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The 3 R's of teacher training in Vietnam: revising, reviving and researching

Martyn Brogan and Nguyen Thai Ha

SECTION ONE

Introduction

Political and economic conditions have changed much in the past fifteen years in Vietnam as a result of the Vietnamese Government's *doi moi* policy. This policy has resulted in an increase in Vietnam's political, diplomatic and economic relationships with other countries. The medium of these diplomatic and economic relationships is primarily English. The changes have demanded a greater number of proficient speakers of English in the English speaking context in Vietnam, in the context of English speaking countries in general and in other contexts where English is the lingua franca. To meet these demands, attempts have been made by the Vietnamese government with help from donor governments and agencies to set up courses for learners of English as well as for teachers of English. The Vietnam-Australia English Language Technical Training Project (VAT) Teacher In-service Education Programs (TIE) are one of these types of courses. The two main aims of the Programs are to develop the English language skills of teachers and their English language teaching skills. Concomitant with these two main aims, the Programs also aim to improve the levels of creativity and professional confidence of Vietnamese English language teachers (ELTs) to improve their overall effectiveness as ELTs.

The description of English language learning and teaching, and English language teacher training in Vietnam that follows in the first part of the paper will provide background information about the need for this development and improvement. The author suggests that this need for development and improvement results from traditional Vietnamese attitudes to teaching and learning.

The second part of the paper will provide a description of the current VAT Project TIE Programs. This second section will outline the underlying theory, aims, methods and forms of evaluation that are used in the Programs.

The author of this first section of the paper would like it noted that published Vietnamese-produced research about the outcomes of English language teaching and learning or English language teacher training in Vietnam — for example, how many learners have become proficient speakers of English after they have finished courses, and the extent to which teacher training has contributed to any success — is not available. This is an indication of one of the concerns addressed in the paper, i.e. the need to develop a culture of research amongst Vietnamese ELTs. Consequently, the following description of the background to the need for such programs as the TIE Programs is based on the author's observations and experiences of 20 years teaching in a Vietnamese tertiary institution. These experiences have included teacher training and English language teaching.

[Contents](#)

The current ELT situation in Vietnam – a personal perspective

Two things need mentioning with regard to the current situation of English language learning, language teaching and language teacher training in Vietnam. These are the teaching methods used in English language courses and the increased popularity of English. These affect the current teaching and learning practices in English language education in Vietnam, which in turn result in the need for the development and improvement of the language and teaching skills of teachers.

English language courses

Vietnamese teachers and policy makers seem to agree that a good curriculum or syllabus plays an important role in ensuring the success of an English language program. Consequently, efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), English Departments in universities as well as by English language course organizers to develop effective curricula and, as a result, many different curricula for English courses have been developed. Unfortunately, observations of the processes of the development and implementation of these curricula have revealed many problems.

One of these problems is the lack of a needs analysis. Policy-makers, course designers and teachers assume the language needs of students. There is rarely any data collected about the needs of learners for the development of a curriculum. Such data would need to include present levels of proficiency, the skills or proficiency levels needed in the future workplaces, the language learning ‘wants’, the prior learning experiences and preferred learning styles. In some cases the components of the courses have been decided upon with special reference to the specific ability of a teacher or the availability of materials. The author has noted that in a few cases some skills that have been perceived as necessary for the future careers of students may be taken off the curriculum. This has been because teachers who will be required to teach the course have never taught those skills before and are fearful of having to teach such skills.

In other cases, a vague evaluation of the proficiency level of students — for example, pre-intermediate — will be made. Then a ‘good’ book that is available on the local market will be chosen and all or almost all of what is in the contents page of the book becomes the core components of the course. This attitude towards needs analysis has resulted in many components in the course not being for the benefit of learners in terms of developing their proficiency level. Not all activities and tasks related to these components may be useful and meaningful to all the students taking such a course.

Another serious problem is that the evaluation of courses and subsequent changes are rare in the development and implementation of English language courses in Vietnam. Courses are usually designed once, materials are usually selected and developed once, and methodologies are usually chosen once. All of these are supposed to, and even are believed to, work well with all students and teachers for all situations. This belief has resulted from several factors.

The first factor is the teacher of English. Teachers of English in Vietnam may teach mornings, afternoons and evenings, and may have no time to listen to what the students think works well and what does not. They may have no time, and some may have no inclination, to share with other teachers what they think works well and what does not. There are, of course, teachers who do listen to their students and who want to make changes, but they may not have the time or the resources to make changes. The sharing of ideas, experiences and materials is not common amongst teachers of English in Vietnam. Many teachers believe that their own ‘secrets’ will make them the ‘best’ teachers, and hence they will be able to attract higher salaries.

The second factor is the attitude towards imported materials and the activities and tasks in these materials. As noted above many teachers and students believe that there are materials that are ideal for all students and teachers, and for all situations. What may even be more worrying is that these teachers often believe that everything in the book is 'good'. For example, it has been reported that after a listening lesson centred around announcements at London airport students who have never travelled by plane before, and may not travel by this means of transport in the near future, found the lesson difficult and, of course, boring. The usual comment from the teachers in such circumstances is that the students are lazy or even stupid. The premise is that the listening activity that comes from a 'good' book must be 'good'. Other teachers and students do not believe that teachers who are non-native speakers of English can produce useful and meaningful activities and tasks. There have been cases when the teacher knows that a material, or an activity, or a task that comes from a published book is not appropriate for students, but is not confident enough or creative enough to make any alterations or changes, or to abandon the activity altogether.

In sum, this usually results in the same syllabus, i.e. the course book contents page, being implemented, the same materials being taught, and the same methodologies being applied to a number of 'different' courses. For example, the English *Headway* series has been used in courses for Government officials who need English to communicate with other government officials from ASEAN countries. This series has also been used for engineers who need English specifically to read texts in their respective fields of engineering. This same series has further been used for students who are going to live and study in an English-speaking country as a form of a pre-academic English course.

English language teacher training courses

Teachers of English in Vietnam seem to have accepted that the grammar-translation method is not effective in English language teaching and learning if communication in the second language is the expected outcome. They have also realized that communicative teaching approaches are what they need to implement in their teaching and for the learning of their students. As a result teacher training courses aimed at developing the communicative teaching skills of teachers have been organized. However the implementation of the courses reveals problems that need addressing if the effective application of communicative teaching approaches is to be achieved. The following is a description of how communicative teaching skills have been introduced and developed in teacher training courses.

English language teacher training courses in Vietnam usually follow two models: the Craft Model and the Applied Science Model (See Part 2 of this paper). The writer has noted that there are often two distinctively different attitudes towards the introduction of communicative teaching techniques using these different models. Young teacher trainees are often overwhelmed when they are introduced to communicative teaching techniques, either through observing 'master' teachers in their teacher training courses or through reading methodology books. The author has also observed that communicative teaching techniques have often been introduced as if they are all that teachers need to solve all their problems in their English language teaching. The danger is that the teacher trainees seem to believe that this is the case. Once they start teaching and try to apply some of these techniques, they realize that some of them, or many of them, do not work in their specific context. In many cases what has been noticed is that the teacher trainees feel very disappointed and embarrassed and consequently change back to more traditional methods. Older teacher trainees, especially those who have been used to traditional teaching methods, and have enjoyed being the 'boss' in the classroom, and those who are former teachers of Russian, have explicitly or implicitly demonstrated skepticism about communicative teaching approaches. The 'I can't apply this idea' response is a common statement heard from these teachers. They have justified reasons for being skeptical, and these reasons may also be attributed to the failures experienced by young teacher trainees as described above; that is the fact that communicative teaching approaches

have been developed by people whose learning and teaching backgrounds and contexts are quite different from theirs.

The above mentioned common practices in teacher training processes in Vietnam do not allow for pre- or in-service English language teacher trainees to reflect on their own language learning and teaching experiences and situations. This has reinforced a belief that there is one single correct answer to English language learning and teaching problems. If the teaching skills of English language teachers are to be developed and improved, this belief needs challenging.

The VAT Project TIE Programs attempt to address the issues raised in the first part of this paper. These issues are related to the need for Vietnamese teachers of English to become aware of, and have the opportunities to practise the skills of needs analysis, and other aspects of empirical approaches to language teaching. These issues are also related to the need for teachers to develop their individual levels of creativity and professional confidence, and to recognize that the English language is a form of communication and not simply a content subject in the Vietnamese curriculum. The second part of the paper describes how this is attempted.

SECTION TWO

Introduction

In the first part of this paper, the Vietnamese co-coordinator of the VAT Project TIE Programs provided background information about the need for Vietnamese ELTs to have their English language skills and their English language teaching skills revised. The second section of the paper describes how this is attempted, and demonstrates that during this process of revision, the Vietnamese ELTs participating in the TIE Programs have affective aspects of their professional lives 'revived'. This section summarizes how this 'revival' of teacher creativity and professional confidence and the 'revision' of language skills and language teaching skills are attempted during the 12-week full-time in-service training Programs. This section also shows how this 'revision' and 'revival' can be partially sustained after the Programs through the use of action research approaches that the participants are encouraged to use in their post-course teaching practice.

Before this description is given of how the Programs attempt to revise, revive and introduce classroom based action research techniques to the participants, the underlying educational theory of the Programs is summarized, and a general description of the Programs is provided.

The theoretical assumptions of the tie programs

The TIE Programs have two main objectives. Intensive pre-course on-site needs analyses and during-course needs analyses have indicated that the Program participants require revision and development of their English language proficiency. These same needs analyses have indicated that the participants require development of English language teaching skills relevant to the Vietnamese educational, socio-political and the institutional contexts (Brogan, 1998, 1999; Denham, 1997; Ellis, G. 1994, 1996; Flew, 1999a, 1999b; Lo Bianco, 1993; Nguyen, 1993; Tickoo, 1995). These two aspects, the revision and development of English language proficiency and the development of teaching skills are core components of all VAT Project

TIE Programs.

The underpinning theory of both main components of the Programs is social-cognitive learning theory (for example, [Eggen and Kauchak](#), 1997; [Dembo](#), 1994). This general theory of learning suggests that learners learn best when they are cognitively engaged in learning activities with others. In other words, learners learn best by doing activities and tasks that are meaningful and useful for them and that require them to think and be socially engaged. This theory is particularly relevant to language learning as the use of language is a social activity, and much research has demonstrated that second language skills are best developed through useful and meaningful practice, at least in Western educational contexts (for example, [Ellis](#), 1994).

The participants in the TIE Programs are not simply observing or reading what has been chosen for them by others to learn. The participants are required to complete tasks that are directly related to their specific language learning and their specific language teaching needs. These tasks are open-ended, and throughout the learning process it is stressed that there is no single correct answer to the language learning or language teaching problems raised. The participants of the TIE Programs are encouraged to find their own solutions to their own problems in a collaborative manner in the social settings provided in the Programs. Apart from the above aspects, these settings attempt to replicate those of the participants as much as is possible. This allows the participants the opportunity to practise and implement their solutions during the Programs. The Program settings allow for the participants to reflect on their progress individually and collaboratively, which was shown in Section One to not be a common practice in Vietnamese educational contexts.

As noted above, the TIE Programs have two core objectives: the development of the English language skills and the improvement of English the language teaching skills of ELTs in Vietnam. This is the 'revision' aspect of the Programs. These objectives are implemented through the application of the social-cognitive learning theory. The application of this theory also allows for the development of the other key objectives of the Programs, which are the improvement of the levels of creativity and professional confidence of the participants. This is the 'revival' aspect of the Programs. In addition, this theory helps facilitate a third key aspect of the Programs, the application of action research based approaches to language teaching, and continued independent, individual teacher development after each participant returns to the work place. This is the 'research' aspect of the Programs.

Before a description of how this theory is transformed into the specific methodologies used in the Programs, a brief description of the participants and the teacher trainers involved in the Programs is provided. This is done to give a clearer understanding of the contexts of the Programs and the Program participants.

The TIE program participants and the teacher trainers

The Participants

The participants in the Programs are from a number of different educational levels and a number of different educational institutions within MOET located in a number of different provinces. In 1998, the 63 Program participants were from 17 Junior Teacher Training Colleges from 17 provinces. The 56 participants in the January 1999 Program were from 20 Specialized Non-language Universities from 20 different provinces throughout Vietnam. The current Program has 43 participants from 18 different provinces who either teach English at Specialized Upper Secondary Schools (37) or who are the provincial Department of Education

and Training English language teaching consultants (6).

Although there are many differences amongst these participants, the needs analyses and the previous research referred to above indicates that there are also many similarities. All participants require English language proficiency improvement, and as with all ELTs anywhere they also require development of their language teaching skills. The institutions from which these participants are drawn share differences and similarities. The similarities being that each institution has extremely limited access to agents of change, language teaching resources and general teaching resources. These institutions share other similarities such as large class sizes with mixed ability groups of students who have different types and levels of motivation. The institutions have examination-driven curricula, and institutional and social constraints that militate against change.

The teacher trainers

The teacher trainers on the TIE Programs work in bicultural teams. The trainers are selected from within Vietnam and Australia. Before they are selected to work on TIE Programs, the trainers must hold appropriate qualifications, a post-graduate degree in ELT is a minimum. They must be experienced in their respective educational fields. They must also be able to demonstrate in their applications and their interviews the prerequisite skills, attitudes and attributes to be able to implement the mutable TIE Programs.

The Programs are intentionally staffed and deliberately timetabled to enable each bicultural teacher training team to work in a team-teaching mode (for example, Nunan, 1992). Each team has at least one Vietnamese ELT and one expatriate ELT. The bicultural nature of the teaching team has many advantages that are beyond the scope of this paper to outline. However, as a minimum, this arrangement assists in the flexible application of the methodologies noted below.

Despite the diversity of the institutional backgrounds and the individual requirements of the participants and the limitations that are noted, the varied and varying application of the methodologies used in the TIE Programs means that the core and subsidiary aims of the Programs are achieved as fully as is possible. The continual adaptation of the methodologies used in the Programs during the Programs by the bicultural teacher training teams means that the possible intervening effects of the noted differences and diversity of the participants are ameliorated. These methodologies are described below.

The Program methodologies

The language learning component

The language learning component of the TIE Programs uses an eclectic range of techniques based on communicative approaches to second language learning. (for example, [Cook](#), 1991; [Nunan](#), 1991). The language learning needs of the participants are evaluated, and lessons are designed to meet these particular needs (i.e. 'revision'). These lessons are evaluated by the participants and the teachers after each lesson, and at weekly evaluation and feedback sessions. The active participation of the participants in their own language development is encouraged, expected and planned for. This active involvement is incorporated through the use of a number of techniques and facilities that will be described later in this paper (i.e. 'revival' and 'research').

The language teacher training component

The TIE Programs use a number of different models of teacher training to assist the participants to achieve the second primary aim of the Programs. A number of models of teacher training have been chosen because the participants and the institutions from which they come are all different. The three main models mentioned are not exclusive and are integrated as required by the teacher training needs of the particular participants. They are:

1. The Craft Model (the participants observe and follow the examples of ‘master’ teachers.)
2. The Applied Science Model (the participants study theories and research findings related to language teaching, and discuss, develop and implement methodologies related to these theories and findings.)
3. The Reflective Model (the participants teach, observe other teachers, are observed themselves, and recall past teaching experiences. They reflect on these prior teaching experiences with their colleagues and teacher trainers to work out alternative methods for themselves and their learners. The participants try these revised methods again with their colleagues, and continue the reflective process.)

For further information about these models, see [Wallace \(1991\)](#).

Implementation

The choice of approaches, methodologies and techniques used by the teacher trainers in the Programs are guided by the information obtained in the pre-course training needs analyses, the on-going during-course needs analyses, the skills and experiences of the teacher trainers and the available resources. All are implemented using action research approaches (for example, [Richards and Lockhart, 1994](#); [Wallace, 1998](#)), incorporating modified loop-input techniques ([Woodward, 1991](#)).

Action Research

Action research techniques are used and taught in all the TIE Programs. These techniques require the participants to think of what they want to improve about their language learning or their language teaching. Action research procedures then require the participants to plan for the necessary, identified improvements, implement these improvements, observe what happens, reflect on this observation and then re-plan. Examples of action research procedures are given to the participants in the form of case studies (for example, [Jackson, 1998](#)). Once participants are familiar with the action research procedure, they are asked to identify and clarify their own language learning and teaching needs. The participants are assisted to make plans to develop solutions to meet these needs. The participants are given the opportunity to try the plans in the Programs. After these plans have been tried, the participants are requested to think about how satisfactory the plans were, and what could be done to make better plans in the future. The use of this approach is also one way that the concepts developed in the Program can be sustained beyond the Program itself. Before each Program, during each Program and at the conclusion of each Program, participants are requested to complete action research tasks related to their teaching.

An analysis of the post-course action research tasks received from the participants after the first TIE Program has been conducted. This analysis confirms that for, at least one third of the participants, the introduced, taught, discussed and demonstrated approaches, methodologies and techniques relevant to each participant have been successfully modified and implemented in their teaching contexts. Although only one-third (20/63) of the participants submitted their post-course action research tasks for comment, the tasks that were submitted demonstrated encouraging uptake of the main Program aims. The received tasks showed improved language

proficiency ('revision'), improved and improving language teaching methodologies ('revision' and 'revival'), more confidence and creativity ('revival') and a willingness to continue to use action research approaches for future development of language proficiency and language teaching skills ('research').

The methodological 'puzzles' that were researched, amongst others, included the management of large, mixed ability classes, the quality and quantity of student to student interactions in the target language, the introduction of communicative techniques and the development and maintenance of the motivation of students. A variety of new teaching techniques were used and self-observed, or observed by colleagues, in the classroom. Two thirds of the respondents reflected that they would continue to use action research approaches in their classes. One respondent reported in her reflections that she was planning a seminar about action research for her colleagues.

In addition to the allocation of time for the development of and the teaching of the essential reflective abilities of the participants to be able to apply action research based techniques, there is a need to give participants models of teaching and of action research based classroom observation techniques. There is a need to then allow participants to reflect on what it is that is 'good' about what has been demonstrated, and what it is that they can individually apply in their own teaching contexts. This is achieved by incorporating the action research approach into the classroom as often as possible, and raising consciousness of this incorporation, through the use of modified loop-input techniques.

Loop-input

A modified loop-input technique is used throughout the Programs. The modified model described below avoids what could be criticized as the prescriptive outcomes that would result if the fundamentals of the techniques, as described in [Woodward \(1991\)](#), were strictly applied. The transmission approach to teacher training and the prescriptive outcomes implied in the loop-input technique are avoided by incorporation of the action research cycle into the 'loop'.

The application of the modified loop-input model employed on the Program requires the participants to actually do what they have planned. This process occurs after participants have had opportunities to observe the methodologies used by the teacher trainers. The participants are required to select one aspect of their teaching methodology that they would like to change. They are asked to reflect on what it is that they want to change and why they want to change this and then to make an 'action plan' for the changes. The plan is 'actioned' in front of colleagues in micro-teaching sessions (see [Wallace, 1991](#); [Richards, 1998](#)), or in other practicum settings that duplicate the contexts of the work places of the participants. Colleagues and the teacher trainers give feedback on what was 'good' about the planned activities, and what needs to be changed. In this way, by observation and reflection, the loop-input technique is related to the action research approach.

As an aside and as an example, in addition to the need to develop the reflection and classroom observation abilities of the participants, there is a need to develop the language and affective skills related to appropriate evaluation and effective and constructive feedback (for example, [Cosh, 1999](#)). The teaching of these reflection, observation, evaluation and feedback skills is an additional component of the loop-input technique. The skills are taught, the language related to these skills is taught and then these skills are 'looped' back into the Program for use in another 'looped' component, the microteaching and practicum sessions. In addition to the training of the participants in the skills of professional reflection, observation and feedback, the participants are also introduced to the concept of and given practice in the use of pedagogical reasoning skills (see [Richards, 1998](#)).

Loop-input techniques can also involve the teacher trainers giving model lessons that the participants reflect on and adapt to their particular circumstances. The participants would perform the adjusted plans in front of colleagues and the teacher trainers. They would receive feedback about their teaching, and make the necessary revisions to their language teaching techniques as a result of this feedback. At the request of the participants, the revised 'action' plan can be repeated, re-evaluated and re-modified.

Each teacher trainer varies the intensity of the use of the action research and loop-input components depending on the needs of the participants. However, usually the use of the loop-input methodology and action research cycle has meant that the first session of each day is an information (input) or 'problem' definition and planning session. This session is usually related to a specific methodology problem being experienced by one or more participants in the 'real' teaching setting. The second session is the implementation (loop) and reflection session. This session requires participants to trial the solutions developed in the first session and reflect on and evaluate these trials.

At all stages of the loop-input and action research process the TIE teacher trainers are key facilitating personnel. The teacher trainers use their experience, and other available resources, to provide relevant input for the participants. The participants use this input to assist the development of their plans, their trial implementations of the proposed solutions and their reflections. Any subsequent sessions may then become further re-planning sessions, which may lead to new information (input) and new planning sessions.

Loop-input and action research are important aspects of the program. In addition to these essential features, other means of implementing the Program are applied. The use of learner journals (for example, [Gray, 1998](#); [Woodfield and Lazarus, 1998](#)), regular class-based evaluation and feedback sessions (for example, [Wallace, 1991](#)), portfolios (for example, [Stewart, 1999](#)) and electives programs are some of these additional elements incorporated into the learning activities.

Other Program components

The participants are requested to write in learner journals on a regular basis, usually daily. This is to assist the development of the reflective processes and pedagogical reasoning skills mentioned above. These reflective, reasoning processes are both for language learning and teacher training.

Informal feedback sessions between the Vietnamese teacher trainers and the participants are held daily. Formal feedback sessions are held weekly. These sessions are used as a means of on going needs analysis and formative evaluations and for the development of the personal and professional relationships amongst all involved in the Program.

Participants are expected to develop a portfolio containing the materials they have developed, and the materials they have been given. It is intended that the participants will use the portfolio when they return to their places of work. The materials in the portfolios are for the development of language lessons, and to share with other colleagues.

An electives program is offered in each TIE Program. The content of the available electives is decided by the pre-course needs analysis. The content of the electives allows each participant to select to study more intensely aspects of language teaching that relate specifically to work duties. Electives that have been offered, amongst others, have included materials development, ESP syllabus design, the teaching of translation skills, alternative methods of teaching grammar, the use of literature in language teaching classes and cross-cultural issues and language teaching.

A range of learning exercises, activities and tasks are used to meet the aims of the Programs. These activities are developed by the teacher trainers or are modified by the trainers from a collection of language learning and language teacher training tasks that are available in the Project Resource Centre. The learning activities mainly take place in the classrooms at the VAT Project English Language Centre, however extra-curricular activities are a regular component of the Programs. These extra-curricular activities are designed to meet the Program aims of improving the language proficiency, teaching methodology, creativity and confidence of the participants.

The Program content is implemented using the above means. The content, as with other design features of the Programs, is flexible. Changes to the content are made based on the on-going needs analyses and formative evaluations. Each of the following content components may be taught for varying lengths of time depending on the expressed needs of the participants.

Program content

The Program content is derived from the pre-course and during-course needs analyses, and from the previous experiences of others who have trained non-native speaking teachers in developmental contexts (for example, [Clarke](#), 1991; [Doff](#), 1988; [Richards](#), 1998; [Spratt](#), 1994; [Willis](#), 1986; [Harmer](#), 1991; [Ur](#), 1996). The Program content is selected being mindful of the social context within which ELTs work in Vietnam, and the Program is responsive to the constraints of such contexts (see [Holliday](#), 1994; [Tollefson](#), 1995). The needs analyses and the previous experiences of others have resulted in a Program content that is delivered flexibly and that may include the following broad, general topics:

- Language Proficiency and Communication Skills
- Theories of Teaching (General Teaching and Language Teaching Methodologies)
- Practice of Teaching (General Skills and Specific Language Teaching Skills)
- Subject Matter Knowledge (for example, the System of the Language; Second Language Acquisition Research)
- Classroom Based and Learner-Centred Observation and Decision Making Skills and Pedagogical Reasoning Skills
- Contextual Knowledge (The Understanding of and Adapting to Specific Contexts)
- In the previous Program for ELTs from specialized non-language universities these substantial, general topic areas were expanded to the following areas:
 - Language Development for Language Teachers
 - Introduction to Action Research for Language Teachers
 - Self-Access and Independent Learning Skills for Language Teachers
 - Empirical Approaches to Language Teaching
 - Classroom Management Skills for Language Teachers
 - Introduction to Classroom Observation and Research for Language Teachers
 - Language Learner Styles
 - Language Learning Strategies
 - Language Learning Tasks
 - Learner-Centred Approaches to Language Teaching
 - Teaching the Four Language Macro-Skills
 - Teaching Large Classes
 - Teaching Mixed-Ability Classes
 - Teaching 'Weak' Classes

- Maintaining Student Motivation
- Teaching Culture and Teaching Language
- The Role of the Language Teacher
- The Role of the Language Learner
- Using Resources and Texts for Language Teaching
- Language Assessment and Evaluation Skills
- Language Teaching Materials Development Skills
- Language Testing and Assessment
- Language and Culture
- Language Teaching Methodology
- Materials Development
- ESP Syllabus Design

It is stressed that each of the above course components is developed to different degrees of depth depending on the needs of the participants. It would be impossible to cover all the above areas to the depth required in the limited time available. The 'depth' that is developed may vary from a simple introduction of the concept, to an extensive and intensive 3- or 4-week course component. The teacher trainers in consultation with their participants are free to decide which aspects of the Program content are focused on.

The delivery of this Program content has other 'peculiarities' in the Vietnamese context. Apart from the fact that no aspect of the content is prescribed, teacher trainers and the participants have access to an extensive and accessible resource centre. This centre contains a wide range of reference texts, course books, cassette tapes, videos, journals, and newspapers. The centre also provides teacher trainers and participants with access to the Internet. The Programs have administrative support including access to photocopying facilities and services. These aspects of Program delivery are unusual in a developmental context, but add to the value of the Program outcomes.

The evaluation and assessment of both the success of the application of the methodologies used in the Programs to achieve the Program aims, and of the learning of the participants is done using a variety of formative and summative evaluation and assessment techniques.

Assessment and evaluation

Assessment

The assessment of the participants and the Program evaluations are used primarily for on-going course development, i.e. the teacher trainers are interested in the assessment of their own abilities to successfully work with the participants. The course assessment and evaluation methods are designed for this purpose.

Participant assessment

The assessment of the participants takes many forms, and is directed by the underlying assumption that the purpose of assessment of the participants is for Program development, or to provide information for performance-based feedback to individual participants. Norm-referenced assessments are never used in the Program, and criteria referenced assessments are used as rarely as possible. The methods of assessment employed are:

- Performance Based Assessment (for example,. Learner diaries, portfolios, micro-

teaching and re-teaching, responses to pre- and during-course tasks, levels of attendance and participation)

- Criteria Referenced Assessment (Using a modified Australian higher education model for the end of course action research task)
- Pre- and Post-Course Proficiency Ratings of Students (for teacher trainers' purposes for class placement and analysis of language proficiency improvements)

Evaluation

The formal summative evaluations are conducted through use of questionnaires, oral and written surveys and the checking of the attendance registers. As a minimum, the formal formative evaluations are conducted during weekly half-hour evaluation and feedback sessions between the Vietnamese teacher trainers and participants and weekly teacher trainer Program meetings. Both these forms of evaluation seek information from the participants about what they are learning or have learnt in the Programs, about their attitudes to this learning, and about other more general information. The teacher trainers also use individual or team forms of evaluation as a part of their individual lesson planning or their team lesson planning to monitor their own progress and the progress of the participants

Informal formative evaluations take place throughout the Programs as the flexible character of the Programs facilitates and requires informal evaluation discussions. The day to day questions that are asked by the participants are seen not only as an opportunity to directly attempt to 'answer' these questions, but also a means of evaluation about what is concerning the participants. The level of involvement of the participants in the Program activities is also noted and is used as a form of informal formative feedback.

The informal and formal evaluation techniques are a further example of the 'looping' of the action research techniques into the Program. Observation and reflection lead to re-planning and 're-acting'. The evaluations and the respective changes that are the outcomes of the re-planned actions following the reflections about these evaluations are made explicit to, or 'looped' for, the participants as examples of the Program approach.

Conclusion

The TIE Programs attempt to revise the language and methodology skills of the participants using a variety of training techniques after clear and on-going specifications of needs. The methods used for this revision have a secondary aim of reviving the creativity and professional confidence of the participants in relation to their skills through the use of reflective methods of teacher training. Throughout the Programs the concept of empirical approaches to learning and teaching, i.e. researching one's own classroom, are developed and are fundamental to the revision and revival process. All of these aspects were identified in the first part of this paper as being of critical importance.

The TIE Programs attempt to achieve the stated aims through the deployment of bicultural teams who have a developed and developing understanding of the cultural contexts of ELT in Vietnam. The aims are clarified through pre-course and during-course specification and analysis of the language needs and the teaching skills needs of the participants. The use of action research and loop-input techniques and a flexible approach by the teacher trainers to the teaching and learning tasks are key aspects of the Programs.

The outcomes of the Programs in terms of the longer term effects on ELT in Vietnam requires more research than has been possible with the limited research afforded by the analysis of the

data collected from ex-participants provided in their post-course action research tasks. The required detailed research about the effectiveness of the Programs is lacking. Such further research would need to include work place visits and interviews with all the stakeholders in English language teaching in Vietnam, as is currently done for the pre-course needs analysis. These research visits would also need to include intensive and longitudinal classroom observations and additional opportunities for reflection and training of the former TIE Program participants. This follow-up training and post-course evaluation research has been planned for the first TIE Program of 2000.

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Some limitations of the current teacher training procedure can be mentioned such as training objectives associated with developing knowledge and skills, not oriented to competencies development; impractical teacher training curricula, etc. Then, we propose a number of solutions to improve the quality and effectiveness of training teachers in the direction of developing professional competences, especially solution to renovate training curricula. MÃ¡»T Sá» Glá»ϕI PHÃP NÃ,NG CAO CHÁ»T LÃE`á»ϕNG, HIá»†U QUÁ»ϕ CÃ”NG TÃC ÃÃ€O Tá» O GIÃO VIÃŠN THEO Ãá»ŠNH HÃE`á»šNG PHÃT TRIá»,N NÃ,NG Lá» °C TÃ³m tá»t: CÃ’ng cuá»™c Ã’á»•i má»•i cÃfn bá»£n vÃ to The 3 R's of teacher training in Vietnam: Revising, reviving and researching. Paper presented at the Teaching at the Mekong Institute: 11. applying the AIM approach. Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Language and Development, Hanoi, Vietnam. Bunton, D., & Tsui, A. B. M. (2002). Setting language benchmarks: Whose benchmark? It's time to learn the three R's of the environment: reduce, reuse, recycle. Then practice what you preach: don't buy things you don't need or items that come in wasteful packaging or that cannot be recycled. Reuse and recycle whatever you can.Â You'll be saving some trees! Plastic containers and reusable lunch bags are great ways to take your lunch to school without creating waste. Coffee cans, shoe boxes, margarine containers, and other types of containers people throw away can be used to store things or can become fun arts and crafts projects. Use your imagination! Don't throw out clothes, toys, furniture, and other things that you don't want anymore.