

**An ecological perspective on the motivational trajectories of
high school students learning English
in rural areas in Vietnam**

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in
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Abstract

This study explores the motivational trajectories of four students learning English at a rural high school in Southern Vietnam. It draws on a person-in-context relational view of motivation (Ushioda, 2009) as the overarching theoretical framework and uses ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) as an analytical tool to develop insights into the ways motivation is implicated in a multiplicity of settings and social relationships. Specifically, it aims to identify motivational affordances for these students, the synergistic effects across settings on their language learning motivation, and their motivational trajectories within and across settings and relationships.

The study utilises a qualitative case study design, relying primarily on interviews from social practice perspectives and observations. The data collection, spanning approximately one and a half years, comprised two main phases, one on-site and one off-site. In the first phase, data were gathered in different settings, including the school, the participants' homes as a site for private tuition, and other more informal public spaces such as food stores. In the second phase, Skype interviews and Facebook exchanges were the main means of data collection.

The findings suggest that while language affordances were evident in both formal and informal learning settings, students developed diverse individual motivational trajectories. Their motivational constructions resulted from a synergy of environmental and idiosyncratic elements pertinent to their own language learning conditions, social relationships, and personal appraisals of such affordances and learning opportunities. These relationships and students' agentive use of resources were shaped and reshaped by their interactions with significant others within and across settings. Sociocultural features related to the school systems, local and national education policies, family traditions, cultural values, and future prospects also have synergistic impacts on their L2 motivation.

The present study illustrates the value of interpreting the situated and dynamic nature of L2 motivation using an ecological paradigm. It also points to the need to adopt a set of data collection methods, tools, and data sources that diverge from more conventional means to explore L2 motivation. The study offers a fresh theoretical and methodological approach for future research geared towards lifewide adaptive perspectives on English language teaching and learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 A personal perspective

“Don’t take English. You won’t have many choices of university majors and career prospects. Don’t risk your future.” This was a piece of advice from my high school biology teacher fourteen years ago, when he learned of my intention to specialise in English. In retrospect, in my time at a high school in a rural district in Southern Vietnam, I was one of the rare students interested in English and determined to pursue an English language major at university. Some of my peers were also passionate about the language, but did not want to gamble their future on it because of the challenges they saw confronting them. They chose to follow the majority who studied natural sciences. There were scant supplementary materials for learning English in the high school library and at local bookshops, so my English language studies depended largely on my formal classes and personal effort.

At school, I was taught mainly English grammar and reading and Vietnamese was the language of communication throughout English lessons. Knowing my ambitions, my English teacher prepared some flash cards for me to study in my own time as an incentive. In my final year, I represented my high school in a provincial English contest and won. I was then chosen to participate in the national English examination, for which I had to take a special English course offered at a high school in the provincial centre. My father took me there for training every week and my parents gave me money to buy the recommended readings. Not having had much English practice before, I was lagging behind other team members who came from urban schools, especially in listening skills. My perseverance, together with the support of the course trainers, my English teacher and my parents, enabled me to achieve high scores in the national competition. This allowed me admission into a teacher-training university in Vietnam without having to take the university entrance examination.

After completing my undergraduate study, I taught English at two universities and at a foreign language centre in Ho Chi Minh City, which is the biggest socioeconomic and cultural centre in Southern Vietnam. Over the five years of classroom observations and personal communication with my students, I noticed a significant discrepancy in English proficiency between those from urban and those from rural areas. While the former progressed through the tertiary English programme with relative ease, the latter tended to struggle with it. Most students from rural or remote localities displayed weaknesses in all language skills and areas of English. They regretted not focussing more on learning English at high school. It was only at university that they realised the importance of learning English for their studies and future career. They expressed their resolution to improve language skills, but concurrently admitted that such limitations in their linguistic knowledge undermined their efforts.

Among the challenges confronting these students in their English language studies in rural contexts, I recognised many of my own. Their accounts, together with my previous English learning experiences, raised many questions: Why were my high school peers and my students who learned English five to ten years later not so keen on the language? How did they learn English before going to university? Did their family support them in learning English? What could I do to help them? My search for the answers to these questions inspired me to research L2 motivation among Vietnamese learners of English from rural areas.

1.2 The research problem

Vietnam's foreign language development was shaped by its history of foreign domination, including languages such as Chinese (over a thousand years of China's invasion), French (France's colonisation from 1859 to 1954), English (American domination from 1954 to 1975) and Russian (Vietnam's socio-political alliance with the USSR prior to the 1990s) (Hang, 2009). With the rapid integration of Vietnam into the global economy and its expanding relations with other countries in recent years, Wright (2002) states that the premise for

Vietnam's successful incorporation in the world's economic market consists in the foreign language proficiency of its workforce. Within this context, the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MoET, 2008) launched a project entitled *Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system from 2008 to 2020*. Its aim is to ensure that “by 2020, there will have been a dramatically increasing rate of Vietnamese learners who can communicate independently and confidently in foreign languages, study and work in multilingual and multicultural environments” (MoET, 2008, p. 32). Given its vital role for Vietnam's socioeconomic development, English had been integrated into the national secondary and high school curriculum as a compulsory subject by 1972 (Vang, 2003) and an optional subject from Year Three in major urban primary schools since the 1990s (Hoa, 2011). Some tertiary institutions in Vietnam have implemented English as a medium of instruction in a number of their programmes (D. T. K. Anh, Hoa, & Truc, 2013). In summary, Think (2006) notes:

Foreign language education policy and accompanying student attitudes and motivation have become crucial issues in the national development of Vietnam and in the personal advancement of individual Vietnamese over the last twenty years . . . In recent years, the impact of foreign languages, especially the re-emergence of English, has contributed to the development in many aspects of Vietnamese society. This choice of English, in particular, has greatly influenced education, especially higher education, and has continued to leave its impact on the society. (para. 4)

Measures have been implemented in an attempt to improve the quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam. In its 2008-2020 action plan, MoET (2008) endeavours to provide further training for language teachers nationwide in order to narrow the gap in terms of qualifications and teaching skills among teachers in different areas in Vietnam. Directed by this ministerial orientation and language teaching and learning realities across the country, most research on English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam to date has primarily focused on innovation in teaching methods and teacher training programmes with the aim of empowering Vietnamese teachers and learners of English with effective skills

and techniques (e.g. Canh, 2011; D. V. Hung, 2006; Le, 2009; Long, 2011; Son, 2011). Another minor but growing body of research in the Vietnamese context has started to attend to affective dimensions in language teaching and learning (e.g. Hang, 2010; P. N. H. Hoang, 2014; Tuan, 2011). These studies accord with an emerging focus on affect in language learning, especially second language (L2) motivation, (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and also acknowledge its importance in English classrooms in Vietnam. Against the contemporary backdrop of English as “a lingua franca” (Crystal, 2003), it is crucial to understand Vietnamese students’ motivation behind their English learning in order to better facilitate language teaching and learning.

One of the limitations of current ELT research in Vietnam is the lack of diversity in research contexts which mainly revolve around the tertiary level. While high school students are among the largest groups of English learners in Vietnam (Thu, 2007), there is a notable paucity of research considering their perspectives. Also, the role of learners’ backgrounds, particularly relating to rural-urban disparities, has received little attention in the broader field of L2 motivation, highlighting the need for further inquiry into high school students learning English in rural areas in Vietnam.

1.3 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study aims to explore the motivational trajectories of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnamese rural areas and the range of social learning resources and support available to them. It highlights the role of significant others in shaping students’ language learning motivation within and across multiple sociocultural contexts and relationships. The four primary settings under investigation include a rural high school, the students’ homes, the private classes at English teachers’ homes, and English courses at foreign language centres. The study addresses the following three research questions:

- RQ1. What are the motivational affordances for high school students learning English in rural Vietnam?

- RQ2. What are the synergistic effects across settings on these learners' language learning motivation?
- RQ3. What are the learners' motivational trajectories within and across settings and relationships with significant others?

These research questions have functioned as guidelines for this study's data collection activities and informed the choice of theoretical and analytical frameworks. They are answered in detail in the discussion chapter. A short summary of the findings in relation to these questions is also provided in the concluding chapter.

1.4 Significance of the study

The impetus behind this study is to contribute to an understanding of language learning motivation among high school students learning English in rural areas, a large but under-researched group of EFL learners in Vietnam. Given the present disadvantages in learning conditions, teaching quality, and social support, the learning trajectories of these students are likely to be riddled with challenges. This study draws on a person-in-context relational view of motivation (Ushioda, 2009) and utilises Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological systems theory as an analytical tool to shed light on the complex and dynamic nature of language learning motivation. It focuses on the interplay between students' motivational progression and a multiplicity of ecological elements and social relationships in both formal and informal language learning settings.

It is my hope that the results from this study will offer teachers, parents, and stakeholders useful insights into the nature of language learning motivation, the challenges as well as the desires of students learning English in rural high schools in Vietnam. Such understandings will optimally inform teachers' approaches, parental interventions at home, and education policies. The ultimate goals are to empower this underprivileged group of students with lifewide adaptive learning skills, enhance their awareness of the resources available for

learning English, ignite and foster their interest in the language, and improve the quality of classroom life in the face of local challenges and limitations.

1.5 Thesis structure

The following diagram provides an outline of the thesis structure:

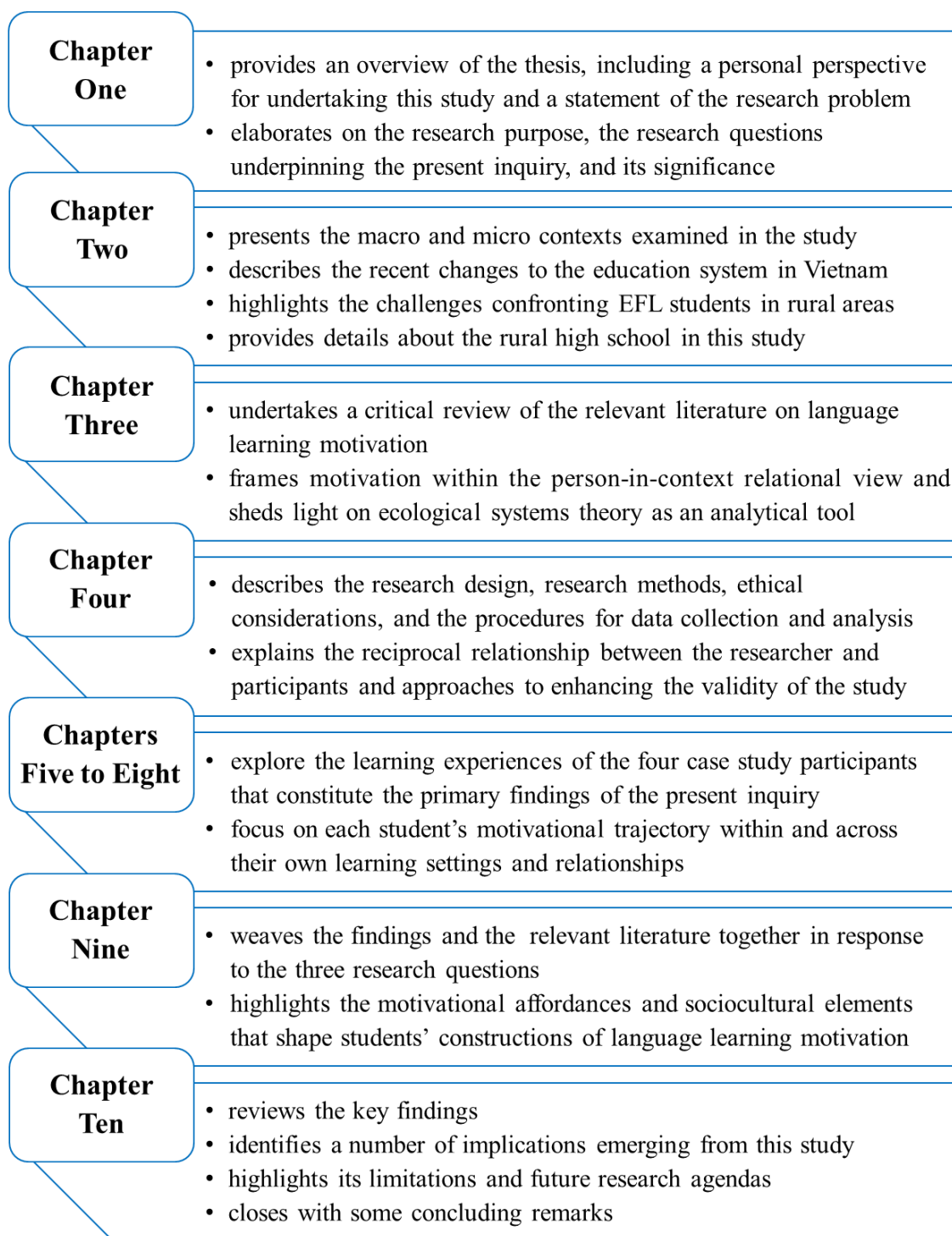


Figure 1.1: Structure of the thesis

CHAPTER TWO: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN RURAL SOUTHERN VIETNAM

The present study explores high school EFL students' motivation to learn English within and across a multiplicity of sociocultural settings and relationships. The complexity of motivation, social relations, and learners' personal constructions of motivation would not be fully accounted for without understandings of the contexts in which their language studies occur. Contextual elements are even more important for interpreting the construct of motivation in this project, whose focus on Vietnamese learners in rural areas may diverge from how motivation is conceptualised in other settings. This chapter aims to detail English language learning in rural Southern Vietnam from macro to micro perspectives. In the first section, the recent changes in the national English testing policies and public feedback about their impacts on students' motivation are discussed. The second section offers some insights into the challenges confronting the English teachers and students in rural areas in Southern Vietnam. The third section explains the reasons for choosing the research site, the school background, the English teaching staff, the English programme, and the student placement criteria at the school. In the final section, private tuition at teachers' homes and foreign language centres is described. The data supporting this chapter include interviews with the school stakeholders, the English teaching staff and local parents, observations, school reports, and analyses of local documents and photographs. Pseudonyms are used throughout for the names of the school and the teachers.

2.1 Recent changes in national English testing systems and their impacts

Education in Vietnam has undergone drastic reforms from elementary to tertiary levels in recent years (Duggan, 2001; Harman, Hayden, & Nghi, 2010; Viet, 2009). Part of this process has been the ongoing changes in the national testing system. The review here captures only those changes affecting the students in the

present study and taking place before the end of the data collection period. Table 2.1 below summarises the changes in the testing policies in relation to the roles of English and the sections that follow will discuss them in detail.

Table 2.1: Recent testing changes in Vietnam's education system

Examinations	Time of policy changes	Roles of English
Secondary school graduation	before 2006	▪ English was one of the four compulsory subjects in the secondary school graduation examination.
	2006	▪ The secondary school graduation examination was removed. Graduation requirements were based on students' performance mainly in Mathematics and Vietnamese Literature.
High school graduation	before 2014	▪ English was one of the four compulsory subjects in the high school graduation examination.
	Mar, 2014 (first wave)	▪ English became an optional subject in the high school graduation examination.
	Sep, 2014 (second wave)	▪ The compulsory role of English in the high school graduation examination was reverted.
University entrance	2012	▪ Exam group A1 was introduced, providing more entries for English majors.

2.1.1 The removal of the secondary school graduation examination

Prior to 2006, Year Nine¹ Vietnamese students had to undertake a compulsory examination to be eligible for secondary school graduation. This examination comprised four subjects, namely Mathematics, Literature, English, and another subject randomly decided by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) on an annual basis. The introduction of *Decision No. 11* (MoET, 2006)

¹ In the Vietnamese education system, elementary schools cater for students from Year One to Five, secondary schools for those from Year Six to Nine, and high schools for those from Year Ten to Twelve.

changed the status of English in the secondary school curriculum. In the wording of the decision, the criteria for graduation were based on students' overall academic performance across subjects in Year Nine. Mathematics and Literature scores were doubled in the total average to indicate their higher priority. Students with an overall average of five (on scale of ten) would be considered for graduation (MoET, 2006, term 7). With this change, English was reduced to more minor importance in the graduation requirements. Students' attitudes towards learning English over the four years at secondary school also shifted dramatically. The following extract shows the views held by all the high school English language teachers participating in this study:

In recent years, I have noticed students entering high school with a marked decrease in their motivation to learn English. It is because they do not have to take the graduation examination. English was equated with other minor school subjects, so they did not bother to learn it. (ITLan)²

According to these teachers, the removal of the secondary school graduation examination was a major factor leading to students' decreased focus on English, a repercussion of which was low English competence upon high school entry:

Most of the students in recent intakes have very low English level. They have very low basic knowledge of English. Some can babble a few sentences but most of them have no idea of English grammar. We have to teach them from a fresh start. (ITKieu)

2.1.2 Two consecutive changes in the high school graduation examination

The streamlining process in the national education system in Vietnam has also impacted on testing and assessment practice at high school which is the threshold between secondary and tertiary education. There were two major waves of change in the high school graduation examination within the duration of the present study (see Table 2.1).

² Interview data from a local teacher, see Table 4.4 for the data source abbreviations

For the high school graduation examination before 2014, students had to take four subjects, including Mathematics, Literature, English, and another random subject that varied every year. The first wave of change which took place in March 2014 retained Mathematics and Literature as the mandatory subjects whereas English became optional (MoET, 2014a). While there was support from a minority of parents and students, this first wave of change received a great deal of public criticism regarding the role of English in the national curriculum and students' motivation to learn it. Anh (2014) described this change as “a shock” to parents: “Learning foreign languages is very important for the future of our country. Without English in the high school graduation examination, this will be a huge disadvantage for our youths in the time of globalisation” (para. 10). In the same vein, one parent mentioned in Anh's (2014) newspaper article stated that “This change is a backward step in the high school graduation examination” (para. 4). Speaking of students' attitudes towards English following this new policy, another parent said:

Having to take English in the graduation examination is one of the main motivators for students to learn this subject. Making English optional will lead them to choose other subjects and neglect English. This means that they will lose an opportunity to learn about another culture. They may lack a basic foundation in English until they realise its necessity. (Q. Anh, 2014, para. 11)

These parents revealed their concern that high school students, particularly those who did not specialise in English, would become merely resigned to, or even resistant to, learning this subject. This might have negative effects on their language competence in the long term. After the first experiential graduation examination to obtain public and stakeholders' perspectives, MoET (2014b) decided to bring English back to its obligatory status for the 2015 graduation examination. The reversion was officially implemented in September 2014, right at the beginning of the final year at high school of the case study participants presented in chapters six to eight. This second wave of change required students

to revise their language learning strategies and consolidated the role of English in the national curriculum.

2.1.3 The university entrance examination

Every July prior to 2015, MoET hosted a university entrance examination held approximately one month after the high school graduation examination. The table below details the subjects assessed for each of the five major groups in the university entrance examination:

Table 2.2: Major groups in the national university entrance examination

Exam groups	Subjects
A	Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry
A1	Mathematics, Physics, and English
B	Mathematics, Biology, and Chemistry
C	Literature, History, and Geography
D	Mathematics, Literature, and English

Initially, there were four main exam groups in the university entrance examination. Groups A and B were for students who chose natural sciences for their university majors while Groups C and D were for students opting for social sciences. In 2012, MoET (2012) introduced Group A1 to give students who specialised in English more choices of university majors. This additional group encouraged students who wished to study a natural science major to learn English instead of Chemistry.

This grouping strategy has resulted in high school students' tendency to focus on the subjects in their desired exam groups upon entering high school and, as a result, appear to overlook other subjects in the curriculum. However, given the high school graduation requirements in which English is a compulsory subject in the graduation examination (excluding the 2014 examination, see Table 2.1),

students have to maintain a certain level of English as well as commitment to this subject throughout their high school studies, especially in the final year. The negative impacts of students' more intensive focus on the subjects in their exam groups on their overall academic development and learning outcomes across subjects, especially in English, have been widely discussed in the mass media, school meetings, and ministerial consultations (Cuc, 2014; T. Hung, 2013; Trung, 2014). In response, MoET and education stakeholders across the country have been working towards more efficient solutions to the high school graduation and university entrance examination and further changes in the national testing system are expected in the near future.

2.2 English language education in rural Southern Vietnam

There are different parameters for distinguishing rural versus urban areas around the world, including population size, demographic density, land use, public infrastructure, and the extent of local industrial development (Isserman, 2005; Pateman, 2011; Stewart, 1958). In the context of Vietnam, an area defined as rural relies primarily on agricultural production and is characterised by local socioeconomic, cultural and natural features unique to that particular community (T. T. T. Dung, 2014). In accordance with this constitutional definition of ruralness, the Vietnam Ministry of Education (MoET, n.d.) issues guidelines for urban-rural area divisions in which students coming from rural areas are entitled to special privileges in the university entrance examination as acknowledgement of their limited educational resources (see 2.2.2 for further details).

2.2.1 Language learning facilities and resources

Vietnam is composed of three major geographical regions, namely the North, the Central region, and the South. Within the scope of the present study, only aspects related to language education in the South are presented based on particular sociocultural features compared to other regions. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has been upgrading rural infrastructure in an attempt to equalise educational attainment nationwide, mainly by providing funds for constructing

new schools or renovating the available infrastructure (Holsinger, 2005, 2009; London, 2011; World Bank, 2009). This, however, only helps to improve the facade of these schools, without further investment in the facilities, and rural schools still have a severe lack of dedicated equipment for specific subject areas, especially for English learning and teaching (Chinh, Linh, Quynh, & Ha, 2014). A school with up to forty classes may have only two or three CD players for English teachers to share among themselves. School libraries have very limited resources in English. Classrooms for language learning are the same as for other school subjects, with fixed seating, making it difficult to conduct communicative activities (see Image 2.1). Kam (2002) states that the shortage of English teaching materials and facilities in Vietnam, especially in remote and rural areas, is “a special challenge to the education authorities” (p. 14).



Image 2.1: English lessons taking place in the same classroom as for other subjects, with fixed seating

Unlike some schools in the North and Central regions where facilities and staff shortages may limit access to English language learning, all students in the South can learn English in their curriculum; this point is based on discussions in the mass media, personal communication, and observations. While urban students may have rich access to English learning resources outside the classroom, students in rural schools mainly rely on their teachers and English TV programmes. Foreign language centres in rural localities are rare, so are bookstores that sell English reference materials. As a result, English learners in rural areas are in dire need of learning resources and a communicative

environment for language practice beyond the school context (Chinh et al., 2014).

The limitations in facilities, language resources and social support for language learning are a major threat to the teaching and learning quality in rural high schools. In Ngu's (2004) words, "rural areas are seen to be receiving an inferior quality of educational service, and hence a lower overall academic attainment in the population compared with that in the urban areas" (p. 227). The disadvantageous conditions pose a real challenge to students in rural areas in their language learning.

2.2.2 Students' language learning attitudes

To compensate somewhat for the challenges that students in rural areas face, they are eligible for 0.5 to 1.5 bonus marks in the university entrance examination (MoET, 2012). This aims to encourage these students to proceed to higher education and narrow the literacy gap between rural and urban areas. The policy applies to all fields of study rather than only foreign languages.

Despite the paucity of formal research on the language learning attitudes of Vietnamese students in rural areas, their resignation and even resistance to learning English at school is well-documented in the local mass media. The absence of communicative environments for using English, the teaching approaches, and, most importantly, students' fear of not being able to compete with peers from urban centres in the university entrance examination are the primary factors that undermine their desire to learn languages (based on personal communication and analysis of feedback in local newspapers). Instead, they choose to specialise in natural science subjects which may give them a higher chance to enter a good university.

In rural areas in Vietnam, parents tend to encourage their children to pursue high-profile occupations for a better economic future, such as in medical science, engineering, or finance, for their career (Lich & Thanh, 2015; H. Nam, 2011).

There have also been greater demands for jobs in these fields than in social sciences (Goodwin, O'Connor, & Quinn, 2009; World Bank, 2013). As a result, students' enrolments in these academic disciplines far outweigh the rest (see World Bank, 2008 for the statistics of enrolments by discipline). To be able to enter their desired university, students spend more time on the subjects in their preferred exam groups and less on English as well as other social science ones.

2.2.3 Teachers' professional development

MoET empowers provincial or municipal education departments across the country to organise training courses and workshops for local English teachers to ensure their equal access to professional development programmes. Within its 2020 Foreign Language Project (see MoET, 2008; 2014c for details), Ho Chi Minh University of Education, Can Tho University, and SEAMEO RETRAC³ were appointed as the primary institutions in Southern Vietnam for training language teachers following the criteria established by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (see Council of Europe, 2001 for details). The goal is to help all high school English teachers, both urban and rural, to achieve the C1 level in CEFR. Despite MoET's attempt to enhance the qualifications and teaching quality of teachers across Vietnam, the disparities between teachers from rural and urban areas remain substantial (Hamano, 2008; Vang, 2003). In fact, schools in rural areas are usually understaffed and most teachers do not meet the national standards (Horn, 2014; London, 2011). A recent survey showed that nearly ninety percent of high school English teachers in most rural provinces in the South fell short of the required CEFR level (Huong & Giang, 2012). Improving the language competence of these teachers is a real challenge to local education stakeholders and the teachers themselves.

Other issues confronting English teachers in rural areas are the teaching facilities, workload, and students' low language level. Large classes, inflexible seating arrangements, and the lack of language teaching aids discourage teachers from

³ Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Training Centre

applying the methodological innovations they encounter in professional development workshops (Canh & Barnard, 2009; Hiep, 2001; Kam, 2002; Lewis & McCook, 2002). In addition to long class hours, English teachers have to assume various administrative tasks such as preparing students' academic reports and meeting parents (Shankar, 2010; Tuoi Tre News, 2014). Also, because most students in rural areas do not perform well in English, teachers have to spend a good deal of class time helping them to revise basic knowledge in English and concurrently cover the new lessons in the high school curriculum. The time and attention spent on ensuring that low-achieving students can meet schools' achievement targets may leave teachers little energy to cater for students who do have an interest in learning English or intend to pursue it as a major in their future studies at university.

2.2.4 Parental involvement

A majority of households in rural Southern Vietnam work in the agricultural sector (World Bank, 2011). Most parents do manual work and are employed on an occasional basis. Family incomes are unstable due to the nature of their jobs, resulting in their inability to afford good study conditions for their children. According to Holsinger (2009), household educational expenditure per high school student in rural areas is only half the amount spent by urban parents. Although the tuition fees of public schools in Vietnam are relatively small, they may still be a financial burden to some parents in rural districts (World Bank, 2005, 2009). In some cases, students are required to terminate their schooling to assist their parents by earning money, partly accounting for the dramatic differences in dropout rate between rural and urban schools (see Quyen, 2011 for detailed statistics). Due to their financial constraints, most students in rural areas have to rely on public education and their own efforts in their study. However, some better-off parents may send their children to private classes for extra academic support, which has become an emerging trend in rural areas in Vietnam (World Bank, 2013) (see 2.4 for details).

According to World Bank (2013) and the mass media in Vietnam, a high proportion of parents in rural areas have very low literacy levels, making it hard for them to provide their children with academic support. Some pre-literate parents may not be aware of their children's needs, especially in regard to language learning, to give them appropriate support and counselling. For other parents, the life difficulties arising out of their low literacy may become the main impetus for their enthusiastic involvement in their children's studies. Their general expectation seems to be that their children can have a better future than their own through higher education.

2.3 The rural high school in the present study

2.3.1 The school background



Image 2.2: A snapshot of a school corner before class hours

Vision High is located in a rural district, about 30 kilometres from the centre of a coastal province in Southeast Vietnam. It was established in 1988 and was the only high school in the area at that time. It has approximately fifty staff members and a thousand students. With the expanding population, economic development, and educational demands of the district and neighbouring rural areas, the school

was split into two in 2008. A number of its staff members were transferred to the new school to assume teaching and administrative positions. With its long-standing presence in the rural district and the province's geographical features as one of the three corners in the South's economic triangle, Vision High can be regarded as a typical high school in rural Southern Vietnam.

Vision High performs all the usual functions of a Vietnamese high school, namely training students from Years Ten to Twelve whose ages generally range from fifteen to seventeen. It strictly follows the national curriculum for general education under the supervision of the provincial education department and MoET. The school has two daily shifts from Monday to Saturday, with the morning shift focusing on the national curriculum and the afternoon shift aiming to provide students with revision and expansion of the textbook content in preparation for high school graduation and university entrance examinations. An average class has over forty students with one form teacher who supervises the class's academic and social activities. Table 2.3 below shows the class categorisation at the school based on students' academic standing (see 2.3.5 for the student placement criteria):

Table 2.3: Class categorisation at Vision High in 2013-2014

Years	Class categorisation (academic year 2013-2014)										
Ten	10A1	10A2	10A3	10A4	10A5	10A6	10A7	10A8	10A9		
Eleven	11A1	11A2	11A3	11A4	11A5	11A6	11A7	11A8	11A9	11A10	11A11
Twelve	12A1	12A2	12A3	12A4	12A5	12A6	12A7	12A8	12A9	12A10	12A11

Higher academic performance

Lower academic performance

The school comprises thirty-one classrooms, one computer lab, and one language lab. The language lab (see Image 2.3) is shared among all classes, meaning that the teachers need to book it well in advance; however, this does not guarantee its availability. There are three CD players, one of which is occasionally faulty, to be shared among the English language teaching staff. The school has a relatively

small library. From my observation, the local teachers and students rarely visit the library. Most of the books are outdated and covered in dust. The school depends on MoET funding and parents' donations for its facilities and activities.



Image 2.3: A rehearsal for an interschool English contest in the language lab

There is a whole-school assembly at seven every Monday morning which lasts forty-five minutes. This is the time for the principal and vice-principals to update the students on school academic progress and upcoming activities. The assembly is also an opportunity to announce a list of academically ill-performing or misbehaving students as a form of warning. Thursday afternoons are left available in the school timetable for extracurricular and other academic activities such as knowledge contests and extra training for top students who will represent the school in provincial and national competitions.

2.3.2 The English language teaching staff

The English language faculty of Vision High has six English teachers, with teaching experience ranging from two to eighteen years. They all obtained their qualifications in either Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

(TESOL) or Applied Linguistics at various tertiary institutions in Vietnam as shown in the following table:

Table 2.4: Profiles of the local English language teachers

Teachers	Age	Origins	Qualifications	Teaching experience
Mr. Trung	> 40	local	BA in TESOL	> 15 years
Ms. Huong	> 40	local	BA in TESOL	> 15 years
Ms. Kieu	35 - 40	non-local	BA in TESOL	7 years
Ms. Lan	35 - 40	non-local	BA in TESOL	6 years
Ms. Trang	25 - 30	local	BA in Applied Linguistics	4 years
Ms. Quynh	25 - 30	local	BA in Applied Linguistics	2 years

Each teacher teaches at least five classes, which accounts for the majority of their work time. Only teachers with more than five years of experience are eligible for working with Year Twelve. Outside teaching time, they prepare lesson plans which are evaluated by the head teacher, the school academic board, and the provincial education department. They are also required to do marking and assume the role of form teacher. Mr Trung, the head teacher of the English language faculty, and Ms Huong take turns to train the school's top students for provincial and national English contests.

For professional development, the local teachers conduct mandatory peer observations every semester. During the summer holiday, they are invited to training sessions offered by the provincial education department. At the time the present study was being conducted, the teachers were studying for the CEFR test to meet the national English requirements, which added another burden to their daily teaching concerns.

2.3.3 The English language programme

One academic year in Vietnam has two semesters, spanning from September to May. During each semester, students have to undertake at least three fifteen-

minute tests, two forty-five-minute tests, one mid-term examination, and one end-of-semester examination. The tests are designed by the local teachers for internal use whereas the examinations are designed by the provincial education department for use at all schools in the province. This policy of having the same examination questions across the province poses challenges for students in rural schools due to their lower English competence compared to that of their urban peers (ITHuong). The weekly timetable for English comprises three formal sessions of forty-five minutes in the morning shift and two extra sessions in the afternoon shift. The amount of time for English in the curriculum is higher than most school subjects, except for Mathematics and Literature.

Extracurricular activities for English at Vision High are rare because of the lack of funding. According to the head teacher Mr Trung, “organising something exciting for the students means each teacher having to spend their pocket money” (ITTrung). However, there have been a number of provincial and national English contests to encourage students to learn the language. Within the province, there is an annual written English examination for top students and recently online English tests have been made available for all language learners which, based on reports of teachers, go some way to meet the needs of avid students in particular. Each school delegates a group of three to five top students for the written examination. Those students who pass with the highest scores will represent the province in the national English contest. The online tests consist of thirty rounds of questions, focussing on grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening. Students undertake the first twenty-nine rounds at their own convenience. The top scorers are selected for the final round that takes place simultaneously across schools in the computer lab at their respective schools. Since 2012, the provincial education department has organised an English speaking contest with a view to improving students’ communicative competence and confidence. In preparation for these competitions, Vision High has established an “English team” of ten students who receive additional training from the English teachers.

2.3.4 English language teaching and learning at Vision High

The vice-principal at Vision High commented that the local students had much lower English levels than their peers at other suburban and urban schools. The school's annual academic reports (Figure 2.1 below) indicated that only about forty-five percent of the students in Years Ten and Eleven passed the end-of-semester examinations. They also showed that Year Twelve students performed slightly better perhaps because in their final year at high school they felt the need to work harder in preparation for the graduation examination. The vice-principal attributed these outcomes to the disadvantages of studying in rural schools and the students' low motivation, insisting that "such learning outcomes are rather alarming. Our teachers and students must do something to improve it. We are trying to change this situation but, as a school stakeholder, I am extremely concerned" (IVice-principal). It has been complained that having the same exam questions for students all over the province without considering the rural-urban disparities might also have contributed to their low achievement (ITHuong).



Figure 2.1: Percentages of students passing the end-of-semester English examinations over two academic years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013.

The Grammar-Translation method still dominates English classes at Vision High. Although the local teachers participate in annual methodological workshops facilitated by experienced TESOL teachers and professors, efforts to implement

the latest teaching methods at the school remain limited. Such a problem is not uncommon in Vietnam where there is a stark contrast between English language teaching theory and practice (Canh, 2002; Hiep, 2000, 2001).

2.3.5 Placement of students at Vision High

The class categorisation at Vision High is based on students' academic performance. Each year group has two top classes (A1 as the first top class and A2 as the second top, see Table 2.3) which receive special privileges such as experienced teaching staff and a tailored curriculum designed to provide the students with advanced knowledge in the main subjects. Students in these top classes are usually selected to participate in provincial and national contests. They also have the highest rate of success in the university entrance examination. These are the incentives for the students to compete among themselves to gain a place in the top classes and class members change on a yearly basis depending on their academic standing.

Year Ten students must undertake a placement test in Mathematics and Literature upon entering Vision High. The students are placed in classes according to the test results, with A1 for top scorers and A9 for bottom ones. Students in Year Eleven and Year Twelve are classified based on their overall academic performance in the previous year. The students retain the right to remain in their present class if they wish not to be transferred to the top classes.

2.4 Local private tuition

Private tuition is considered the “shadow education” that complements formal schooling (Bray, 2013). Sending children to private tuition is an emerging but rapidly growing phenomenon in rural areas of Vietnam (D. H. Anh, 2013; World Bank, 2013). In the rural district in the present study, where the majority of parents are financially challenged, affording private tuition for their children poses a real problem for family budgets. Private tuition fees may account for a considerable proportion of the family income. The impetus behind sending

children to private tuition arises from the harsh competition for academic achievement at school and, in some cases, also reflects parents' frustration with the quality of mainstream education. Parents fear that their children may fall behind their peers and consequently develop a sense of inferiority or miss out on life opportunities (D. H. Anh, 2013). Private tuition provides students with opportunities to reuse and expand knowledge from formal classes and further learning experiences (D. H. Anh & Rogers, 2008; Bray & Silova, 2006; Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009). Due to situational constraints in rural areas in Vietnam, formal education may fail to cater for students' individual needs; as a result, students, particularly those who want to gain more advanced knowledge in a particular subject, have to seek more support from private teachers (D. H. Anh, 2013; Dawson, 2010). Some disadvantages of taking private tuition entail the possibility of teachers abusing it for their financial advantage, higher family expenses, and students' increased workload (D. H. Anh, 2011, 2013; Gurun & Millimet, 2008).

Private tuition in Vietnam, especially for language learning, takes many forms, including home tuition, classes at cram schools, classes at teachers' homes, and language courses at foreign language centres (D. H. Anh, 2011). The last two options are more popular among the students at Vision High.

2.4.1 Private classes at teachers' homes

In an attempt to reduce the above downsides of private tuition in Vietnam, MoET (2007) requires all teachers who organise private classes to obtain approval from the school where they work or the local department of education. The application includes the teaching plan and consent letters from parents whose children attend the private class. This enables schools and local education stakeholders to monitor private teaching activities in their areas in terms of tuition fees and teaching content.

With this form of private tuition, students can choose any teacher from within or outside their own school. The meeting time, group size, and teaching focuses are

also at the students' discretion. The class can take place in an area of the teachers' home that is able to accommodate the number of students, for instance, the living room, the kitchen, or the house extension. The lesson content usually complements the formal curriculum with additional practice. Private teachers have more time to help individual students with their difficulties. Students can take private classes all year long, especially during their summer holiday to learn the programme of their coming academic year in advance.

2.4.2 English courses at foreign language centres

While foreign language centres have thrived in urban areas (Thin, 2006), there are very few in the local rural district. Some better-off parents have to take their children to a city centre which is approximately twenty kilometres away for English courses. The tuition fee for these courses can be ten times more than a private teacher's fee and is far beyond the income of most local parents. There are different courses offered at foreign language centres, including General English classes that integrate the four language skills or Communicative classes that primarily focus on listening and speaking. The main attraction of these courses is the opportunity for students to work with foreign teachers from English-speaking countries. The facilities, class size, and teacher support available to students within language centres generally far exceed those at schools or private teachers' homes.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has described the ongoing changes taking place within the educational testing system in Vietnam. Resulting policy shifts have had dramatic influences on ELT nationwide and on the attitudes of teachers and students towards the teaching and learning of English. A snapshot of English language education in rural high schools in Southern Vietnam has also been provided. Due to the constraints in terms of facilities, resources, and their ultimate choice of university majors, most students in rural areas tend to overlook English as a school subject. This general picture has been substantiated with evidence from

English teaching and learning activities within Vision High. The school profile and ethos contribute to accounting for the participants' learning approaches and the motivation behind their English language studies. The emergence of private tuition in rural areas has also been discussed in relation to parental investment in their children's education and their perspectives on the value of learning English.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The advent of new constructs and theories in the well-established field of language learning motivation has necessitated reconceptualising it in a more situated and dynamic manner. Spearheaded by the well-known psychologist Robert Gardner with his frequently cited notion of integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985), research on L2 motivation has made impressive strides. Different models drawing on theories in education, psychology, and sociology have been introduced to attempt to better explain the complex, dynamic issues of language learning motivation (see Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011 for a detailed overview). L2 motivation has been gradually reformulated not as a unitary internal psychological construct affected by individual differences, personality, and other affects, but rather a synergy of internal and external factors pertaining to learners' specific language learning situations and contexts (Dörnyei, 2005; Nakata, 2006; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009; Volet, 2001a).

This chapter reviews recent developments in L2 motivation research with a focus on the person-context interface. It starts with an overview of socio-dynamic approaches that situate motivation in sociocultural contexts and account for its temporal and dynamic nature. Subsequently, Ushioda's (2009) person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation is discussed as the overarching theoretical framework for the present study. The next section outlines some concepts and constructs which offer more specific theoretical insights into L2 motivation. The final section examines aspects of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological systems theory that function as analytical tools for exploring L2 motivation within and across multiple settings and relationships.

3.1 Socio-dynamic approaches to language learning motivation

The widespread function of English as a lingua franca has made English proficiency one of the "global literacy skills" (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 1) and

loosened its connection with particular cultures or communities (Kennedy, 2010; Kirkpatrick & Deterding, 2011; McKay, 2012; Ushioda, 2012a, 2013b). These changes challenge earlier theories of language learning motivation which predominantly highlight learners' integrativeness and attitudes towards the target language speakers and their culture (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Also, language learning takes place across a variety of social activities and settings rather than in a vacuum; thus, process-oriented models which underscore causal relationships with beginning and ending states do not provide a situated account of the complexities and fluctuations of L2 motivation within and across learners' diverse learning settings and activities (Dörnyei, 2005). In relation to this, Dörnyei (2009c) adds that "such a patchwork of interwoven cause-effect relationships would not do the complexity of the system justice and therefore a more radical change was needed" (p. 210). Accordingly, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) propose reframing language learning motivation research from a more situated and temporal perspective in the so-called "socio-dynamic" phase (p. 72).

3.1.1 The "social turn" in language learning motivation research

The special attention to context and social relationships within the field of language learning motivation aligns with the "social turn" in second language acquisition (Breen, 1985; Jarvela, 2001; Ortega, 2011; Turner, 2001; Volet, 2001a). Block (2003) subscribes to a "broader, socially informed" view that "takes on board the complexity of context" in second language acquisition research generally and motivation research specifically (p. 4). Context and interpersonal relations have great salience in explicating the concept of motivation (Lamb, 2004a). Likewise, Ushioda (2012c) comments that "current research perspectives on L2 motivation have become even more strongly socio-contextually grounded" (p. 60). This trend is laudable because "nothing is 'decontextualised' despite efforts to make it so" (Turner, 2001, p. 85). One of the challenges confronting researchers is formulating a convergent set of theories that best examines motivation in relation to the social environment. Jarvela (2001) notes that "while the role of contexts in shaping students' cognitions is

becoming well integrated in the educational psychology literature, the construction of motivation in learning context still lacks a coherent theoretical foundation” (p. 4). This supports Jarvela and Niemivirta’s (2001) call for theoretical and empirical developments of contextualised motivation in order for this field of study to “truly advance” (p. 124).

The mounting importance of social parameters has been marked by a number of recent theoretical reconceptualisations of language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b, 2005, 2009a, 2012; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gao, 2012; Kim, 2005, 2006; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Ushioda, 2003, 2009, 2012b, 2012d; Williams & Burden, 1997). These works interpret the social nature of motivation from different theoretical perspectives, including but not limited to both sociocultural and social constructivist paradigms. The interdependence between the learner and the environment responds to a common concern as to “whether any knowledge (or motivation) is either individually or socially constructed” (Turner, 2001, p. 87). From socially grounded perspectives, most research tends to investigate teacher-student or peer interactions within the school context or classroom practice contributing to learners’ motivational changes. There is a paucity of studies that examine motivation in both the school and other informal learning contexts such as home and private tuition. In other words, inquiry into language learning motivation within and across settings and relationships remains an important yet underexplored research avenue.

3.1.2 The temporal and dynamic dimensions of motivation

There has been a growing interest in the complex, dynamic nature of motivation in second and foreign language learning. A significant body of research has been conducted within a dynamic framework (Bodnar, Cucchiarini, Strik, & Hout, 2014; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015; Kim, 2009; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Pawlak, 2012; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2015; Waninge, Dörnyei, & de Bot, 2014). This renewed research focus mainly adopts dynamic systems theory that investigates language learning and acquisition as

complex, dynamic, and nonlinear systems (de Bot, 2008; N. C. Ellis, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2002, 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Ellis, 2006; van Geert, 2008). One strength of this approach is avoiding reductionist practice that rests on a cause-effect relationship because “language, language acquisition, and language attrition are much more intricate, complex, and even unpredictable than a linear position would allow” (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007, p. 7). Linking this issue to language learning motivation, Ryan (2006) states that “individuals and their motivation are not fixed; motivation changes over time and in response to interactions with others and the target language” (p. 35). Such changes are the result of the mutually shaping and evolving relationships between the learner and social contexts. Also, there is a rising need to elicit data at different timescales to substantiate learners’ motivational fluctuations over time, a combination of which could form a fuller picture of language learning motivation (de Bot, 2015).

Adopting a complex, dynamic systems framework, Waninge et al. (2014) conducted a micro inspection of classroom motivation. They selected four out of twenty-eight Dutch students, aged between eleven and twelve, learning Spanish and German as compulsory foreign languages in their secondary education programme. The research instruments included researchers’ in-class observations and questionnaires which were sent out to the students after the researchers had made all the six observations. The data collection lasted two weeks, with a total of six observations of forty to fifty minutes each in both language classes. The results indicated that language learning motivation was subject to variation even within very short periods of time during the researchers’ classroom observations. However, a rather stable motivational pattern could also be identified within the span of two weeks. The students’ motivational changes tended to correspond with certain situational and contextual influences but this was not always true.

In a similar project, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) explored the degree of fluctuation in approach-avoidance motivation second by second during L2 communication tasks in one laboratory class session. Participants in the research were twelve undergraduate students, aged from nineteen to twenty-two, taking

French classes in a Canadian university. Questionnaires, interviews, and recorded videos of the participants' responses during communicative tasks were utilised. The findings showed a great deal of motivational variation among some students and stability among others. The students attributed their changes to the lexical and grammatical demands of different communicative tasks. However, few respondents displayed long-term language learning motivation, chiefly because of the timescale constraints of this study.

Therefore, a major limitation of these studies as well as most research on language learning motivation using dynamic systems theory is the relatively short duration of data collection. In addition, the classroom remains the primary research setting. An extended period of time is required to obtain language learners' motivational shifts in different situations and contexts, and their overall motivational trajectories. In other words, a longitudinal research design would enable researchers to better follow learners' motivational changes over time.

Bringing the social and dynamic strands together, Lamb (2007) maintains that "for theoretical purposes, there is a need to investigate further the subtle ways in which motivation evolves, the aspects which are permeable and those which are not, and its complex interrelationship with contextual factors" (p. 760). In sum, examining language learning motivation from a holistic perspective should take into consideration both the social and temporal aspects. Contexts in which social relations are established function as a major constituent leading to language learners' motivational fluctuations over time. Understanding individual learners' motivational constructions across time and space could contribute to explaining the reasons behind their cognitive, affective and idiosyncratic evaluation, or appraisal (see 3.3.2), of the values, resources, support and other salient contextual elements along their learning trajectories. In relation to this, Beltman and Volet's (2007) model of a learner's trajectory of sustained motivation (Figure 3.1) represents the process underpinning their appraisals of salient contextual and personal aspects leading to decisions as to continue or withdraw from their present studies.

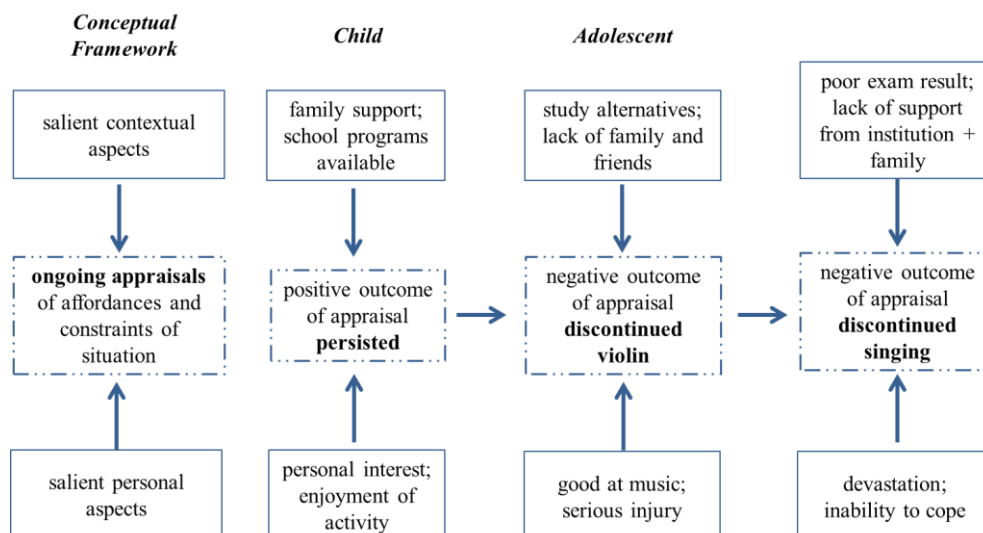


Figure 3.1: Part of Beltman and Volet's (2007) model of a case study participant's trajectory of sustained motivation

3.2 Person-in-context relational view of motivation

The critical roles of context in language learning motivation have been examined more explicitly in recent research. Each learner learns languages in specific ways, depending on his/her sociocultural and historical background, social relationships, and how he/she interacts with these elements. Ushioda (2015) notices a “dynamically involving relationship between learner and context, as each responds and adapts to the other” (p. 47). This relationship is far from unidirectional and is constantly being co-constructed by both the learner and the language learning context, and elements within that context. The person-in-context view stemmed from cognitive-situative epistemological positions in educational psychology (Beltman & Volet, 2007; Pintrich, 2000; Volet, 2001a, 2001b) which underscore sociocultural dimensions encompassing learners' motivation. Addressing “the need to more fully account for the complexities of learners as social beings” (S. Ryan, 2006, p. 35), Ushioda (2009) applied this person-context interface to language learning research in her attempt to explicate the learner's personal construction of motivation in a complex system of social and contextual relationships. The person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation revolves around three major aspects: the learner as a real *person*, the

context in which learning is situated, and the issue of *relational* as opposed to linear approaches to language learning motivation.

3.2.1 The language learner as a person

In traditional motivation research, learners were referred to as a more or less homogenous group, suggesting that they all shared certain characteristics. The common practice was classifying learners into specific types such as low versus high motivated students. One limitation of this universal categorisation was isolating learners from their learning context, thus restricting the ability to account for their different degrees of motivation, the different ways in which learners learn languages, and the reasons for these discrepancies. There has been corroborating evidence against such depersonalised generalisation (Busse & Williams, 2010; Dörnyei, 2009a; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Mercer, 2011a; S. Ryan & Dörnyei, 2013; Sung, 2014; Ushioda, 2009, 2011b, 2012b). Dufva and Aro (2014) argue that “learners are persons, embodied beings with their own experiences and feelings that are also irrevocably interrelated with their environment and the Others therein” (pp. 49-50). Conceiving of language learners as real people rather than idealised abstractions attends to “the unique individuality, agency, intentionality and reflective capacity of human beings as they engage in the process of language learning” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 76). In the same vein, Tudor (2001) notes that learners are not “bundles of discrete variables. They are complex human beings who bring with them to the classroom their own individual personality as it is in a given point in time” (p. 14). This focus on the distinct features of each learner is shaped by a sociocultural perspective which emphasises learners’ agency and active engagement in “constructing the terms and conditions of their learning” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 145). In other words, learners are presented as thinking and feeling beings with unique sociocultural, historical backgrounds and identities.

Dismissing the view of language learners as theoretical abstractions, recent motivation studies have attempted to integrate learners’ idiosyncrasies into their

research agenda. Lamb (2011) took a more situated approach in analysing sociocultural elements impacting on individual learners' development of motivation and autonomy in their EFL learning trajectories. His research was carried out with young Indonesian students at various points in time, mainly using questionnaire surveys and interviews. The initial study, based on questionnaire responses and teachers' comments, was conducted when the participants were around eleven to fourteen years old. The second wave of data collection took place several years later. He held customised interviews with twelve focal group members who were seventeen to eighteen then. Lamb (2011) found that "while each individual's learning trajectory was unique, distinct patterns emerged" (p. 181). The findings pointed to the fact that learners' English learning motivation varied from case to case, depending on their activities outside the classroom, degrees of persistence, future visions, and family backgrounds. Despite the researcher's efforts to elaborate on different aspects of language learning that affected the students' motivational trajectories, his focus was more on their future self-guides than other personal and contextual elements. The data collection mainly relied on the participants' self-reporting and thus solely reflected their points of view without much observational validation from the researcher.

Similarly, Tanaka (2013) described the interplay between language learning motivation, self, and context among four female Japanese students taking a two-year academic English course as part of their university programme. The researcher worked with them over a period of eighteen months, utilising different data collection methods such as observations across different contexts, interviews, email exchanges, informal conversations, and group discussions. The findings suggested that the students derived different meanings from their early international experiences and how these influenced their language learning motivation. Also, they aspired to different goals and future paths and had various interpersonal needs, despite their similar educational backgrounds, contextual factors, and language proficiency. Given the extensive accounts of how learners' motivation shaped and was shaped by contextual elements, the research setting

primarily revolved around the classroom and the university where their English language studies were situated. Motivational dimensions emerging from other contexts were not adequately addressed in this project.

Also predicated on the view of language learners as people, Mystkowska's (2014) study explored factors contributing to their development of a positive mindset that would promote language learning. This project adopted a qualitative design based solely on the interviews with four female Polish students in their third year for a BA in English teaching. The findings showed that each student had diverse interpretations of their language learning although they had similar ages, university courses, and general backgrounds. Not all of them initially had a passion for learning English. Their choice to pursue language studies originated from their self-efficacy, career plans, experience with language use, and personal interests. This research has a strong theoretical foundation but its reliance on interview data alone diminished its content validity.

These studies were recent attempts to explore language learning motivation from a more idiosyncratic perspective. Despite their extensive focus on learners' individuality, there are certain shortcomings in terms of research settings and methodology. Most of them have not moved beyond the confines of the classroom setting. Individual students' approaches to language learning in other informal contexts outside the school remain in the shadows of discussion. Also, the absence of a combination of data collection methods has not enhanced the validity of the findings.

3.2.2 Person-in-context/situation views

Within Ushioda's (2009) framework, language learning motivation is examined in "the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro and macro contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of" (p. 220). She notes that most previous research tended to assign context with an implicit role in shaping learners' motivation. In the social-educational model of second language learning (Gardner, 1988), elements in the

social milieu were briefly commented on in relation to learners' cultural beliefs and development of language learning attitudes and motivation. As motivation research detached itself from socio-educational influences and moved towards a period that Dörnyei (2005, p. 66) called "cognitive-situated", more attention was paid to the learning contexts. Certain contextual elements were integrated into the research agenda (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997) despite receiving only a minor proportion of discussion. In more recent research that claims to take a "situated" approach (see McGroarty, 2001 for a review), the tendency has still been to specify the impacts of contexts on language learning motivation rather than uncover the mutually constitutive relationships between the person and social context. Ushioda (2009) concludes:

Context has always been ascribed an implicit and now increasingly explicit role in the study of language motivation, and contextual factors are usually integrated into the major theoretical models. However, as I shall argue, when incorporated into these models, context is generally defined as an independent background variable which is theorised to influence motivation, but over which learners have no control. (p. 216)

Learners as real people are situated in particular cultural and historical contexts which, in turn, exert certain impacts on their self and identity. Palfreyman (2006) notes that context should not be treated as "a mere backdrop for a pre-existing individual learner, and [. . .] referred to only in so far as it is necessary to explain variation in individual performance" (p. 353). Context should not be regarded as a static and independent variable but rather an embedded element that interacts with the learner in the language learning process. However, considering language learning motivation from a person-in-context perspective remains insufficient to holistically capture the complex, dynamic, and evolving relationships between the person and the settings. According to Leather and van Dam (2002), "the context of language activity is socially constructed and often dynamically negotiated on a moment-by-moment basis" (p. 13). This means that better understandings of learners' motivational changes can be gained by expanding the unit of analysis to situational changes occurring between the individual and the

social context. Boekaerts (1993) states that “learner's appraisals of learning situations, taking into account contextual, social, and emotional factors, are quintessential to understand and explain behaviour in various learning situations” (p. 150). In her recent work, Ushioda (2012d) thus proposes a person-in-situation approach that aims to provide situational insights into learners’ motivational dynamics. Her theoretical revision arises out of the growing significance of sociocultural factors to language learning within and across both micro and macro contexts.

Ushioda’s person-in-situation/context views align with contemporary research trends in applied linguistics that reject “a variables-based approach to the explanation of social phenomena” and uphold “a relational, emergent perspective” (Sealey & Carter, 2004, p. 209). Relational views stand in stark contrast with the linear model that used to dominate the field of language motivation research.

3.2.3 Relational approaches to motivation research

Past research on language learning motivation was primarily driven by the search for factors that motivated or demotivated learners (see Crookes & Schmidt, 1991 for an overview). This cause-effect pattern aimed to identify learner types and generalisable motivational behaviours against certain language learning settings to formulate relevant pedagogical interventions (Ushioda, 2009, 2011b). Such research linearity originated from the fact that “the human mind has evolved to view the world in terms of singular causes and single chains of causality” (Schumann, 2015, p. xviii). This perspective only presented a segment of language learning motivation by focusing on a small number of variables that were believed to be strongly influential. Thus, a linear approach failed to account for the multiplicity of internal, external, situational, temporal dimensions of motivation. Its lack of sensitivity to the complexity and dynamics of language learning motivation in real-life situations was another weakness (Dörnyei et al., 2015). It could thus be concluded that a linear model of motivation

conceptualised learners in an idealised abstract sense and context as a separate background variable that might influence motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, each learner is characterised by numerous idiosyncratic elements and complex social relationships, all of which leave certain footprints on his/her construction of motivation. Ushioda (2009) argues:

It is people, not their componentised subpersonal parts, who are orchestrating course [sic] of action in the unique and complex system of social relations they inhabit and are inherently part of. Linear models of motivation which reduce learning behaviour to general commonalities cannot do justice to the idiosyncrasies of personal meaning-making in social context. (p. 219)

Since each person and the context in which learning is situated are unique, the relations between the two are also unique. Lamb (2013a) states that “the context is viewed not as a ‘container’ for the acquisition process but as a complex ecosystem in which human beings are agents in constant dynamic interplay with each other” (p. 33). A relational approach sees the learner and context as shaping each other because “learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world. This world is socially constituted” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 51). Its main concern is the complex interactions between the individual and diverse contexts rather than a mere focus on personal elements. Language learning motivation thus emerges from an intricate and evolving network of relationships and interactions. Motivation as a situated construct challenges traditional research that attempted to quantify it and justifies the increasing popularity of the qualitative paradigm in this field.

To conclude, the person-in-context relational view offers a holistic approach to examining language learning motivation. It focuses on a complex, dynamic, and nonlinear system of relations between multiple learning contexts and the learner as a real person with unique histories, identities, agency, and goals. Ushioda’s contextualisation of the language learner encompasses the emphasis of the

present inquiry which explores the idiosyncrasies of individual Vietnamese EFL students' motivation within and across settings and relationships. Within this theoretical framework, personal and contextual elements contributing to learners' motivational trajectories are considered in their mutually constitutive relations. This is highly relevant for understanding how learners construct their language learning motivation against complex relationships within their social milieu.

Ushioda's person-in-context relational view, despite its encompassing value in weaving the person and contexts together, seems to provide a general theoretical guideline rather than specific theoretical and analytical tools for exploring the various dimensions of language learning motivation. Ushioda (2009) admits the necessity of adopting "theoretical and analytical frameworks which may usefully inform a more contextually embedded relation view of motivation" (p. 220). In relation to this, section 3.3 will shed light on a number of concepts and constructs associated with L2 motivation that support the person-in-context relational view. Then, section 3.4 will elaborate on L2 motivation from an ecological perspective, focussing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as an analytical tool for examining learners' motivational constructions within and across settings and relationships, and the synergistic effects of ecological elements on such processes. This approach responds to Ushioda's (2009) concern for finding a more in-depth analytical lens to explore the socially embedded and complex nature of L2 motivation by highlighting the sociocultural elements and social relationships that contribute to shaping and reshaping learners' motivation in multiple settings and the interplay among them.

3.3 Dimensions in language learning motivation

3.3.1 Significant others

Research in language education has documented the different roles of significant others. Teachers and peers are usually addressed as the most common significant others that shape students' attitudes (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Girard, 1977; Guilloteaux, 2007; Kaboody, 2013; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Noels, 2001; Noels,

Clément, & Pelletier, 1999). The contribution of parents, siblings, extended family members, near peers, and social others in the community to learners' language development, school performance, and motivation are receiving more attention in this field (Gao, 2012; Lamb, 2013b; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011; Panferov, 2010; Williams & Burden, 1997). Shoaib and Dörnyei (2005) regard relationships with significant others as one of the six “motivational transformation episodes⁴” (p. 31). Depending on the degree of intimacy, contact time with learners, and social backgrounds, significant others are salient social resources for their cognitive as well as affective development.

In Lamb's (2009, 2012, 2013b) research with Indonesian students, he found that parents played an important role in children's language learning. Most typically, they provided their children with financial support and English learning materials. Some parents spent time practising English with their children. Parents and other family members are also discussed as English resources in other language learning contexts such as China and the United Arab Emirates (Gao, 2012; Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011). In addition, Lamb suggested that parents' educational concerns and expectations were important motivators for the students in his studies. Also, students' desire to make their parents proud of their success constituted part of their language learning motivation. In summation, family members, especially parents, can provide students with vital material and emotional affordances for language learning.

The motivating value of social others in the community such as near peers has been widely acknowledged in a variety of foreign language learning contexts (Murphey, 1998, 2002; Murphey & Arao, 2001; Murphey, Jin, & Li-Chi, 2004). Near peers are defined as “peers who are close to the learners' social, professional and/or age level, and whom the learners may respect and admire” (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004, p. 128). These researchers adopted what they called “near peer role modelling” in their language teaching in Japan and Taiwan. They

⁴ The other five motivational transformation episodes include maturation and gradually increasing interest, stand-still period, moving into a new life phase, internalising external goals and 'imported visions', and time spent in the host environment.

suggested that learners had no difficulty identifying themselves with near peers compared to the distant role models or native speakers who bore marked differences to them in terms of age, knowledge, social status, and ethnicity.

In brief, significant others provide students with different affordances for language learning and are also learning resources for them. The reviews above are just part of a body of research which presents the relationships between significant others and language learners, as either direct or indirect, and their impacts on language learning motivation. One important point Wentzel (1998) notes is that little research has integrated the perspectives from parents, teachers, and peers in a single study. Inquiry into language learning motivation that accounts for the motivational value of different significant others within and across settings and relationships remains limited. Consideration of their motivational affordances to language learners would be worthwhile for the theoretical conceptualisation of motivation.

3.3.2 Agency and resistance

Language learning is mediated by the learner's interactions with his/her social milieu and the relationships arising out of this process. As a result, learners' behaviour, attitudes, and motivation are shaped by sociocultural factors. Learners' agency has been largely discussed in relation to the socially mediated aspect of language learning. In Lantolf's (2013) words, "agency is understood as the human ability to act through mediation, with awareness of one's actions, and to understand their significance and relevance" (p. 19). His view was partially influenced by the anthropological conceptualisation of agency as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112). These definitions suggest that agency is contingent on both individual elements and the environment in which learning is situated. In the same vein, van Lier (2010) points out:

The employment of agency depends on a learning conducive environment that allows and instigates a diversity of manifestations of agency at

different levels. Not all agency is cut of the same cloth. It can be more individual or more social, it can be more creative or more routine, it can be more serious or more playful, and so on and so forth. There must be room in a learning environment for a variety of expressions of agency to flourish. (p. 5)

Learning in general and language learning in particular are processes that require learners to constantly exercise their agency. Human agency is essential for successful language studies (Lamb, 2004b). Also, language learning motivation is viewed as a component of agency (Lamb, 2013b; van Lier, 2007). Subscribing to these views, Mercer (2011b, 2012a) worked with an Austrian female student learning English as her university major and Italian as her minor, to become a teacher. The data was generated from twenty-one informal interviews conducted over a period of two years. In addition to highlighting the temporal, contextualised, and interpersonal dimensions of agency, the findings indicated the guiding function of motivation in the participant's agency that prompted her to take a certain path of action. In this sense, learners' agency is closely aligned with the construct of appraisal that is related to decisions either to persist in or discontinue current learning activities (Beltman & Volet, 2007). Appraisal has been found to have a strong link with learners' affective and idiosyncratic evaluations of values and elements significant to their own learning contexts and situations (Boekaerts, 1993; Gabryś-Barker, 2011).

Another notion closely related to agency is *resistance*. It is usually considered "oppositional agency" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 115) or refusal to engage in "expected, privileged ways" in particular target practices or communities (Duff & Doherty, 2014, p. 61). Resistance may be associated with learners' lack of motivation to learn languages; thus, they decide not to participate in certain learning or interactive activities. In his study with university students in Hong Kong, Holliday (2005) found that they developed resistance to teachers' approaches and classroom activities for various affective reasons. Students may develop certain oppositional behaviour such as not taking study materials to class and talking with friends instead of doing classroom tasks to resist school expectations and

classroom practice (Talmy, 2008). The value of weaving resistance in the motivation stream is to shed light on the different ways students react to their language learning.

3.3.3 The L2 Motivational Self System

Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System draws on integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985), investment and imagined communities (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995), language learners' motivational orientations (Noels, 2003), and language learners' motivational thinking (Ushioda, 2001). The system "represents a major reformation of previous motivational thinking by its explicit utilisation of psychological theories of the self" (Dörnyei, 2009b, p. 9). It consists of three components as follows:

Ideal L2 self, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the '*ideal L2 self*' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.

Ought-to L2 self, which concerns the attributes that one believes one *ought* to possess to meet expectations and to *avoid* possible negative outcomes.

L2 learning experience, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). (Dörnyei, 2009b, p. 29)

The constructs of ideal and ought-to L2 selves originate from two psychological strands: possible selves and future self-guides. Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves as "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (p. 95). Possible selves are powerful mechanisms in motivating learners, potentially improving their academic performance, and enabling them to achieve their goals (Hock, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2006; Strahan & Wilson, 2006). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) see possible selves as "a dynamic, forward-pointing conception that can explain how someone is moved from the present towards the future" (p. 80).

Regarding future-self guides, ideal and ought-to selves can be viewed as adapted versions of Higgins' self-regulation with a promotion focus and self-regulation with a prevention focus (Higgins, 1987, 1997, 1998, 2001). This self-discrepancy theory distinguishes the promotion focus from the prevention focus based on their nurturance-related and security-related regulations respectively (Higgins, 2001). The promotion focus involves a concern with advancement, aspirations, and accomplishment whereas the prevention one takes protection, safety and responsibility into consideration (Dörnyei, 2005). Accordingly, the ideal self refers to the attributes that a learner wishes to possess; meanwhile, the ought-to self represents the attributes that one is supposed to possess, namely duties, obligations, and moral responsibilities (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009b). In other words, the ought-to L2 self refers to a less internalised aspect of language learning motivation because it has less connection with an individual's volitions, desires, or wishes.

The third dimension in the L2 Motivational Self System involves language learning experience. Learners' experience is swayed by a constellation of factors including the immediate learning environment (e.g. curriculum, school ethos, and local education policies), experience of success or failure, and significant others (peers, parents and siblings). Nakata (2006) argues that learning experience has critical importance in the development of learners' beliefs and motivation. Likewise, Ushioda (2001) affirms the connection between learners' beliefs cultivated from language learning experiences and their subsequent efforts.

Dörnyei's tripartite model covers different aspects of language learning motivation, one of which is the cultural variations in learners' constructions of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. Also, in conjunction with sociocultural factors, learners' language learning experience shapes the way they see themselves and what they can do with languages in the future. These future prospects, or visions, can be an incentive for language learning.

3.3.4 Language learning vision

The rise of English as a language for international communication has transformed learners' views. Learners study English not only because of their language interest but also because of the vision associated with their language learning and uses. Research using visions to generate and sustain language learning motivation has gained some prominence (Al-Shehri, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Gao, 2013). Vision is seen as “the mental representation of the sensory experience of a future goal state (involving imagination and imagery)” (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 357). This definition suggests a close connection between vision and imagery. According to Arnold, Puchta, and Rinvulcri (2007), “our images can take us where we want to go” (p. 14). Learners with clear future self-images are likely to see the direction they should take for effective and successful learning. This has great significance for their motivation, as they can visualise their progress in terms of gradual attainment of their objectives and more distant goals. Dörnyei (2014a) states that vision “represents one of the highest-order motivational forces, one that is particularly fitting to explain the long-term, and often lifelong, process of mastering a second language” (p. 11).

Recent studies have shown that strengthening learners' vision of their ideal L2 self helps to enhance their language learning motivation and linguistic self-confidence (Magid & Chan, 2012). It is important to attend to individual elements in creating and promoting learners' self-images as personally relevant visions of a possible future self enable them to maintain a high level of motivation (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013). In addition, research has highlighted the motivational value of developing an ideal language self “which in turn is reflected in heightened motivated effort and behaviour” (Al-Shehri, 2009, p. 168). Such empirical evidence can be taken to confirm the extent to which visions help to energise language learning motivation. Indeed, motivation is pertinent to the way language learners set their goals, envisage their future self-images, and expend their effort to achieve them.

3.4 Ecological perspectives on language learning

3.4.1 Overview of ecological perspectives on language learning

Rooted in the field of biology, ecology is tentatively defined as “the study of the relationships among elements in an environment or ecosystem, in particular the interactions among such elements” (van Lier, 2010, p. 4). It looks into the complexity of the interactions between people and environmental elements. Transferred to second language learning, ecological perspectives explore the totality and multiple layers of the relationships between the language learner and his/her social environment, with language being the semiotic mediator between them (Kramsch, 2008; Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008; Pinnow, 2012; van Lier, 2004). They aim to provide a holistic description of language learning in relation to personal, situational, and sociocultural factors whose synergistic effects may either facilitate or hinder language development. Williams and Burden (1997) propound:

Learning never takes place in a vacuum . . . learning is the result of social interactions, it always occurs within a particular context . . . learning occurs within a variety of often overlapping contexts, some of which are more conducive to the process of cognitive, affective, moral and social development than others. (p. 188)

Three central aspects embedded in ecological theories that are relevant to the theoretical focus of the present study entail context, relations, and emergence (Given, 2008; van Lier, 2004, 2011). First, the context in which language learning is situated has a shaping function for learners’ cognitive development. Järvinen (2009) points out that “the ecological perspective views the (rich) context either as the source of learning or as a prominent resource of learning” (p. 167). Societal and cultural context provides language learners with numerous learning opportunities through their interactions with the social milieu and human artefacts such as the mass media. In other words, it offers a wealth of *affordances* (discussed in 3.4.2) that support the learning process. Second, relations are the central tenet of an ecological approach. The relationships

between language learners and the world permeate all aspects of their learning activities and practice. These relationships can be bi- or multidirectional since “a relationship between two elements can be effected by the relationship that one of these elements holds with yet another element” (Gurtner, Monnard, & Genoud, 2001, p. 189). The complex and dynamic relations between learners and the environment leads to the third constituent of ecological perspectives, i.e. emergence. Kramsch (2008) argues that “if we consider language learning and teaching as a complex system with *emergent properties*, we can no longer look for cause and effect in the simplistic linear fashion” (p. 392, emphasis added). Considering the complexity of learners’ interactions in diverse settings, linear causality models that pinpoint certain environmental variables as crucial to language learning do not seem plausible. In summary, the main focus of an ecological perspective is “to understand that which emerges from the moment rather than to analyse separately the different variables that underlie the moment” and “how language learning emerges in a particular context and with certain participants” (Thoms, 2014, p. 726).

3.4.2 The construct of affordance

The construct of affordance was coined by American psychologist James Gibson. In his words, “the *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill” (Gibson, 1986, p. 127, italics in the original). His definition is based on the premise of the reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its surrounding environment. Affordance relates to the perception of the organism in terms of what it does, what it needs, and what is useful to it (van Lier, 2000, 2004). Gibson’s (1986) view coheres with the majority of definitions proposed by other theorists in which affordances are “relations between particular aspects of animals and particular aspects of situations” (Chemero, 2003, p. 184).

Regarding second language learning, van Lier (2000) states that the environment provides rich opportunities and resources for “the active, participating learner”

(p. 253). Affordance is seen as a better alternative term for the notion of input because “what the learner takes from the input is not that much determined by its quality but by what the learner intends to take from it” (Lankiewicz, 2011, p. 237). This means that language is not a fixed code readily made for learners to absorb. Instead, learning a language is a process in which learners “construe and construct it” along the way (van Lier, 2004, p. 90). Such a theoretical substitution has significant implications in language teaching and learning.

Applying the construct of affordance in their research, Murray and Fujishima (2013) conducted an ethnographic investigation into social learning spaces for local and international students studying in Japan. The context for this project was the English Café at a university which provided a variety of resources for independent language practice. The data came from three sources: students’ written reports on their language learning history, interviews with students and the café administrator, and the researchers’ observations through their regular visits to the café during one year. This study showed that the English Café as a social learning space provided the students with opportunities for improving both English and Japanese, encouraged social networking and intercultural exchanges, and promoted autonomous learning. Similarly, Menezes (2011) explored affordances for English language learning beyond the classroom, drawing on corpus data on language learning histories of learners studying English in Brazil, Finland, and Japan. Her analyses suggested that English language affordances were ubiquitous in almost all settings, from the home (via cultural products such as books and movies) to the workplace and international travel. However, affordances were not necessarily available for use, even in English-speaking countries or English classes but emerged from language use through learners’ interactions with others in social practice. Menezes (2011) concluded that “learners must be empowered to perceive affordances [around them]” as “schools alone cannot gather all the necessary affordances for language development and we must open our students’ eyes to the world around them” (p. 71).

These studies, among others, indicate that affordances for language learning are present everywhere, from the school to the social world. One aspect that van Lier (2008) emphasises is:

While being active in the learning environment [,] the learner detects properties in the environment that provide opportunities for further action and hence for learning. Affordances are discovered through perceptual learning, and the effective use of affordances must also be learned. Perceiving and using affordances are the first steps on the road towards meaning making. (p. 598)

Affordances surround language learners but they have to take an active role in discovering and learning how to make appropriate use of them. What van Lier (2008) calls “meaning-making” implies the potential value associated with the use of affordances. The motivational properties of affordances have remained relatively unexplored, as have the ways they contributed to learners’ language development both inside and outside the classroom setting.

3.4.3 Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory highlights the patterning and interrelations among environmental elements embracing the person through his/her interactions with them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993). Everything in the physical and social environment is seen as interrelated and human development is examined in close connection with sociocultural and historical contexts. From Williams and Burden’s (1997) view, his theory takes into account the totality of environmental factors leading to human development with a special focus on their dynamic and interactive nature (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 190). The active role of the person is another vital element in ecological systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that “the developing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides” (p. 21). A person is part of the environment but concurrently actively responds to its influences and shapes it. The dynamic interplay between the

person and the environment is the foundation for development. Within this theory, the environment is characterised as a set of nested ecosystems, each of which has its own agents, cultural materials, patterns of operations, and linkages, as presented in Figure 3.2.

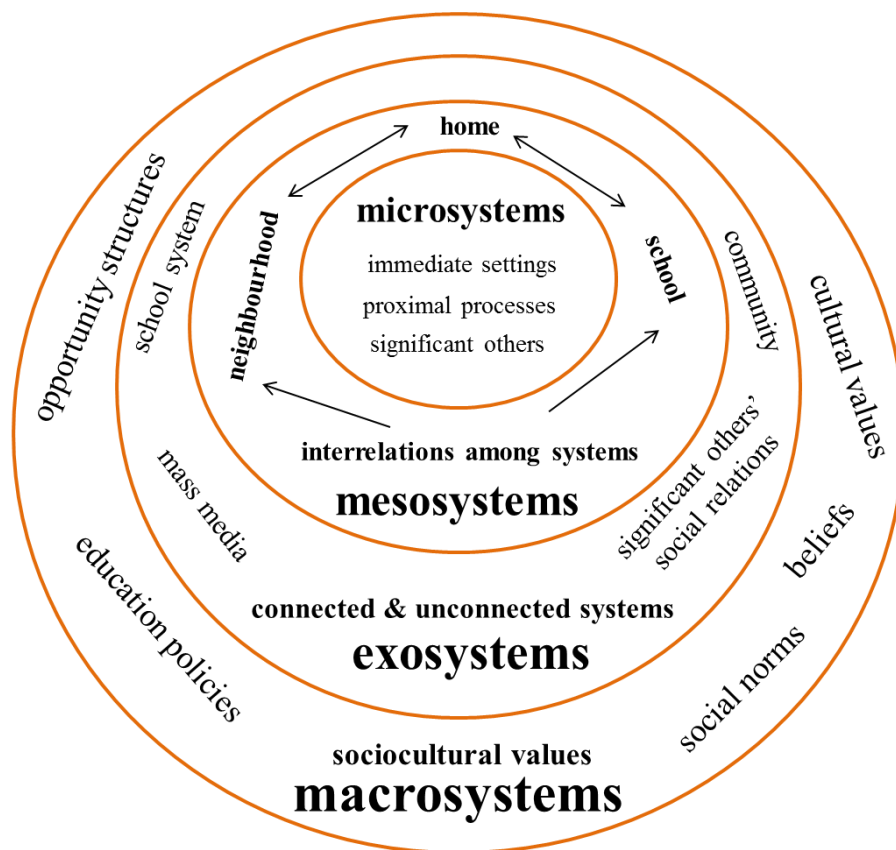


Figure 3.2: Visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological systems theory

Microsystems

A *microsystem* is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit, engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 15, italics in the original)

Activities, roles, and interpersonal relations resulting from a person's social interaction in a specific setting are the primary constituents of a microsystem.

This system focuses on the proximal processes taking place between the developing person and environmental influences. Elements of the immediate setting mainly involve significant others, such as teachers, parents, and peers, who are in frequent and direct contact with the person (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Their beliefs and practices may have dramatic impacts on the person's development.

Mesosystems

A mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. Special attention is focused on the synergistic effects created by the interaction of developmentally instigative or inhibitory features and processes present in the setting. (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 22, italics in the original)

A mesosystem relates to the synergistic impacts of different social relationships on the developing person. In other words, it refers to the connections between and among microsystems. A new mesosystem will be formed when the person enters a new setting with new environmental elements and relationships. Development, thus, results from a plethora of social interactions whose effects do not necessarily mean the sum of its parts but a synergy of individual elements in the setting. These linkages and their synergistic effects are the core value of this nested ecosystems model (van Lier, 2004).

Exosystems

The *exosystem* comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives. (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 24)

An exosystem represents the link between a setting which the developing person does not actively participate in and his/her immediate context. For example, a person's experience at home may be affected by his/her parents' experience at their workplace. The second-hand knowledge gathered from elements in the

environment not directly related to the person can also be crucial for his/her development. This also highlights the complexity of social relations in which knowledge and experience is shared either directly or indirectly.

Macrosystems

The *macrosystem* consists of the overarching pattern of micro- meso- and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, *with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems.* (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p. 25, italics in the original)

As an overarching system, the macrosystem concerns the sociocultural values, norms, beliefs, or policies that have indirect impacts on the developing person. Factors in the macrosystem underpin the person's cognitive development, beliefs, and social relations. These factors reach the person through various social channels and cultural materials such as the mass media and people that he/she interacts with.

In summation, ecological systems theory offers a holistic perspective on the relations between the developing person and his/her natural environment. One evident limitation of this hierarchical model is, however, that sociocultural elements are described as the sole attributes of the outermost macro level: in the research conducted, from the outset they seem to permeate all social interactions and relationships from micro to macro levels.

3.4.4 Language learning motivation from an ecological perspective

Responding to the growing awareness of the interrelations among language, language learners, and the environment in second language learning, more researchers have started to adopt ecological perspectives (Kramsch, 2002). Tudor (2003) carried out a survey on the application of ecological perspectives in language teaching and learning. He argued that “learners are not ‘simply’

learners any more than teachers are “‘simply’” teachers; teaching contexts, too, differ from one another in a significant number of ways” (Tudor, 2003, p. 3). This focus on the subtlety and uniqueness of learners, teachers, and teaching contexts has provoked an interest in the interplay between human and contextual factors that influences language teaching and learning in specific settings. He proposes an ecological research agenda that investigates language learning and teaching in real life, acknowledges their diversity and complexity, and adopts different methods for perceiving pedagogical situations. In a practical sense, “an ecological approach therefore rests on the concept of local meaningfulness” which emphasises the real-life aspects of language education (Tudor, 2003, p. 8). Attending to the dynamics of teaching and learning situations is also of great significance. In brief, “the essence of an ecological perspective on language teaching is precisely that it works with situations in their own terms and in the light of the dynamics which operate in these situations” (Tudor, 2003, p. 10).

Situating their research within Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory, Cross and Hong (2012) explore emotions as interplay between teachers’ internal psychological characteristics and environmental factors. Two experienced teachers working at Greenwoods elementary school in the Midwestern United States participated in this project. Individual and paired interviews, classroom observations, email communications, and research memos were used for data collection. The researchers worked with the participants throughout their three-year professional training programme. In microsystems, they found that the interactions between the teachers and students, parents, the school principal, and themselves resulted in different emotional nuances. Only colleague-principal relationships were reported in the mesosystems. The principal helped to foster pleasant emotions and resolve problems among teachers. At the exosystemic level, the teachers referred to the school location and local community as causes of their frustration. At the macrosystemic level, local low economy, sociocultural context, and educational policies aroused the teachers’ empathy with the local students and parents but concurrently disappointed them. This project provides a detailed examination of teachers’

emotions as a result of their interaction with a variety of environmental elements and relationships. It tends to focus more on individual elements as the source of certain emotions among teachers rather than their emotional development over time. Adding a temporal dimension to this study would better account for teachers' emotional trajectories which, in turn, could have significant implications for teacher-training programmes.

In the field of English language teaching, Peng (2012) conducted a case study on factors affecting Chinese students' willingness to communicate in English. The project adapted a deviant case sampling strategy for recruiting participants from English classes in a comprehensive university in Southern China. Two freshmen and two sophomores learning English for Specific Purposes were chosen for case analyses. The data collection relied on six sessions of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and participants' journals over one and a half semesters. The data were analysed according to the four levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecosystems. At the microsystemic level, learners' beliefs, motivation, background knowledge, classroom tasks, class atmosphere, and teacher factors were considered. At the mesosystemic level, students' past language learning experiences and participation in extracurricular activities were found to enhance students' engagement in classroom activities. At the exosystemic level, students' willingness to communicate was impacted by curriculum design and course evaluation criteria. Finally, macrosystemic elements such as the rising importance of English, employment prospects, and Chinese culture also had certain impacts on their attitudes towards using English. In conclusion, Peng (2012) stated that "Chinese EFL students' classroom willingness to communicate is socioculturally constructed as a function of the interaction of individual and environmental factors, both inside and outside the classroom" (p. 211). The merit of this project lies in its consideration of various environmental dimensions that affect students' language use at different levels. However, one of the limitations of this study is the lack of students' reporting on their willingness to communicate in non-academic settings such as in their daily interactions with social others.

These studies show that, with the exception of language learning motivation, ecological perspectives, especially ecological systems theory, have been adopted in a wide range of areas in education and language teaching. Ushioda (2015) observes that “ecological perspectives on language learning and use have been helpful in capturing holistically the complex processes that take place within learners and between learners and their sociocultural environment” (p. 48). Ecological systems theory offers a means for exploring a multiplicity of sociocultural settings and relationships that underpin the learner’s personal construction of motivation. Within the present study, Bronfenbrenner’s theory provides an analytical lens through which different dimensions of language learning motivation are examined within and across the learner’s specific contexts and relationships. From this perspective, their motivational trajectory is seen as resulting from the synergistic effects of situational and environmental factors against which a complex system of relationships is established.

3.5 Summary

In recent years, research on L2 motivation has been shifting towards socio-dynamic approaches that can uncover its temporal nature within the social and cultural milieu in which language learning occurs. This contemporary trend allows for more holistic explorations of the multiple sociocultural factors influencing learners’ motivation and for useful extensions beyond linear cause-effect conceptualisations. A person-in-context relational view of motivation as the overarching theoretical framework for the present study makes it possible to account for the mutually constitutive relationships between learners as real people with their own sociocultural and historical backgrounds and the learning contexts. Within this main framework, a number of other theoretical dimensions highlight how L2 motivation is implicated and constructed throughout the language learning process of each individual learner. As an analytical tool, ecological systems theory is utilised in this study to delve into the complexities of social interactions, relationships, and sociocultural values within and across

diverse settings and their synergistic effects on language learners' motivational trajectories over time.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design and the methodological, theoretical, and ethical considerations underpinning the process of collecting and analysing the data. It begins with a discussion of how a longitudinal qualitative case study design best responds to the situated and dynamic nature of language learning motivation. Next, data collection and ethical issues are described, with a focus on interviews based on social practice approaches and the construct of reciprocity. The final section explains the data analysis procedures used in this study and measures taken to enhance the quality of data interpretation and reflection.

4.1 Research design

4.1.1 The longitudinal qualitative design

Qualitative inquiry into language learning motivation has gained popularity in recent research (Kim, 2005, 2006, 2009; Lamb, 2009; Nakata, 2006; Ushioda, 2009, 2011a), complementing the traditional quantitative method that mainly dominated this field prior to the 1990s. Ushioda (2011a) points out that research on language learning motivation used to be overwhelmed by the concern for “generalisable models of motivation” with the aim of “mak[ing] predictions about the types of motivation and pedagogical intervention that may lead to particular patterns of learner behaviour in particular contexts” (p. 204). Despite acknowledging the contributions of quantitatively oriented studies in the field of language learning psychology, especially language learning motivation, Mercer (2012b) contends that they “have left many questions unanswered” (p. 16). Quantitative approaches tend to underestimate the uniqueness of individual learners, the role of context, and the complex, dynamic nature of L2 motivation. This supports Wendt’s (2003) argument that “research attempting to document contexts as interpreted realities cannot refrain from qualitative methods” (p. 98). Qualitative methods have a strong emphasis on the emergent nature of social

phenomena in the natural setting from an insider perspective (Dörnyei, 2007) and thus offer a more holistic perspective on the complexity and dynamicity of language learning motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Syed, 2001; Ushioda, 2009). They also allow a more rounded interpretation of learners' personal constructions of motivation and their idiosyncrasies since "it is above all else a person-centred enterprise and therefore particularly appropriate to our work in the field of language teaching" (K. Richards, 2003, p. 9). This helps to reduce the risk of examining language learning motivation from a reductionist view (N. C. Ellis, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2002, 2012; Larsen-Freeman & Ellis, 2006).

As language learning is a long-term process with numerous ups and downs, attention needs to be paid to the temporal dimension of motivation (Dörnyei, 2009c). Ortega and Iberri-Shea (2005) argue that "[language] learning (or development, progress, improvement, change, gains, and so on) can be most meaningfully interpreted only within a full longitudinal perspective" (p. 26). Also, the value of longitudinal research lies in the reward of seeing the changes and developments that take place among the participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Saldana, 2003). These features help to capture the motivational trajectories within and across settings of teenage students who "have enough maturity and autonomy to pursue information and experiences outside the confines of their families" and "are more open to what is new and unusual" (Arnett, 2002, p. 774). Thus, it is possible to shed light on how learners construct and reconstruct their motivation over time. The patchwork of these moment-by-moment examinations aligns with the theoretical perspectives adopted in the present study which highlight the temporal, dynamic, and situated dimensions of language learning motivation.

4.1.2 The pilot test

A pilot test was conducted at the onset of this study after I had identified the research area. It served two aims, namely validating the feasibility of the topic in the local context and identifying the most suitable research design. According to

Maxwell (2013), a pilot test enables researchers not only to enhance their theoretical and conceptual insights but also to derive ideas, meaning, and values from those participating in it. To begin, I developed an exploratory retrospective questionnaire (see Appendix A) and my colleagues in Vietnam, who are lecturers of English, helped me to administer the survey with 92 students at two universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The participants came from different rural areas in Vietnam, so they had a large number of attributes similar to the target high school students in the main study. The questionnaire focused on two main themes: learners' views of English language learning and the roles of significant others such as teachers, parents, and peers in terms of their language learning motivation. After analysing the data, I conducted in-depth Skype interviews with three of the respondents, which delved further into aspects of the survey results relevant to the research focus.

The data from both the survey and interviews pointed to the fact that the participants had different attitudes towards English learning, depending on their interests, family background, learning environment, language learning experience, and future career goals. It was evident that their motivation changed within and across settings as well as over time. Also, different students received different language learning support from diverse social others such as their parents, relatives, and teachers. These findings suggested that inquiry into language learning motivation among individual Vietnamese students from rural areas would need a more situated approach that took contexts and social relationships into deeper consideration. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) assert that "taking account of variations in context is as important as sampling across time and people" (p. 39). This led me to opt for a case study design with a view to reflecting high school students' motivation more holistically.

4.1.3 Case study design

The strengths of case studies lie in their ability to deal with topics of enormous complexity by flexibly making use of multiple data sources (Berg & Lune, 2012;

Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Yin, 2014). In Duff's (2014) words, "a qualitative case study of a person presents a contextualized human profile" (p. 233). To put it differently, case studies help to gain an in-depth insight into how learners come to construct their motivation in a certain way. Each learner presents diverse aspects of language learning motivation within and across different settings from an idiosyncratic perspective. This is because case studies aim to deal with each instance in a "*descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive*" manner (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 103, italics in the original). The richness of the data also makes it possible to track learners' moment-by-moment motivational fluctuations and the elements that contribute to these changes. However, Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) note that any research project working with one single case may face the risk of "microscopic" reflections (p. 34). In other words, one case alone may not fully illustrate the complex and dynamic nature of language learning motivation. To capture multifarious angles of reflection, the present study utilises multiple cases so that each case will add "a complementary facet" (Yin, 2012, p. 8) to the motivation panorama.

4.2 Data collection

4.2.1 Overview of methods and instruments

Jarvela and Niemivirta (2001) emphasise the need to elicit data from various sources "to draw valid inferences about how motivation comes about in natural learning settings" (p. 106). A number of methods and instruments were thus utilised for collecting data in the present study (see Figure 4.1). However, gaining in-depth insights into the world of the participants largely depends on the rapport between them and the researcher. In this regard, Kawulich (2005) argues that "rapport is built over time; it involves establishing a trusting relationship with the community . . . to the extent that they feel assured that the information gathered and reported will be presented accurately and dependably" and insists on the importance of the special attention given to the norm of reciprocity (para. 39). His contention coincides with the findings of my exploratory questionnaire

survey on research practices in Vietnam (see 4.2.2.1) which revealed reciprocity as a central protocol for interpersonal relationships. This section details the data collection procedures, with consideration of rapport development and reciprocity along the way.

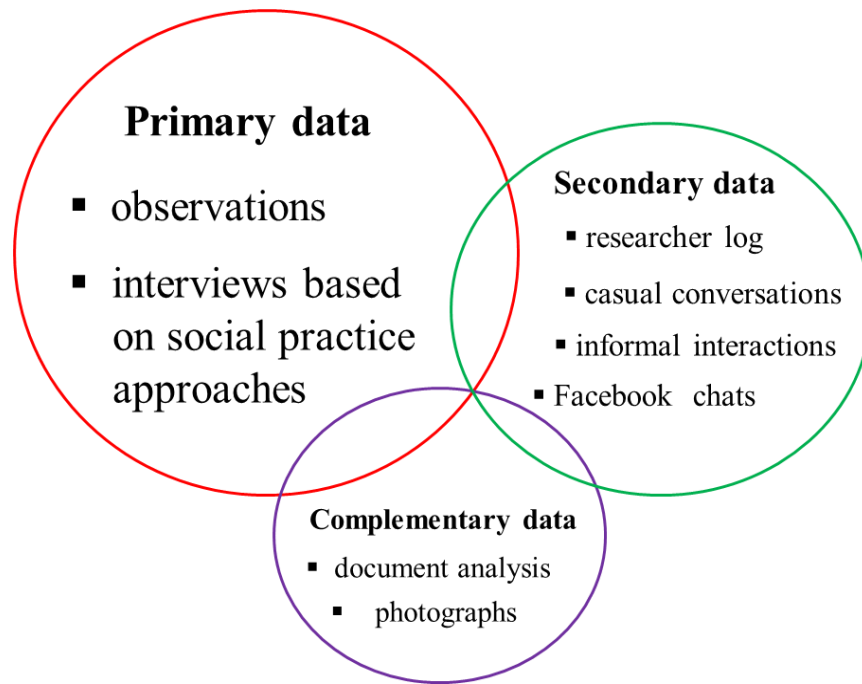


Figure 4.1: Data collection methods and instruments

4.2.1.1 Primary methods

The primary methods included interviews drawing on a social practice approach and observations. In Richards' (2003) words, "interviewing is never really an 'answer' to anything; it is a journey within a journey. This means that it should not be regarded as simply a means of confirming something already known or as definitive in itself" (p. 65). For this reason, Corbin and Strauss (2008) insist on a combination of interviews and observations which complement each other by providing background information and clarification for understanding participants' discourse.

Interviews

Interviews have been widely employed to gather qualitative data in ways that are both efficient and effective (Dörnyei, 2007; Hopf, 2004). However, Fontana and

Frey (2000) note that interviews are not merely an instrument for data collection but rather “active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 646). This means that the interviewer and interviewee are both involved in constructing meaning. Indeed, addressing the power relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, their meaning negotiation, and the contextual and interactional elements constituting an interview is regarded as the primary focus of the event (Block, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003; Talmy, 2010; Talmy & Richards, 2011). The present study adopts a constructivist view, drawing on an interview as social practice approach, which highlight the process and product oriented, interactional, and relational dimensions of interviews (Roulston, 2011; Talmy & Richards, 2011).

According to Talmy (2010), both the product of the interview (the “whats”) and the process leading to the interview (the “hows”) are of equal importance in the social practice sense (p. 132). In this regard, Seidman (2006) adds:

Each interview relationship is individually crafted. It is a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact . . . individual interviewing relationships exist in a social context. Although an interviewer might attempt to isolate [it] from that context and make it unique to the interviewer and the participant . . . [it] tend[s] to affect their relationships with participants nonetheless. (p. 95)

Given that the power relationship between the researcher and the participants is one of the main features of interview as social practice, I took gradual steps to bridge our initial social distance (see 4.2.5 for details). Winning the participants’ trust was crucial at the beginning because all the students had no interview experience and had not worked with a complete stranger like me before. I also took great care to make the participants feel comfortable. Sometimes, we cancelled our interview appointment if the students were in a rush for their private classes or simply were not in a good mood. The sites for the interviews also varied from their houses to the school yard or street-side food stores. Once I had left the research field and returned to New Zealand, further interviews were conducted on Skype. One participant had a laptop computer with Internet access

for interviews at home, while the rest were happy to go to my parents' house in the local area for the Skype meetings.

The co-construction of meaning between the interviewer and the interviewee was another dimension integral to interview as social practice (Talmy, 2010, 2011). Ellis and Berger (2003) state that "the interviewing process becomes less a conduit of information from informants to researchers . . . and more a sea swell of meaning making" (p. 19). The interviewee is no longer seen as the "repository of knowledge" for the researcher's excavation but rather takes an active role in constructing and negotiating meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 4).

For each interview, I did not formulate a fixed set of questions in advance but rather used an interview guide based on my prior observations across research settings. This was because:

The aim of the qualitative interview, however structured, is not merely to accumulate information but to deepen understanding and in order to do this the interviewer must be responsive to nuance and opportunity as the interview progresses. This is not best achieved by dragging an unwilling victim through every nook and cranny of an interrogatory masterplan but by listening to what they have to say and how they say it. (K. Richards, 2003, pp. 64-65)

I started each interview with some warm-up questions (e.g. about the students' homework, their school activities, their favourite movie) and then began to steer the discussion to questions, such as "Why did you choose to go to Ms Thy's private English class?" or "How have you helped your sister to learn English," or the relevant points that I had made notes of in my interview guide which was not disclosed to the students (see Appendices B and D for sample interview guides for interviews with the students and their parents respectively). The interviewees were free to express their opinions and make further comments. My goal was to leave the discussion as open as possible and for me to remain receptive to emerging issues. In this respect, Richards (2003) notes:

In interviews we are concerned only with encouraging the speaker, not with putting our own point across, so the skills we need are still collaborative but they are focused on drawing from the speaker the richest and fullest account possible. (p. 50)

Thus, I was careful about my talking time and giving the interviewees as much floor as possible by using prompts, rephrasing the questions, using my own examples for clarification, or linking the questions with things that they were likely to be familiar with.

Observations

Observational data provided me with preliminary understandings of the participants' English language studies and attitudes in the rural context in Vietnam. Merriam (2009) expounds that observations offer contextual and behavioural knowledge of the participants. Also, observations help "researchers literally look at what is going on around them and give them important insights into the external aspects of language learning" in order to "unravel the complexities of a culture" (Cowie, 2009, pp. 168-170). Observations were made both at school and the participants' homes which were the main observational settings via my one-on-one/group private tuition with them (see 4.2.5.1). When I went to their homes, I carefully yet unobtrusively paid attention to such features as their study corner, any display of their academic achievement around the house, the attitudes of their parents and other family members towards my tutoring activities and their language learning. After each private tuition session, I jotted down important observations, incidents and experiences, and reflected on them in the researcher log.

Observing the participants' English learning from the home context did not take as much effort as from the school setting because not many Vietnamese teachers were, initially at least, comfortable with the idea of having their lessons observed (Canh & Minh, 2012). Indeed, Canh (2011) insists that "in Vietnam, each school is a separate 'territory'. . . Vietnamese secondary school teachers do not like the idea of having their teaching scrutinised for fear of being negatively evaluated"

(p. 7). In relation to this, Athanases and Heath (1995) warn that “the handling of rapport, trust, attention to authority, and power relations can determine entirely how well fieldwork can proceed” (p. 268). Thus, I regarded rapport establishment and reciprocity as critical in entering the field and developing trust. In my first two months at the school, I spent a large amount of time helping the local teachers with their academic and extracurricular activities including providing them with resources for professional development and training students for interschool English competitions. I usually had casual conversations with the English teachers during their tea breaks and after their work hours. Once I believed that I had gained a degree of trust from the teachers and that they would feel comfortable with my presence in their classes, I asked for permission to observe their lessons. My request at that point was enthusiastically and unreservedly accepted by all the teachers.

4.2.1.2 Secondary and complementary tools and sources

To gain diverse perspectives on the participants’ motivational trajectories, data were also gathered using the following secondary and supplementary data collection tools and sources (see Figure 4.1).

Researcher log

I recorded all my research activities and field notes in a researcher log to keep track of my data collection progress and to note ongoing reflections on the phenomena that I had observed. The data from the school meetings, English faculty meetings, informal communication, and especially my private tuition were carefully reviewed and annotated in the evening or morning right after the event took place to ensure as full a recollection as possible.

Casual conversations and informal interactions

In addition to interviews, I also had a large number of casual conversations and informal interactions with the participants, their parents and extended family members, the teachers, and the school stakeholders. These occasions offered me

more detailed and further insights into the research context, supporting the interview as well as observational data. In addition, they also helped me to clarify the points I was unsure of or may have missed in interviews. Most importantly, the spontaneous nature of these instances allowed me to obtain more situated data. For example, I met one of the participants on the street and she proudly told me that she had already finished all her homework assignments for the upcoming private tuition session. Up to that point, she had tended not to prepare or complete tasks beforehand. This incident signalled a positive shift in her language learning attitude at that particular moment.

Facebook



Image 4.1: My interaction with a participant on Facebook Messenger

As the Internet has become more widespread in rural areas in Vietnam, all of my participants had regular access to Facebook. The value of Facebook has been widely acknowledged as an efficient means of social connection, communication

immediacy, and maintenance of participants' interest in recent education research (Jong, Lai, Hsia, Lin, & Liao, 2014). This was a significant source of data because I could get a richer sense of the participants' life and academic activities through their Facebook statuses. I also made use of the chat function on Facebook Messenger (see Image 4.1) to exchange and clarify information with the participants, especially after I returned to New Zealand and when I was writing up the findings chapters.

Document analysis

The documents relevant to this inquiry included school reports, newspaper articles, cultural brochures, and television broadcasts. Prior (2011) expounds that “text and documentation are not only produced, but also, in turn, productive” in terms of disseminating information and offering local perspectives on the subject matter (p. 101). Another benefit of using documents in qualitative research, especially case studies, is “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources . . . because of their overall value, documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case study research” (Yin, 2014, p. 107). Document analysis enabled me to partly understand local parenting cultures, parental involvement in their children's education, local policies for language learning and teaching, and social norms. The local documents also helped me to formulate interview questions that were locally relevant and to interact appropriately with people at different research sites.

Photographs

Banks (2007) maintains that analyses of images reveal insights into social and cultural aspects that other research methods may fail to obtain. During my data collection period in Vietnam, I also collected photographs that were available or took them by myself. The photographs of local agricultural activities, school settings, and participants' homes provided deeper understandings of the research settings and were useful to me as a researcher throughout the period of data analysis and interpretation of results when I had left Vietnam.

4.2.2 Preparing for the field trip

4.2.2.1 Exploratory questionnaire on best research practices in Vietnam

As a collectivist society, Vietnamese people take great care in preserving solidarity and social rapport (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Them, 2006). Interactional etiquette, including language use, terms of address, and indications of mutual respect and interest is highly important for interpersonal communication and rapport development in rural areas in Vietnam (Them, 2008). Emphasising the social nature of qualitative inquiry, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) posit:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 14, italics in the original)

In view of the potential importance of social factors to my data collection activities, I designed a small-scale questionnaire survey on research experience in Vietnam as a further way of preparing for the field trip (see Appendix E). The chief focus of the questions was on the challenges in collecting data in Vietnam, and how international as well as local researchers dealt with them. I sent out emails to seventeen researchers and received five replies. One respondent suggested “First make friends, then think of work. In Vietnam a cup of wine brings people closer, although the language might be different. With the time comes the experience. Most important: flexibility, time and patience.” Data from other respondents also confirmed that reciprocity was the key aspect of etiquette for developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships in Vietnam, as a Vietnamese saying goes:

“Có qua có lại mới toại lòng nhau”
[Có qua / có lại / mới toại lòng nhau]
[Giving / taking / mutual satisfaction]

The construct of reciprocity which concerns the “mutual benefit in human interaction” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 157) has a determining effect on the relationships between the participants and researcher, and consequently their trust and enthusiasm (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001; Patton, 2002). Considering its significance, reciprocity was the socialising protocol pervading my data collection activities.

4.2.2.2 Ethical considerations

Responding to the participants’ rights and benefits and minimising the potential harm to them were among my major concerns. In this regard, Halai (2006) argues that “sound research is a moral and ethical endeavour” which should prioritise the well-being of the participants (p. 4). To this end, the methodological procedures for the present study carefully followed Massey University’s Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching, and Evaluation involving Human Participants. This study was peer reviewed and evaluated to be low risk by the Massey University Human Ethics Committees (Appendix F).

Prior to my field trip, I prepared a number of documents which were translated into Vietnamese, including the researcher’s information sheet (Appendix G), a cover letter (Appendix H) and consent forms (see Appendices I and J). The documentation was part of the human ethics requirements. Also, it showed my respect for the participants’ rights and gave them details about myself and my research purposes, and our mutual commitments throughout the research process. Since “consent is not a one off event to be undertaken at the start of a project, rather it is a process and needs to be negotiated throughout the course of the project” (Halai, 2006, p. 8), the forms stated that participants had the right to have further discussion about their rights and responsibilities as well as the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

Corbin and Morse (2003) stress that participants should benefit from the project and be exposed to the least risk to their emotional as well as sociocultural systems. I took precautionary measures to ensure the participants’ interests were

maintained and that their identities were not disrupted in any way. For their benefit, I conducted a variety of activities to help the students with their English and supported the teaching staff in terms of professional development (see 4.2.5 for details). Pseudonyms were used for all research participants and the physical address of the school in the present study was not mentioned to preserve their anonymity, given that anonymity is considered “the mechanism through which privacy and confidentiality are maintained” (Vainio, 2013, p. 685). Also, I was the only person who had access to the digitally recorded interviews and observational data in my password-protected computer. Permission was granted by the participants for including photos of them in this thesis.

4.2.3 Gaining entry into Vision High

I approached the research field fully aware of the collectivist practices among Vietnamese which emphasise reciprocity in social and interpersonal relations (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Them, 2006). As a novice researcher and first-time fieldworker, I could not help but feel anxious and somewhat concerned about the delicacy of this entry-gaining stage that has been widely discussed (Brewer, 2000; Gobo, 2008; Heath & Street, 2008; Wolcott, 2008).

I arrived at Vision High on the first day it resumed academic activities after the Lunar New Year celebration in Vietnam. I was welcomed with the sweet fragrance of spring blossoms and the silence of the school during class hours. I went to the principal’s office, constantly reminding myself of the following observation: “building relationships with gatekeepers calls for the same patience and openness as does building relationships with other people who are likely to be important sources of information in the field” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 83).

I opened communication with the principal with New Year wishes as an expected Vietnamese norm. I then introduced myself as a school alumnus passionately wishing to conduct my study at the school with the aim of contributing to the local teaching and learning of English. I hoped this self-disclosure would help to

break the ice between us and gain his sympathy: it was a highly effective strategy adopted by Ispa-Landa (2006) for identity sharing as a basis for establishment of relationships between the researcher and the people at the research site. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) maintain that “self-disclosure can deepen a relationship and create opportunities for sharing ideas and information” (p. 13). Such a strategy was also effective in my case. The principal thanked me for the wishes and asked me some further background information. I presented him with the information sheet and gave him further explanations about my research plans and activities. As a reciprocal move, he revealed that it was also the first time he had worked with a researcher at the school. He was quite concerned however that my research activities could interfere with the students’ learning activities and that their parents may voice complaints. This was chiefly because most high schools in Vietnam are in a harsh competition in terms of students’ academic achievement under the target pressure imposed by the provincial department of education (Ha, 2010; Them, 2012). I reassured the principal I would only work with Year Ten students mainly outside class time and in home contexts if permission was granted by those participants. After quite a lengthy discussion on the rights and responsibilities of the potential participants, the principal was evidently reassured and signed the consent form for my research activities. Once all formalities had been resolved, the conversation proceeded in a more open manner. From this experience, I learned that gaining entry in Vietnam would be less challenging if the researcher was ready to share personal background information, minimised interference with local activities, and highlighted the contribution of their research to the local context. Having prepared all the documentation regarding the research was also important.

I was then introduced to the vice-principal who gave me specific details about English teaching and learning at the school. From his perspective, my research activities there would be of mutual benefit to both parties. He briefed me on the statistics of English learning outcomes over the previous two years, students’ and parents’ attitudes towards learning English, and teacher training activities. He reiterated the school’s goal of enhancing teachers’ and students’ English

proficiency but also lamented the shortcomings of educational policies, provincial support, and school-parent cooperation as the major obstacles to the local English programme. His enthusiasm was aroused by his expectation that I could help the local teachers with professional development and carry out more activities to motivate the local students. I was sympathetic towards the vice-principal all the more so given that, as a researcher following the principle of reciprocity, I wanted to do something in return for the participants' expended time, efforts, and involvement (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Davis, 1995; Napier, Hosley, & Nguyen, 2004; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

4.2.4 Meeting and recruiting participants

From Gans' (1999) perspective, entry approval does not secure good rapport with participants; in fact, it requires the researcher to expend further efforts to get to know the settings and the people involved. I usually went to school meetings well in advance to introduce myself and talk to the staff. I did not miss any whole-school or English faculty meetings because these occasions would enable me to develop better relationships with the staff and understand more about the school. I learned from the head of the English faculty that the English teachers were struggling with the language requirement imposed by MoET (see 2.2.3). Also, there was a serious lack of resources for training the students for provincial English competitions. I realised that as part of gaining support from the teaching staff and students, it was important that I help them to ameliorate these problems. According to Schensul et al. (1999), it is a rewarding strategy to share time, expertise and other significant resources with the participants and local community. In addition, a reciprocal approach will have a dramatic effect on demonstrating the researcher's enthusiasm and good will (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Maiter, Simich, Jacobson, & Wise, 2008). To be honest, I tried to help the teachers and students not only because I was collecting data at the school but I also wanted to improve the local English teaching and learning as a school alumnus and a concerned English teacher. The staff and I had discussions on the school and province's upcoming English contests and the amount of time I could

offer, along with my research activities. My research agenda was warmly supported by the English teachers and they promised close cooperation. In my view, rapport based on mutual support and interest had been established as a good basis for future activities.

My second week at Vision High was wholly devoted to meeting and talking to the students. I worked with the English teachers to arrange suitable times for class visits whose aim was to raise their awareness of the importance of English to their study and future lives. Each meeting lasted from forty five to sixty minutes with the presence of the English teacher in charge of the class in every session; the vice-principal attended the first one in accordance with the school's administrative requirements. I organised a number of communicative activities and shared success stories of some peers and near peers who were not “a panacea, but present[ed] students with powerful ‘identificatory moments’ of possibility” (Murphey & Arao, 2001, p. 9). The vice-principal strongly favoured my activities, adding accounts of some of the school alumni's achievements. The students were attracted by the talks and posed a large number of questions. The discussion on the importance of learning English served as a springboard for me to introduce my research project to the students, including the rights and benefits of the participants. The students could contact me for expressions of interest in person or by phone, email, or Facebook message. I can still vividly recollect the students' excitement at having a “new teacher” coming to their class. Every time passing a classroom, I was overwhelmed by greetings, cheers, and questions. Such a welcome assured me that a large number of students would be interested in my study.

By the end of my third week at the school, I had received over fifteen responses. I contacted the students during their break time or after class for further discussions. I gave them the consent forms and information sheet for their own and their parents' reference. When both the student and parent forms were returned, I checked their time preferences and home location to set up the private tuition. Due to time constraints mainly because the students had to study at

school all mornings and take extra classes some afternoons, I grouped those who lived close to each other or those with the same study interest into pairs and small groups. At this stage, all students who gave consent were included. Table 4.1 below shows the private tuition grouping:

Table 4.1: Participants' grouping for private tuition

Types of grouping	Number of classes
One-on-one	4
Pair	2
Group	2

To sum up, the recruitment process went quite smoothly, thanks to the enthusiasm of the local teachers and students. However, the most essential factor that facilitated the procedure was the reciprocity of interest between the researchers and the participants. In particular, the one-on-one/group private tuition obviously offered the participants, especially financially-challenged students, an opportunity to improve their English. Also, the Thursday English class (see 4.2.5.1 for details) created an environment for the students to develop communicative skills which they lacked in their formal English classes. With such contributions, these research activities received full approval from both the school and the parents.

4.2.5 Working with the participants

The data collection was conducted in two phases, one on-site and one off-site, spanning February 2013 to August 2014. The on-site period lasted six months and functioned as a critical predecessor to the later phase which relied on distant online communication. Its main aims were both to collect data, and establish, develop, and maintain rapport with the participants during the project. I carried out various activities to elicit data from the students, their parents, local teachers,

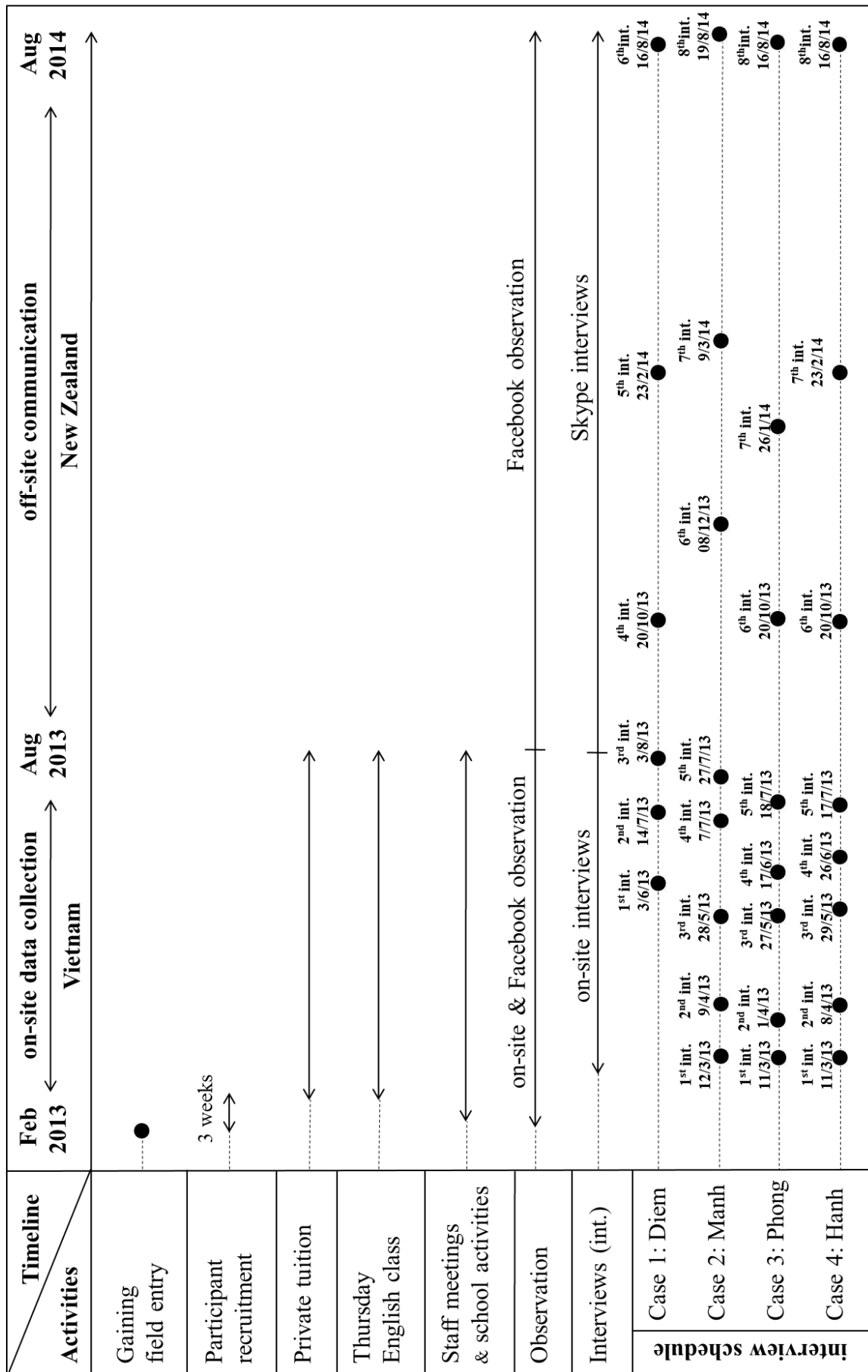


Figure 4.2: Data collection timeline

other school stakeholders and significant others while Skype interviews and observations of the participants' Facebook statuses were the chief communication channels upon my return to New Zealand. I found the construct of reciprocity significantly important throughout both phases. Particular research activities, times, and locations are detailed in the research timeline (see Figure 4.2 on the previous page).

4.2.5.1 Working with the students

On-site activities with the students

I chose to work mainly with Year Ten students who had just undergone the transition from secondary to high school for one semester because they could offer more vivid accounts of the differences between the two environments. Another reason was that these students would work with me for approximately one year and a half, meaning that I could observe their changes for the majority of their time at high school. I had intended not to work with the students in Year Eleven and Year Twelve because they had to focus on their study for important upcoming examinations. However, two Year Eleven students were so passionate about learning English and participating in my study that I could not refuse them. Initially, there were sixteen students participating in my project. Four of them later withdrew from the study for various reasons (moving to a new place, time clashes with private classes for other school subjects, or lack of interest). Most of the students had started to learn English in secondary school, i.e. from Year Six, whereas a few of them had learned English earlier, either in elementary school or private English classes. They were at elementary to pre-intermediate English levels at the time of participating in the present study. Table 4.2 describes the profiles and English learning backgrounds of the remaining participants who worked with me in the research field:

Table 4.2: Participants' biodata and English learning backgrounds

Participants (pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Present year at high school	English learning duration (years)	English learning settings		
					School	Private teachers' homes	Foreign language centres
Diem*	female	17	11	5	✓	✓	
Manh*	male	16	10	4	✓		
Phong*	male	17	10	4	✓		
Hanh*	female	16	10	4	✓	✓	✓
Tham	female	17	11	5	✓		
Hoa	female	16	10	4	✓	✓	
Tuyen	female	16	10	4	✓		✓
Hung	male	16	10	4	✓		
Minh	female	16	10	4	✓	✓	
Tuan	male	16	10	7	✓	✓	
Sim	female	16	10	7	✓	✓	
Tho	female	16	10	4	✓	✓	

I worked with the students simultaneously in two settings, the school and their homes. At school, I spent time with them during their breaks or during any cancelled class sessions. Sometimes, I observed their formal lessons to see how they worked in class and how they interacted with their classmates and English teachers. However, our exchanges at school were rather short and irregular because I did not want to interfere with their break-time activities. I mostly worked with the participants and other students in my Thursday English class at the school which focussed on developing their speaking and listening skills and also functioned as the school's English Club meeting. I invited a British friend who had an English teaching diploma to the class (see Image 4.2). One student

* The students selected for case study analyses

brought his two teenage Canadian cousins along. This provided the students with an opportunity to interact with native speakers of English, encouraging them to continue going to the class. According to the English head teacher, “the Thursday class was a rare occasion for the school students to actually practise their listening and speaking skills, especially with foreigners. None of us here [the local teachers] were able to do so” (CTTrung). After each meeting, I usually stayed there for a while chatting with the students to listen to their language learning issues as well as to share my experiences. The Thursday class activities continued until I went back to New Zealand.



Image 4.2: The Thursday English class with my British friend's participation

The majority of the contact time between the participants and me was at their homes during our private tuition sessions. The students had to attend formal classes at school in the morning, so our meetings took place in the afternoon and evening. I went to the participants' homes to tutor them in English once a week. I helped them with different aspects of English, depending on their interests or exam groups. During each private tuition meeting at the participants' homes, I endeavoured to create as many opportunities for language practice as possible. In addition to focussing on language areas that the students were not very good at or wanted to explore further, I played the role of a conversational partner with those who worked with me individually, or a facilitator for those who worked with me

in groups. In order to encourage their more autonomous learning, I gave the participants some grammar books to read in their own time and answered any questions they raised. Before and after each private tuition meeting, I also usually spent some time talking with them or their family members to learn more about the students' language learning backgrounds.

In terms of the researcher's approach to establishing relationships with the participants, Canagarajah (1996) reminds that "research frequently involves a measure of manipulation and deception as interviewers and participant-observers make subjects feel friendly, comfortable and powerful in order to reveal their intimate thoughts and experience" (p. 325). In fact, I was often in a more cordial role with the students than that of a researcher trying to elicit data from them. In addition to the interactions at school and home, we occasionally went out for informal drinks as a whole group. There were many times when the students phoned me late in the evening to talk about their issues with learning English and other teenage problems which they found hard to share with their family members. It was thanks to such intimate rapport that they were more open during our interviews.

Before each interview, I set up the time with the participants one or two weeks in advance. The location varied on a case-by-case basis, including their homes, the school yard, public parks, or teenagers' food stores. I also carefully explained to them the nature of the interview which was more or less a casual conversation and that there were no right or wrong answers. The interviews were conducted mostly in Vietnamese. In some cases, I asked some simple questions in English to encourage the students to practise the language and so they could use English to reply. The aim of these activities was to make the participants feel at ease and under no pressure. These were essential elements of interview as social practice which emphasised both the "whats" and the "hows" (Talmy, 2010, 2011).

Prior to my departure for New Zealand, I had told the participants about my leaving date well in advance so that my disappearance would not come as a

shock to them. In Walsh's (2004) words, "leaving the field will have to be negotiated as it entails closing relations with participants that may have been firmly established and which they may not wish to relinquish" (p. 233). At this stage, given my initial analysis of the data from all the twelve participants, the overlapping aspects in their responses and my observations of their language learning, my desire to gain in-depth insights into individual students' motivational constructions within and across settings over time, and their time commitment to my research project, I decided to specifically work with only six of them: *Diem, Hanh, Manh, Phong, Sim and Tuyen*. However, I still stayed in touch with the other students on Facebook and was ready to offer them further help. I took careful notes of their contact information and set up Skype communication. More importantly, I tried to establish connections between the participants so that they could share information among themselves and concurrently work to support each other. This cross-peer monitoring approach proved to be helpful because I could receive frequent updates not only about the student I was communicating with but also the rest of the group.

Off-site activities with the students

Online communication substantially facilitated the continuation of my data collection and rapport maintenance despite the geographical distance. Upon my return to New Zealand, I still kept frequent contact with the participants on Facebook, Skype, and mobile phone. As all the participants could easily access the Internet either at home or through an Internet service, I was confronted with relatively few problems. All the students had Facebook accounts and accessed it regularly, making distant communication with them convenient and economical. The students' Facebook statuses also helped me to know more about what was going on with them. In addition, I encouraged them to send me questions about English and share difficulties they encountered in their study as well as their lives. We kept exchanging information on Facebook even after I ceased my data collection. In so doing, we were geographically distant but still connected. This

shows that researcher-participant relationships may first be built up mainly to the researcher's advantage but then can develop into long-lasting ones.

Regarding the online interviews, the participants who did not have Internet access at home went to my parents' place in Vietnam for video calls. I either phoned them or sent them Facebook messages to set up appointments for interviews. The adoption of Skype video calls enabled me to participate through participants' verbal as well as nonverbal responses during online interviews. This provided me with a real-time perspective for interpreting and analysing the online data. Apart from the occasional drops in the quality of the audio and video transmission on Skype which could be easily overcome by repeated listening to the recordings and referring to the interview notes, the online communication process was generally smooth and effective.

Approximately four months after I had returned to New Zealand, Sim had to withdraw from my research project because of her worsening health conditions. Also, Tuyen's data appeared to largely align with those from the other participants. As a result, my data collection during the rest of the second phase primary focused on four participants: *Diem, Hanh, Manh* and *Phong*.

4.2.5.2 Working with significant others

Working with the English language teachers

Through my identity as a language teacher in Vietnam, I received a good deal of support from the local English teaching staff. I was invited to monthly staff meetings, staff observations, and other informal events within the English faculty. In the first meeting, the head teacher stated that the faculty ethos was making everyone feel at home. Despite being busy with both school work and family issues, the English staff usually had informal conversations after they finished their afternoon sessions to share their teaching experiences and critical moments as part of that "family" culture. I found these conversations highly motivating and rewarding in that I could improve my relationship with the

teachers and gain a significant amount of essential background information for my research. I viewed each interaction with the staff as an opportunity for me to learn more about the research site and strengthen our rapport. For instance, we went to a café together one evening after the English staff completed their exam marking, which the head teacher referred to as “a refreshing moment for the whole family after the struggling time with exam papers” (NTTrung). It was also an informal event for them to reflect on their own teaching and students’ learning outcomes and to ponder solutions to their problems together.

I did not conduct any interviews with the English teachers until the middle of my on-site period. This was because I wanted to develop an insightful understanding of the school context through my observations and to establish a certain degree of rapport and trust with them first. I interviewed each teacher once only, but spread the time from the middle to the end of my fieldwork. This strategy enabled me to obtain their perspectives at different points in time so as not to bother them so frequently and to avoid overlapping information. The interviews took place in various settings, namely at the school during the teachers’ available time, or at their homes by prior arrangement. The most important step was to minimise the time pressure so that the teachers could feel as comfortable as possible. My enthusiastic engagement in the school and staff activities was rewarded with the teachers’ genuine willingness to share their stories. I formulated a set of points for discussion during the interviews rather than using a list of pre-determined questions. In this way, the interviews progressed with both the teachers and me co-constructing the meaning, as guided by the construct of interview as social practice (Talmy, 2010). Our close rapport and mutual trust encouraged them to disclose often even sensitive facts such as their private tuition practice. These revelations were a further significant reward of my reciprocity-based approach.

Working with the parents

The one-on-one private tuition was my chief means of connection and communication with the parents. Initially, not all parents welcomed the idea of

having a private tutor for their children due to a number of concerns that I later learned from the interviews and informal conversations with them. One father was worried that I might charge them a large amount of money for the tuition fee while another parent expressed doubts about my teaching ability despite my introduction in the information sheet. I had anticipated these problems, so my strategy was making them “see and believe.” I tried to win their trust and reassure them by my tutoring performance and devotion since “initiating and maintaining contact require researchers to present themselves as sincere individuals who have a commitment to the study group” (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993, p. 112).

My weekly tuition at the students’ homes enabled me to have regular interactions with most of the parents. I always took each opportunity to get into a conversation with any family member there, either before or after each session. This both showed my respect to the family as a guest and helped me to know more about them. In addition, I gave the parents some advice on career options so that they could guide their children. They consulted me about occupationally-related information because they trusted my experience as a lecturer. In return for my enthusiasm, they invited me to family dinners and shared their concerns as well as their children’s characters that helped me to gain more understandings of the students and, in some cases, revise my approaches for working with them. They talked to me using address terms like family members.

I conducted a total of nine informal interviews with the parents, one of which was with both the mother and the father. The interviews were carried out quite differently from those with other participants in my research since they had never been interviewed before. I asked the students to inform their parents of my interview intention two weeks in advance so that they could arrange a time and prepared themselves psychologically. Indeed, a few parents reported to me at the beginning of the interview that they felt quite anxious and worried about giving the wrong answers. I reassured them that it was similar to the casual conversations we usually had and that I just wanted to understand about parents’

role in learning English without judging whether it was right or wrong. I began the interviews with common socialising questions in Vietnamese culture such as asking if they had their dinner or if they had a busy day. As in the interviews with the teachers, I made a list of main points to explore and let the interview flow naturally (see Appendix D for a sample interview guide). The interviews varied from forty five minutes to two hours.

Working with other school stakeholders

Working with other school stakeholders required a high degree of formality and administrative procedures as partly discussed in 4.2.3 because they “shape the conduct and development of the research” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 59). I had direct contact with the principal primarily at the very beginning of the project for entry negotiation. After that, he assigned the vice-principal to supervise my research activities at the school. The vice-principal took great care in arranging observation timetables and school facilities for me. He also gave me the option of discussing further the time arrangement with the teachers in charge. I was impressed with his discreet and enthusiastic manner. There were many times I offered to pay for the drinks that I ordered during our private meetings but he frankly refused, maintaining that “I was of more help to the school than the school was to me” (CVice-principal). His statement implied that my contribution there was well acknowledged and even more appreciated than material rewards which has been mentioned by researchers working in Vietnam as a way to gain the support of the people in the field (e.g. Napier et al., 2004). By the end of my on-site period, I visited the stakeholders’ homes to say good bye and give them my gifts of gratitude. They were highly appreciative of my research activities at the school and promised to continue supporting me.

4.2.6 The researcher’s multiple roles: Advantages and challenges

As a sailor making my way across the vast ocean of human knowledge, I inevitably faced a number of challenges along with positive experiences both on-site and off-site. Since “the researcher’s roles and identities are constantly

constructed during the research process, regardless of his or her intentions or efforts” (Gobo, 2008, p. 122), I was ready to assume various roles and forge different identities to meet the contextual and situational needs throughout the research voyage.

4.2.6.1 Advantages

To begin with, my identity as a school alumnus partly eased my access to the field. As discussed in 4.2.3, I did not face much difficulty gaining entry into Vision High despite the principal’s initial concerns. Most of the teachers there still remembered me and could recognise me on the very first encounter. During break times, we usually had informal conversations about my high school life and memories which they compared with the experience they were having with their present students. Through such occasions, I could obtain further understandings of the local students in terms of their learning attitudes and social lives. Some teachers of both English and other faculties were willing to switch their timetables so that I could run longer sessions with the students during the recruitment phase. They also encouraged their students to attend my Thursday class and highlighted the importance of learning English at the weekly class meeting with the form teacher.

In addition, being a local researcher was a further advantage for me. The present study was conducted in a rural setting where the streets were not well-lit at night. Street names and house addresses were not always visibly displayed. These might pose a formidable obstacle for non-local researchers to travel around. Fortunately, I knew the geographical features of the place quite well and had no difficulty locating the participants’ houses for the private tuition which mainly took place in the evening. More importantly, having been living in the area for over twenty years, it was possible for me to conform to local norms and etiquette. On this point, O’Toole and Were (2008) propound:

Qualitative research involves investigation beyond the superficial. Researchers routinely probe beyond the explicit and the known to try to

understand the worlds of research participants of which the participants themselves may be unconscious. Part of this exploration involves the context surrounding the area of research. (p. 616)

In fact, an understanding of local culture and social meanings functions as one key to the success of any fieldwork (Brewer, 2000; Fetterman, 2010). With the readily available insights into the local settings, I could carry out interviews and other communicative activities in a manner that was likely to provoke more productive sharing of information. Such cultural knowledge also facilitated the integration of contextual aspects to the interview as well as other interactional data. These elements are important when drawing on an interview as social practice approach (Talmy, 2010, 2011).

My roles as a university lecturer and a PhD student eased my approach in winning the parents' trust. In this regard, Brewer (2000) points out that "trust is rarely instantaneous and is usually a slow, steady process" and that "winning trust can be hard work and emotionally draining" (pp. 85-86). This was true in my case. On many of my first visits to the participants' houses, their parents kept asking me questions about my background and teaching experience although the information was clearly stated in the information sheet. From the rural parents' perspectives, they only trusted those teachers at school who had proper qualifications assessed by the school board. Having a researcher working with them and their children was such a foreign experience that they could not hide their doubts about me. My dual roles functioned as a passport for me to pass the parents' screening. It was after several weeks of "investigative" conversations and observation that the parents began to exude confidence that their children were secure in working with me. Once trust was established, the parents started to consult me about choice of foreign language centres, language programmes, and future careers for their children.

Regardless of the merits of these roles, I was also aware that they might create a power distance between the researcher and participants. Athanases and Heath (1995) insist that "a researcher who lacks sensitivity to demands in the life of

informants or who holds fast to the comfortable distance of authority rather than becoming a learner in the culture, severely limits the nature of the data and undermines the research” (p. 268). This fact calls for more intimate roles to reconcile the differences and “establish a large degree of ordinary sociability and normal social intercourse” (Walsh, 2004, p. 233). I performed a variety of roles in response to situational and contextual needs (see 4.2.5 for discussions on my on-site activities and strategies for rapport establishment). Despite the amount of time and effort these activities required, they were an indispensable element contributing to the success of my data collection. As a result, I received highly enthusiastic support from all the people concerned throughout the whole data collection process.

4.2.6.2 Challenges

Working with teenage students and rural parents was fraught with numerous challenges in terms of time and spatial management, parental bias against the role of English in the curriculum, and data quality.

Firstly, it was a challenging job to allocate suitable time for tutoring the participants within their busy school timetable and private tuition at their teachers’ homes. All the participants spent all weekday mornings attending their formal classes and the compulsory extracurricular classes three afternoons a week at the school. In addition, most participants took at least one private class with two weekly meetings. My meeting time with them varied on a weekly basis due to the time changes of school activities and their private classes. This meant that I had to squeeze my time to fit into their available slots. It was not uncommon that I was riding my motorbike to the participants’ homes for the weekly private tuition and received a phone call cancelling classes. Even worse, I arrived at their place only to find out that they were taking an afternoon nap and had completely forgotten the tuition session with me, or had not returned from their private classes. I accepted these situations with a high degree of patience and resilience, reminding myself to prioritise the students’ comfort.

Secondly, setting up interview appointments with the parents was no less challenging. Most of them had to work very hard all day long without a break on the weekend. At home, they were usually very busy with household activities. I had to inform them of my desire to interview one or two weeks in advance. The interviews were also sometimes disrupted by the nature of the parents' work. For instance, my interview with one of the mothers who ran a small shop at home was continually interrupted by incoming customers. Despite her enthusiasm and apologetic indications, it was not a really comfortable experience. On another occasion, I was interviewing a father who had an on-call manual job when he received a phone call from his colleague. We then had to postpone the interview and set up another time for it. Time and patience were of great importance in these situations.



Image 4.3: Paired private tuition at one of the participants' home

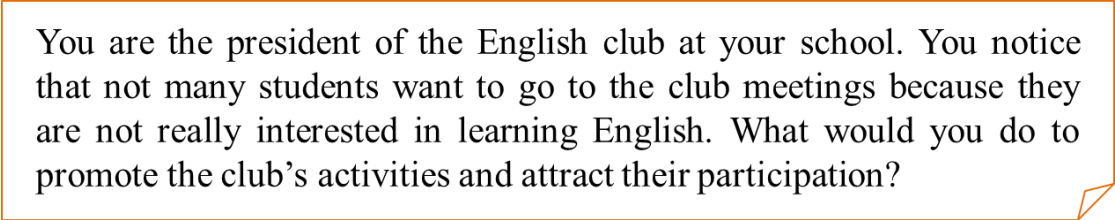
Thirdly, the learning space at the participants' homes is another point of discussion. During my recruitment stage, beside the excitement about having a teacher coming to their house to teach them, some students expressed concern regarding the space for it. One of them confessed "teacher, my house is very small. I don't have a place for my own study. I don't know where we can study. I

am afraid you will not want to go to my home” (CSManh). In response, I tried to convince them that any learning space was fine for me and that the most important thing to me was their willingness and enthusiasm about learning English. In fact, my private tuition with the participants took place in a very informal space such as at a table in the living room, a stone bench in the front yard, or a dining table in the kitchen (see Image 4.3). These places were inevitably affected by any surrounding disturbance.

Fourthly, parental lack of appreciation of the English subject in the school curriculum was a formidable challenge. I faced one case in which the student was particularly keen on learning English but received very strong opposition from the father. In the father’s view, English was no more than a supplementary subject that his son could master very easily when he had more time in the future. He persuaded his father to allow him to learn English with me by promising to perform well in the other school subjects. My visits for the one-on-one tuition were rather uncomfortable. Under parental pressure, the student was forced to withdraw from my study after a few weekly meetings. I had an informal conversation with the father on the last visit. Despite his partial acknowledgement of the importance of learning English, the father insisted that his son needed more time for other “main” subjects.

Finally, conducting interviews with the teenage participants in the home context may affect the quality of the data (Bassett, Beagan, Ristovski-Slijepcevic, & Chapman, 2008). It is not easy to engage teenagers in an extended in-depth interview; thus, most of the interviews spanned no more than one hour, especially the first interviews because the participants were not familiar with sitting for an interview with a researcher. The depth of the reflection in the interviews was also challenged by the common problem of receiving short shallow answers such as “yes/no” or “I have no idea” (McCracken, 1988). To cope with these issues, I used information questions with “What . . .?”, “How . . .?” and “Why . . .?” instead of “Yes/No” ones. In addition, the variation of interview techniques, from merely asking questions for feedback to giving

scenarios for reflections (see Figure 4.3 for a sample scenario), activating participants' imagination, and employing the yoked-subject technique (see White, 1995), helped to maintain their interest and encouraged them to talk. Moreover, the interviews were mostly conducted in the participants' houses, with the parents or other family members sometimes working around us. Although they did not mean to interfere with us or observe us, their presence did appear to impact on the interviewees' manner of responding. To overcome these problems, we chose to have the later interviews in places with the least distractions, for example, in the students' backyards.



You are the president of the English club at your school. You notice that not many students want to go to the club meetings because they are not really interested in learning English. What would you do to promote the club's activities and attract their participation?

Figure 4.3: A scenario used in an interview with the students

4.3 Analysing and presenting the data

4.3.1 Data analysis procedures

4.3.1.1 Analytical approach

The analytical approach adopted in this project aligns with the principles of interview as social practice in which “data do not speak for themselves; analysis centres on how meaning is negotiated, knowledge is coconstructed, and interview is locally accomplished” (Talmy, 2010, p. 132). I tried to interpret the interview data not only through the participants' wording but also the contextual elements encompassing their discourse. Attention was also paid to how meaning was negotiated and constructed during the interviews. In other words, the analytical process focussed on both the “whats” and the “hows” of the interview. On this note, Mishler (1995) propounds that “each response is a fragment removed from the psychological and social contexts of the respondent as well as from the full discourse of the interview” (p. 26). In addition, the fact that interview data are

contextually grounded (Roulston, 2010) and jointly produced by the interviewer and the interviewees (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Talmy, 2010, 2011) necessitates other channels of data for more rounded reflections. The data from my observations and other supplementary sources were woven into the interview data to interpret or clarify ambiguous points. Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that a combination of observations and interviews helps to understand how meaning is negotiated. Also, observations enable the researcher to gain more profound understandings of the settings surrounding the participants and to explain their behaviours, attitudes, motivation, and emotions through their real-life activities (Cohen et al., 2011; Schensul et al., 1999).

4.3.1.2 Data transcription and translation

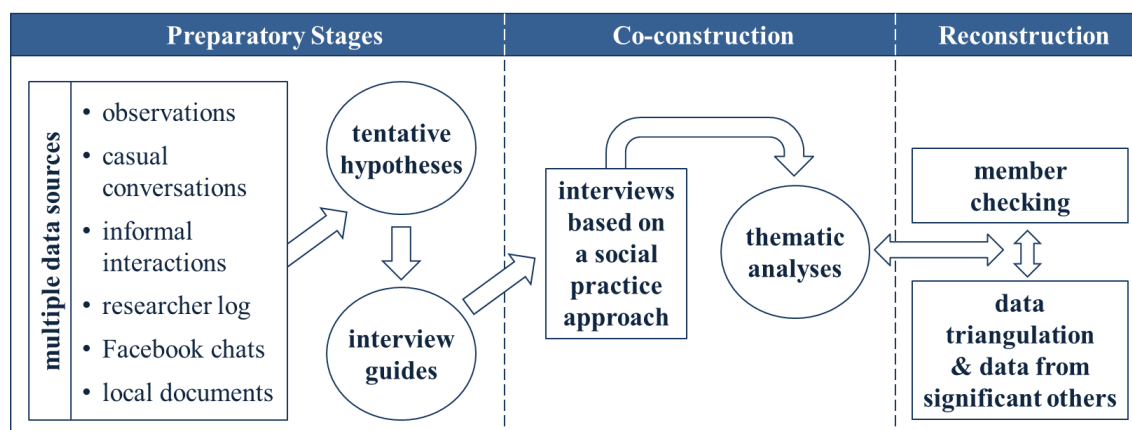
I commenced transcription of the recorded data from all the participants immediately after the first interview round. This helped me to have timely reflections on what happened during the interview as well as to formulate areas for discussion in follow-up interviews. Despite the relatively short length of the interviews, varying from thirty minutes to one hour, the transcription was a very time-consuming process because I had to compare the transcript with the interview notes to present different aspects of interview as social practice, such as contextual information and the reasons why the respondents came to say that. As the number of interviews accumulated, I could not finish transcribing the previously recorded interviews prior to the next round. My strategy was listening to the recordings and taking notes of the critical points in preparation for subsequent interviews. Transcribing the Skype interviews took more time due to static noise and occasional interruptions caused by the Skype recording software (I used the free MP3 Skype Recorder, version 3.1). I double-checked the draft transcripts by listening to the recordings and reviewing the interview notes several times to make sure all verbal and non-verbal indications and background information for the interviews were included.

Since all the interviews and other verbal data were in Vietnamese, I worked with them in their original form to encapsulate aspects of discourse such as participants' literal versus intended meaning, word choice, or cultural references, and translated into English only those pieces selected for case analyses and discussions. During the translation process, I was confronted with many complexities in terms of finding conceptual equivalents between the two languages and cultures or rendering the implications behind the participants' words. I adopted different approaches to work with these issues. For the former, I consulted my supervisors, my Vietnamese colleagues who had backgrounds in TESOL or applied linguistics, and postgraduate New Zealand students in my office about any ambiguous cultural concepts. For the latter, I conducted member checking (see 4.3.3) to clarify aspects of meaning implicated in the data as well as drawing on different sources of data and contextual information concerning the interactions.

4.3.1.3 Data coding

The data coding process (Table 4.3) comprised three major stages: preparatory stages, co-construction and re-construction. These coding and analytical procedures were repeated for each interview round and follow-up analysis.

Table 4.3: The data coding process



Within the preparatory stages, data from difference sources, such as observations, casual conversations, informal interactions, the researcher log, Facebook chats

and local documents, were used as the basis for developing tentative hypotheses about each participant's English language learning within and across settings and the ecological elements impacting on his/her motivational construction. These hypotheses were then compiled into interview guides which provided the main points for discussions during interviews with individual students (see Appendix B for sample interview guides in the first interview round and Appendix C for major points of discussion in follow-up interview rounds).

With regard to the co-construction stage, drawing on Talmy's (2010) interview as social practice approach, both the interviewer and the interviewee are actively involved in co-constructing meaning throughout an interview. When I was interviewing each student, in addition to listening to his/her stories, I also shared my experiences as a local language learner and a language lecturer who had had opportunities to work with students from similar rural backgrounds. This process of meaning negotiation and co-construction encouraged the interviewee to critically reflect on their language learning and the ways in which his/her L2 motivation was shaped and reshaped within and across settings and relationships.

The thematic analyses of the data and the reconstruction stage took place simultaneously. Critiquing, reflecting on and thematising the data were the most pivotal and time-consuming undertaking in order to "fully know[ing] the data"(Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 262). In Corbin and Strauss's (2008) words, these processes involve:

Breaking the data down into manageable pieces, reflecting upon that data . . . To arrive at an understanding of what the data are stating, there was a lot of brainstorming going on with questions asked about the data, comparison made and a lot of reflective thought. (p. 193)

I started analysing the data by scrutinising the interview transcripts, the observations, my research log, and other supplementary data in an iterative fashion. I read these documents page by page, underlined the key words or expressions, and took notes of items repeated several times by the participants. For ambiguous points, I contacted them on Facebook for clarification. Then I

made cross comparisons and contrasts among the data sources not only from the students but also from significant others such as school teachers and parents to identify tentative themes related to each case study participant. Afterwards, I took a segment of the data related to one case study participant and tried to analyse it against the themes. The value of this activity lies in the fact that “this should provide a good initial grasp of the phenomena with which you are concerned. These can then be tested by looking at relevant features of your whole data set” (Silverman, 2011, p. 62). I applied the same analytical process to the other three case study participants until I became familiar with all the data. This step also enabled me to mine the data for emerging aspects, to revise the initial themes, and to identify the individual themes salient to each case study. Once I developed better understandings of and confidence in my analysis, I started writing up each case study according to the finalised themes.

Abbreviations (abb.) of the six major data sources are presented in Table 4.4. Interview and observational data with the students was specifically dated to facilitate chronological tracking of their trajectories.

Table 4.4: Abbreviations for the data sources and participants

Data sources	Abb.	Participants' roles	Abbreviations										
interviews	I	student	S										
observations	O	teacher	T										
Facebook exchanges	F	parent	P										
casual conversations	C	others	their role/position										
informal interactions	N	<table><tr><th>Examples</th><th>Explanations</th></tr><tr><td>ISHanh100613</td><td>Data from an interview with a student named Hanh on June 10, 2013</td></tr><tr><td>ITTrang</td><td>Data from an interview with a teacher named Trang</td></tr><tr><td>CPDiem</td><td>Data from a casual conversation with Diem's mother</td></tr><tr><td>IPrincipal</td><td>Data from an interview with the school principal</td></tr></table>		Examples	Explanations	ISHanh100613	Data from an interview with a student named Hanh on June 10, 2013	ITTrang	Data from an interview with a teacher named Trang	CPDiem	Data from a casual conversation with Diem's mother	IPrincipal	Data from an interview with the school principal
Examples	Explanations												
ISHanh100613	Data from an interview with a student named Hanh on June 10, 2013												
ITTrang	Data from an interview with a teacher named Trang												
CPDiem	Data from a casual conversation with Diem's mother												
IPrincipal	Data from an interview with the school principal												
researcher log entries	R												

4.3.2 Presenting the data

In alignment with the construct of interview as social practice and the focus of the present study on different English learning settings, the data are mostly presented as narratives. Narratives offer detailed background information relating to the data, allow for moment-by-moment examinations of the data, and leave some aspects of the data for readers' interpretations (Barkhuizen, 2011).

One strength of the narrative style is that the researcher can "present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness" (Bell, 2002, p. 209). The narratives allow readers who are foreign to the research settings to develop a panoramic understanding of situational and contextual features. In the traditional conceptualisation of interview data as reports, Talmy (2010) points out that data tend to be devoid of background elements and are usually depicted as "stand-alone quotes of respondents' answers (p. 136) . This is among the most common constraints of qualitative data presentation which fails to question the data itself (Block, 2000). From a social practice perspective, data are delineated as "accounts" that involve various aspects - contextual, attitudinal, factual, experiential, and mental (Talmy, 2010, 2011; Talmy & Richards, 2011). In this regard, Miller (2011) states:

When we choose to engage with how accounts are constructed as well as what interviewees seem to be saying, we come to understand more clearly how interviewers and interviewees assemble particular discursive resources in co-constructing clarity and seeming reliability too. (p. 58)

As the present study emphasises analysing EFL students' motivational trajectories within and across settings, the narrative approach makes possible vivid accounts of how changes occur over time.

Another merit of narratives lies in their temporality. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to this as the central dimension of narrative inquiry because "we take for granted that locating things in time is the way to think about them. When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an

expression of something happening over time” (p. 29). The temporal nature of narratives is critical to this study by considering EFL students’ motivation in particular situations and contexts (Ushioda, 2012b, 2012d). Such spontaneous situated analyses make up a patchwork of the learners’ overall motivational trajectories. Also, the concepts of time and context are not separable but mutually contingent. From this point of view, Corbin and Strauss (2008) remark:

Persons or collectives do not live or act within a vacuum, but rather exist and act within a larger framework of structural conditions . . . lead[ing] to certain events, circumstances, situations, and/or problems . . . Thus, context and process are necessarily linked and should be part of an explanation of any phenomenon. (p. 114)

Most importantly, a narrative approach to data presentation allows me to leave certain issues open to discussion. In Canagarajah’s (1996) words, “narratives represent concrete forms of knowledge that are open to further interpretation” (p. 327). Since motivation is a complex and dynamic construct that does not follow any pattern (Dörnyei, 2009c), the open-endedness of narratives offers different ways of interpreting it. In examining the cases, there were certain instances that exceeded my interpretation as there might be more than one way to approach them. Fixing such instances to a particular angle of reflection might slide into a reductionist stance. To resolve this dilemma, some data were simply narrated the way they were, leaving some aspects for readers’ judgements.

4.3.3 Validity and reliability

The epistemological and ontological relevance of such constructs as validity, generalisability, and reliability to the qualitative paradigm have been controversial (Dörnyei, 2007; Gialdino, 2009; Seale, 1999). It is rather misleading to impose criteria for evaluating quantitative research on the qualitative realm because “naturalistic [qualitative] inquiry has its own set of criteria for adequacy” (Guba, 1981, p. 88). As a result, researchers have spawned substitutes for these terms to segregate them from the quantitative connotations in an attempt to enhance qualitative rigour (Cho & Trent, 2006; Denzin &

Lincoln, 2008; Shenton, 2004). The ultimate strength of qualitative inquiry is that it offers rich insights into a particular phenomenon by investigating a smaller number of cases but this concomitantly reduces the ability to generalise findings to a larger population (Patton, 2002). Such concepts as generalisability and reliability are not strictly adhered to in qualitative research because “qualitative researchers are not seeking to establish ‘law’ in which reliability of observation and measurement are essential. Rather, qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those in it” (Merriam, 1995, p. 56).

Qualitative inquiry depends on how the research is conducted within the research settings rather than the methods it adopts because its primary concern is to reflect on the “holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing” nature of reality (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). In fact, contextual elements are especially crucial to research validity, as Maxwell (2013) insists:

Validity is a property of inferences rather than methods, and is never something that can be proved or taken for granted on the basis of the methods used. Validity is also relative: it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions. (p. 121)

Another criterion for assessing validity in qualitative research is its congruence with the research purposes and settings. These were the major points of consideration in the present study. To gain in-depth understandings of the rural Vietnamese EFL students’ motivational trajectories in relation to significant others from a situated perspective, contextual dimensions were derived from diverse data sources, including interviews, observation, casual conversations, local documents, and photographs. This method of data triangulation, defined as “the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 7), served to enhance the validity of the data. Different types of data from different perspectives (the students, their parents and other family members, the local teachers, and the school’s stakeholders) complemented each other to encapsulate

learners' motivational fluctuations across contexts and situations. For example, observational data were substantiated by means of interviews and casual exchanges with the participants. Likewise, interview data were strengthened by observational data and analyses of photographs and local documents.

In addition, respondent validation, or member checking, was also exhaustively utilised throughout the course of data collection. This involved sharing my understandings and findings with the participants for their feedback and further explanations throughout the process of data collection and analysis. With this technique, the data can be examined through the lens of the participants, which helped to enhance the validity of their accounts (Creswell & Miller, 2010). I did not wait until the final interview to conduct member checking; instead, I referred back to some previously discussed dimensions of the case studies on a frequent basis, checked their progress, and modified them to fit in with the emerging elements. I conducted member-checking particularly thoroughly while writing up my findings chapters with the assistance of Facebook Messenger which allowed me to chat with the participants online either synchronously or asynchronously. I discussed my findings outlines with each student to ensure that my understandings and interpretation of their data approximated what they actually intended in the interviews. This continuously validating process aimed for “acknowledging learners as agentive, responsible theorists of their own experience, and of representing their experience and voices in a way that balances their recognition and ownership of their experience with the rigorous academic criteria” (Harvey, 2014, p. 12). I also asked my participants to clarify their perspectives in the form of drawing (see Image 7.1) or I illustrated their data in tag clouds (Image 5.1) and elicited their feedback. These visual representations were a vivid channel for me to better understand and explore different angles of the students' language learning motivation.

4.4 Summary

Qualitative research has increasingly established itself as a valuable tool in researching the dynamic and situated nature of L2 motivation. The longitudinal case study design adopted in this study aims to account for the idiosyncrasies of individual language learners in their personal constructions of motivation over time. Data collection was primarily based on interviews from social practice approaches and observations. Secondary and supplementary data collecting tools and sources consisted of a researcher log, casual conversations, informal interactions, Facebook exchanges, and analyses of documents and photographs. A combination of on-site and online data collection was effective in capturing a substantial part of the participants' motivational progression, maintaining the sustained duration of the present study, and overcoming geographical barriers. Principles of reciprocity informed every step throughout the data collection process as a way to show my appreciation of the participants' commitment. In alignment with the theoretical and analytical focus of the present study, the presentation of the findings followed narrative and descriptive styles to weave together different contextual and situational elements that shaped learners' motivational trajectories. In addition to the triangulation of data collection methods, member checking was carried out, among other approaches, to enhance the validity of the study.

The following four chapters present the findings from this study. The four case studies describe and analyse the students' diverse views and attitudes, the motivational affordances provided by significant others, and the sociocultural values encompassing their English language studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: DIEM

5.1 Diem as a late-coming participant

Diem entered the present study two weeks later than the rest of the participants. At the time of recruitment, she was in her second semester of Year Eleven. This was a critical phase in her studies because she had to make careful preparations for the next year, which was her final year at high school. Initially, I was reluctant to recruit her as a participant for fear that her engagement in my project would disrupt her studies (see 4.2.5.1 for my participant selection criteria). Instead, I invited her to join a private tuition group at another student's home. She also attended my Thursday English class and actively took part in all the activities. With better language competence than other students, Diem usually volunteered to be a model when it came to presentational work.

In addition to the private group meetings, I gave Diem some reference materials for her own study and came to her house occasionally to help her to revise for the university entrance examination. Her language learning visions, diligence, and particularly her enthusiasm about my study convinced me that Diem would be an exceptional case. Diem represented an avid learner from a rural area who had experienced numerous challenges in her foreign language pursuit from secondary school to the end of her high school. After my data collection period in Vietnam, we remained in frequent communication on Facebook and Skype for discussion of her study issues. She gave me regular updates on her language learning activities, her revision progress for the university entrance examination, and her successful entry into university.

5.2 Diem's family background and her perception of education

Born into a poor, low-literacy family originally from Cambodia, Diem witnessed the difficulties that her parents and extended family experienced in their lives and schooling. This microsystemic background contributed to sharpening her

perspectives on the role of education in reaching her personal goals. The motivational affordances from her family, including her desire to respond to her parents' efforts and emotional investment in her, provided a constant driver for Diem to persevere in learning English (see Figure 5.2, p. 129).

5.2.1 Diem's family background

Diem's parents are Cambodian-Vietnamese who fled their home country to Vietnam due to poverty and political instability. At the time I started my data collection, her weather-beaten cottage was being transformed into a firmer concrete house under the sponsorship of the local charity organisation for the poor. Diem's parents, far older than was usually the case for those with children at her age, had only a very small circle of relatives living in the rural neighbourhood. Her father usually left home very early in the morning for work and came back late in the afternoon while her mother assumed all household responsibilities, including taking care of the children. Diem had an elder brother specialising in engineering at a college in Ho Chi Minh City.

Parental educational backgrounds are a salient element in determining their approaches to child education and persistence (Chevalier, Harmon, Sullivan, & Walker, 2013; Lamb, 2013b). Given their relatively low literacy levels, Diem's parents did not put any academic pressure on her, but regularly reminded her of the importance of schooling with a common Vietnamese saying: "khôn thì con nhờ, dại thì con chịu" (on your own head, be it). Her mother elaborated on her family situation and child-rearing viewpoints:

Interviewer: What do you think about the role of education?

Diem's mother: We left Cambodia in 1975 and started to go to school at a much later age than our classmates. We had to switch from Khmer language to Vietnamese, which was a real challenge for us. We were teenagers but had to sit in classes for kids. We quit when we were in Year Two or Three. We had no idea about education and its

importance at that time. We are pre-literate but our children can't be so.

Interviewer: Do you expect anything from your children?

Diem's mother: I have no idea. We are too poor to support their study the way other families do, but the further they can go in their study, the better. It's all up to them. If they want to continue going to school, we will try our best to help. If not, the decision is theirs to make. (IPDiem)

The mother's stance was that schooling was important but not necessarily obligatory. She gave Diem the freedom to decide whether she should continue to a higher academic level or quit school because "that's my daughter who is studying, not me" (IPDiem). Her easy-going manner came from an understanding that Diem would develop her full potential by learning something she liked; parental imposition of education options might be counterproductive. However, her mother's sharing of life experience helped Diem to see more clearly the value of education to her academic and economic future.

5.2.2 Higher education for life changes and fulfilment of filial duty

Family socioeconomic statuses have been found to have a key role in shaping children's L2 motivation and the amount of effort they expend in their studies (Butler, 2015; Lamb, 2012; Sadiman, 2004; Shim, 2013). Having been living in a financially challenged situation since childhood, Diem had a strong desire to make her way up the academic and professional ladder, indicating her self-appraisal of the limited language affordances within her microsystems and her agentive commitment to her language studies as a means of upward social mobility. Unlike her cousins and relatives, who came to terms with their low-paid manual work, she was committed to pursuing higher education:

Interviewer: Do you have any relatives living around here?

Diem: Yes, most of them.

Interviewer: Do they study well?

Diem: No. In my extended family, I am the best student.

- Interviewer: Do your aunts, uncles, and parents usually talk about children's education?
- Diem: Not much. They do not pay much attention to it. Most of them are peasants so they don't care much about our study. My cousins have taken up different jobs like factory workers, bricklayers, drivers, or mechanics since they graduated from high school. None of them have gone to university.
- Interviewer: So you are among the few who want to go to university?
- Diem: Yes.
- Interviewer: How do you feel about this?
- Diem: I think I am luckier than them. I am proud of myself and so are my parents. (ISDiem030613)

By referring to her relatives as “peasants”, Diem did not mean to denigrate them but wanted to show that most people in her extended family and neighbourhood cared more about day-to-day money making than their children's schooling. Their limited social knowledge and immediate household concerns blurred their perspectives on the importance of education. Diem cherished her “luck” at being able to pursue her desired study, in contrast to her cousins who had to quit school early due to lack of parental encouragement or for financial reasons. She also had a firm belief in the rewards of education. In response to my interview questions about what she would do for her parents in the future, she said:

- Diem: I can earn a lot of money to help my family and achieve my ambitions.
- Interviewer: Your mom told me she didn't expect any return from her children. Do you think helping your family is your duty or your desire?
- Diem: Both. My parents have brought me up and taken care of me, so I should do the same to them when they get old. If I have good living conditions, they must have the same. That is my biggest wish because now we are poor and my parents have to work hard. I really want my family to be

better in the future so that they won't have to live in difficult financial situations.

Interviewer: What is the link between your present study and your wishes?

Diem: My study is very important because I can only realise my dreams through higher education.

Interviewer: So what is the biggest motivation to you?

Diem: Because of my family circumstances. My parents are poor, so I have experienced more disadvantages than my classmates in many aspects of life. I have to study hard to escape poverty and help my family. (ISDiem140713)

Indeed, Diem's ideal self, namely being able to alleviate her family's financial difficulties, was one of the factors that fortified her decision to pursue her language learning interest.

5.3 Diem's intense love for learning foreign languages

Diem's interest in learning English was ignited in secondary school (see Figure 5.2, column 1). She soon became aware of its practical value for her studies and future prospects and actively participated in various learning activities across microsystems. She also wanted to learn Japanese, but was hindered by her circumstances and the local lack of language affordances and learning opportunities. The challenges and limitations in her language learning were the main driver for her ambition of opening a foreign language centre in the future to help students coming from similar rural backgrounds.

5.3.1 Diem's passion for learning English

Diem started to learn English at secondary school whereas most of her peers who came from better-off families had commenced their English studies in either private classes or at foreign language centres much younger. This was both because her parents did not realise her need to learn English and because their financial circumstances stopped them from thinking about sending her to private

English classes. In her first English lesson, Diem was hugely impressed by the idea of being able to read in a foreign language:

Interviewer: When did you start learning English?

Diem: Since Year Six. In the first English lesson, I had a reading text. After finishing it, I found I could read English, which was so exciting that I grew to like it.

Interviewer: What do you like about English?

Diem: I can communicate with foreigners. I can read a lot of foreign books which are mainly written in English. I can easily get updated with worldwide news and other information. (ISDiem030613)

It was very soon after Diem started to learn English at school that she realised how useful it would be for her studies and life activities. English could facilitate her communication with foreigners and provided her with easy access to worldwide knowledge from cultural products such as books, the mass media, and the Internet. She primarily learned English through her personal efforts and active participation in extracurricular programmes at school. Since I did not want to distract Diem from her studies during my data collection, I formulated her language learning activities, strategies, goals, and other related aspects in a tag cloud⁵ based on the interview data and my observations (for the other participants who had more available time than Diem, I asked them to do this by themselves to obtain more of their idiosyncratic perspectives). I presented it to her and together we made modifications to my original cloud. Image 5.1 is the revised version incorporating her feedback:

⁵ The tag cloud was generated automatically by entering a set of keywords into the textbox on <http://www.wordle.net/create>.

- Diem: Yes. One teacher was in charge of training us once a week, mainly by giving us advanced exercises, but she did not have high hopes for us because of the past failing records.
- Interviewer: How did you feel when you failed?
- Diem: Very sad but it also showed that my English was not good enough and I had to make more effort. If I had passed it, I might have rested on my laurels and would not study hard. I still have to take the university entrance examination which is much more important to me. (FSDiem271213)

Despite the frustrating experience in the provincial examination, it was an opportunity for Diem to evaluate her English competence in preparation for the university entrance examination. She said “the extra English training for top students at school helps me to gain more knowledge necessary for my upcoming examination” (FSDiem271213). More importantly, the honour of being the only school representative was both a recognition of her personal effort and a motivator for her language pursuit. Also, being better at English than other school students helped Diem to be more confident in communicative activities:

- Interviewer: Are you confident with your communicative skills?
- Diem: It depends on the situation. If I can deal with it or I like that activity, I will feel good.
- Interviewer: For example, when your English teacher asks you to present something in front of the whole class, how will you feel?
- Diem: Definitely positive because it is my strength. I am much better in English than most of my classmates in English.
- Interviewer: Are you afraid of making mistakes?
- Diem: No. Everyone makes mistakes. I am just a foreign language learner so mistakes are inevitable and I can learn from them as well. (ISDiem030613)

Diem was not afraid of making mistakes in using English, believing that they were common to any language learner. Such a belief built up her positive attitude towards speaking English in public, which was good for her language development. Indeed, her passion was so strong that she even found great joy in learning only a new word or phrase. She stated:

Learning English has brought something new and meaningful to my life. Sometimes I feel tired from the difficulties in my life. Although I have faced many challenges in my language studies, I have always had great fun because I have always discovered something interesting. (ISDiem140713).

5.3.2 Diem's interest in other languages

In addition to English, Diem was particularly passionate about Japanese language and culture. She knew about Japan through the mass media and looked for information about the country from time to time. Unlike other avid English learners who usually wanted to study abroad in English-speaking countries, Diem preferred the idea of going to Japan because:

- Interviewer: Have you ever wished you could go and study in a foreign country?
- Diem: Yes, always.
- Interviewer: Which country?
- Diem: I have always wanted to go to Japan.
- Interviewer: Why Japan, not an English speaking country?
- Diem: Apart from English, I also like learning Japanese. Japan is a developed country and the people are hard-working.
- Interviewer: But you have been learning English only.
- Diem: Just because I don't have the opportunity to learn Japanese. Now I learn English first because there is no Japanese school here. When I go to university in Ho Chi Minh City, I may have more chances to learn Japanese. (ISDiem030613)

In the district where Diem lived, there was no school or foreign language centre that taught Japanese or any other languages, which made it difficult for her to pursue an additional language for her own interest. This did not mean that Diem learned English because she had no other choice, but rather that she had a general interest in learning foreign languages. She was aware of the constraints of her language learning conditions and set a goal to learn Japanese if she managed to go to Ho Chi Minh City for tertiary study. Another reason for her plan to learn Japanese was its occupational prospects and the local preferential policy for students with Japanese competence. She revealed:

If I can't find a good job with my English qualification, I can work as a Japanese translator. Nowadays there are many Japanese working in my home province. I can apply for jobs in Japanese-owned companies or enterprises. Also, the provincial government also has preferential career policies for students specialising in Japanese. (ISDiem230214)

Learning an additional language might offer Diem different career alternatives in the competitive job market in Vietnam. To achieve this goal, she would have to perform well in the English subject first.

5.3.3 Diem's language-associated visions

Diem's challenges in learning English in the rural community evoked her sympathy for other language learners in similar situations. She harboured a dream of establishing a foreign language centre in the future to help them with their English:

Interviewer: What is your biggest ambition?

Diem: It is a very noble one (laughs). I want to have a good job just to earn money, but my greatest dream is to set up an English language centre for poor students who can't afford to go to a foreign language class like me.

Interviewer: Do you really want to make it come true?

Diem: Certainly (with a very definite tone).

Interviewer: What have you been doing to achieve your ambition?

- Diem: Now I can do nothing but learn English as hard as I can so that I will be able to find a job with a high salary. Only then can I fulfil my dream.
- Interviewer: Will you run your English centre as a profit-making business?
- Diem: I think there will be a small fee but it will be absolutely free for poor students.
- ...
- Interviewer: Is this an element that motivates you to learn English harder?
- Diem: Yes. When I think about my dream, I feel excited and think I should do my best. (ISDiem140713)

Although her plan to open a foreign language centre was merely one of the future possibilities which she conceded would be hard to achieve, Diem felt energised by the idea that she could contribute something worthwhile to students with a rural background such as herself. This future vision, whether achievable or not, showed her appraisal of the significance of learning English, not only to herself but also to other students. Her concern to create an English learning environment also reflected her undiminished desire to go to a foreign language centre. In fact, Diem had always been envious of her classmates who could afford to take English courses at foreign language centres:

- Interviewer: Have you ever attended any class in a foreign language centre?
- Diem: Never. My parents can't afford it.
- Interviewer: Do you feel envious of your classmates whose parents can afford to send them there?
- Diem: Yes. They can speak very good English because they have the opportunity to practise with native speakers of English. Their pronunciation and communicative skills are marvellous. They know how to react appropriately in different situations. My parents are not as financially comfortable as theirs, so I have to rely on myself then.

Still, there are some aspects that I excel them, for example, vocabulary and grammar. (ISDiem030613)

Diem consoled herself with the thought that she was better at vocabulary and grammar than her classmates. She was proud of this because it was the result of her personal effort rather than relying on English courses at foreign language centres. However, the lack of language affordances due to her financial and local constraints within her microsystems and wider exosystems was just one of the obstacles confronting Diem. Both the teaching focus and school policies that did not pay much attention to English as a subject also challenged her perseverance.

5.4 The pros and cons of being in the top class

Upon entering Vision High, Diem was eligible to study in the first top class for her high performance in the entry examination. This placement, which offered her a number of academic privileges and learning opportunities, was an honour for herself and her family because it indicated her academic excellence over hundreds of other students. Despite the challenge of the pressure, requirements and expectations in the top class, the more autonomous learning style fostered in this microsystem was advantageous to her (see Figure 5.2, column 2).

5.4.1 Pressure from school stakeholders

As mentioned in 2.3.5, the students in the top classes usually represented the school in provincial and national competitions. Along with special affordances such as scholarships, extracurricular activities, and highly experienced teaching staff, Diem studied with a tailor-made curriculum which was knowledge-intensive, chiefly focussing on three major subjects: Maths, Chemistry, and Physics (FSDiem250314). In this class, she was provided with more advanced knowledge in these subjects that went beyond the national curriculum. In fact, she did not really desire such expanded knowledge, except for Maths, because it did not relate much to her future major. Also, she had to study under intense score pressure since the students in the top class were expected to set good examples for their peers. The principal and vice-principals came to her class

more often than other classes. She said that their seeming encouragement during each visit usually implied that everyone in the class had to make much more effort to meet the school achievement targets.

5.4.2 Pressure from the teachers across disciplines

The teaching methods, task demands, and score requirements added to the stress Diem experienced in her class. She commented:

All teachers assume that we are all excellent students in their subjects. You know I focus and spend more time on English. The majority of my classmates are not so good at English because it is not their subject of specialty. . . The teachers only follow the majority. They teach very fast and give very difficult questions, assuming that students already have the basic knowledge in their area. Sometimes I feel I am drowning in their classes. I don't dare to ask them to slow down because I may be among the few students to do so. They also expect us to have high scores. It is the school's pressure on the teachers, which is passed on to us eventually. (ISDiem201013)

Most members in Diem's class had the highest academic standing at Vision High; thus, the teachers of these subjects tended to cover the teaching content very rapidly and at times overestimated students' ability. This made it difficult for Diem to keep up with her classmates who specialised more in these areas than her. In an effort to bridge the knowledge gap and to catch up, she had to spend more time working on these subjects at the expense of her time for English learning. In addition, the school set achievement targets for each class which the teachers in charge had to meet. In the first top class, the targets were usually much higher than those for students in normal ones. To meet the school's academic goals, Diem's teachers held very high expectations of her overall class performance. This required her to spread her focus more evenly among the school subjects, suggesting her adaptive learning styles and her appraisal of the affordances available within different microsystems.

5.4.3 Peer competition and challenging learning conditions

Peer competition has been found to be a strong motivator in language learning (Azarnoosh, 2014; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Gao, 2008; Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Unlike other classes at Vision High, whose atmosphere was based on mutual support, the students in Diem's class competed very fiercely in terms of academic achievement. They had to try their best to retain their place; otherwise, they would be transferred to another lower-level class to make room for better performing students. Diem found herself entangled in such a continuous struggle:

Everyone in my class is in intense competition. This does not mean we hate each other but we have to try our best to maintain our standing. All my classmates study very hard and well. Most of them come from rich families, so they have a lot of learning opportunities. They can take private tuition for most main subjects. They have computers with Internet connections at home. Their parents give them money to buy books and materials for further study. I have to really struggle to keep up with them because my parents cannot afford such things. (ISDiem201013)

Despite acknowledging peer competition as an effective source of motivation, Diem had to carefully balance her time to ensure good performance in both English and other subjects. As part of her strategy, she made a resolution to study English at least half an hour a day however busy she was with school work, thus showing her ability to continue to adapt to multiple pressures and opportunities.

Another disadvantage confronting Diem was her family's financial situation. Whereas most of her classmates came from affluent families who could provide good learning conditions, especially private tuition, she had to rely chiefly on lessons at school and her personal effort. She felt she had to study twice as hard as her classmates to keep up with them. It was not uncommon for her mother to see her doing homework assignments until after midnight (IPDiem).

Figure 5.1 summarises how Diem interacted with the significant others in the school context. There were multiple mesosystemic and exosystemic relationships between her and these individuals, and between these individual themselves.

Although their synergistic influences challenged Diem's approaches to her language studies, she showed great perseverance in pursuing her goals.

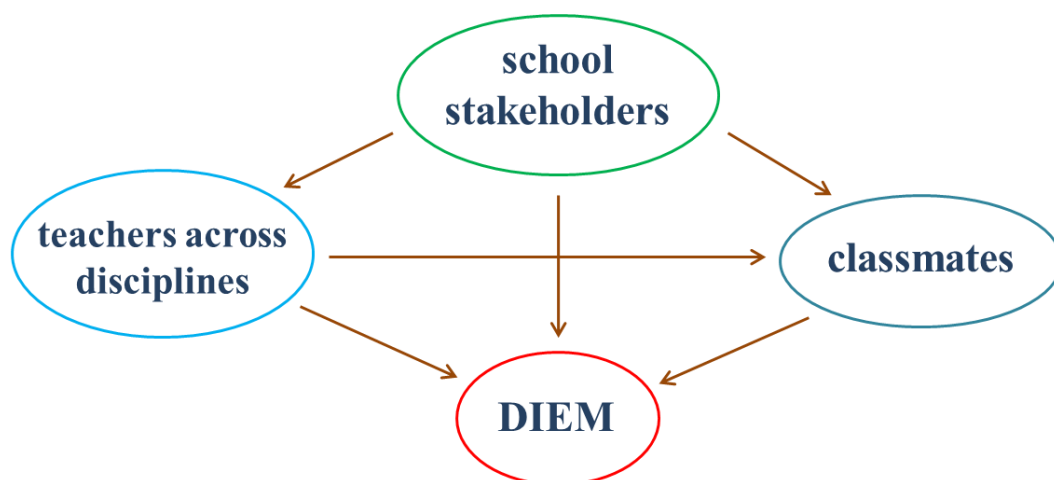


Figure 5.1: Diem's various sources of pressure and expectations

5.4.4 Diem's reflective moments

Maintaining a place in the top class and sustaining her English learning interest took away most of Diem's available time for any other life activities. Sometimes, she really wanted to indulge herself in moments of relaxation:

This afternoon, on the way back from school, I saw some kids flying kites in the paddy fields. The wind was growing stronger and stronger, signalling the advent of the summer holiday. I wish I could fly a kite like them, in such gorgeous late afternoon sunlight. I really want to enjoy a taste of childhood but now I have to leave such enjoyment behind. Study and study for university entrance. (Facebook status on 140214)

The critical importance of her studies at that point in time denied her such a refreshing activity as kite-flying, which is common in rural areas in Vietnam, suggesting her sacrifice of emotional needs and her appraisal of this salient stage in her academic life. She kept reminding herself to focus more on her studies because she was at the threshold between high school and university which required maintaining serious revision for upcoming examinations. She was well aware that a minute of procrastination might cost her the chance to enter a good university. She said: "There are nights when I am too sleepy to open my eyes but

I have to keep my routine. I have to study English before going to bed. I would feel really bad about myself the following day if I failed to do so" (ISDiem230214).

Despite experiencing so much pressure in her present class, Diem insisted that the class environment helped her to realise her potential. She strove to maintain her position as a member of the school English team, which allowed her to participate in interschool and provincial English contests from which she could gain more knowledge than the textbooks and teachers could provide. Her effort suggested that she was highly agentive in grasping learning opportunities and language affordances available in her language learning context. Such activities also helped her to identify gaps in her knowledge so that she could fill them. In addition, Diem believed that the competitive class environment actively promoted diligence and autonomous study. Most importantly, her parents would be happy with her placement in the first top class, as she stated:

In A1 [the first top class], everyone is hard-working so I can't procrastinate. A1 usually has the highest university admission rate at my school. It is also an honour to be in the best class. I am proud of myself and so are my parents when other people ask them about me (ISDiem030613).

5.5 Diem's frustration with learning English at school

Given the class size and constraints of the local context, English teaching at Vision High tended to cater for the needs of the majority of students who specialised in natural sciences and had minimal interest in English. This practice challenged the minority of students who were committed to learning English, including Diem. Particularly, the classroom teaching approaches, with their lack of flexibility or focus on communicative elements, fell short of her expectations (see Figure 5.2, column 3).

5.5.1 The routine teaching approaches

Diem was among the very few students in her class as well as her school to choose English as a university major. Over her three years at high school, she had the opportunity to work with most of the English teaching staff either directly or indirectly in various contexts, including the formal English classes, training sessions for excellent English students, and other extracurricular activities. However, her experience showed that her English teachers, despite their enthusiasm, did not provide adequate support for students like her who specialised in English. This was because they paid more attention to low-performing students who chose to pursue majors in natural sciences. Her teachers had to ensure that these students met the score requirements imposed by the school stakeholders to maintain the balance between English and other subjects. Consequently, their teaching approaches were tailored to the needs of this bigger group of students. Diem reflected on her classroom experience:

Interviewer: How do you feel about your English classes?

Diem: There are not many special activities in class. My teachers always follow the majority. We do not have much communication in class. Because the test questions are the same for all students in the province, schools compete more for students' academic achievement than teaching quality. We work on a lot of exercises from a supplementary workbook the English staff compiled. After we finish the assigned exercises in the workbook, they will read the answer keys to us. Sometimes they give us some explanations but very briefly. We only study according to the tests and exams. They want us to have high scores, so we have grammar and vocabulary practice most of the time.

Interviewer: Have you ever been impressed about the teachers' lessons?

Diem: Yes. We go to the school lab sometimes, actually very rarely, because there is only one lab for over 35 classes. In one lesson, my teacher showed us some video clips about

the universe and asked us related questions. It was really interesting but we do not have many opportunities.

Interviewer: So most classes are the same?

Diem: It is only when our classes are observed by the school vice-principal or other English teachers that my teachers will carry out more communicative activities. Otherwise, we only have exercises and little interaction in English. (ISDiem030613)

Except for a few occasions, especially when the class had visitors, Diem felt bored with the routine exam-focused teaching approach. Most tasks in class were well below her English level because the majority of her classmates were not good at English. She commented: “I have to ‘swim by myself’ with English as my teachers have not helped me much” (ISDiem201013). By “swimming by herself,” Diem meant that the teachers did not offer individual support to excellent students like her but focussed more on the less-achieving students to balance the overall performance of the whole class.

5.5.2 Diem’s desired English class

Despite her frustration with the teaching approaches that her English teachers adopted and their limited support for students specialising in English, Diem was sympathetic towards their challenges. She was aware of the English language teachers’ struggle in the rural context where most students held a resigned attitude towards learning English. Diem said:

Diem: Although they are mechanical in their teaching styles, they do want students to understand the lessons.

Interviewer: What do your teachers usually do?

Diem: They usually repeat the same points many times or draw a diagram to illustrate their explanations. It is not always easy to understand some of the teachers though because of their methods. (ISDiem030613)

By “mechanical”, Diem meant that the teachers mainly focused on drills and non-interactive practice in the belief that her classmates could master the study points. There were little classroom interaction and few communicative activities to develop speaking and listening skills. In Diem’s opinion, such an approach was hugely beneficial to students who only learned English for examinations, but not for her because she wanted to develop multiple language skills, especially communicative English. In one interview, I played the role of her formal English teacher and asked Diem to make some frank suggestions. The extract below indicated what she really expected from an English class:

Interviewer: If I were your English teacher, how would you like me to teach you?

Diem: I think you should conduct more games and activities to increase the application of textbook knowledge. There should be more interaction and communicative activities so that we can become more active in our study and apply what we learn in real-life contexts.

Interviewer: What else do you think I should do?

Diem: For example, you should have some illustrative photos and video clips to make the lesson more interesting or integrate your life experience in the lesson so that we can develop life skills as well. (ISDiem030613)

Diem felt that authentic practice and visual illustrations would be useful for English learning; however, few of the school teachers integrated these elements into their lessons. Also, there was a marked mismatch between what she learned and its immediate applicability because the teachers did not give her the chance to put them to use in meaningful situations. One inevitable repercussion of this teaching style and focus was that students had to take private tuition if they wanted to pursue an English language major in their future studies.

5.6 Free private tuition as a source of motivation

With limited affordances from her language learning at school, Diem and her peers formed a study group facilitated by a private English teacher, Mr Hung, who worked in another local school but had a good reputation for his teaching excellence. This study arrangement showed her appraisal of the limitations within her microsystems, her pro-active approach to private tuition, and her agency in choosing a learning setting that better suited her L2 goals. The private class enabled her to develop the skills and strategies necessary for coping with her upcoming examinations. Also, the teacher's waiver of the tuition fee, a rather uncommon act indicating his attention to students' background and empathy, was a great incentive for Diem (see Figure 5.2, column 4).

5.6.1 The class at Mr Hung's home

To prepare for the university entrance examination in her final year, Diem and some of her close friends who chose the same exam group asked Mr Hung, an English teacher in another local high school, to tutor them. They knew of him through the introduction of other school alumni who had successful examination results with his assistance. They started working with Mr Hung at the beginning of Year Eleven, which was about six months before my data collection. The class met twice a week at his house but the meeting time changed very often because he was very busy with his other position as the school's vice-principal. In her description of the private class, Diem said:

It is more like a study group than an English class. There are around ten of us who are interested in learning English and will sit for the university entrance English examination. For each class, Mr Hung assigns us with some tasks, usually in the form of multiple choice questions. My classmates and I work on the questions; he provides us with the answer keys and explanations once we finish them. We mainly learn grammar, vocabulary, reading, and other language aspects necessary for the university entrance examination. Generally, we learn those points that are not taught in class. (ISDiem140713)

Diem's chief goal in taking the private class with Mr Hung was to learn more advanced points in English which the formal classes did not cover. Their class activities mainly involved doing exercises that simulated previous exam papers. The teacher was very strict on disciplinary issues, such as timing and class attendance, and demanded a high level of diligence. One afternoon after Diem finished a private session with me, I wanted to know more about Mr Hung's classes so that I could help her better. She stated:

One needs to have strong determination to attend the class because there is nothing interesting except for exercises and homework. We are given a lot of homework and have to memorise a lot of idioms, phrasal verbs, and vocabulary. Sometimes, when we procrastinate and do not do the homework, Mr Hung will get upset, saying that we are wasting our parents' money or we are studying for our own future, not for anyone else. Once he even threatened to cancel the class if we did not focus on our study. (CSDiem)

Despite its monotonous nature, Diem and her friends hardly ever skipped a private class meeting because it was the only extra source of language affordances that helped them with the revision for the university entrance examination. Diem revealed that they were not afraid of Mr Hung's warnings because they knew he did not mean it; rather, such alerts showed that he really cared about their study. In addition to imparting knowledge, Mr Hung gave them moral lessons about appreciating other people's efforts, especially that of their parents. It is common in Vietnamese culture that teachers, whether school or private ones, may take the place of parents in educating students. Mr Hung's practice showed both his academic devotion as well as his attention to other aspects of these students' lives.

5.6.2 Mr Hung's generosity

In an interview following my talk with Diem's mother about her studies and the private tuition fees she had to pay for other subjects⁷, I referred to her mother's

⁷ Vietnamese people in rural areas are usually open about financial issues to those with close rapport.

worry about the tuition as one of the topics for discussion because she had also been there listening to our conversation. Diem revealed that she had been trying to reduce the number of private classes she took, compared with her classmates. While they attended four to five private classes to cope with the academic requirements in the first top class, she only went to classes absolutely essential to her university major.

Interviewer: You take private tuition for three subjects. Do your parents have any difficulty funding your study?

Diem: Yes. My mom sometimes complains. She said she did not pay that much for my elder brother when he was at high school. But, in fact, I only have to pay for two subjects. Mr Hung gave me a fee waiver for his class.

Interviewer: What do you think about this?

Diem: I think he is very kind. He is a very enthusiastic teacher as well. I didn't tell him about my family background. He heard it from my study group. One day after class, he summoned me and said I didn't have to pay for the tuition. I felt very happy but there was something hard to say.

Interviewer: What's that?

Diem: I felt like I owed him something. I have to study well to deserve his good deed. I always prepare homework and other things very well before going to his class. I think I have to double my effort. If I fail the university entrance examination this time, I will not dare to see him again. (ISDiem140713)

In Vietnamese culture, family financial status does not usually evoke any sense of superiority versus inferiority among students. This was why Diem took no step to hide her family background from her friends in the study group. Mr Hung learned from them about her financially challenged condition and decided to waive her tuition fee. She viewed the teacher's preferential treatment as an act of benevolence in the face of which she had to study harder. Her serious attitude towards learning English was one of the ways through which Diem wanted to

show her gratitude to the private teacher. While she was happy because the fee exemption partly relieved her parents' tuition burden, she developed a new fear: the fear of not being able to meet Mr Hung' expectations.

5.7 Diem's preparation for the university entrance examination

The university entrance examination was the most salient event in Diem's time at high school, as it determined her access to tertiary education. It required her to draw up a timetable in Year Twelve that focussed on her exam group. This exam also triggered her low sense of self-efficacy of not being able to meet the academic expectations from significant others (see Figure 5.2, column 5).

5.7.1 Expendng more effort to learn English

In the second semester of her final year at high school, Diem focussed more on her preparation for the university entrance examination. After one Facebook exchange on this topic, I asked Diem to send me her timetable for exam revision. I received the diagram below (Image 5.2) from her after she finished all her examinations:

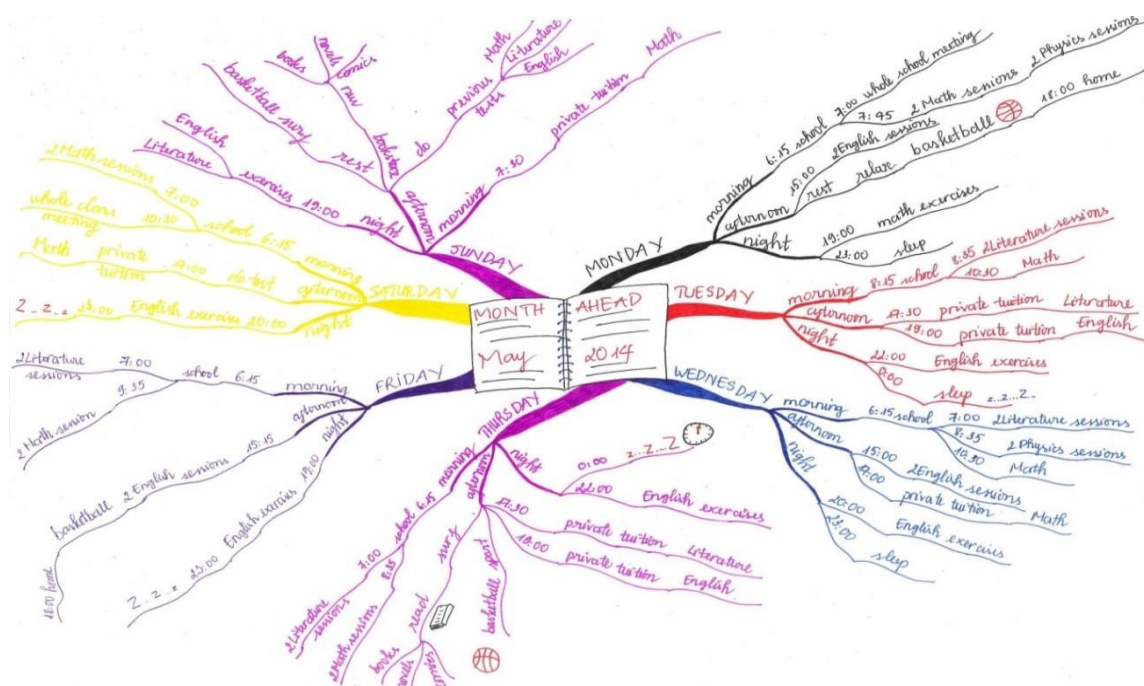


Image 5.2: Diem's timetable for examination revision

Diem prioritised the three main subjects that she would be assessed on in the university entrance examination, including English, Mathematics and Literature. However, English accounted for most of her time because it would determine her overall score and the chance to pass the exam (owing to the testing requirements of Diem's intended university, the English score would be doubled in the final total). Her revision took place in different contexts, from school to home and in the private class.

Interviewer: How much time do you spend on your study?

Diem: Do you mean learning English?

Interviewer: Yes.

Diem: I usually study four evenings a week because I have to go to private classes for other subjects. I study at my desk from seven pm till midnight. I spend around one hour on other school subjects and then the rest of the time on English.

Interviewer: How about in class?

Diem: Because most of my friends do not take English, my teacher cut down the English curriculum for them but gave me one exercise book to work on by myself in class. She knew that I was also taking private classes with Mr Hung so she did not care much about my study in class.

Interviewer: How about the class with Mr Hung?

Diem: He has been quite busy with his work but we still maintain the class meetings. We are working on previous examination papers. (ISDiem230214)

At this stage, both the school and private English teachers gave Diem the best learning conditions for her examination revision. Despite not providing Diem with much extra, the school English teacher gave her special exam material to work on. Also, Diem did not have to follow the school curriculum and could spend her formal class time studying for her specialised subjects. In the private class, Mr Hung started to give her mock tests so that he could evaluate her progress. Most of Diem's available time at home was also dedicated to English

practice. Even during the Tet holiday when most Vietnamese students relaxed their study, Diem still studied meticulously because she was afraid of failing the university exam (ISDiem230214). These activities displayed her ongoing adaptation to the changes in her learning situations with regard to the critical importance of the upcoming examination.

5.7.2 Diem's pre-examination anxiety

As the time for the university entrance examination approached, Diem developed doubts in her ability to pass it. She was afraid of not being able to gain entry into her desired university and that she would end up being a financial burden for her parents. In a Facebook exchange one month prior to her university entrance examination, she shared her feelings:

- Diem: There is only one more week before the end of the school year. My English is still not good enough. I have tried some exam papers of previous years but my scores are not high. I am afraid I will fail the university entrance examination. Can I make a big improvement in one month, teacher?
- Interviewer: I think what you can do now is make general revision of all the knowledge you have learned. You can't ask for much within one month.
- Diem: So you mean it is hopeless.
- Interviewer: No, I don't mean so. I mean you should try your best. You never know the future.
- Diem: I feel my knowledge is below the expected level for entry into the University of Education. The score requirement is usually very high. Maybe it will be higher this year.
- Interviewer: Don't be that pessimistic. I know your difficulty. You don't have many good teachers there. Try your best. Read the books I gave you before. I hope they will help. Calm down and you will be fine.
- Diem: If I fail this time, I don't know what to do. (FSDiem210514)

Diem's overwhelming concern about the upcoming examination developed into low self-efficacy and a sense of pessimism. The unexpectedly low results from the mock examinations that she was taking raised her doubts in her own ability. Such negative emotions came as a natural response to what was a pivotal milestone in her academic life as well as the high expectations from significant others in multiple microsystems. Diem reported suffering from escalated stress as the exam date was coming closer and closer. She gave herself no break over the last few days before the exam in the hope of cramming herself with as much knowledge as possible. She confided in me: "I have been tied up all day revising for the exam. I still have a mountain of questions to consult with you about" (FSDiem280614).

5.8 Diem's successful admission to her desired university

Diem came to our last Skype interview with a piece of exciting news. All the effort she expended over her three years at high school, especially in her final year, was rewarded with her entry into a teacher-training university in Ho Chi Minh City. This initial achievement was a critical incident that provided a motivational boost in furthering her English learning. In the face of this success, Diem was aware that more effort would be needed at university. Entry into university also allowed her to fulfil her aspiration to learn Japanese and explore Japanese culture (see Figure 5.2, column 6).

This success caused great happiness and pride to herself and her parents. Diem said: "since I knew the results, I have received lots of nice praise from my teachers and neighbours. My parents have received a lot of congratulations from their acquaintances as well" (ISDiem160814). She viewed this as a significant achievement and a step closer to realising her ambitions. In an interview before she left for the city to commence her tertiary study, Diem outlined her plans:

In my first year, I may have to depend on my parents for financial support. I want to devote most of my time to improving my English because I may not be as good at English as my university classmates who come from big cities or elite schools. I am worried that the lecturers will be using so

much English in classes that I can't understand them. From the second year onward, I will start looking for a part-time job to cover my daily expenses. (ISDiem160814)

Along with Diem's excitement about her recent academic success, she was greatly concerned about the financial challenges that confronted her parents, suggesting her appraisal of the affordances available in her future studies. This was one of the reasons for her choice of this university which offered a fee waiver to English language teacher trainees. She also worked out a timeline for her tertiary study and the objectives for each phase, indicating her adaptive learning style in preparing for her new learning context at university. Diem was also afraid that her language skills might be lower than that of her university classmates who came from urban areas and elite schools all over Vietnam. After receiving her university admission confirmation, she devoted most of her available summer time to learning English grammar and vocabulary. She stated: "instead of hanging out with my friends who also passed the university entrance exam to celebrate our success, I have refused their invitations and have been working very hard on English" (ISDiem160814).

Another significant point in her immediate plan was Diem's resolution to pursue Japanese and other languages. She had mentioned such an intention many times in earlier interviews but was more decisive on this occasion. She insisted:

First of all, I will brush up on my English and then Japanese. I will attend an evening Japanese class at a foreign language centre as soon as I settle into my new life in Ho Chi Minh City. I may consider learning other languages afterwards but will probably think about them later. (ISDiem160814)

Learning foreign languages was as much an interest as an occupational pursuit to Diem. Knowing many languages would offer her more alternatives and increase chances of success in job applications. Despite the upcoming challenges in her studies, she was confidently crossing the university threshold with a high hope that her future visions would be realised.

5.9 Diem's overall motivational trajectory

Diem was an avid language learner who had achieved a good degree of success in her learning pathway. Drawing on Beltman and Volet's (2007, p. 319) trajectory model⁸ of a learner's sustained motivation, Figure 5.2 represents her motivational trajectory in relation to her appraisals of the affordances for language learning provided by significant others and overarching sociocultural values. These elements included: Diem's family background; her desire to demonstrate filial piety and to show her gratitude to her private English teachers; her school's placement criteria and teaching practices; the role of English as a language for international communication; and its importance for her to actualise her visions for the future.

Diem's passion for learning English was kindled right after her first English lesson at secondary school and pervaded her academic choices, occupational orientations, and ambitions. It did not take her long to realise the importance of learning English to her studies and future visions. However, English was not the single language that Diem was specifically interested in. She had to restrain her desire to master other languages, especially Japanese, due to the lack of language learning facilities in the rural area where she lived and the fact that English was the sole foreign language covered in the local curriculum. Her plan to take Japanese classes upon her entry into university suggested Diem's strong liking for foreign languages had endured despite the constraints of limited language affordances and learning opportunities in the rural setting.

Another challenge confronting Diem in her pursuit of English was less than adequate support from her English language teachers and school stakeholders. Their primary concern was for the majority of students who were at a much lower level of English. This fact impacted on the teaching approaches that chiefly focused on tests and examinations to cater for the needs of these students. Diem was among the small proportion of students who opted for English as their university major.

⁸ This model applies to the rest of the case studies in the overview of their motivational trajectory

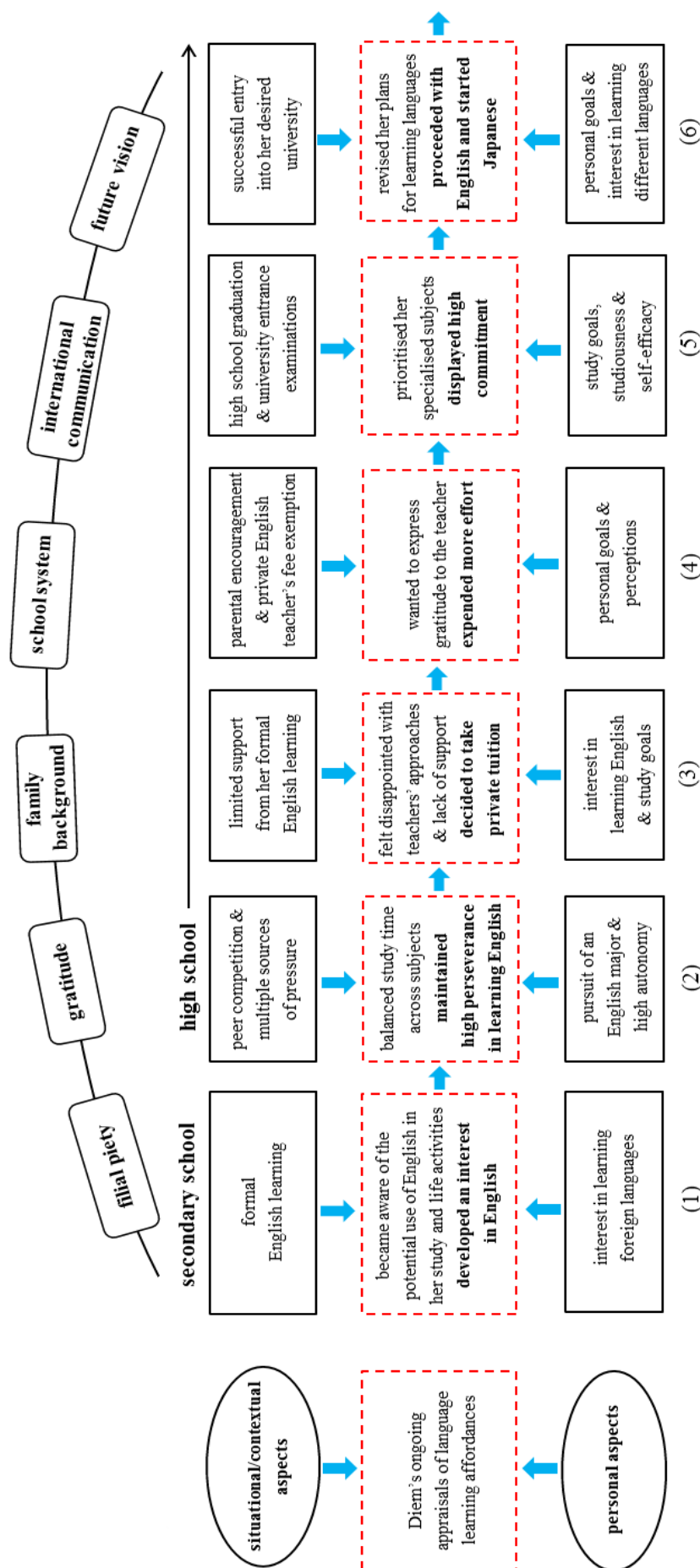


Figure 5.2: Diem's ongoing appraisals of language learning affordances and her motivational trajectory

In addition, peer competition and academic pressure from the school teachers and stakeholders made it more demanding for Diem to follow her language learning interest. As a member in the first top class, Diem had to both maintain high performance across disciplines and to make personal effort in her English learning. However, the privileges and honour of being in such a class were a boost to her language learning motivation.

Frustrated with the insufficient language affordances and learning opportunities in the school context, Diem sought private tuition with an English teacher from another high school, showing her appraisal of the limitations within her microsystems and her agency in looking for alternative language sources to meet her own needs. There was not much difference between the private teacher's approach and that of her school teachers. However, the distinction consisted in the amount of attention and advanced knowledge she received from him in preparation for her university entrance examination. Also, the private teacher's generosity in waiving the tuition fee was another important incentive. She tried her best in her language studies to express her gratitude to him.

Finally, Diem's successful entry into the teacher-training university was a reward for her diligence and showed that a learner from a rural area could make her way to a tertiary institution despite all the challenges in her studies. This significant event also brought much pride and honour to her family within a rural community where not many students were able to proceed to higher education. Most importantly, she felt she was getting closer and closer to realising her ambitions and partially fulfilling her duty of filial piety.

5.10 Summary

Given her family's financial and low-literacy background, Diem was aware of the value of education for her socioeconomic future. She developed a passion for foreign languages out of her curiosity about their linguistic features and practicality. Over three years at high school, Diem's placement in the first top class, which offered her a better school programme and other privileges, was a

great honour to herself and her family. During this time, Diem managed to cope with cross-discipline requirements and peer competition. However, she did not receive very limited language affordances in her formal English learning and had to resort to private tuition. The experience in the private English class, especially the teacher's act of kindness in waiving the tuition fee, further fuelled her determination to learn English. Diem finally passed the university entrance examination which opened up new opportunities for her foreign language pursuits, and for her to demonstrate filial piety to her parents and gratitude to her private teacher, and to help students of similar rural backgrounds. Indeed, the synergy of motivational affordances from school, home and the private English class, and the interpersonal relationships arising from these microsystems contributed positively to Diem's L2 motivational trajectory.

Diem was one year ahead of the rest of the case study participants. Her accounts thus included her preparations for the graduation and university entrance examinations and her successful entry into university. For the next three chapters, the data collection with these case studies ceased at the beginning of their final year at high school. With such time constraints, the descriptions and analyses in these chapters do not entail much of their final year.

CHAPTER SIX: MANH

6.1 My first impression of Manh

6.1.1 The visit to Manh's class

As part of the routine I was establishing in my second week at Vision High, I arranged with the English teachers to visit one or two of their classes each day. Manh was studying in class 10A7, which was one of the lowest-level classes. Before my visit, the teacher in charge informed me that all the students were very weak at English and I should speak very slowly, use very simple English, and make regular Vietnamese translations. I prepared several basic ice-breaking activities and games, aiming to have a very relaxing time with the students.

On that day, I followed the teacher to Manh's class. Seeing us walking in the corridor, some of the students popped their heads out of the windows, applauding and cheering fervently. However, despite the initial excitement, the class grew strangely quiet and passive when I carried out my activities. I tried to elicit answers from the students but none of them expressed any willingness to speak, stating that they were shy and unable to use English. The teacher, observing from the back of the class, occasionally called out the names of some students to stand up and reply to my questions. Manh was one of the students summoned to answer me. From my initial judgement of his responses to my questions, his communicative English was indeed more fluent and natural than that of most of the students at the school. He was embarrassed at the beginning, but when he started to talk, he could express himself in English very well. I also learned from the teacher that Manh was thinking about specialising in English.

6.1.2 My personal interaction with Manh

After the class meeting, I decided to stay behind with the students because their next session had been cancelled. I was talking to some students in the front row

when Manh approached and joined us. He asked me about English learning strategies, explaining that he loved learning English but could not figure out the most appropriate ones for himself. He was also curious about my language learning experience and how I could become successful in my studies. I shared my experience with the group and Manh kept asking more questions. Most of the students showed more interest in knowing about New Zealand whereas Manh was more concerned with how to become a good English learner. I then asked if he wanted to participate in my research. He nodded in agreement without a moment's hesitation but asked if we could have one-on-one private tuition at my house rather than his. He said his place might be too small and uncomfortable for me. I explained to him the nature of my study and assured him that any learning space would not be a problem for me. Also, he needed approval from his parents to take part in the project and promised to give me his answer the next day. I gave him an information sheet and the consent forms.

On the following day, Manh sent me a text message, asking to see me during the morning break. Upon seeing me from afar along the corridor, he greeted me with a smiling face. He presented the parents' consent form to me, excitedly confirming that they fully supported the one-on-one meetings at his home. Unlike other students, he wanted to master all the four language skills, especially writing, because few teachers had taught him how to write an essay at school. In addition to the one-on-one meeting every Tuesday afternoon, we also had frequent conversations on Skype to resolve any issues arising out of his more autonomous study sessions.

6.2 The home environment

In the case of Manh, the home setting has great significance in providing him with initial access to English (see Figure 6.3, column 1, p. 158). Within the local context, his family's interest in his studies was rather unique in that his father was actively involved in igniting and sustaining his orientation to language learning by frequently interacting with him in English. The motivational

affordances at home and parental support were a springboard for Manh in his language studies.

6.2.1 The lifelong dream of Manh's father

The first thing I could see from the threshold was an antique wooden bookshelf in the corner of the living room. Unlike the book-laden shelves often seen in other houses, it was half stacked with CDs and household stuff. Standing alone on one desolated side of the shelf was a dog-eared, browned-paper, monolingual English dictionary. (OSManh050313)

The extract above was my observation of Manh's home on my first visit. I was warmly welcomed by his father, a tanned sturdy man in his forties. Soon after formulaic introductory interactions, the father switched to an account of his college time with chains of fond memories. Reaching for the dictionary on the shelf, he then proudly showed me the signature of a foreigner on the inner page. It was an award from his American teacher for his excellence in English. He went on talking about his passion for learning English at high school and college. He was being trained to become a secondary school English teacher when there was a significant shift in his career choice. He had to quit college and chose to play football professionally under financial and family pressure. He said that being a teacher, especially a teacher of English, was the last career choice one would opt for. He cited a contemporary Vietnamese saying: “Chuột chạy cùng sào mới vào sư phạm”, literally meaning “a person choosing to study at a university/college of teacher training is like a mouse ending up in a trap for having no alternatives.” In those days, Russian was a much more popular language due to the influences of the Soviet Union on Vietnam's socioeconomic and political developments prior to and following wartime. While the teaching of Russian prospered, that of English was the least desired and lowest paid (Thinh, 2006; Wright, 2002). A majority of English teachers had to take on additional work to make ends meet or were forced to leave their jobs for financial reasons. His mother asked him to stop learning English. As a result, Manh's father decided to join the provincial football team which was also his other pastime. His

thwarted ambition turned into recurring remorse for not pursuing a qualification in English language teaching. This left a lasting mental impact on him in that, when intoxicated, his reminiscences of the past came flooding back, spurring him to speak English to quench his “thirst”:

You know I was very keen on learning English. I was about to study to become an English teacher. I attended a teacher-training college for a couple of months. However, my mom discouraged me, saying that being a teacher would be very poor. So, I chose to become a footballer for a living. Now I really regret it. English teachers are very well-paid nowadays . . . When I get drunk, my “English soul” speaks for me. I usually speak English to myself subconsciously. If I could turn back time, I would never have quit my study. (IPManh)

Manh’s father considered this career switch his biggest mistake. He could not have imagined that English would gain such popularity and be in such social demand. Most of his college classmates enjoyed their jobs as English teachers or interpreters with stable incomes and favourable working conditions. He always wished that his only son would help him to fulfil his unachieved ambition. What he had been trying to do was guide Manh through his language studies.

6.2.2 Home interactions in English

Manh’s initial exposure to English was not by learning it formally from school but rather from his curiosity about the confounding language uttered by his father when he was drunk. It is customary in Vietnam, especially in rural areas, that workmates, friends or neighbours gather for a drink after they have finished their hard-working day. His father usually invited some friends over to drink wine until late in the evening. After everybody had left, his father would be reclining on the sofa in the living room but refused to sleep right away. Instead, he kept on babbling something very foreign to Manh. The repeated utterances from his father intrigued him to explore what it actually was:

Interviewer: How did you come to like English?

Manh: It was very early, maybe because of my dad. I think he made me love it. Occasionally I heard him speak a bizarre language when he was drunk. In the beginning I didn't really pay attention to it but this happened so many times that I kept wondering what he was uttering. Was that the language of a drunkard? Other drunken men didn't say anything like that. At that time, I was in elementary school and didn't have a chance to learn English, so I didn't know what language it was.

Interviewer: Then what happened?

Manh: One time, he was sober and I asked him what he said when he was drunk and he said it was English. He also told me about his school life. I was very curious about the language indeed. (ISManh090413)

Manh could not stand the feeling of not being able to understand the meaning behind his father's words when he was drunk. He simply wanted to be able to communicate with his father on those occasions. At that time, he did not know that when he entered secondary school, he would have to learn English as a compulsory subject. What he was more interested in was the way his father uttered it. He stated "I heard the sounds. They were very strange. They were something completely different from what I speak every day" (ISManh090413). The appeal of the language to him came from its sound system which strikingly contrasted with the tonal features of the Vietnamese language. He attempted to mimic his father's pronunciation several times and grew to like the idea of speaking English. His curiosity accumulated over time to the extent that he begged his father to teach him some vocabulary items:

The boy [Manh] kept asking me about the language I spoke. He demanded that I say some words to him. In fact, I could not remember much English. I just knew a few basic sentences and repeated them from time to time when I was intoxicated. This is what we usually call "tiếng bồi" [non-standard English that does not follow any rules, and usually relies on word combinations]. Since he was so keen on knowing the language, I taught him some basic socialising English I knew like greeting or saying "dad,

meal time,” “have you had a shower?”, “where do you go?”, and so on. He picked up these words very quickly. (IPManh)

Despite not explicitly naming his father as his first English language teacher, Manh regarded him as the one who actually kindled his love of English. It was a habit in his family for everybody to gather in the living room after a meal to chat. At those moments, Manh’s father would help him to review the words and expressions that he had learned before teaching him new items. In fact, his father could teach nothing other than spoken English from his recollection of the knowledge he had learned. He believed that developing Manh’s communicative competence was very important because Manh was too shy to talk to others. He said he tried to help Manh to practise speaking English at every possible occasion to enhance his impromptu reactions. This accounted for Manh’s confident speaking manner at home: “It has become a natural reaction. When it came to that particular situation, I would speak English to dad” (ISManh090413). Manh even practised English with his mom who had no language skills. She complained:

He spoke English to me time and time again while I was doing housework. I got quite upset at times because I had no idea what he was saying or wanted me to do. I really hated those moments, especially when his father got drunk. They talked to each other in English. They said something and then laughed. I asked them if they were saying something bad about me without wanting me to know. It was funny, indeed. Anyhow, I think it is good for him this way. (IPManh)

With the exception of his mother’s instances of annoyance because she could not understand what Manh was saying, she supported him in learning English and wished that he could pursue an English language major in his future studies.

6.2.3 Reliving his father’s dream

With all the activities at home to help Manh to learn English, his father deeply shaped his attitudes towards the language. His father tried to build up his communicative confidence through daily conversations at home. When they had

free time together, he usually told Manh about his studies in the past and his regret for not fulfilling his language learning passion. He wanted Manh to be aware of the significance of English to his academic and economic future. At the same time, he wished to pass on “the gift for learning foreign languages that Gods gave me but unfortunately I did not use it the way I was supposed to” (IPManh). His father believed that the practice at home helped Manh to develop an interest in learning English at an early age. Also, he did not put any pressure on Manh to specialise in English; instead, he used his real-life experience to inform Manh’s decisions in his studies.

Manh was sympathetic towards his father for having to abandon his language learning. He found that he was provided with much better conditions and more parental support for language studies than his father had in the past. He kept reminding himself to try his best to learn English to live up to his father’s expectations: “Dad wants me to do well in English. He liked it but he couldn’t pursue it to a high level of education. I want him to feel happy with my language studies. I am doing my best” (ISManh090413). This showed Manh’s determination to relive his father’s language learning dream.

The language affordances and further opportunities for language practice with his father at home provide corroborating evidence that parental interventions and involvement contribute positively to children’s L2 motivation and language competence (Gao, 2012; Shim, 2013; You & Nguyen, 2011).

6.2.4 Empathetic parents

In addition to the shaping role of Manh’s father, the support from his mother was also a big incentive for his language learning. His mother insisted that “now he is growing up. I can’t act as his mother any more but as a friend who is always there to listen to his stories and wishes” (IPManh). This role shift enabled her to gain more understandings of Manh’s thinking and expectations so that she could respond to them appropriately. She was happy that he had always listened to her advice and never frustrated her. Unlike his easy-going mother, Manh’s father

adopted a sterner manner, believing that the two diverging approaches between the parents mutually complemented each other for his rounded development.

Regarding Manh's studies, his parents did not put pressure on him to attain high academic achievement. Instead, they encouraged him to learn those subjects that he liked and could perform best at. Whereas many Vietnamese parents often expected their children to go directly to university after high school graduation (Hang, 2009; D. Nam, 2012; Thao, 2012), Manh's parents were more flexible in their strategies. They stated: "He doesn't have to have a university degree. After high school, if he can go to university, it is good. If not, he can go to a vocational school. Then, he can upgrade his qualifications gradually through continued education if he wants to" (IPManh). This does not mean that his parents denied the value of education but rather set targets proximal to Manh's actual performance. His mother stated that he was not an excellent student, so there was no point in pushing him to enter university. Instead, they aimed at a level of study that best suited his ability and interests.

In addition to setting attainable goals for Manh, his parents observed his academic activities very closely. With an occasional job at her relative's café, his mother had more free time at home. She had been checking on his daily study since he was in elementary school. She said that "every evening I ask him if he has prepared everything for the next day and check if he has done all the assigned homework" (IPManh). She explained to Manh that the reason for her regular observation was to show how she cared about his studies. From her viewpoint, actions should be accompanied by explanations to be convincing. She strongly criticised the Vietnamese traditional parenting approach "spare the rod, spoil the child," stating that "he is my flesh and blood. If I hurt him, I will feel the pain myself. Child rearing and education should come out of affection" (IPManh).

Manh's mother was also aware that he was particularly interested in learning English. While his father kindled his language learning love, his mother nurtured it by providing him with frequent encouragement, close observation, and

necessary learning resources. Sometimes, she would go to a local bookstore to find some English books for him. As his house did not have much space, when Manh was studying, his parents would move to the bedroom in order not to disturb him. They also persuaded him to take private English classes to improve his language skills but he refused insistently, maintaining that he could manage his studies by himself. However, as shall be seen, they understood that his disappointment with his first private English class had taken away his trust in private tuition.

6.3 Manh's frustrating experience with private tuition

Sending Manh to a private English class was a further way in which his parents had sought to provide him with better learning conditions. This not only showed their awareness of the limited language affordances at school and at home but also their perceptions of its value for his future. However, the private teachers' approaches, teaching content, and English competence were so disappointing that Manh decided to withdraw from this practice (see Figure 6.3, column 2).

6.3.1 Prior to attending the private class

Upon his entry into secondary school, Manh's parents decided to send him to a local private class. The main aim was to provide him with a good foundation of English so that he could develop more rounded language competence. The private teacher, Ms Tien, was a retired English translator who had been tutoring the children in their neighbourhood for a couple of years. Manh's father was in no doubt about her ability, given her occupational background: "I think she must be good enough at English to be a translator. Many people have sent their children there to learn English. I think she can teach English well" (IPManh).

Manh reacted to the idea of taking the private English class with mixed feelings. As an avid English learner, he really wanted to have more opportunities to develop his language skills. School and home environments did not provide him with a sufficient amount of practice and knowledge beyond the textbook. At

school, teachers had to extend their attention to the whole class, so they could not always cater for individual needs. At home, his father was not capable enough to solve all of his problems in learning English. Manh hoped that he would have more communicative practice and gain more real-life knowledge from the private class. He imagined Ms Tien to be a fluent speaker of English with a good grasp of grammar. Along with these expectations was a concern about the cost his parents would be shouldering. He was afraid that the private tuition fee would add to his family's expenses, meaning that they would have to work harder. His mother said:

When we told him to take the private class, he was excited but kept asking about the tuition fee. I consoled him with the fact that we could afford it and making money to support him was our business. His job was studying well. (IPManh).

His parents' decision to send Manh to private tuition indicated the particular attention they gave to his language learning interest. They wanted to give him the best learning environment they could afford. This represented their effort to fulfil part of parental responsibilities. Manh viewed going to private tuition as an opportunity for him to have further language practice. He also held high expectations of the private teacher's English competence. However, his awareness of the financial constraints of his family suggested that Manh also took a very cautious attitude towards this special privilege.

6.3.2 After a few class meetings

The class met twice a week at Ms Tien's place, with about ten students of various ages and learning needs. She classified students at similar levels into smaller groups but taught all the groups at the same time, mainly by giving tasks for them to work on. Manh did not receive as much attention from the teacher as he had envisaged. He quickly grew bored with this group-teaching technique. Commenting on her teaching approach, he said "it is a routine style in which Ms Tien gave me exercises at the beginning of each session, and then brief explanations and the answer key at the end of the class. I couldn't learn much"

(ISManh090413). Due to the nature of the mixed-ability class, Ms Tien placed so much focus on mechanical practice and grammar teaching that no communicative elements were considered. There was little speaking practice and interaction in the private class. As a result, Manh's goal of improving his speaking skills was not met.

The teaching content and the private teacher's ability were other points of frustration. Ms Tien taught him with the materials she designed instead of following the school programme. Manh said that there was a marked lack of coherence between what he learned at school and in the private class. Also, the tasks in her class failed to challenge him because most of them were below his level or were a repetition of what he had learned before, either in the formal class or by himself. The last straw contributing to Manh's disappointment was her frequent grammatical and pronunciation mistakes at a basic level. Despite his low English competence, it was not too difficult for him to pinpoint Ms Tien's language deficiencies.

In general, the private English class did not offer Manh additional communicative practice and the language affordances necessary for his language development. He did not receive enough individualised support from the teacher. Her teaching content did not meet his immediate learning needs and were not up to his English level. The teacher's frequent mistakes were another factor that discouraged Manh from going to private classes.

6.3.3 Manh's decision not to take private tuition

The stark contrasts between Manh's pre-class expectations and the private class reality (summarised in Figure 6.1) provoked a high degree of disappointment. His initial excitement about taking the private class was soon overtaken by doubt about its benefits and Ms Tien's competence. Considering the constraints of taking private tuition and its financial pressure on his parents, he decided to leave the class within the first month. His withdrawal from the private class showed that Manh had started to exercise his agency in appraising the efficiency and

effectiveness of different learning contexts and to opt for strategies that best suited him and his family circumstances.

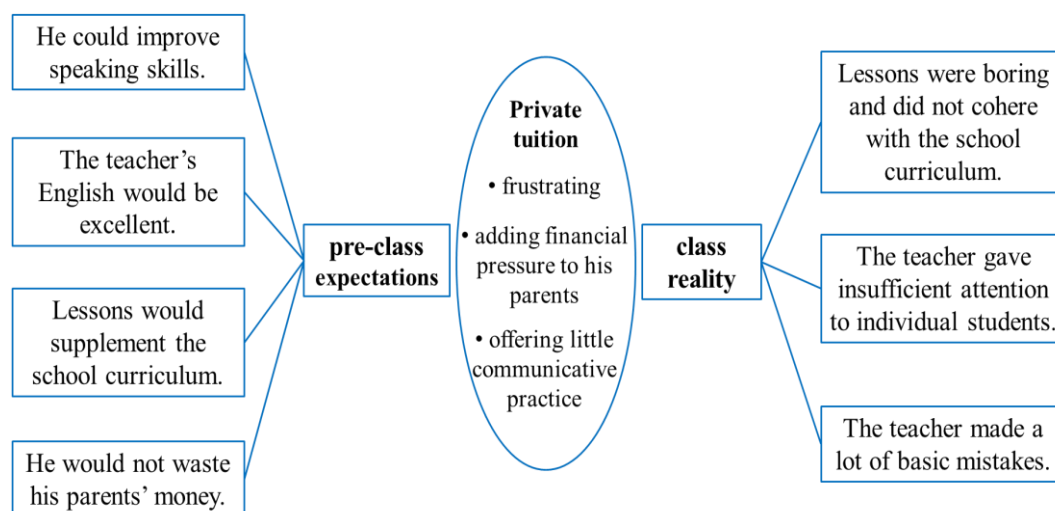


Figure 6.1: Manh's reflections on taking private tuition

The disappointing experience left Manh with a negative impression about private tuition. He developed strong opposition to taking any private English class despite his parents' encouragement. However, a good aspect of his resistance was his adoption of a more autonomous and adaptive learning style.

6.4 Manh's English learning across settings

Manh compensated for his withdrawal from private tuition by making use of the resources available for English practice in multiple learning settings (see Figure 6.3, column 2). His personal effort and commitment suggested that he was both a responsible and adaptive learner.

Manh found language affordances and learning opportunities in diverse microsystemic settings, showing his lifewide approach to learning English (Figure 6.2). At school, he took advantage of the break time to consult his English teacher about the grammatical points that he did not understand. It was difficult for him to ask the teacher during the lesson because his questions might take up a lot of class time. Manh was also an active participant in class activities which helped him to become one of his teacher's favourite students (see 6.7.2). Practising English with other students, especially those who excelled in English

during my Thursday English class meetings at school, also offered him an opportunity for mutual learning and peer feedback.

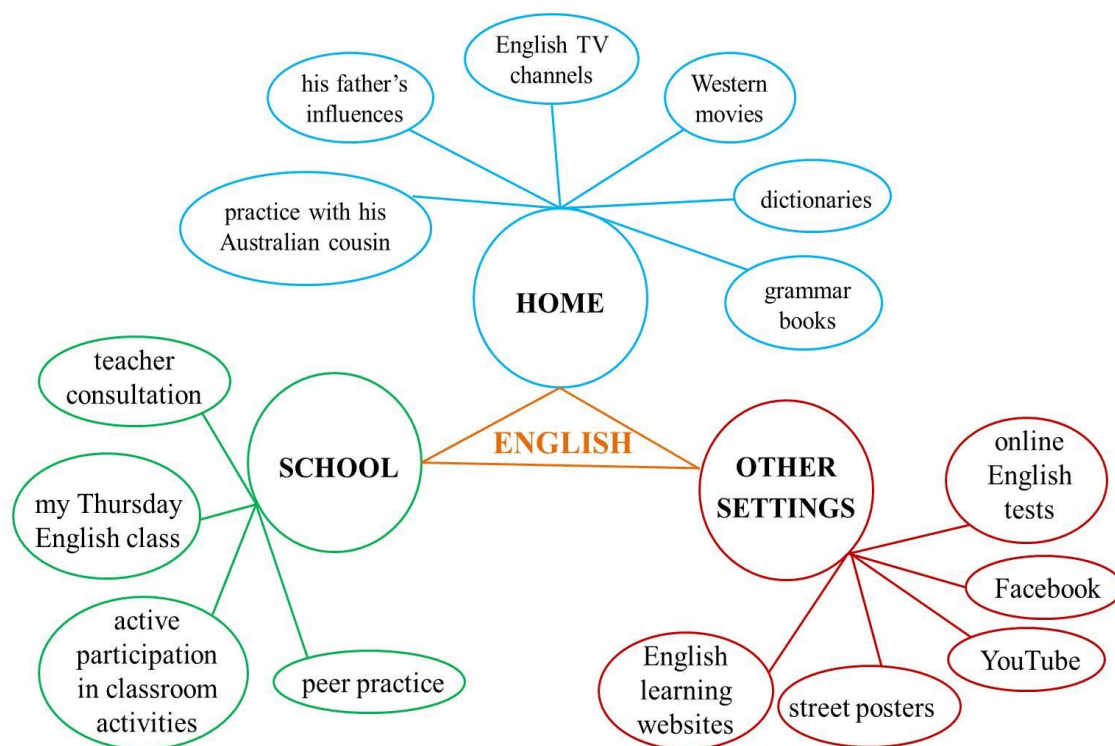


Figure 6.2: Manh's English learning across settings

In the home context, Manh received a lot of help and support from his father and cousin in terms of speaking practice. In addition, he made good use of available resources at home, such as TV, Western movies, and the Internet, to improve his English vocabulary and language skills. He particularly enjoyed writing his Facebook statuses in English because “sometimes I want to express my feelings but I don’t want the friends in my Facebook list to understand them” (CSManh230413). What was surprising about Manh was his particular interest in learning new vocabulary items from street posters. Not many students could see the learning opportunity from such an easily overlooked thing as a street poster. These activities showed that Manh had started to incorporate both personal and contextual aspects in his language learning to overcome the limited language affordances available to him within the rural district.

In an interview at the end of my data collection period in Vietnam, I asked Manh to reflect on his language learning activities so that I could give him some further recommendations. To this end, I gave him the following scenario:

Scenario

You were a freshman specialising in English at a good university in Ho Chi Minh City. Your classmates admired you for your excellent English competence when they knew you came from a rural district. They approached you for advice on how to learn English effectively. What would you say to them?

- Manh: I think, of course, we have to learn English at school, from teachers and classmates. If we do not understand some points, we can ask about them. However, the most important thing is we have to have more practice at home by ourselves. Do more exercises and learn more vocabulary.
- Interviewer: What do you think is the most effective learning strategy?
- Manh: We have to have a *serious* [his emphasis] learning attitude. For example, if we come across a word we don't know, we have to note it down and check its meaning later. We can't ignore it. Also, we have to practise speaking to become more confident, and ... uhm (smiled) ...
- Interviewer: Who do you practise speaking with?
- Manh: Most of the time with dad and my cousin. Sometimes, I speak to myself.
- Interviewer: How do you know you are speaking correct English when you speak to yourself?
- Manh: Everything comes very spontaneously. I just practise for fluency and I don't need to be correct. Just to be able to speak fast. This also helps me to remember more vocabulary.
- Interviewer: How about listening skills?
- Manh: We can watch TV, English teaching programmes, and foreign movies with English subtitles. We can also read books in English.
- Interviewer: What books?
- Manh: We can borrow books from our teachers, or go to the school or district libraries. If possible, we can access the Internet.
- (ISManh270713)

Manh strongly advocated a combination of formal English language study at school and personal effort, with an emphasis on the latter, indicating his appraisal of the affordances and learning strategies which would be beneficial for his language learning. In his view, to become a good learner of English requires a high degree of autonomous study, showing his agency in developing his own learning style (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Oxford, 2015). He believes in the proverb “practice makes perfect” and displayed high perseverance in his English studies. His primary approach was learning spontaneously and having a serious attitude. This meant that he could learn English at any time, in any way, and in

any situation. He could either practise English with other people or by himself. The main point was that actually carrying out some activities was the means by which language input could occur, even a single vocabulary item.

Manh's burning desire to master English was restricted by the lack of language affordances in the rural area. He reported sometimes "being stuck" (ISManh120313) in his studies as he had so many questions about English that had been unsatisfactorily answered. He was in dire need of a significant other who could guide him through his language studies. He took my arrival at Vision High as a rare opportunity for him to improve his language skills because of my overseas experience and my teaching position at a university in Vietnam.

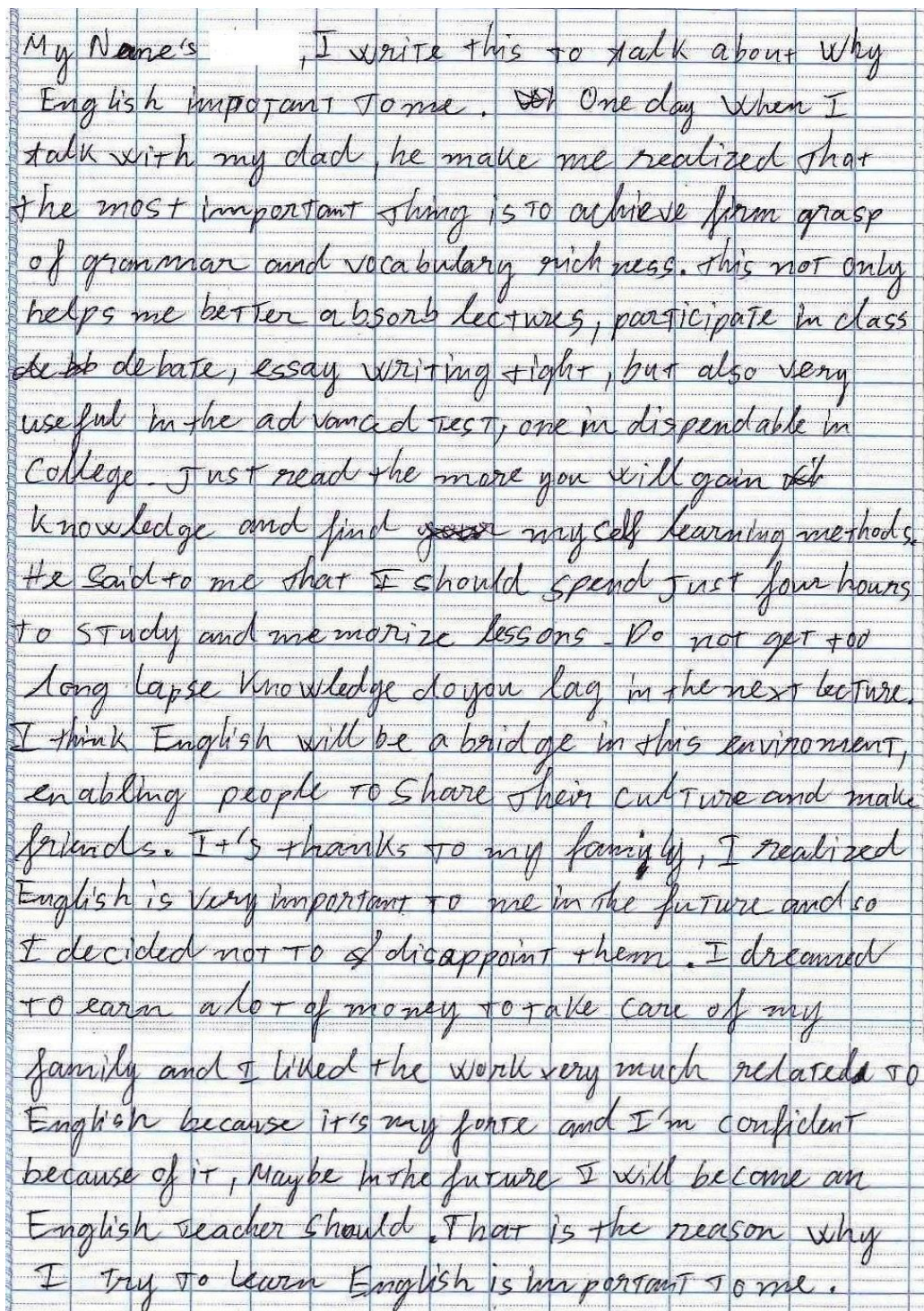
6.5 Manh's participation in my study

My data collection at Vision High was important for Manh in that it provided him with further English practice and affordances (see Figure 6.3, column 3). Our one-on-one private tuition at his home and the Thursday English class at school helped Manh to develop language skills in areas that were not covered at school and to overcome his areas of weakness in learning English.

6.5.1 The one-on-one private sessions at Manh's home

Manh was a self-motivated English learner who demonstrated great initiative in his studies. When I tutored him, I aimed to help him to become more aware of the available resources and strategies for autonomous language learning. He wanted to learn language aspects and skills that were not covered in class. After each tutorial, we together discussed the study focus for the next meeting so that both of us could make effective preparations. The learning tasks varied in terms of design and level of complexity. We started with simple activities to enrich his vocabulary and sentence structures before proceeding with more complicated ones. For listening skills, I gave him links to online resources so that he could practise them in his own time. Manh particularly liked written tasks such as sentence building, paragraph writing, and Vietnamese-English translation.

Taking advantage of his writing interest, I asked him to present his views on the significance of learning English. Through this activity, I wanted to gain more perspectives on his language learning attitudes. Manh sent me the following paragraph for feedback, detailing his learning strategies and ambitions:



My Name's , I write this to talk about why English important to me. ~~at~~ One day when I talk with my dad, he make me realized that the most important thing is to achieve from grasp of grammar and vocabulary richness. this not only helps me better absorb lectures, participate in class ~~deb~~ debate, essay writing ~~right~~, but also very useful in the advanced test, one in dispendable in College. Just read the more you will gain ~~at~~ knowledge and find ~~your~~ myself learning methods. He said to me that I should spend just four hours to study and memorize lessons. Do not get too long lapse knowledge do you lag in the next lecture. I think English will be a bridge in this environment, enabling people to share their culture and make friends. It's thanks to my family, I realized English is very important to me in the future and so I decided not to ~~a~~ disappoint them. I dreamed to earn a lot of money to take care of my family and I liked the work very much related to English because it's my forte and I'm confident because of it, Maybe in the future I will become an English teacher should. That is the reason why I try to learn English is important to me.

Image 6.1: Manh's reflective essay on the significance of English

Despite a number of mistakes in grammar and word choice, Manh's writing was rich in original ideas and replete with autonomous learning strategies. His reflection confirmed the earlier discussion on the shaping role of his father in his language learning and the importance of English to his future plans. From my observation, Manh always fulfilled the tasks I gave him to a very good standard:

Manh did the translation homework I assigned him last week very well. He told me he loved practising translation. I also asked him to write a paragraph about his most memorable vacation and he did a good job. In general, he had a very positive attitude towards learning English and completed all the homework satisfactorily. (RSManh090413)

Throughout the semester, Manh consistently achieved high scores in the English classes at school. His perseverance in learning English was partly attributed to his parents' close observation and frequent reminders. Before and after each meeting at his home, they usually asked me about his studies. They also invited me to a couple of family dinners in return for my help. Occasionally, they asked me when I would go back to New Zealand because they were afraid that Manh's English language studies would be disrupted. During Manh's examination period, we had no meetings for two weeks. This made his father worried:

Before leaving Manh's house, I told his father that we would be off for two weeks during his final examination. His father expressed concern regarding whether I would still continue my tutoring activities afterwards. I assured him that I would resume the one-on-one sessions in two weeks' time. He showed signs of relief upon hearing my confirmation. (RSManh230413)

However, Manh did not show much interest initially in getting back to studying English when we met again. He insisted on having a short break after all the examination stress. My log below indicates his post-exam procrastination:

After the examination period was over, we resumed the one-on-one private tuition. Normally, when I arrived, he had already been in the front yard waiting for me. This time, he was still having an afternoon nap. His mother woke him up and we started the lesson a few minutes later. He

hadn't done any of his homework yet, stating that he needed some relaxation. (RSManh140513)

Manh's motivational decline after the examination was not unusual for high school students in Vietnam and part of the dynamics of students' L2 motivation as "a process that is in constant flux, going through ebbs and flows" along their learning trajectory (Dörnyei, 2014b, p. 519). In response to his attitude, I made the session more comfortable with some speaking activities regarding his English learning plans over the coming summer holiday. He also apologised for his lack of enthusiasm on the day and promised to make more of an effort in the following weeks.

During the summer holiday, he was free from all formal academic activities and devoted most of his time to learning English. I gave him more homework than before and he even asked me for more at times. He performed all the tasks very well and made very careful preparation before each meeting:

I am very pleased with the quality of his work and his diligence. He was clear about his language learning goals and had a strong passion for learning it. Of course, sometimes he showed signs of procrastination but still tried to complete all the homework I gave him despite its heavier workload than that of other participants because I knew he loved doing them and could do them excellently. I like his essays, which are full of innovative ideas and show his excellent use of vocabulary, despite a number of grammatical and technical lapses. (RSManh0613)

In addition to the one-on-one private tuition at home, Manh also fervently took part in my other research activities at the school which offered him interaction not only with me but also with his peers, other school teachers, and the foreign guests who also joined my Thursday English class.

6.5.2 The Thursday English class at school

Manh was a regular attendant at the Thursday English class, showing his appraisal of this learning environment as a salient additional affordance for language learning. He went there in the hope of improving his communicative

skills and confidence. His father told me that he was shy talking to other people and asked me to pay special attention to this aspect. In the beginning, Manh was rather embarrassed when I asked him to make a short presentation in front of other students. In an informal exchange, his father revealed to me:

The other day he came home from your English class at school. He told me that you called him to the blackboard to talk in front of the class. He said he had prepared it very well with other group members, but when he went to the front and talked, everything went out of his mind. His mouth became stiffened and he couldn't utter a single word. (CPManh)

Manh was a typical example of the majority of the high school students in rural areas who lacked communicative confidence. He was very active in pair or small group discussions but became reticent when it came to public speaking. He found it hard to organise his ideas in a talk and was not used to talking to a large audience. The diverse English levels of the students in my Thursday English class also aroused his sense of inferiority. After each one-on-one session, I usually asked him about the problems confronting him during our class meeting at school so that we together could figure them out. As I asked Manh to practise making more presentations, he gradually felt more comfortable with the activity. He realised that other students also made mistakes and not all of them were better at English than him. The environment of my English class with neither peer competition nor impact on his formal learning enabled him to make and learn from mistakes. Sometimes, he volunteered to be the role model for the rest of the class during communicative activities.

Indeed, there was a significant increase in Manh's public-speaking confidence as a result of his regular participation in my Thursday English class. Part of this improvement was also attributed to his Australian cousin who had frequent Skype conversations with him in English and taught him a wealth of spoken expressions that made it easier for him to convey his ideas.

6.6 The help from Manh's Vietnamese Australian cousin

A further significant other who took an important role in sustaining Manh's motivation to learn English was his overseas cousin, Duyen. Students' interactions and relationships with other family members, and the affordances they receive from such a microsystem have been reported as an important motivator for language learning in many EFL contexts (Lamb, 2007; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011; Ushioda, 2014). Duyen's material support and English tutoring represented his extended family's attention to his studies as well as the globally dispersed nature of language affordances (see Figure 6.3, column 4).

6.6.1 The cousin's gift

Duyen, who had lived in a more urban part of the same province before going abroad, was Manh's only cousin on his mother's side. She used to study in the UK and then moved to work in Australia. On her home-country visit, which was approximately one month after I started working with Manh, Duyen gave him her used laptop computer and paid for the monthly Internet fee to facilitate his studies. He was excited about having the computer because he did not have to go to an Internet service to look for desired information. Every afternoon, except for the days with extra classes at school, he would spend hours practising English on YouTube or on the English learning websites I recommended to him. He also asked me to send him some listening and reading materials for his own practice. Another benefit of having the computer at home was that Manh had continuous access to online Vietnamese English dictionaries which enabled him to express his ideas better in the essays I assigned him. The various textual, audio and visual resources available online for language learning also inspired him. Manh said:

The laptop computer has been pretty handy for me to learn English. The video clips on the Internet help me to improve my pronunciation and speaking. I also read English news online to increase my vocabulary. Before, every time I came across a new word I had to look it up in the dictionary and it took quite a while. Now, everything is much easier and faster. (CSManh)

The convenience of having the laptop computer made it easier for Manh to practise English. However, the most important implication behind giving him the computer was Duyen's concern about his language studies. She used to learn English when she began her studies overseas; as a result, she had experienced the challenges he was facing and was aware of the usefulness of information technology. Also, Duyen spent a lot of her free time chatting with Manh on Skype to help him to improve his communicative English.

6.6.2 Practising English on Skype with Duyen

Duyen and Manh had Skype conversations on a weekly basis. According to Manh, Duyen had been living overseas for a long time, so her English was very fluent. Through their Skype communication, Manh learned a great deal about both British and Australian culture and lifestyles. Duyen also helped Manh to correct his pronunciation and taught him how to speak English more naturally. He reflected on their online interaction:

I really enjoy learning English with her. We are like biological siblings, so we can chat very freely about any topic. She taught me the commonly used phrases in daily interaction. She said I might not be mature enough to know of the importance of English. She told me how hard she had to struggle with her daily life and study due to her poor English when she first went to the UK. (CSManh)

Having studied and worked in English-speaking countries, Duyen had hands-on experience in learning English and knew what Manh really needed for his studies. Duyen was highly enthusiastic about helping him as he stated: "sometimes, it is very late in Australia but she still chats with me. She really cares about me" (CSManh). The close relationship between them also made it easy for Manh to discuss his language learning difficulties with her. His frequent English practice with Duyen was an indication of his agency in actively grasping the learning opportunities and affordances available to him within the home setting.

6.6.3 Duyen's promise

One afternoon when I arrived at Manh's place for the one-one-one private tuition, he was chatting with his mother. She invited me to join the conversation and asked me if he could study overseas with his present English competence. I learned from her that Duyen promised to sponsor him to study in Australia after his high school graduation. His mother strongly supported the idea of sending him abroad for the sake of his future. I mentioned the topic at the end of our private session when his mother was away to see Manh's responses. He showed great excitement about studying abroad, commenting on the educational differences between Vietnam and Western countries:

They have strong economies, so they have better facilities for education. The learning styles are also different. Students are given more freedom in their study. Studying there is more useful because teachers focus more on practical work than theories. (ISManh280513)

Duyen's accounts of her overseas experience and the information Manh gathered from the mass media enabled him to develop a certain picture of what education in the Western world would be like. He loved the idea of studying in foreign countries including the autonomous learning styles that he was working towards. The well-equipped learning environment was also another advantage.

6.6.4 Manh's perspectives on Duyen's offer

The temptation of being able to study abroad did not obviate Manh's concern for his parents. As an only child, he thought his parents would be very sad when he lived away from home. He was also worried about their well-being, stating that "I am afraid I can't take care of my parents when they are old. They may get sick and need special attention. Life in Australia is good but I prefer to stay with my parents and look after them" (ISManh280513). In saying so, Manh was appraising the rewards of living overseas against filial responsibilities, with the latter resonating more strongly. This suggested that his ideal self was closely connected with what he could do for his parents. At the same time, he presented

himself as a child with a strong sense of filial piety. The emotional attachment to his parents made it hard for him to think about studying overseas. Whatever his future decisions might be, Manh believed that learning English was essential to all of his plans.

6.7 The innovative English language teacher in Year Eleven

Within the local context where English teaching was exam-oriented and lacking in communicative elements, Manh's English teacher's approaches stood out. The friendly classroom atmosphere which aimed to foster students' confidence and skill development enabled Manh to make further strides in learning English (see Figure 6.3, column 5).

6.7.1 A more learner-centred teaching approach

In Year Eleven, by which time I had completed the fieldwork and we had started online communication, Manh worked with Mr Trung, the head teacher of the English language faculty at Vision High. With his position, the teacher received frequent professional development training and updates from the provincial department of education. Mr Trung was responsible for both imparting the methodological changes to other English teachers and promoting the adoption of language teaching innovations. His principle was setting the "heart" above other aspects in his daily teaching. By this, he meant that English teaching involved both improving students' language proficiency and attending to affective dimensions. He stated that most teachers nowadays paid more attention to the former at the expense of the latter (ITTrung). To this end, he gave his students more freedom in class and developed their communicative confidence by conducting various activities and alternating his roles from teacher to facilitator, counsellor, and father (his daughter was also a student there). He said:

During speaking sessions, I said to my students 'Try to speak. Don't be afraid of mistakes. I will help to correct the mistakes and you will be fine after a couple of times.' I encouraged them by saying 'open your mouth, open your mouth. Just make it like a casual conversation. You can even

insert some Vietnamese words in your talk. Don't worry about being right or wrong. The point is you can say something'. . . I found these words really effective. My students felt very relaxed. Most importantly, they felt that I respected them and wanted them to be better. (ITTrung)

Mr Trung's approach was successful in minimising the distance between teachers and students. In the beginning, Manh felt scared of his position as the head teacher which evoked the image of a strict character. However, his care and enthusiasm overcame Manh's fear:

Mr Trung addressed us as 'thầy-con'. I feel very warm because of this. He is very patient. My friends and I make a lot of mistakes in speaking but he tries to help us. He always encourages rather than criticises us. In the beginning, we were afraid of making mistakes and thus did not want to say anything but now we are absolutely comfortable with that. (ISManh081213)

In Manh's view, the binary Vietnamese address term "thầy-con", literally translated as "teacher-child," promoted much more intimacy and a stronger feeling of being a family than the teacher-student distinction made by other teachers. Mr Trung gave him an impression of both a teacher and a father who cared about his studies and really wanted him to make progress.

6.7.2 Becoming the apple of the English teacher's eye

In the context of his class, where most students performed rather poorly in English, Manh stood out as a good language learner. He enjoyed being summoned to be the role model for his classmates. He said: "Mr Trung often conducts role plays and invites me to make an example for my classmates. At first, I was rather shy but not now. I am happy to do so" (ISManh081213). The role-modelling activity not only earned Manh bonus marks but also increased his confidence. Mr Trung also gave him special support because he had chosen English as a university major. His teacher assigned him some more challenging tasks than other students for his own further practice either in class or at home. Manh viewed this as preferential treatment and tried his best to complete all the

tasks. Sometimes, he was overwhelmed with homework in other subjects but still managed to finish them because “they [the tasks] are good for me and I don’t want to disappoint my teacher” (ISManh081213).

As a significant other within the school microsystem, Mr Trung had been successful in fostering Manh’s L2 motivation and developing his language skills and communicative confidence. He achieved much higher scores in English in Year Eleven than in the previous year. His classmates usually consulted him about their English homework. Manh felt proud of himself and grateful to Mr Trung for his dedication. Such positive learning outcomes strengthened Manh’s decision to pursue English in higher levels of education.

6.8 Manh’s overall motivational trajectory

Manh’s family culture and the academic as well as financial support from significant others across contexts generated and sustained his interest and efforts in learning English. Figure 6.3 represents his motivational trajectory in relation to his appraisals of the affordances for language learning provided by significant others and overarching sociocultural values. These elements included: Manh’s desire to fulfil his filial duty and to show his gratitude to his overseas cousin; the place of English as a subject in his exam group; and its role as a language for international communication and for him to achieve his ambitions.

The home context provided Manh with language affordances well before he learned it formally at school. His father, who failed to realise his dream of becoming an English teacher, generated his curiosity about English. The frequent English interactions at home and the implicit expectation from his father including his often repeated narratives about his past studies fuelled Manh’s decision to pursue English. His mother also supported him in learning English by providing him with necessary learning resources.

To recap, upon Manh’s entry into secondary school, his parents sent him to a nearby private English teacher so that he could improve his language skills. His

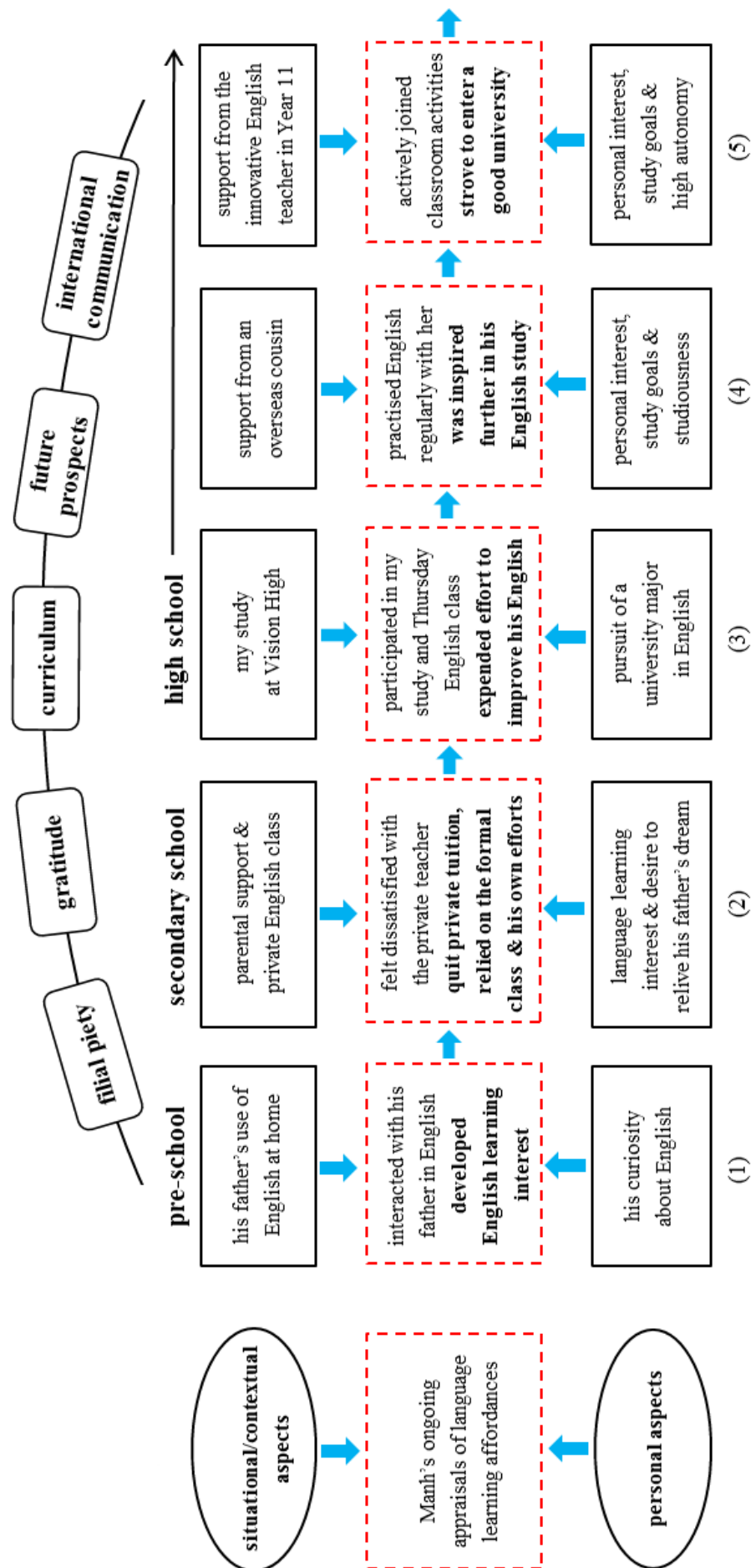


Figure 6.3: Manh's ongoing appraisals of language learning affordances and his motivational trajectory

initial excitement about attending the private class was soon extinguished by a sense of disappointment at the private teacher's approaches and language deficiencies. He decided to quit the class within first month. The experience also increased his doubts about the effectiveness of private tuition. As a result, he decided to study English by himself, relying on the formal English class and the available resources. One of his strategies was consulting his English teacher during the break time about the points he came across. His learning style was challenged by time constraints and the limited affordances in the local context.

I started conducting my study at Vision High when Manh was stuck in terms of finding suitable language learning strategies. I was impressed by his zeal for learning English during the first class visit. Unlike other participants, Manh wanted to develop rounded language competencies, especially his writing skills. He tended to adopt an independent learning style by repeatedly asking me for more homework assignments and study materials. He also joined the Thursday English club to build up his public-speaking confidence.

During the time Manh was working with me, he also received extra support from Duyen, his Australian cousin. Duyen's help enabled Manh to have more access to online resources and frequent oral practice from which he learned how to use English more naturally. Duyen's promise to sponsor him to study at a university in Australia after his high school graduation was another source of motivation for him. He welcomed the offer but preferred to remain in Vietnam with his parents.

In Year Eleven, Manh worked with Mr Trung, the head teacher of the English faculty. Mr Trung's teaching experience and innovative methods with a communicative emphasis were what he was expecting from an English class. Manh actively participated in the class activities and received a good deal of support from his teacher. His dynamic classroom engagement, the teacher's preferential treatment, and other learning activities Manh conducted outside the school context helped him to make rapid progress in his studies. The positive

outcomes in Year Eleven and the affordances from significant others across settings substantially energised him in his language pursuit.

6.9 Summary

The home setting initiated and nurtured Manh's interest in learning English well before he began learning it at school. His father, having specialised in English, was actively involved in creating an environment for English language practice at home. Manh's parents also sent him to a private English class with which he was disappointed due to the teaching approaches, teaching content, and the teacher's limited English competence. He withdrew from private tuition and tried to develop a lifewide adaptive learning approach by grasping every learning opportunity and making use of language affordances available in the local context. Further, he received enthusiastic support from his overseas cousin in terms of linguistic and material resources. This help not only exemplified the educational concern from his extended family, but also the globally dispersed nature of his motivational affordances. At school, Manh worked with the head teacher of the English faculty who adopted various approaches to enhance his communicative confidence and language competence. These elements within and across microsystems, the interpersonal relationships established within each setting and their synergistic effects on Manh's L2 motivation were the main drivers for him to proceed with his English language studies.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PHONG

7.1 My initial exchange with Phong at school

Phong sent me a text message on the evening of the day I visited his class for participant recruitment. I called him back and together we set up an appointment on the following day. I suggested I would be waiting in front of his classroom at the end of the morning session.

After finishing a couple of class visits, I made my way to Phong's classroom and waited for him. The school yard was busy with students coming out of their classes, heading for the school gate. Phong approached me, nodding his head to greet me as a common indication of respect. I started our conversation with questions about his family to break the ice. It was interesting to find out that Phong was not living with his parents, but with his grandmother who was taking care of his studies and daily activities. As the conversation progressed, I noticed that he became more confident, unlike the first few moments of reticence. We then shifted the topic to why he wanted to join my research project. He told me he had been interested in English since he started to learn it at secondary school but did not have opportunities to practise it outside the classroom. He thought the one-on-one private tuition with me would help him to improve his English. He was complimentary about his present English teacher but insisted that the formal class time was not enough for him.

Later on in the conversation, we talked about the language skills that Phong wanted to learn. Referring to his lack of communicative confidence and bad pronunciation, he said he wanted to improve these areas. He also suggested inviting his best friend, Tuan, to study with us so that he could have a partner for conversational drills. We decided to meet every Monday afternoon at his grandmother's house for his convenience.

7.2 Phong's transition to high school

Phong's entry into high school was a significant event marking his determination to pursue English. Reflections on his English learning at secondary school, including his disappointment with his English teachers' approaches and peers' resigned attitudes, compelled him to take more assertive action. The class environment in his first year at high school, with an enthusiastic teacher, exciting sessions, and close rapport, fuelled his motivation to learn English (see Figure 7.2, columns 1 and 2, p. 191).

7.2.1 Phong's English language studies at secondary school

Phong had taken an avid interest in English since he started to learn it at secondary school. He particularly wanted to expand his English vocabulary to understand American movies and translate the English documents he came across. He vividly connected language learning with his other passions:

In those days, when my parents bought some electronic devices, there were always attached manuals written in both English and Vietnamese or only English. I tried to translate the documents but found the whole process too difficult. I thought I should learn more English words. (ISPhong110313)

Phong had always wished to become an electrician and found it intriguing to read equipment instructions. Whenever his parents bought a new item, he would retain the English manuals and read them time and time again. He felt inspired to learn English vocabulary to figure out how the devices worked. In his opinion, English was very useful for his life activities. He also realised the ubiquity of English in his surrounding environment, from the classroom to the outside world, and the need to have good language competence. He stated "Nowadays there are so many foreign investors coming to Vietnam. Learning English is one of the keys to grasping this opportunity" (ISPhong010413).

In terms of his language studies at secondary school, Phong was disappointed with the way English was taught. He thought that English was not given

sufficient attention as one of the major subjects in the curriculum, showing that he had been able to appraise the limitations in the local context very early in his language learning. He attributed his teachers' low enthusiasm about their teaching and his peers' downgrading attitudes to the removal of the secondary school graduation examination (see 2.1.1) and especially the absence of English in the high school placement test (see 2.3.5). He described his teachers' approaches as "teaching by the book," meaning that they only stuck to the English textbook and did not conduct any further activities to encourage zealous students like him. In addition, he found it hard to pose questions in class, not only because of his shyness but also their rigid teaching methods that inhibited teacher-student rapport. One repercussion of the testing policy and teachers' classroom manner was that his classmates were at best resigned to learning English. These contextual factors gradually undermined his energy and had led, up to this point, to a motivational decline in learning English over the four years at secondary school.

7.2.2 The transition to high school

Phong went to high school with new resolutions, expecting that it would be a critical milestone in his life. A flashback to his previous studies showed that much more work needed to be done to improve his language skills, indicating his initial appraisal of the changing learning context. He said "I didn't do well at secondary school. If I want to go to university, I have to do my best now. My present study has a lot of influence on my future" (ISPhong110313). After one private tuition session, we talked about the activities that Phong had adopted in his English studies. At the end of the discussion, I asked him to make a visual representation of his learning strategies when he had free time. The aim of this was to help him to critically reflect on his daily English practice at school, at home, and in other settings. Upon receiving his drawing (Image 7.1), I shared my language learning experience and gave him some follow-up suggestions.

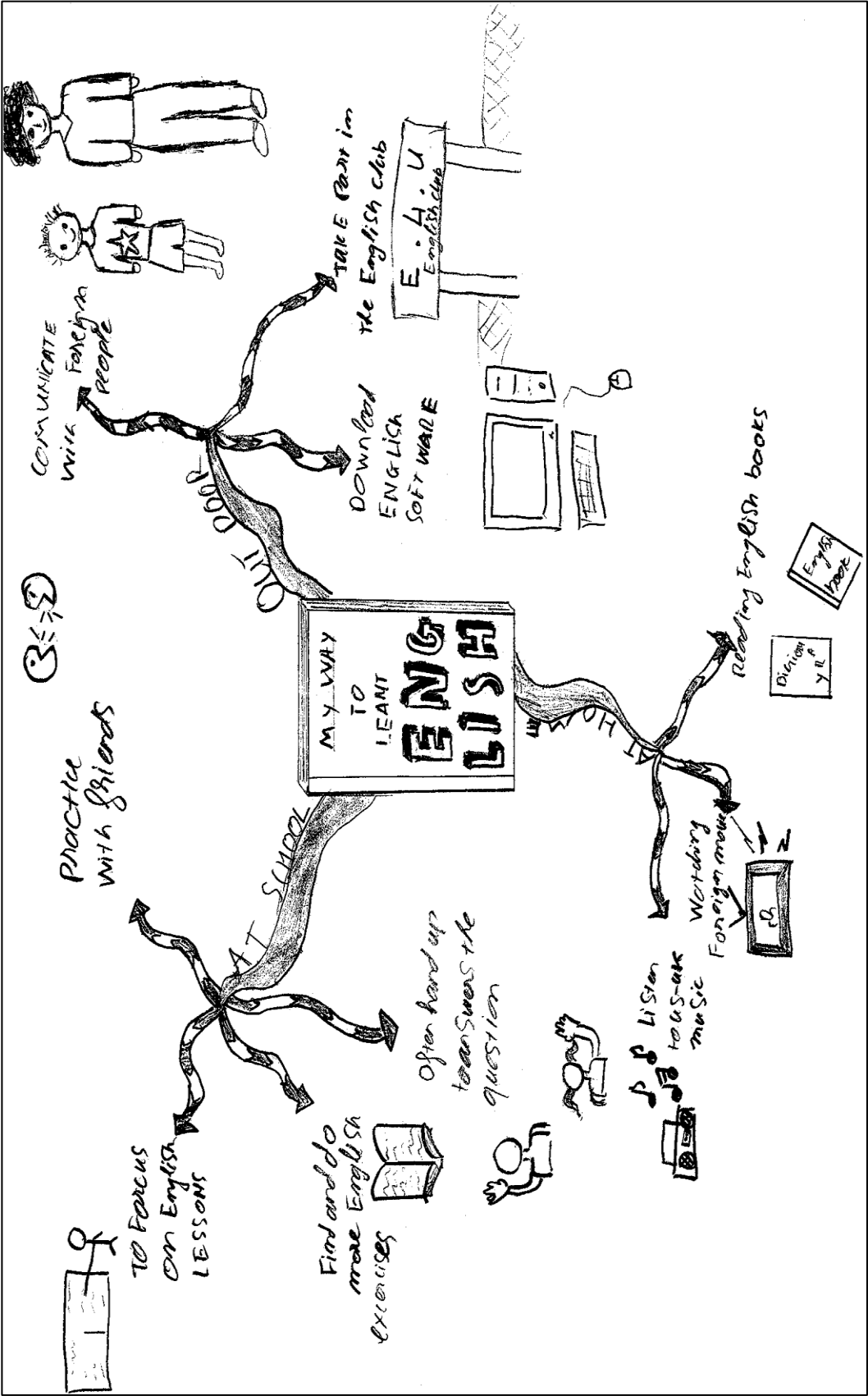


Image 7.1: Phong's activities for learning English

Phong's visual representation of his language learning showed his lifewide approach to language learning that integrated diverse language affordances in a wide range of microsystems. At school, he listened attentively to the lessons and volunteered to answer questions from teachers: "often hand up to answers [sic] the question." In addition to the tasks assigned by the teacher, he managed to "find and do more English exercises." Also, he considered peer learning a crucial element among the activities (see 7.3 for details). At home, he would spend his free time reading his favourite English books. He told me he had won some books for vocabulary practice in an English quiz during a secondary school camping trip and had been so keen on reading them. Phong combined his studies with recreational activities, such as learning English through movies and listening to Western music. His language practice also included what he called "outdoor" activities, varying from going to Internet cafes to download English learning software, to occasionally going to an English club hosted by a foreign language centre in the city. With an increasing number of international tourists visiting the nearby beaches and historical relics, he saw opportunities for improving his communicative skills by having conversations with them. Although such interactions with foreigners were infrequent, he felt exhilarated about being about to do something practical in his language studies. These activities revealed Phong's appraisal of personal and contextual elements and language affordances within and across microsystems that contributed to shaping his L2 motivation and his development as a more agentive language learner.

7.2.3 The high school English teacher

Phong thought he was fortunate to work with a very enthusiastic English teacher, Ms Kieu, who had a teaching background in Ho Chi Minh City. He said she really loved her students and gave special support to those who were not performing well in class:

She would ask my classmates who were very weak at English to sit in the front row in class. She would ask them to go to the blackboard to give answers to her questions more often than the rest of the class. Whenever

she gave us a task, she would come and give them further explanations. After a few months when she saw their progress, she would ask them to go back to their original seats and a new group would replace them. (ISPhong010413)

Although he was not given as much attention as his lower-achieving classmates, Ms Kieu's overall affective indications made him feel that "she really cares about us and wants us to make good progress in our study" (ISPhong010413). Another distinct impression he had of the teacher was that her varied teaching approaches enlivened the classroom atmosphere. With her previous teaching experience in the city, she added new perspectives to her lessons and successfully engaged students in the class activities. She combined study and fun by providing many games in which the students could apply the points she was teaching. She also played songs that were popular among teenagers when they felt sleepy or exhausted due to the study load. When it came to examination time, she focused more on examination revision so that everyone could be well-prepared. Phong felt much more excited about English lessons than any other subject.

Unlike the majority of teachers he had been working with before, Ms Kieu went beyond the routine teaching responsibilities by managing to convey certain messages behind her lessons. From time to time, she used role models of other high-achieving school alumni to show her students that they could make progress in their English. She also talked about herself as a rural learner who tried her best to become an English teacher in the city before moving to teach at Vision High. Phong was firmly convinced by these stories that he could also be successful in the future, irrespective of his rural background. Most importantly, she helped the students to gradually see the value of learning beyond the classroom boundaries by giving them a lot of practice in pairs and groups, and encouraging them to conduct such activities in their own time. Phong was inspired by her confession that "learning is not only with the teacher but also with others. Teachers do not know everything" (CSPhong150413). Ms Kieu's words were the main driver for Phong to carry out more autonomous language learning with his peers.

7.3 Phong's view of peer learning and his obstacles

Phong was one of the few students at Vision High who developed peer approaches to learning English, varying from paired to group activities. His attempts to promote more English practice outside formal English sessions reflected his view of the contribution of peer learning to language development. However, these peer activities did not receive much support from his classmates and friends.

7.3.1 His approach to peer learning

Despite the increasing adoption of pair and group work in local teaching practice, not many students in the school showed preference for it. Phong was exceptional in seeing the significance of studying with peers, revealing also his adaptive approach to language learning. Upon entering my study, he asked Tuan to join our private class. He was excited about undertaking private tuition with me since he could study with his best friend and receive my feedback on their progress. During our meetings, he presented himself as a diligent student. He always outperformed Tuan in the task preparation and efficiency. Due to his regular mistakes in his spoken English, Phong was particularly interested in peer correction. He realised that they could learn a lot from mutually correcting each other's mistakes during the pair work. After each meeting with me, Phong and Tuan would stay behind for further practice. Outside our meetings, they also worked together on the grammar books I gave them. Each of them was in charge of reading one section and then reporting what they read to the other. For those grammatical points they could not understand, they would ask me for clarification. In this way, Phong said they could save time and remember these points longer. He found this learning approach highly effective and motivating because he took a more active role in the learning process. Another benefit of learning in pairs was that Tuan could be a good point of comparison and contrast to keep track of his own progress. Most importantly, Phong commented:

An ideal learning environment is not with teachers but rather with my favourite peer group. There seems to be some distance between teachers and students. Conversely, I feel more comfortable working with my friends. It would be easier for us to discuss and speak our minds. (ISPhong170613)

As mentioned earlier, he used to suffer a sense of unease and dissatisfaction with the teachers at secondary school. Such language learning experiences affected his perception of teacher-student rapport, making it difficult for him to approach his teachers with questions or express his personal opinions. On the contrary, he felt more relaxed working with his classmates, with whom he could be more straightforward in voicing his ideas. The amount of time they could study together significantly exceeded that available with teachers in class. Also, he claimed that friends who were more able in English helped him to review the knowledge he learned in class much more efficiently than the teacher. The merits of peer learning from his perspective can be illustrated in Figure 7.1:

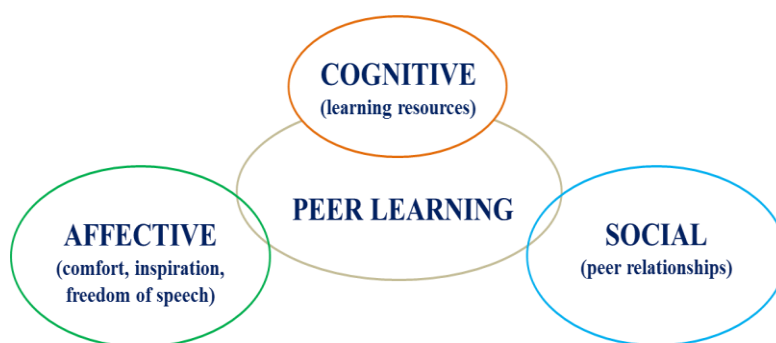


Figure 7.1: The value of peer learning from Phong's perspectives

There were three major dimensions in Phong's perceptions of the value of peer learning. In terms of cognitive development, his classmates and friends were extra resources that provided additional insights into the class lessons. Peer discussions helped to clarify the points that he was still unclear about but did not dare to ask his teacher. The meetings were also the time for him to socialise with his peers, alleviating study stress. They usually went to food stores after each occasion and had great fun together. Such moments strengthened peer cohesion and enhanced his study enjoyment. The most meaningful aspect of peer learning

was the positive feelings that he experienced. Peer intimacy and the idea of working with someone his age freed him from the anxiety of making mistakes which could be a severe embarrassment when he worked with his former teacher.

Phong was strongly in favour of peers helping one another in language learning. In one interview, we discussed the different roles teachers and peers had in assisting his English language studies. In response to Phong's preference for peer learning, I gave him the scenario below, focusing on what he would do with his classmates and peers in the local community if he had good English competence:

Scenario

As an excellent English learner, what would you do to your school and local community?

- Phong: At school I would help my classmates to feel English was an “easy-to-swallow” subject by giving them additional explanation or tutoring.
- Interviewer: What do you mean by “easy to swallow”?
- Phong: Because most of them didn't catch the basics of English and felt daunted with the subject. It is not the feeling of hatred though. I want to help them become more interested in it and learn it better.
- Interviewer: How about helping the local people? Do you know of any English activity at the local cultural centre?
- Phong: There has been no such activity. If my English was good enough, I would arrange a so-called English class in which there are neither teachers nor students. It is like a gathering for discussion in English and I am the facilitator. Now that we are talking about this, I am feeling really excited about the idea but it would be hard to make it true.
- (ISPhong170613)

In each commune or district in Vietnam, there is one “cultural centre” for cultural and educational activities, including English teaching in some cases. Unfortunately, there was no such English class in Phong's commune. In this reflection, he displayed a genuine commitment to helping his classmates and the local people to improve their English. His emphasis was on giving mutual help

rather than having teacher-student dyads. His desired role as a facilitator partly suggested his recurrent frustration with the teacher-centred approach he had experienced at secondary school.

7.3.2 Local challenges

It was not easy for Phong to set up pair or group meetings with his classmates and friends although he was careful in choosing to work with only those he assumed would be keen on further language practice. He faced two major challenges, namely peer attitudes towards learning English and time management. The majority of his classmates and friends preferred to study natural science subjects and held a resigned view towards English. They were learning English only to cope with tests and examinations. When asked about the possibility of forming pairs or groups for English practice, Phong lamented:

I asked my classmates to study English together after class or on the weekend. I volunteered to be the group leader and prepare all necessary stuff for the group meetings. They laughed off the idea, asking me not to waste their time. They didn't show any interest in my suggestion. (ISPhong170613)

Students' lack of interest in learning English within and outside class hours was a common phenomenon in Phong's school. Most of his friends made fun of him when he tried to speak some English to them. He revealed that their break time discussions were never related to language learning despite his attempts to raise the topic. Such uncompromising attitudes undermined Phong's motivation to summon his friends for group study: "My effort has gone to waste. There is no point in having such group meetings. Changing their view about learning English is totally out of the question" (ISPhong170613).

The shortage of time for extracurricular activities among the students was another issue hindering Phong's endeavour. Most of his peers had an overloaded timetable, including official class hours, extra classes at school, and private tuition at their teachers' homes. Such a time constraint forced them to determine

different priorities for different subjects, with English usually being the last on their list. He insisted that “we are all exhausted with homework and going to private classes. We don’t have time to sleep [by this, he meant the afternoon naps after lunch time], even on the weekend, let alone asking them to meet for practising English” (ISPhong170613). The limited amount of time outside formal and informal learning activities, together with their low motivation to learn the language, discouraged his classmates and friends from meeting for further English practice.

Phong’s efforts to promote peer learning garnered little support from his classmates and other students chiefly because of their lack of interest in learning English and the heavy study load. However, he still felt a strong passion for helping other people around him to develop positive attitudes to language learning. To his younger sister, he was much more fervent in this regard.

7.4 Kindling his sister’s love of learning English

Sibling tutoring was another activity that underlined Phong’s awareness of the importance of learning English both to himself and his sister (see Figure 7.2, column 3). He viewed tutoring her as a good way of learning through teaching. Helping his sister with English also represented his willingness to fulfil filial obligations towards his parents for their financial and emotional involvement in his studies.

7.4.1 Their time together

There was a stone table and some surrounding wooden stools in the middle of a thatched attachment to the left of his house. Phong and his sister were sitting in a hammock. Some books and notebooks were lying on the table, half-opened. (OSPhong020613)

The extract above was an observational note from my visit to Phong’s home for an interview with his mother on a Sunday morning. At that time, he was studying with his sister, Mai. They paused the activity and he ran away to look for his mother upon my arrival. As mentioned in 7.1, Phong had been living with his

paternal grandmother since he went to secondary school and thus had little time at his parents' home. On Saturday afternoons when he was free from homework assignments, he would ride a bike home. He usually spent the whole weekend helping his parents with household chores and tutoring his sister. Phong said: "My sister sticks to me like glue. She will follow me wherever I go and copy my activities" (ISPhong110313). Such an affectionate sibling relationship was the main driver for him to become a good role model. He stated he would feel ashamed of himself if Mai excelled him in academic results although there should be no competition between them. By this, he meant he should do his best to remain a good example so that she could learn from him.

Phong considered it both his desire and responsibility to take care of Mai's study, insisting that "my parents have put in a lot of effort in my studies. It is my duty to help my sister with her studies. I do want her to be a good student. I want her to learn English much better than me" (ISPhong110313). His role perception as an elder brother was realised in his actions; he made it a habit to help her with homework when they had time together. He also found that Mai was particularly keen on learning English under his influence. When he was doing his English exercises, she would sit next to him, working on hers, and sometimes asking him about the English words in his book. There were many occasions when they shared headphones and listened to English songs. He thought these instances sowed the seeds for her love of English.

7.4.2 His sister going to secondary school

In preparation for Mai's entry into a local secondary school which would also be the beginning of Phong's Year Eleven, he set himself a new resolution. Her English programme bore strong similarities to his present study but at a much simpler level. He determined to tutor her in the hope of giving her a good start with the language:

Interviewer: What is your plan for tutoring Mai?

Phong: Well, I think the English programme for Year Six is quite distant to me now. What I have to do is read her textbook a few times. It is easy for me to recall the knowledge because I had already learned it. But to tutor her, I need to invest more time in revising my English. I love it this way anyhow. (ISPhong270513)

It is not uncommon in rural areas in Vietnam for siblings to help each other with their study, but normally with other subjects rather than English. This is because not many of them are good at English and confident enough to teach their brother or sister. Despite not being an excellent English learner, Phong's determination to assume the tutoring role reflected how he perceived the importance of English to his own and her sister's future, and his strong sense of filial responsibility as a brother. He expected that his sister could develop an interest in the language: "I like it and I hope she will as well" (ISPhong270513). Such an orientation for Mai's language studies received his mother's complete support:

Mai is starting secondary school soon. At home she learned a few English words from Phong and kept repeating them. He teaches her almost every week. I think she likes learning English. I plan to send her to one of the local English teachers for private tuition. The teacher is now retired from her teaching and has received a lot of kids as students. People say she is very good at teaching kids. I want Mai to have a sound foundation in English from the beginning. (IPPhong)

Phong's mother expressed happiness that Phong could help Mai with English but admitted his limited ability to do so because he was also learning English himself. She believed that such sibling guidance helped to build up Mai's motivation to learn English from the beginning and also to form a learning culture within the family. She regretted not sending Phong to private English classes when he entered secondary school because she had not been aware of the importance of learning the language. It was Phong who first drew her attention to the necessity of language learning to their present study and future prospects. From the information he shared with her, the mother started to read the news, watch TV programmes, and learn from other people about the role of English in

the globalised context. She positively encouraged him to tutor Mai in English as it also helped him to consolidate his knowledge.

In summation, Phong's desire to inculcate a language learning interest in his sister originated from his own love of the language and his awareness of the importance of English to their academic and economic future. Striving to be a good role model for others in terms of language learning has indeed been found to have high motivational values for the learners themselves (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 1998; Murphey & Arao, 2001). Also, Phong did so out of the sense of responsibility as an elder brother and the filial obligations to his parents and grandmother, in return for their affection, care, and involvement in his studies. An explanation of the family context in the following section would clarify the way in which Phong's perceptions of filial obligations impacted on his L2 motivation.

7.5 Learning affordances within Phong's family

Unlike most parents in the local commune who had wavering beliefs in the value of education, Phong's parents were persistently involved in their children's schooling. He also received strong support from his grandmother in terms of living arrangements, tuition fees, and his day-to-day wellbeing. Phong perceived it as both his desire and his responsibility to acknowledge such multigenerational concern over his education by expending substantial effort in his studies (see Figure 7.2, column 2).

7.5.1 Life and education in the local commune

Phong's parents lived in a small commune whose main business relied on duck farming, duck-egg harvest, and rice crops (see Image 7.2). Most children quit school after primary or secondary education to help their parents with these labour-intensive activities. Education was not much appreciated among the local people since they were unsure of the return on their financial investment in their children's schooling and the lengthy amount of time the whole process might

take. They were more concerned about their children's immediate contribution to family income to satisfy daily household expenses.



Image 7.2: A snapshot of duck farming in rural Southern Vietnam⁹

In an account of her neighbours, Phong's mother was empathetic but at the same time rather critical of the local attitudes towards education:

Interviewer: Do your neighbours care much about their children's education?

Phong's mother: Here, most of them expect their children to contribute to the family expenses by quitting school early and going to work. They do not expect much from the rewards of education which they think are too far in the future . . . I felt really sorry for a boy living nearby. He was studying at a very good university for about two months but then his mother asked him to come back. She didn't want to sell her two bulls to pay for his tuition fee. She said his studies might last up to five years and in the meantime he could not earn money to help the family and she doubted whether he would pay her back in the future. I gave her a lot of advice but she

⁹ Photo from Dong Thap News (2014)

refused to listen. If I talked too much, she might think that I was poking my nose into her business. (IPPhong)

From the mother's perspectives, not many local parents cared about their children's schooling because they did not see its long-term benefits. She made an effort to encourage her neighbours to support their son's university study but was unsuccessful. This not only showed Phong's mother appreciation of education for her children but also her concern for improving the local people's awareness of it. In fact, her own life challenges were the impetus for her enthusiastic involvement in Phong's studies.

7.5.2 His parents' background and their child education resolutions

Being pre-literate themselves, Phong's parents experienced various difficulties in their lives. They did not have stable jobs and were working on an occasional basis, leaving their family budget vulnerable. Children's tuition fees added to their daily financial burden, requiring them to formulate a more careful approach to child education. Their job insecurity and life problems fostered their positive view of education: "We would support them until they cannot study any further . . . This is the responsibility of parents like us" (IPPhong). Their child-rearing principles lay in stark contrast with those of a majority of their neighbours in that they looked beyond the immediate financial gains. Phong's parents always kept themselves up-to-date with the changes in social qualification demands so that they could know what they should do for the sake of their children:

Nowadays, frankly speaking, it is a huge disadvantage to be without education. In my time, illiteracy was not a big issue but now the opposite is true. Now, to be eligible even for working as a security guard, one must have at least a high school diploma. Education should be the top priority. (IPPhong)

Being a security guard is usually the lowest-paid and most arduous work in Vietnam but still requires a certain level of education. In his mother's view, supporting Phong's education, despite its long-term nature, would empower him with necessary skills and knowledge for job seeking. Phong's parents were

among the few local people stepping out of their status quo to offer him such a high degree of support. His father, though busy with earning money as the main breadwinner, occasionally gave him and his sister moral advice on the value of education and other aspects of life.

Concerns over his studies also extended to the wider family setting. Realising the potentially negative influences from his neighbourhood peers who left school early, his paternal grandmother agreed to accommodate him and take care of his studies as well as his daily well-being. It was his parents' view that staying with the grandmother would provide him with a better learning environment:

For children at his age, we have to keep close observation to prevent bad influences from peers and bad people in society. We have to make sure that he is behaving well at school and not hanging out too much with his friends. That's why living with his grandmother is better for him. Those kids around here [his parents' home], are not good ones for him to socialise with. They quit school, stay home, and have no job at all. Sometimes they disturb our neighbours. If he lived with us, his studies would be negatively affected sooner or later. (IPPhong)

Phong's grandmother lived quite close to the district centre where he could have easier access to schools, the library, and other resources. This living arrangement both provided him with better learning conditions and embodied the shared support and responsibilities across the extended family.

7.5.3 Phong's dedicated grandmother

Each time I arrived, Phong's grandmother was usually lying in a hammock in the living room. A mug of fresh ice water had already been put there on the desk. Phong came to open the gate for me. I took my motorbike into the front yard. The grandmother sat up and smiled to me. After a few words of greeting, she quickly withdrew herself to the back house, leaving the whole space for us. (OSPhong)

The observational extract above shows his grandmother's respect for me as a teacher and how she valued my private tuition. Phong had been living with her

since he started secondary school. She carefully prepared everything before I came and left a quiet space for the tutoring. She asked me about how Phong performed in English from time to time and entrusted me with his English studies. Since Phong was the oldest among her grandchildren at high school age, she paid close attention to his academic activities and helped his parents to cover his tuition fee whenever they could not afford it. However, the grandmother was rather strict with Phong in the way she dealt with matters relating to his education:

Interviewer: Does your grandmother care much about your study?

Phong: She asks me about it very often. If she does not see me studying at home, she will remind me. She may reprimand me if I hang out too much.

Interviewer: What do you think about her?

Phong: I understand her. She scolded me because she wanted me to be good. I have received her rebukes so many times that I am used to them. Just a few days ago she asked me about my career choice. I told her I wanted to be an electrician. She didn't agree with that, saying I couldn't do this kind of job because of my poor eye sight. She advised me to attend a teacher-training college. She wanted me to become a teacher.

Interviewer: Why does she want you to become a teacher?

Phong: She said it would be easier for me to find a stable job. Being a teacher would be stress-free and less competitive than other jobs. (ISPhong160814)

Being a pre-literate housewife, the grandmother adopted quite a traditional approach to educating Phong. In the local culture, it is common that grandparents are loud in their manner of speaking to grandchildren when they are doing something wrong. By "scolding", Phong did not mean that she got angry and was rude to him but rather that she felt unhappy about his study attitudes and wanted him to change. His grandmother also expressed great concern about his prospective profession. In her mind, working as a teacher would be a rewarding

occupation which would ensure job security and low work-related pressure. She usually consulted her sister's daughter who had just graduated from a university in Ho Chi Minh City about the best career options for Phong and asked him to follow the relative's example:

Interviewer: Is there anyone in your extended family who goes to university?

Phong: Yes, my auntie. She is the daughter of my grandmother's sister. She lives next to my grandmother's house. She usually tells my grandmother about her university study.

Interviewer: You didn't mention her to me when I was teaching you.

Phong: At that time she was studying in Ho Chi Minh City. Now she has finished and come back. Her voice in the family is very influential because she has a good education. My grandma usually listens to her counselling. She also talks to me and gives me a lot of academic advice.

Interviewer: Is she good at English?

Phong: Yes. She took English for the university entrance examination.

Interviewer: Does she help you with your English language studies?

Phong: She gave me all her English materials for examination revision. She said I should learn English hard. It is very important at university. (ISPhong160814)

In Phong's opinion, the relative had certain authority in her voice because she had a university qualification. The grandmother expected Phong to be as academically successful as her. These points indicated their high appreciation of education and the spread of educational concern across his extended family.

7.5.4 Phong's attitudes towards his studies

The enthusiastic involvement of significant others in the home microsystem served as a strong incentive for Phong. Like other students who depended on their parents for living expenses and tuition fees, he came to terms with the fact he could do nothing except to expend efforts in his studies. Moving up the

educational ladder, in his view, was the only way for him to return their emotional and financial support, and to fulfil filial duty. Filial obligations and a desire to fulfil their filial duties are one of the salient motivators for students in many Asian contexts (Chow, 2007; Hang, 2010; Phillipson, 2010; Salili & Hoosain, 2007; Tuan, 2011). Such perceptions helped him to refrain from the superficial temptations that many adolescents could not resist. He stated:

Most of them [his neighbourhood peers] do not want to proceed to higher education. They are blinded by the idea that they can earn some money now. They can buy new mobile phones or motorbikes and change these things very often. Of course, they can help their parents while I can't, but this is just their present life. They do not care much about their future. I think only by having a proper education that I could have a better life. Now, I may not be able to earn money and am totally dependent on my parents and grandma, but I think it is normal for any school boy. (ISPhong010413)

In the above reflection, Phong vehemently criticised his peers in the neighbourhood for neglecting their study and for chasing after materialistic interests such as new motorbikes and mobile phones, showing that he was highly agentive in developing a positive attitude towards education generally and language learning specifically. His peers did not give much consideration to their future life, failing to gain a certain level of education and to look for a stable job. In contrast, Phong adopted a long-term strategy by taking a serious attitude towards education because it was not only his parents' and grandmother's expectations but also his best choice for a good future. Phong never failed to complete the assignments I gave him for each private meeting. He confided that his diligence arose out of the joking warning that his grandmother usually made: "Nowadays, if you don't study hard, there is nothing else you can do. If you fail the high school graduation, there is no other way to make money than working as a buffalo herder" (ISPhong270513). Being a herder is a common job for people with a very low level of education in rural areas in Vietnam and is usually looked down on. The grandmother referred to the role models from his peers who did not complete school as a warning for him. The emotional attachment between his

grandmother and him, as he acknowledged, made her words more resonant. The more he thought about her reminders, the more efforts he compelled himself to expend in his studies.

The love, encouragement, warnings, and education provisions from his parents and grandmother helped Phong to maintain high performance at school. Also, his appraisal of the value of language learning for social mobility as a way to respond to his filial commitment fuelled his L2 motivation, given the negative examples of his neighbourhood peers. These elements influenced his decision to challenge himself in a new class which confronted him with pressure, competition, and hard work.

7.6 Placement in the second top class in Year Eleven

His transfer to the second top class (11A2) in Year Eleven from a normal class (10A4) in Year Ten was a critical event in Phong's learning curve (see 2.3.5 for the student placement and class ranking at Vision High). This was an acknowledgement of his achievement in the previous year but concurrently provoked anxiety and low self-efficacy given the claims he heard about students' high performance in top classes. In an effort to keep up with his peers in all subjects in the new class, Phong tended to overlook English, leading to less motivation to learn it (see Figure 7.2, column 4). He yielded to the challenges in the second top class and reminisced about the atmosphere of his previous class.

7.6.1 Weighing the advantages and disadvantages

Phong's move to the second top class as he entered Year Eleven brought him a good deal of anxiety and pressure. These feelings mainly originated from the stories told by his schoolmates who were either attending the class or had been demoted from it. Over the summer holiday between Years Ten and Eleven while I was still working with Phong in the research field, he was obsessed with the upcoming challenges in the new class and its demanding requirements. In a pros-and-cons analysis, he stated:

In A2 [the second top class], they [the students in this class] are ‘abnormal’ people. I know some of them who study very hard and can solve many questions that I have absolutely no idea about. Some of them are quite conceited because of this. The learning atmosphere is very competitive and they are under a lot of pressure from the teachers and school. Of course, there will be more chance for passing the university entrance examination. I don’t like it this way though. It is too demanding for me. I prefer something less challenging. (CSPhong040613)

Phong’s comment on these students as “abnormal” implied that they usually outperformed the rest of the school students in terms of academic achievement. Along with his admiration for their excellence, this also suggested his fear of not being able to keep up with them. At the same time, he slightly criticised a few of them for their arrogance towards other less able students. In fact, the prospects of becoming a student in the second top class and being able to enter a good university did not seem to intrigue him. He was more concerned with the obstacles ahead, including peer competition and the pressure from social others. There were many times Phong intended to ask his mother to talk to the school principal about the class change and inquire if he could be sent back to his usual class before the start of the new academic year. However, he was reluctant to do so since “they (other students) all want to go to that class. There is a good future in it” (CSPhong040613). The implications of “a good future” consisted of the academic advantages and higher possibility of university admission which was the biggest goal for any high school student. More importantly, such a request would go against his parents’ will. He reported how happy they felt upon knowing that he was being moved to the second top class:

Interviewer: Did your parents praise you for the good work?

Phong: No. It is not common for them to give any explicit compliments but I could see from their faces that they were delighted with the news. I think they were very happy inside. (ISPhong270513)

Phong was aware of his parents’ emotional states and their expectations. This made it more difficult for him to raise his concerns with his mother. He kept

talking about the class change with me over conversations before or after our private meetings until he resigned himself to the fact that he would study in the second top class and gave up his plan to withdraw. This reflected the conflict between his ideal and ought-to L2 selves, with the latter outweighing the former. Concurrently, his appraisal of the affordances and challenges in the new learning context made it hard for him to reach a decision.

7.6.2 Preparing for the new semester in the new class

In preparation for the new semester, he decided to focus more on English over the summer holiday. He cited four main reasons for his decision. First, he was free from attending classes at school and thus had more time to improve his English skills, especially speaking. Second, I was still there and could guide him during the weekly meetings. Third, he wanted to revise English to help his sister to make sure she would be well-prepared for a new stage of her studies (see 7.4.2). Above all, English was his only strength that would probably offer him an edge over his new classmates. In other words, he would feel less embarrassed in the new class if he could be better at English than some of them. Phong said:

I have more time for English during the summer. It is my only hope in A2. I know they [his new classmates] learn English very well but perhaps not much better than I do. I can't beat them in other subjects like Maths, or Chemistry, but I may excel over some in English. (ISPhong170613)

In this statement, Phong was trying to convince himself that English might be his only winning card in a more competitive setting than his former class. His strategy came out of his observational experience in Year Ten that a majority of the students were less competent at the language than him. To this end, he invested more time and effort in learning and practising English, indicating his agency in taking advantage of my presence in the field to tutor him; it also showed how he endeavoured to adapt to challenges confronting him in the upcoming semester. Throughout the summer holiday, he never cancelled any weekly private tuition with me and tried as hard as he could. He consulted me about learning strategies and resources on the Internet for his own study at home.

In addition, he asked Tuan to set up more meetings during the week for further practice and revision of the lessons I gave them. Phong was trying his best to cope with the new learning situation in the coming semester:

Tuan was absent twice for personal reasons. Indeed, he does not have much motivation to learn English and is absorbed in other summer activities such as playing games or hanging out with friends. He is in a low mood for learning English. On the contrary, Phong really wants to make the most of the holiday to improve his communication skills in English. He wishes to expand his vocabulary and improve his pronunciation. He knows the class change will be a challenge for him and requires him to make more effort. They have also started to conduct pair learning outside the meeting time with me. This shows a sign of autonomy in their language learning to some extent. (RSPhong0613)

Phong displayed much more commitment to learning English than his study partner. He also attended my Thursday class every week and actively took part in the class activities. These indicated his agency in taking advantage of the language affordances available to him within different microsystems and relationships with significant others.

7.6.3 Facing reality

Despite foreseeing the potential challenges, the harsh reality in the second top class exceeded his predictions and preparation. In his words, the new classmates all studied like “buffalos”- a common Vietnamese symbol for hard work and untiring perseverance. All of them spent a significant amount of time studying at home and going to private classes. In the beginning, he estimated that he was among the bottom ten in the class in terms of academic performance. He yielded to the pressure from different sources, especially peers and teachers: “I was told that competition in A2 would not be so fierce as A1 [the first top class], but indeed I couldn’t actually cope with it. There is so much work to do” (ISPhong201013). The new learning environment underlining academic achievement, peer competition, and teachers’ rigid requirements seemed to

exhaust him. This did not mean that Phong was not aware of the privileges from being in the top class:

Interviewer: What are the good things about being in this class?

Phong: Uhm, smaller class size. There are only thirty two people in this class. In my previous class, there were up to forty four. We get more attention from the teachers and receive more advanced knowledge. Competition is sometimes good. I am trying to be more and more hardworking. (ISPhong201013)

There were many benefits of studying in the new class, including more support from the teachers due to the smaller class size, the extent of knowledge he could gain, and particularly the positive aspect of peer competition. In a context where everyone had to make the best of their abilities, he compelled himself to study harder. He stated that he was more diligent with homework and making prior class preparation. Indeed, he was making a “buffalo” out of himself in such an intensely competitive learning environment. Hard as he tried, he was still overwhelmed by a sense of inferiority for being a latecomer in the class with lower academic ability. He admitted that “from the beginning to now, I can’t keep up with them. I feel well behind them” (FSPhong120414). By this, he referred to his lower performance across all subjects at school, rather than a particular one.

Most of his new classmates specialised in natural science subjects and had a resigned attitude towards learning English. He found that he was rather better at English than the majority of them. This was his point of self-consolation, proving that his study effort during the summer was worthwhile. From this, he believed that “everyone has their own strengths” (ISPhong201013). He felt comfortable about not being inferior to his classmates in this regard. As the semester continued, Phong realised that he was among the very few students who chose to specialise in English. He encountered another challenge in the pursuit of his language learning interest:

The teachers of other subjects gave us so much difficult homework. I have been snowed under with my study. I feel exhausted. I can't focus on English only. I need to get high scores in other subjects as well. The gap between them [his new classmates] and me is being widened. (FSPhong120414)

The class environment did not offer Phong sufficient time and affordances for English learning. It was difficult for him to allocate enough time for English in his timetable, even on the weekend. The study load at school and teachers' disregard of students' specific academic interests gradually overwhelmed his love for the language. He noticed a marked decline in his language competence as well as his motivation to learn it after the first semester in the second top class.

7.6.4 Nostalgia for his previous class

The class change between Years Ten and Eleven with a substantially different classroom atmosphere and rapport left Phong in a conflicted situation. The new environment caused him a lot of anxiety and pressure. To a certain extent, he attributed his motivation to learn English as well as other school subjects to these instances of negative emotions. It was, however, the negative nature of these emotions that drained his enthusiasm very rapidly. In comparison with his former class, he recalled:

Interviewer: If you had a chance to return to your previous class, would you do so?

Phong: I think I might. Now my classmates are not so friendly. They think more about how to defeat me to maintain their place in the class. My former classmates were very friendly. We hung out together quite a lot. We helped each other a lot as well. Learning was ever so comfortable then. (ISPhong260114)

The retrospective contrast in peer relationships between the two class environments suggests his frustration with the new class. He missed the relaxing and intimate atmosphere in which his classmates and he used to have a good time

together. There was very little competition among class members in Year Ten; instead, they helped each other with their study and lives. Less pressure from peers and teachers was another reason for his enjoyment in the previous class. He comforted himself with the fact that he was among the good students in the class without making much effort. Conversely, Year Eleven confronted him with both pressure and expectations from the school stakeholders, teachers, peers, and his parents. Phong's nostalgia for the former class partly showed his limited resilience in coping with the sterner challenges in the new learning environment.

In the second top class, perseverance and personal commitment were among the essential traits for survival against intense peer competition and the stringent placement requirements from the school. Unfortunately, Phong fell short of these elements, resulting in academic and motivational decline as the semesters progressed. For an escape, he joined a local folk dance club which met two times a week at the end of the first semester in Year Eleven. He savoured moments of relaxation and peace there: "Most of them [club members] are my age. We had a lot of fun activities. When I focussed on the dance, I felt free from all worries about my study" (ISPhong260114). He claimed that those activities helped him to build up interpersonal confidence which is absolutely necessary for language learners. However, the repercussion of such a social pursuit was that he had only enough time to meet basic academic requirements and almost none for English. The scores for his English tests dropped markedly, compared with those achieved in the previous year.

7.7 The final year at high school

The final year marked Phong's revived passion for learning English and the shifts in his goals. His concern to pass the university entrance examination overcame his fear of falling behind his classmates. He carried out more activities to improve his English and considered going to private English classes for guided examination preparation (see Figure 7.2, column 5).

7.7.1 Phong's retrospections

By the end of Year Eleven, which was around four months before the end of all my data collection activities, Phong found himself in an alarming situation. This was because the following year would be his last year at high school and he had to take two important examinations. His declining performance in English, which he intended to be his university major, placed his chance of entering university in jeopardy. In a casual exchange on Facebook, he said: "Now my English is getting worse and worse. I am afraid I can't pass the university entrance examination. I am really worried now" (FSPhong120414). He blamed himself for not finding enough time to learn English and for being so distracted by social activities. It was also because of the pressure to keep up with the school progress in other subjects that he could not spend enough time on English. This fact showed how his language learning motivation fluctuated within the context of multiple disciplines. He was not learning English in isolation and thus had to give priority to other subjects at times to cope with the changing learning environment:

For the first semester, I had to work harder on other subjects; otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to keep up with my classmates. My teachers [of other subjects] gave me so much difficult homework which took up most of my time. I had to focus on them first because at that time I thought my English was still quite OK. (ISPhong260114)

To deal with the requirements in the second top class, Phong's adaptive approach in Year Eleven was reasonable. He expended more effort in other school subjects to save himself from falling behind his new classmates. However, his strategy resulted from a misconception that he could survive with his English competence at that time, without bothering to improve or to even maintain it. In his words, the English learning outcomes in the first semester and other progress tests along the second semester of Year Eleven dismayed him immensely. It was time he reviewed his learning strategies and made certain adjustments in preparation for the final year (FSPhong120414).

7.7.2 Setting new goals for the final year

Phong viewed Year Twelve as the biggest milestone for his studies and career choice that necessitated properly prioritising learning activities. Unlike the majority of his classmates who specialised in natural sciences, he had less access to study resources and teacher support for learning English. Phong realised that he should make more personal effort and would have to seek private tuition from which he could receive revision for the university entrance examination, indicating his adaptation to emerging needs in his studies. His primary goal was not to keep up with his classmates but rather to focus on the subjects in the upcoming examinations:

Interviewer: What do you think you should do in Year Twelve?

Phong: I didn't make any good plan for Year Eleven. Everything turned out so terribly. I need to learn English seriously for the university entrance examination. I think I will invest more time over the summer and take private English classes as well. I don't know what to study. I think a private teacher will guide me with the main points from which I can study further by myself.

Interviewer: How about other school subjects?

Phong: I will just study to pass all the tests and exams. In Year Twelve, marks are not important any more. What counts is whether I can enter university. So I will invest most of my time in English, Maths and Physics only.
(FSPhong120414)

The importance of the upcoming examinations required Phong to set up a study plan which would prioritise English and the other two subjects in his exam group, namely Group A1 (see 2.1.3). He renewed his focus on learning English by switching back to his habitual practices of learning more vocabulary items, reading grammar books, improving his pronunciation by watching TV and listening to audio materials, and having discussions with those peers who also had an English language major. In addition to his more autonomous study sessions, our online exchanges towards the end of my data collection revealed

that Phong saw the need to take private English classes. He had not resorted to private tuition in previous years because he believed that he was capable of coping with his studies and partly because he did not want his parents and grandmother to pay more for his study. His decision to go to private English classes showed his fear that he would not be able to pass the coming examinations without external help. He needed a language teacher to teach him the necessary areas of knowledge and exam-taking strategies. Phong's revitalised attitudes and approaches in the final year indicated his agency as well as adaptation to the changes in his language learning conditions.

7.8 Phong's overall motivational trajectory

Phong's attitudinal changes, interwoven with different affective nuances, both within and beyond the classroom, vividly illustrate the motivational ups and downs in his language learning process. Figure 7.2 represents his motivational trajectory in relation to his appraisals of the affordances for language learning provided by significant others and overarching sociocultural values. These elements included: Phong's desire to fulfil his filial duty; his school's student placement practices; the place of English as a subject in his exam group; the lack of peer support in terms of language practice; and the role of English as a language for international communication and by which he could achieve his visions for his future.

Phong's point of departure came from himself as a curious learner who made good use of the available cultural materials at home, namely movies and instructions that came with electronic devices. He was interested in learning English and had a strong desire to expand his vocabulary since it would be essential to understand English texts. Unfortunately, the secondary school environment with textbook-based teaching and peers' resigned attitudes towards learning English, as a result of the changes in examination policies, slowly drained his motivation. Phong's four years at secondary school left him with disappointment with the teaching approaches and negative peer influences.

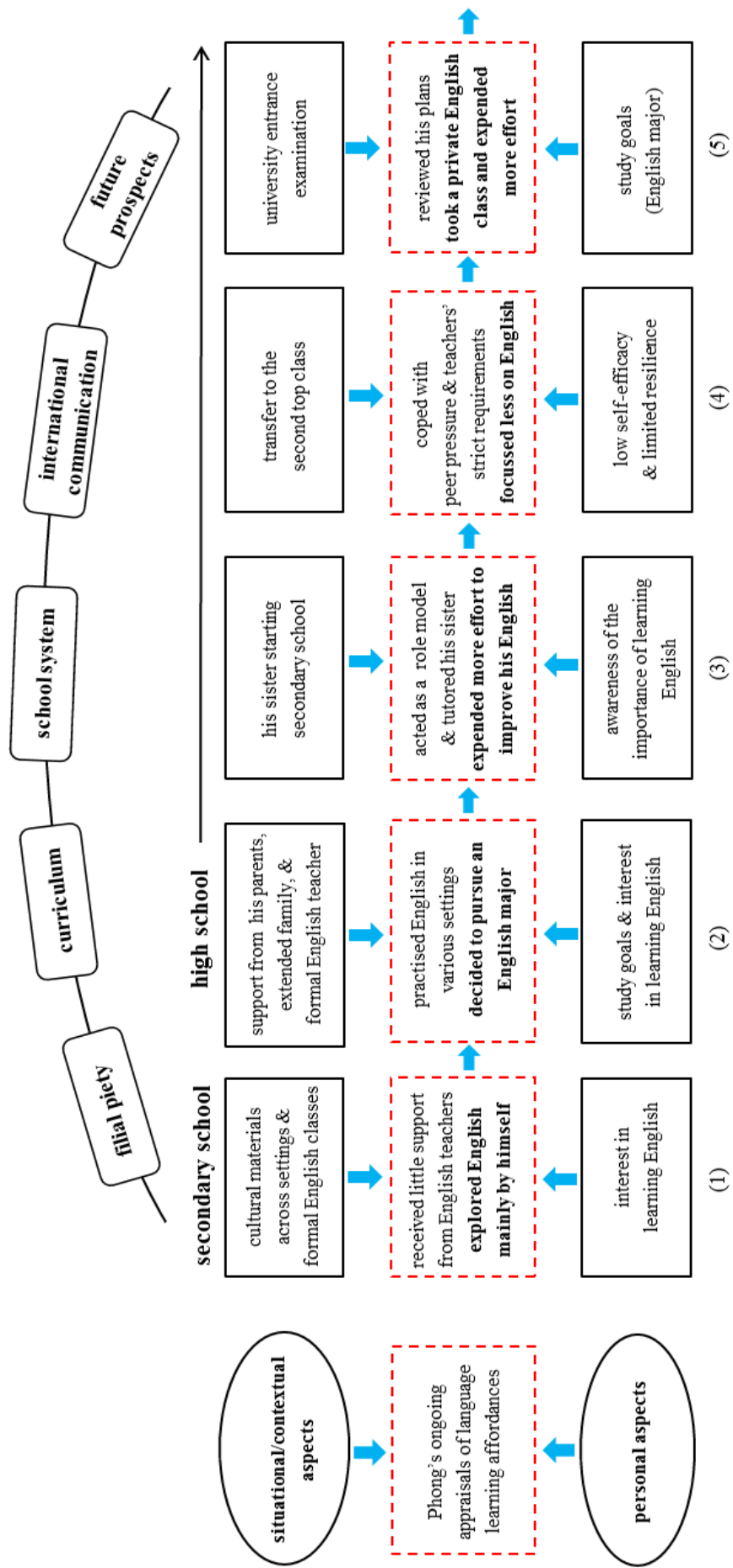


Figure 7.2: Phong’s ongoing appraisals of language learning affordances and his motivational trajectory

The transition to high school marked a new stage in his language learning motivation. Phong made a strong resolution to improve his language skills through various activities both within and beyond the classroom setting. The enthusiastic English teacher in Year Ten, together with the encouragement and affordances provided by his parents and grandmother, helped to rekindle his motivation to learn English. He loved the innovative English lessons and the class atmosphere that his teacher created. The role models from his teacher and other near peers she mentioned in class convinced him that he could himself become a successful learner.

In Year Eleven, he faced a new challenge, being moved to the second top class. The pressure from the teachers and new classmates, the majority of whom excelled in most school subjects, led him to think that he would be able to compete with his peers only by investing more in English. Also, his sister started learning English in the same year. These events fuelled his desire to learn the language both to maintain his place in the new class and to tutor his sister.

As the semester progressed, however, he yielded to the excessive amount of pressure stemming from the stringent academic requirements of the teachers in other school subjects and peer competition. To cope with the new situation, he focussed more on other subjects to the detriment of his English language learning. Phong saw an alarming decline in his language competence but failed to take any immediate action because of his overarching concern to secure his place in the second top class. To alleviate his study stress, he turned to some social activities in the local community.

Looking back at his language learning over the first two years of high school, Phong felt that he should expend more effort in his final year. He also planned to take a private English class so that he could be guided more in the assessed areas of the university entrance examination and exam-taking strategies. The necessity of taking private tuition, chiefly due to his fear of not being able to enter a university, surpassed his financial concerns. Phong was taking significant steps

in his English learning to prepare for the upcoming examinations that could substantially determine his academic and economic future.

7.9 Summary

Phong's interest in English developed from his access to the language both in class and at home. In addition to his formal study, he strove to learn English in his own time. The transition to high school and the enthusiasm of his English teacher strengthened his resolution to pursue an English language major. He adopted a peer approach to language learning but unfortunately he did not receive much support from his classmates and friends. He worked hard to become a role model for his sister and tutored her in English. Together with his parents, Phong's grandmother was deeply involved in creating good learning conditions for him and giving him frequent reminders of the value of education for his future. The motivational affordances across his immediate and extended family were the impetus for him in pursuing a higher level of education. In Year Eleven, Phong was transferred to the second top class which meant he was confronted with challenges and pressure that he had not experienced in his previous class. In an attempt to keep up with his classmates and to cope with the workload in the new class, he tended to overlook English. Peer pressure and the requirements across school subjects overcame him and resulted in his declining motivation to learn English. In the final year, however, Phong reviewed his learning strategies and decided to take private English tuition to prepare for the upcoming graduation and university entrance examinations. The home-school synergy, including the motivational affordances from his language teachers in Year Ten, his parents and grandmother, peer impacts in the second top class, and the high evaluation of education promoted within his family culture contributed to shaping and reshaping his L2 motivational construction.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HANH

8.1 Setting up the private class with Hanh

Hanh and her mother came to my place on the evening of the day I visited her class. Her mother asked me about my private English class and offered to pay the fee for Hanh and her two cousins. She said it would be a unique opportunity for them to work with a teacher with overseas experience like me. Realising the value of being able to observe Hanh's English learning strategies alongside her cousins and the flexibility of conducting pair and group activities during our class meetings, I agreed to let the other two students join us. I also talked with them about the nature of my research activities and the benefits to the participants. Then, I asked if she could allow Hanh to take part in my study. Her mother happily accepted my request and expressed her willingness to give me further support.

Hanh had been learning English in both formal and private classes for several years but she remained at an elementary level. Her mother was worried about her competence, referring to the contemporary importance of English. She hoped that I could help Hanh to improve her spoken English during the time I was at the local district. At the end of our meeting, we agreed to have the group sessions at Hanh's home every Monday evening. Her mother gave me very detailed instructions of how to get to her house for fear that I might get lost. Throughout the meeting, I got the feeling that she really cared about Hanh's language studies.

In the beginning, there were only three members in the private class with me. Diem (the case study in Chapter 5) joined the group from the third meeting. We maintained the weekly meeting and only cancelled the classes during their examination period. For every meeting, Hanh's mother carefully prepared a big bottle of cold water for the students and one pot of tea for me, indicating her

respect to me as a teacher. Occasionally, she treated us with some tropical fruit from her orchard and gave me some to take home in recompense for my efforts.

8.2 Hanh's low level of interest in learning English

Hanh's experiences in her English language classes became consistently worse and triggered a number of negative emotions and declining interest. Such was the extent of her anxiety that she grew increasingly resistant to learning English in spite of her parents' efforts to provide good learning conditions. They also continued to give her frequent reminders about the need to pay attention to English as an investment in her future. She later resorted to private English tuition to make up for her lack of hard work (see Figure 8.2, column 1, p. 220).

My first few class sessions with Hanh's group went on much more slowly than the one-on-one meetings with other participants because of their different English levels. I had to repeat the same points several times with detailed explanations and Vietnamese translation. Hanh was much weaker at English than the rest of the group. The other members usually left earlier after they finished their tasks while Hanh was still working on hers. On such occasions, I had more time to tutor her individually and asked her about her language learning difficulties so that I could adapt my teaching accordingly. I learned that the initial challenges confronting Hanh when she started to learn English at secondary school left an indelible impression on her language learning attitudes. She found it extremely hard to memorise English vocabulary because she kept forgetting it. In her opinion, the lack of vocabulary caused her further difficulties in skill development, especially with listening and speaking: "Every time I listened to a conversation on the cassette in class, it was like a duck listening to thunder. I was usually as quiet as a mouse in speaking sessions" (IS110313). Her metaphors implied that she performed very poorly in these skills at secondary school. This resulted in her fear of her English teacher: "I always tried to avoid the English

teacher's eyes in class. The scariest time was the lesson checking¹⁰. When the teacher was browsing the class list, my heart would pound so strongly as if it would jump out of my breast" (IS110313). Hanh's avoidance and anxiety soon developed into a degree of withdrawal from learning English, and being resigned to it at best.

One of the consequences of Hanh's low level of interest in learning English was her lack of personal effort: "After arriving home from my English classes, I would throw my school bag on the desk and that was all for the day. I wouldn't bother to review the lessons" (CSHanh180313). She chose to ignore her mother's frequent warnings about the importance of learning English: "My mom kept saying that I should spend more time on English practice but I hate it. I have no mood for learning it at all" (CSHanh180313). Instead, she would prefer to spend time on other school subjects that she was interested in. Also, Hanh insisted on a combination of study and fun, believing that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (CSHanh). She usually spent a lot of time after classes hanging out with her classmates and cousins, stating that these teenage activities helped to refresh her mind for more effective study. This learning style was a challenge to her transition from secondary to high school.

8.3 Entering high school

Hanh's initial excitement about having a young and enthusiastic English teacher in the first year was soon overcome by the demanding nature of the new learning environment. A further challenge for her was that the teacher did not appear to be adapting to the language level of local students. Hanh continued to rely on private English tuition to cope with her English language studies at school (see Figure 8.2, column 2).

¹⁰ In a typical English class in Vietnam, teachers usually spend the first ten minutes of the session checking whether students memorise the points they learned in the previous class. They invite one or two students to the backboard randomly as part of the lesson checking.

8.3.1 Hanh's initial difficulties at high school

Hanh had been used to the “spoon-fed” teaching style at secondary school, with her teachers writing everything on the blackboard for students to copy into their notebooks. They only used Vietnamese in class and translated almost everything in the textbook. She did not have to do much preparation prior to attending each class. All the content in the textbook was covered in class and the examination questions were usually a reflection of what had been taught. Hanh could get high scores in tests and examinations by rote learning and going to private classes:

Interviewer: Did you learn English well at secondary school?

Hanh: So so.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Hanh: Just good enough. I didn't pay much attention to it. My study was quite relaxed.

Interviewer: How did you learn English then?

Hanh: I just took private classes. That's enough. The tests were easy. All the questions came from the textbook and my private teacher also gave me similar questions to work on before each test. (ISHanh110313)

The high school setting required a drastic review of Hanh's learning strategies. All the instructions were given in English without much translation into Vietnamese, making it difficult for her to understand. She was supposed to read the textbook and prepare for the tasks before going to class. Another obstacle was the teaching focus. Her teacher did not cover all textbook content but left some sections for home reading and study. There were many points she could not understand but was afraid to ask about in class. Learning by rote was not effective any more: “At secondary school, I only needed to memorise the vocabulary and structures from teachers' examples and could do well in tests. Now, tests are so difficult. The questions are completely different from the examples” (ISHanh110313). The most difficult aspect of her studies was time management with both the formal and extra classes at school, and private tuition

at teachers' homes. She complained "While I only focussed on one or two main subjects at secondary school, now I have to spread my attention to four or five subjects to keep up with my school progress" (ISHanh110313). It took her one whole semester at high school to adjust to the new environment, indicating her relatively slow adaptability to changing learning conditions and her low agency.

8.3.2 Hanh's newly graduated English teacher

Ms Quynh, Hanh's English teacher in Year Ten, was in her first-year probationary teaching at Vision High. Hanh was full of excitement talking about her first English class:

When she [Ms Quynh] entered the classroom, everyone stood up to greet her with applauses and cheers. She looked so young and charming. I couldn't take my eyes off her. I could notice that she blushed. I thought she was a bit shy at that time. (ISHanh080413)

The youthfulness of the teacher gave Hanh a very distinct impression. She really looked forward to having interesting lessons. Ms Quynh was highly enthusiastic, varying classroom activities and creating a pleasant atmosphere with a lot of games and songs. Because of the relatively small age difference between them, Hanh felt Ms Quynh was more approachable and friendlier than other English teachers she had worked with before. However, the teacher's age and lack of classroom management skills created challenges to her authority in class. Hanh recounted some fond memories:

Sometimes, the class got out of control when we were playing games. Ms Quynh tried to calm us down but she couldn't. She spoke to us at the top of her voice but no one followed her. Some boys even went so far as teasing her. She sat at the teacher's desk with tears rolling down her face. She looked so lovely at these moments. (ISHanh080413)

Soon, Hanh's initial concern to do the required tasks before going to class seemed to disappear because Ms Quynh did not check on her work. Without her teacher's strict supervision, she procrastinated and paid little attention to the

subject of English. These reactions not only revealed her resigned attitudes but also her rather passive role in language learning.

Another problem Hanh encountered was Ms Quynh's teaching approaches and lack of understanding of the local students. As a recent graduate, her teacher did not have much experience in teaching high school students. Hanh found her explanations quite confusing and difficult to understand for low-level learners like herself. Ms Quynh used too much English in class, even for delineating complicated grammatical points, without checking students' comprehension. She also had a tendency to cover so many points in one session that Hanh could not absorb them all.

Probably she [Ms Quynh] just graduated from the university in Ho Chi Minh City where English is more popular and she doesn't know that we do not use much English in class here. We are used to teachers speaking Vietnamese. It is really hard to understand her explanations. (ISHanh080413)

Hanh's slow adaptation to the new learning environment at high school and Ms Quynh's teaching style made it hard for her to stop relying on private tuition.

8.4 Hanh's private English class at her teacher's home

With encouragement from her parents, Hanh gained access to private English tuition; she used the opportunity as she recognised her parents' financial investment. She did not view this as a privilege but rather a means to compensate for her procrastination in terms of studying at home (see Figure 8.2, columns 1 and 2). The private English class provided further language affordances for her to meet the requirements of her formal English language learning.

8.4.1 Parental support for private tuition

Not being a self-motivated student, Hanh had been going to private English classes since secondary school. Her mother fully supported this practice and did not even question its benefits to her learning outcomes:

I have allowed Hanh to take private classes in most important subjects since Year Six. I want her to have equal learning opportunities to other children. My husband and I are too busy and do not have sufficient knowledge to help her with school work. I think it is a good way to supplement her formal study. (IPHanh)

Hanh's mother believed that private tuition would help her to gain additional knowledge, which would give her an advantage in class. More importantly, her mother wanted to offer her as much access to learning resources as other parents could afford for their children. As a busy mother, she tried to fulfil her parental responsibility by providing Hanh with all that she found necessary for her studies. Exposed to various sources of information in the market place where she worked, her mother was well aware of the crucial importance of English to Hanh's upward social mobility. Such exosystemic elements were the impetus behind her investment in Hanh's private English tuition. She loved the idea that her daughter would be able to communicate in English as fluently as those students she had seen in the news. In her words, "if my children study well, I won't mind spending my hard-earned money" (IPHanh).

8.4.2 The private English class

The private class was offered by Ms Thy, an English teacher working at a different school from the one Hanh was attending. The reasons for this choice were that the teacher was well-known for her teaching experience and easy-to-understand approach, and also that some of Hanh's close friends were also going there. She liked the company of the class. She had been working with Ms Thy since she entered high school, approximately seven months prior to her participation in the present study. The private class met twice a week on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings when all students were free from school work. There were around twenty five students in the class, which was a much lower number of students than in a normal class at school. Attendance at the private class was quite erratic, with Hanh being one of the most regular members because "skipping one class means wasting dad and mom's money. I still go

there even though sometimes I am not in a good mood for studying” (CSHanh080413).

Ms Thy made use of her living room and the available furniture for the private class. It did not look like a normal class arrangement, with students spread around the room. When all the class members were present, there might not be enough seats for everyone. There was a small whiteboard fixed on the wall which was decorated with some family photos and other memorabilia. The class might be interrupted at times when Ms Thy had guests over or her family members came to talk to her.

According to Hanh, Ms Thy, given her teaching experience in the local district, had an excellent understanding of what her students needed and how to approach them. She usually began a class with detailed explanations of the study points for the day, followed by related exercises. At the end of each session, she gave the students the answer key and further explanations; afterwards, they had a chance to ask further questions. Her teaching method aimed to help the students to thoroughly understand the key points before shifting to others. Hanh reported having good scores in tests and examinations because Ms Thy helped her to prepare very carefully before each occasion: “So far, my test scores have been relatively good. I can’t imagine what they would be like without taking private classes. I am too lazy to study by myself” (CSHanh080413). Ms Thy also paid close attention to each student’s study progress.

8.4.3 Hanh’s reflections on taking private tuition

Hanh took private tuition mainly to cope with her formal English studies and to make up for her lack of personal effort. Her goal was to pass English examinations because she could not keep up with the school progress and was not confident about her language competence. Apart from the study time at school, the two weekly meetings in the private class were the only additional time Hanh spent learning English. The support from her parents and the company of her close friends were an incentive for her to keep going to the private English

class. Figure 8.1 summarises the microsystemic elements underpinning Hanh's private English tuition:

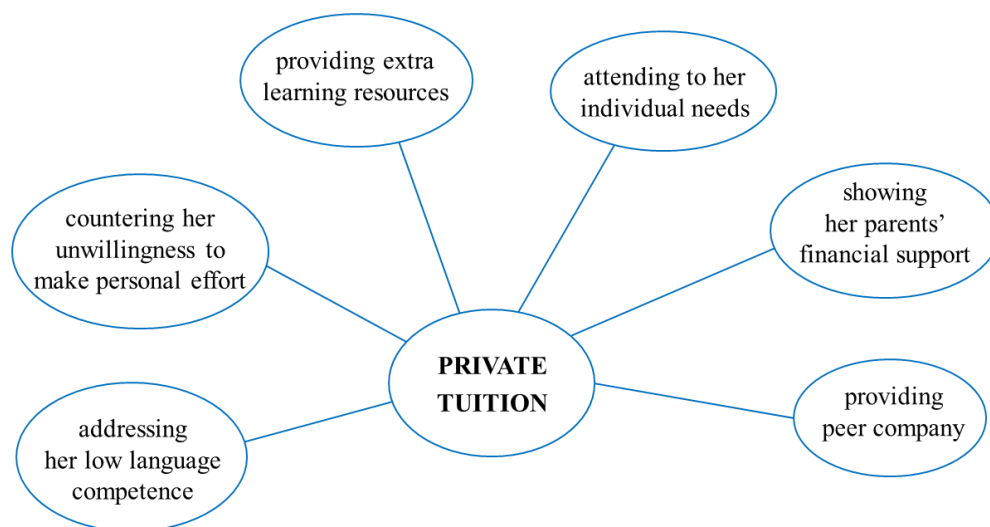


Figure 8.1: Affordances of private English tuition for Hanh

However, Hanh's private teacher primarily helped her to review the points she learned at school by giving a lot of exercises. When asked about the efficiency of taking the private English class in terms of her overall language development, she responded doubtfully:

The private class helped me with grammar and reading skills. I need them to pass tests and examinations. I have been able to get quite good scores so far. That's all. I don't really like English. I don't want to learn too much of it. Of course, if I want to learn English well, I have to make more effort in other language skills by myself. (CSHanh080413)

Hanh was fully aware that more effort was needed to improve other language skills, but this was not her immediate objective, indicating her appraisal of English as having a subordinate role in her present studies. She reported challenging herself occasionally by doing some extra reading at home but she could not really focus on her studies: "Every time I open my English workbook, I can only study for a short time. I will doze off very soon" (CSHanh080413). Another element that impacted on her attitudes towards going to private English classes was the tuition fee. She said:

There are some afternoons when I am too tired from the morning sessions at school to bike to Ms Thy's home. The thought of the long travel, intense sunlight, and my lack of interest in English make me lazy, but I still force myself to go there. I feel bad about spending my parents' money. (CSHanh080413)

One of Hanh's good traits was her awareness of her parents' financial investment in and concerns about her studies. Although she was not passionate about learning English, she did not miss any private English classes. In Vietnamese culture, this attitude is considered an indication of her gratitude and respect towards her parents for affording her such good learning conditions. However, the cost associated with taking the class at Ms Thy's place was minor, compared with the amount her parents had to pay for her English courses at a foreign language centre in the city which is approximately 30 kilometres away. It was not an easy budget calculation but they sent her there anyhow, believing that its benefits would outweigh the fee.

8.5 Hanh's English language studies at a foreign language centre

At the foreign language centre, the enthusiastic assistance of the English teachers as well as the facilities enabled Hanh to develop communicative competence and aural skills. This was also an opportunity for her to work with near peers in her class from different age and social backgrounds, which sharpened her perspectives on the importance of learning English (see Figure 8.2, column 3).

8.5.1 Her mother's encouragement

After the formal interview with Hanh's mother at her house, she invited me to a nearby café. During our informal conversation there, she mentioned her intention to send Hanh to a foreign language centre in the city. The log below describes the motive behind her plan:

Hanh's mother started with the stories about how hard her husband and she had to struggle in their early days coming to settle in the local area "with bare hands" (meaning they hardly had any money). She then asked

me about my English learning strategies and how I came to attain such a high level of education. She also wanted her children to attain far-reaching academic success. She told me about the chats she usually had with her fellow traders in the market place about their children's study. They sent their children to foreign language centres. The children could speak English "like parrots" (a Vietnamese metaphor for being a fluent speaker) after a few months studying there. She really wanted to send Hanh to a foreign language centre to see how this would work. We continued the conversation with a discussion about which centre she should go to and how long she should spend on the activity as she might need more time for other school subjects. (RSHanh270513)

According to the information Hanh's mother gathered from her fellow traders, a foreign language centre would provide a better environment for learning English than the formal class at school. This shows that parents with their social networks within their exosystems serve as a major transmission of cultural capital continuously add value to their children's education (Gao, 2012; Reay, 2000). Despite the mother's hesitation about the fee, she believed that the language courses would help Hanh to develop communicative skills in English. Soon after I left the research field, Hanh started going to the foreign language centre. She rode her electric bike for roughly an hour to get to the centre two evenings a week. She said sometimes she had just finished one private class but had to rush to the language centre without having any food. Tired and hungry on those occasions, she never skipped any meeting because, just as with other private classes, she was aware of the high tuition fee her parents had to pay.

8.5.2 The English class at the foreign language centre

There were two teachers for the class, one Vietnamese in charge of teaching grammar, vocabulary, and reading, and one American teacher for listening and speaking skills. Both teachers were very enthusiastic and committed to helping learners to improve their language skills. The class atmosphere was exhilarating with a range of pair and group work, games, and competitions which aimed to increase learners' communicative confidence and engagement in class activities. Hanh was impressed by the American teacher's sense of humour and really

enjoyed his sessions. Sometimes, he talked to individual learners and corrected their pronunciation mistakes very carefully. She thought the corrective feedback helped her to identify her frequent mistakes so that she could avoid them the next time she spoke English. She had not received such a high degree of meticulous correction before, even in the private English class. Also, she found it highly comfortable working with the teachers as they were always friendly and welcoming. The teachers were there really to help students and promote their love of learning English. Hanh said:

After going to the class for a while, I think I became quite keen on learning English. It was interesting. Even a shy student like me still wanted to open my mouth and talk in class. But then, when I went back to the formal class, the class atmosphere was worlds apart. I felt intimidated with the teacher's approach and soon became bored with learning it. (ISHanh201013)

The substantial contrast in terms of language affordances between the English language class at school and the one at the foreign language centre was rather frustrating. In the former, the teacher did not pay much attention to students' individual needs and their language learning difficulties. In the latter, probably because students had to pay much higher fees and in order to increase the number of enrolments, the teacher paid more attention to creating a stimulating class atmosphere in order to maintain and enhance learners' interest in learning English as well as to improve their language skills.

Across the three English learning contexts, namely at school, at her private teachers' home, and at the foreign language centre (summarised in Table 8.1), Hanh found the class at the foreign language centre the most motivating and effective in developing her language competence and confidence:

The fee might be rather high but I could work with an American teacher and make a lot of improvement, especially in my speaking skills. The Vietnamese teacher was also very good. I am not shy in class any more. (ISHanh201013)

Table 8.1: Hanh's comparisons across the three English learning settings

Learning settings	Class size	Study focus	Classroom interaction	Hanh's reflections
Formal English classes	large (≥ 40)	examination-based, mainly grammar and reading, little oral and aural practice	some interaction with the teacher and between peers, but still teacher-dominated	The teacher did not have time for individual students. Her lack of experience and understanding of local students' difficulties made her teaching ineffective.
Private English classes	medium (≤ 25)	examination-based, mainly grammar and reading, no oral and aural practice	little peer interaction and totally teacher-centred	The private teacher was encouraging and paid more attention to individual students. Hanh felt more comfortable in class and saw progress in her study.
Foreign language centres	smaller (≤ 15)	four skills, with an emphasis on oral and aural practice	various activities for interaction with the teacher and between peers, learner-centred	Classes were exciting with various activities. The teachers were friendly and enthusiastic. Hanh became more confident in her communicative skills

However, the most significant aspect of going to the foreign language centre was her realisation of the value of learning English from the near-peer examples. Despite the frequent reminders from the teacher, the mother, and me about how essential English would be to her future studies and career, she seemed to take them for granted. It was only after she attended the class with people from different backgrounds and at various ages who still had to learn English for various pragmatic reasons that she started to perceive its salience:

Interviewer: Who are your classmates?

Hanh: There are many types. Some of them are secondary or high school students like me but most of them are working people who are much older than me. They have different occupations such as doctors, office workers, or tour guides.

Interviewer: Do you know why they are learning English?

- Hanh: Because some are required to have at least the B level¹¹ in English to maintain their current position at work. Others want to apply for jobs or communicate with foreign business counterparts.
- Interviewer: How do you compare yourself with them?
- Hanh: They've stopped learning English for a long time. Now they only care about making money. They don't study well enough and make very slow progress. They are rather old for learning English.
- Interviewer: What do you learn from their examples?
- Hanh: Uhm . . . they are much older than me but they have to learn English and work very hard on it. I think I have more opportunities than them because I am still very young. I learned that English is very important now. I have to be more hard-working. (ISHanh201013)

The role models from her classmates made Hanh aware that English was one of the prerequisites for job applications and job security in most fields of life in Vietnam: her classmates still needed to learn English even though they already had stable jobs or high social positions. Despite their age, workload, and family issues, they had to allocate some time for attending the classes at the foreign language centre; otherwise, they could lose their current positions or would not be considered for promotion. In terms of time and study efficiency, she thought she had more “opportunities” than them, meaning that she had more time available for language learning and she could make quicker progress. These classmates acted as real-life role models, highlighting the significance of English and positively changing her attitudes towards learning it (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 2002; Murphey & Arao, 2001).

8.5.3 A motivational surge

The experience of her first course at the foreign language centre drastically changed Hanh's way of thinking about learning English:

¹¹ In the Vietnamese language certification system, B level is equivalent to the pre-intermediate level.

I used to be completely uninterested in learning English. I just wanted to have a passing grade at school. That was enough for me then. Now I am having quite a different view. Nowadays communicative skills are also very important. I have to improve them. I should have good listening and speaking skills as well. They are very necessary for future job applications. (ISHanh201013)

Previously, Hanh only focussed on the assessed areas at school, such as reading, grammar, and vocabulary, in her English language studies. She had never wanted to learn English at home, unless required by the school teacher. The examples from her classmates at the foreign language centre showed that a rounded development in language skills would be crucial to both her future study and occupation, regardless of her university major. This also indicated that she had started to appraise the role of English within her present and future studies and other commitments. In addition, the exciting class atmosphere with friendly teacher-student rapport gradually reduced her bias against English learning. Most importantly, she insisted: “My parents have spent much more money on my English language studies than any other school subjects. Going to the foreign language centre cost a fortune indeed. I must be responsible to them” (ISHanh201013). By being more responsible to her parents, she meant that she had to study harder in return for their concern and payments. She had started to prepare for each class and to review the previous lessons since she went to the language centre. Hanh said: “Sometimes I suddenly feel inspired to learn English and open the workbook to do some exercises” (FSHanh180114).

Going to the foreign language centre was a worthwhile and mind-opening experience for Hanh. She was not only convinced of the necessity of learning English but also more aware of her parents’ concerns and expectations. Also, in the local community, her academic and life success had huge significance to her parents. The following section will provide a snapshot of Hanh’s local community and her parents’ perspectives on education.

8.6 Local appreciation of educational attainment

Hanh's parents originated from the central region of Vietnam whose traditional ethos prioritised children's education. Although her family moved to the local province long before she was born, their high appreciation of schooling was deeply imprinted in their child-rearing styles. Despite these factors and parental interest in her studies, Hanh remained at best resigned and at times resistant to learning English (see Figure 8.2).

8.6.1 Hanh's migrant community

Hanh lived with her parents in a remote corner of the rural district, amid fields of cassavas and bamboo clusters. Most of the local people were migrants from Central Vietnam who left their poverty-stricken hometown in search of a better life. They came to settle in a formerly uncultivated area, bringing along their tradition of academic diligence and a high appreciation of education; their endurance and perseverance can be understood in terms of the geographical and life challenges of their home region (T. Hoang, 2013; Thong, 2013; Tung, 2010). Speaking of their love of study, Tung (2010) comments:

In this land (Central Vietnam), study does not mean individual effort but rather the expectations and concerted efforts of the whole community. Those who have been academically successfully have brought about honour for their family, their relatives, and their neighbours . . . Their academic studiousness is a product reflecting individual and societal appreciation of education across the local history and their desire to climb up the social ladder through education. It is those achievers who have established and passed down the local tradition. (para. 6)

Hanh's local community mainly depended on cassava and other crops for their income. Despite certain hardships in their lives, the local people always tried to support their children's education. They were well-known among the nearby communities for their high valuation of education and the extent of their support for children's schooling, as in the words of Hanh's mother:

We moved from the poorest central region to here in the belief that we, especially our children, would have better lives. Life back in my hometown was so tough. The only way to change the present family situation is through higher education. Everyone here values education. We are proud to be able to support the kids' study to the present level though not as well as affluent families. We give them very little housework so that they can wholly focus on their studies. (IPHanh)

Hanh's family was typical of those in the migrant commune in terms of prioritising child education. The local parents would take on different types of hard work to earn money but would not let their children get involved in family business. They believed that higher education was the best option for securing their children's social advancement.

8.6.2 Educational attainment as family honour



Image 8.1: The living-room wall with Hanh's commendation letters

The first impression any guest to Hanh's place had would be the living-room wall ornately decorated with letters of commendation Hanh and her younger brother received for their academic excellence (Image 8.1). These were not only the evidence to substantiate her parents' belief that their investment in their

children's schooling was acknowledged, but also a source of family honour. In our interview, her mother took great pride in talking about her children's studies:

Interviewer: How do you feel when Hanh and her brother perform well at school?

Hanh's mother: I am very proud and happy. Sometimes I am so excited that I can't help sharing the good news with my neighbours. My husband and I are very happy and our colleagues are also happy for us. Traditionally, we care about our children's education very much. Many families around us also show concern about their children's study but the results have not been up to their expectations. They feel sad. For us, our children are just halfway through their academic lives but we have been happy and proud of them so far. We hope that they can keep up the good work. (IPHanh)

Due to the nature of their work, Hanh's parents did not have much time to keep track of her studies. Her mother spent most of her day time in the market place while the father, a security guard, worked away from home and usually came back once a month. For them, the only means of finding out about Hanh's results was the half-semester academic reports from the school which detailed her performance across subjects and teachers' comments on her progress. In her free time, her mother occasionally told Hanh and her brother about the difficult life back in Central Vietnam as a message to encourage them to study harder. She also used role models from some local students who were studying at good universities in Ho Chi Minh City. These local role models and their families had gained high popularity and respect from their neighbours. As a small migrant community, the local people knew each other very well and had very close relationships. They usually made comparisons among families and children's academic success was considered a great honour. Hanh's mother said every time she went to a local wedding party or celebration, she felt very happy when her neighbours praised her children for their excellence. This fuelled her energy to work harder to afford them even better learning conditions (IPHanh).

8.6.3 Hanh's trip back to her parents' hometown

On the Lunar New Year holiday of 2014, which was about six months after I had returned to New Zealand, Hanh's family revisited her hometown in Central Vietnam. I learned about the trip from her Facebook status. As a prelude to the seventh interview, I asked about her experience on the trip which turned out to be a good topic for discussion.

It was her second trip there. She did not have any recollection of her first visit because she was too young at that time. On this occasion, she saw a striking contrast between her present life and that in her hometown. According to her description, it was a poor and remote district kilometres away from markets, schools, and hospitals. She felt lucky because she was born and lived in her present place with closer access to public facilities. She was surprised to find out that there were mainly old people and small children living there. Most people of working age had left the place either for study or work. Hanh noticed two opposing trends among the local people. A large number of them, for various reasons, decided to look for jobs in other bigger cities after they finished high school. A minority of them who persisted in their schooling usually became successful in different walks of life and many held important positions across the country. To the people living there, these successful individuals were the "faces" of the district and the oft-quoted examples for younger generations to follow.

Having witnessed the challenges of life and heard about real role models in her parents' hometown, Hanh felt more convinced about the claims commonly made about the resilience and academic studiousness of the people who live in Central Vietnam. In her reflection on the trip, she said:

Now and then, mom told me about the people there and their life difficulties. I listened to her stories but they came in one ear and out the other. It is said that seeing is believing. I stayed there, not too long but enough for me to understand how the people were struggling in their lives against the harsh weather conditions and their perseverance. I then thought about my parents' lives. Dad can't come home often. Mom has taken care

of everything at home by herself. I didn't think much about how hard their lives were when they were my age. I know they want me to have a good life, one that is much better than their own. When I used their money to pay the private tuition fee, I hadn't given a single thought to their hard work at all. I felt guilty for not being a good student. (ISHanh230214)

As Hanh was responding to my questions about how she linked this experience with her present life and studies, her usually smiling face was replaced by more serious facial expressions, displaying a certain degree of sympathy for the people there and also for her parents. She indicated her regret at not working hard, especially in English, because her parents spent more money on it than other school subjects. Compared with the peers in her parents' hometown, she acknowledged having much better learning conditions. However, Hanh did not see this as an advantage:

Interviewer: Are there many foreign language centres there?

Hanh: (laughs) If there was any, even in town, the foreign language centre would close down very soon. The students there do not care about learning English. My cousins told me they were only studying the natural science subjects to pass the university entrance examination. After that, they might think about learning English. Their English teachers were also sympathetic and did not put pressure on them. If I studied there, my English would be the best in class.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Hanh: They are so happy (jokingly).

Interviewer: Why?

Hanh: Because their teachers and parents do not force them to learn English.

Interviewer: How about in the long term?

Hanh: Of course, we have to learn English to look for jobs. We have to learn English at university anyhow. But that's the story of the future, not now. (ISHanh230214)

Her replies to the interview questions rather contradicted what she had stated earlier. On the one hand, Hanh was sorry for her parents' past and present life, and insisted that she did not deserve what they afforded her. She felt bad about herself for not performing well in her studies. On the other hand, she considered learning the language an obligation imposed by the school and her parents rather than being a desire of her own. In this respect, she envied her peers in her family's former hometown who did not have to focus on English despite her awareness of its future importance.

Hanh's attitude towards learning English was related to her ultimate choice of university major, business, which does not require high English language competence, showing her agency in prioritising the school subjects relating to her academic goals. Her shift away from learning English, especially in non-formal settings, was displayed more clearly towards her final year at high school.

8.7 Hanh's final year at high school

In her final stages of high school, two major changes took place in the testing policies in relation to the place of English in the high school graduation examination: a policy change implemented at the end of Year Eleven, which was reversed in Year Twelve. The evident impact on her motivation is traced below (see Figure 8.2, columns 4 and 5).

8.7.1 Her English learning plans for Year Twelve

With the first wave of change in the high school graduation examination which was officially introduced at the end of her Year Eleven (see 2.1.2), Hanh decided to withdraw from learning English in the coming year. She wanted to wholly concentrate on the main subjects for the university entrance examination. When I was informed of the testing change, I contacted Hanh on Facebook to see her immediate reaction. She said: "When our English teacher told us about this change, everyone in my class cheered with relief. English is not an academic burden on me anymore. I can focus on what I want to study now"

(FSHanh250414). Having a low level of interest in English, Hanh was particularly excited about the new policy.

Since entering high school, Hanh had planned to study a major in business and thus tended to work more on her exam group, namely group A (see 2.1.3). She learned English only because it was a compulsory paper at school and she had to maintain a certain level of English to be entitled to a good ranking in class. Her academic standing was the criteria against which her mother evaluated her study progress. However, for her last year at high school, the main goal was to make her way to a good university. With the policy change, she was free from the pressure of having to learn English which had little contribution to her chance of passing the university entrance examination. To this end, she planned to quit both the private English class at her teacher's home and the language course at the foreign language centre in Year Twelve: "Now I don't have to sit for the English graduation exam. There is no need to continue taking private classes at the moment" (FSHanh250414). This withdrawal from private English tuition would give Hanh more time for the subjects in her exam group.

8.7.2 Reviewing her initial plans

The beginning of Hanh's Year Twelve, around which time I ended all my data collection activities, saw another change in the national testing policy (see 2.1.2 for the later policy change). English came back to its previous status as a compulsory component of the high school graduation examination. In our final interview which was a few days after the draft policy had been issued, Hanh was rather upset with the continual changes. She shared the same feeling with another student in the news who had sent a letter of complaint to the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training:

Interviewer: What do you think about the recent changes in the high school graduation policies?

Hanh: I feel "dizzy."

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Hanh: The changes have been so abrupt. They just changed the policy in March and now they have changed it again. We had very short time to adapt to them. Have you read the letter a student sent to the Minister of Education in the newspapers?

Interviewer: Not yet. I wasn't aware there was such a letter.

Hanh: She told the testing stakeholders not to turn students like us into "white mice" in their experiments. If there was going to be a change, the Ministry should have informed us well in advance when we just entered high school so that we could have enough time to prepare for it. (ISHanh160814)

Hanh was one of the million students who felt at a loss with the switching roles of English in the graduation requirements. Her previous relief at not having to undertake the English test was superseded by her present worry about it. Consequently, Hanh had to review her study plan.

Interviewer: What is your study plan now?

Hanh: I had to abort my previous plan. I can't stop taking private English classes now.

Interviewer: When are you going to stop all the private English tuition?

Hanh: I will put it on hold before the graduation examination to have more time for exam revision. (ISHanh160814)

Hanh's adaptive strategies showed how she used her agency to cope with the changing situations in her studies. Her attitude towards learning English in the final year varied substantially, depending on its status in the graduation requirement. This was because Hanh was more concerned with gaining entry into her desired university which required her to focus mainly on her exam group. However, English still had great significance in her long-term plans, especially in her university studies:

I will temporarily stop taking English courses in the second semester of Year Twelve but will resume them when I enter university. I will go to an

evening class at a foreign language centre as soon as I start university. I will continue taking English courses until I can become fluent in English. Now all jobs require English. (ISHanh160814)

Hanh's long-term language learning strategies confirmed her earlier responses to my interview questions about the value of learning English. In the interview, I gave her the following scenario after we had been discussing her parents' involvement in her language studies:

Scenario

Imagine you were a mother with a daughter at your present age, what would you do for her English study?

Hanh: I would definitely support my daughter's language study. I would send her to private English classes from elementary school so that she could develop an early interest in it.

Interviewer: What else would you do at home?

Hanh: I would buy English books and subscribe to English TV channels for her to practise English. I want her to love English. I can't learn English well because I do not love it. It is really hard to change myself now, so I want to help her from the very beginning.

Interviewer: What if she refused to learn English?

Hanh: I would use my own example to convince her. I would tell her how I had to struggle with learning English and how much money my parents had to spend on my study. She might not choose English as a university major but would have to learn English. (ISHanh170713)

The activities that Hanh would do for her imagined daughter suggested that she was highly aware of the vital status of English and her own shortcomings in learning it. In her view, to learn English well, one must love it. She wanted her daughter to develop an early interest in learning English right from the beginning of her language studies by sending her to private classes and providing different

English learning resources at home. She also admitted her erroneous belief that having a university major in other fields meant not having to learn English. To rectify her mistake, she would encourage her imagined daughter to learn English, whatever her intended major would be.

8.8 Hanh's overall motivational trajectory

Like the majority of the learners at Vision High, Hanh did not show much passion for learning English despite a wide range of learning opportunities chiefly provided by her parents. Figure 8.2 represents her motivational trajectory in relation to her appraisals of the affordances for language learning provided by significant others and overarching sociocultural values. The motivational elements for Hanh included: her desire to respond to parental financial investment and involvement in her language studies; the local appreciation of higher education; the compulsory nature of English in the school curriculum; and its role as a language for international communication. However, her ultimate choice of university major and the changing testing system in Vietnam largely defined her attitudes towards learning English at that point in time.

The initial obstacles confronting Hanh when she started learning English in secondary school rapidly deterred her from making much effort. To compensate, she resorted to private tuition and rote learning as a strategy for coping with school tests and examinations. During her retrospections, she did not have any special impression about her English studies and the teacher-student rapport in her secondary school time.

Hanh still had a low level of interest in learning English upon her entry into high school. She experienced a challenging school transition in terms of learning styles and academic requirements. The more demanding high school environment caused Hanh a lot of difficulties because she was not in a good position to adapt to the changes. In Year Ten, Hanh worked with a newly graduated English teacher, Ms Quynh, with whom she could develop a friendly

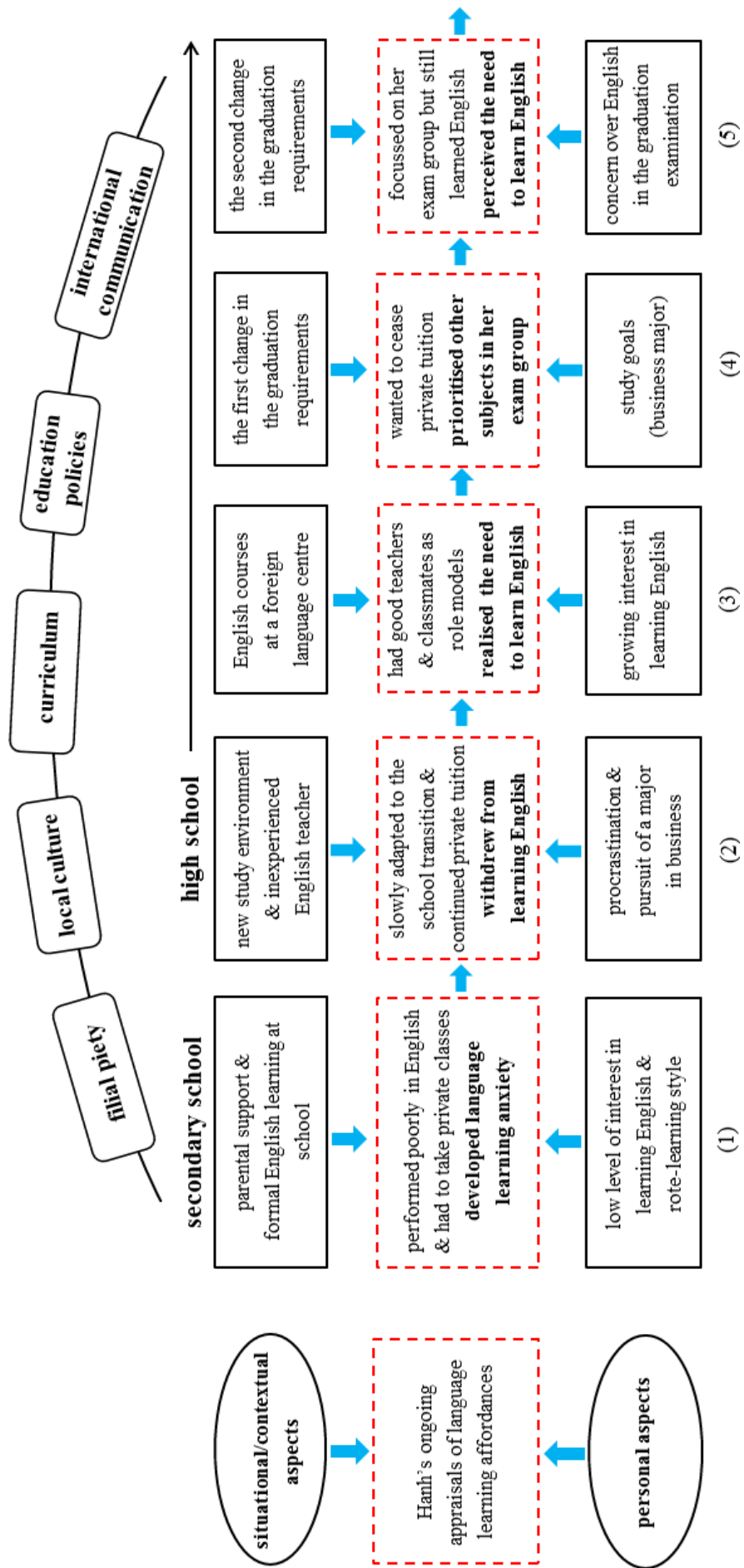


Figure 8.2: Hanh's ongoing appraisals of language learning affordances and her motivational trajectory

teacher-student relationship more easily than the teachers at secondary school. She also enjoyed the relaxing classroom atmosphere because Ms Quynh was young and enthusiastic. However, her teacher's easy-going manner, together with her lack of teaching experience and classroom management, partly resulted in Hanh's continued procrastination and neglect of her English language studies. These elements also made it hard for Hanh to stop taking private English classes.

The private learning setting mainly emphasised the skills and language areas that Hanh actually needed to maintain her performance at school. There was little oral or aural practice because it was not within the teaching and assessment focuses at high school. The private teacher, Ms Thy, was more attentive to Hanh's weaknesses and gave her very careful revision of the points covered in the formal English lessons. Ms Thy spent more time with individual students which helped to enhance teacher-student rapport. Despite the mechanical teaching techniques, the private class helped Hanh to consolidate her school knowledge and maintain her language competence to the extent required by her studies at school. Hanh tried not to skip any private class meeting because she was aware of the tuition cost being shouldered by her parents. This was an indication of her respect and gratitude towards them for their educational involvement.

Hanh's mother learned from her fellow traders at the market place about the benefits of taking English courses at foreign language centres. Her mother sent her to an English centre in the city, hoping that she could improve her communicative skills. Hanh had the opportunity to work with an American teacher who was both humorous and enthusiastic. He gave her very detailed corrective feedback on her pronunciation. The exhilarating classroom atmosphere, with a wide variety of activities, helped to increase her linguistic confidence and she became more active in class. She also saw a marked improvement in her language skills after her first course at the foreign language centre. Most importantly, the role models from her classmates who were having stable jobs and certain positions in society but still going to the English class

broadened her mind. Hanh internalised the importance of learning English and started to develop a more positive attitude towards learning it.

Halfway through Year Eleven, Hanh followed her mother on a trip back to her parents' hometown. The experience enriched her understandings of the hardships that her parents used to experience. This trip also enabled Hanh to see the substantial differences between her present learning conditions and those of her peer cousins in the hometown. She became more conscious of the local community's emphasis on the value and rewards of higher education which she had completely ignored before.

Prior to Year Twelve, Hanh was confounded by the two sudden changes in the testing policies. After the first wave of change in which English became an optional subject in the high school graduation examination, she planned to cease private English tuition so that she could devote more time to her exam group in the final year. Her relief was soon dispelled by the reviewed policy, with English returning to its former mandatory status in the graduation requirements. As a result, she had to abort her previous withdrawal plan. These adjustments were only her temporary measures to cope with the requirements in her present study. In the long term, Hanh resolved to adopt a more serious attitude towards English, given its importance to her academic and occupational prospects.

8.9 Summary

Hanh's consistently negative experiences in her formal English language classes triggered high levels of language learning anxiety. She became increasingly resigned and resistant to learning English despite her parents' emotional and financial investment in it. She relied on private English tuition to compensate for her lack of effort and interest in learning the language. As migrants from Central Vietnam, where higher education is highly valued, her parents tried their best to create good learning conditions for their children. In addition to private classes at her teacher's home, they encouraged her to take language courses at a foreign language centre to improve her communicative skills in English. The exciting

atmosphere and the enthusiasm of the teachers at the centre helped Hanh to become more confident and interested in learning English. Also, her interactions with near peers in the class sharpened her perspective on the importance of the language. However, the contrasts between her formal and informal language learning settings resulted in motivational fluctuations. This indicated the extent of the situatedness and dynamic nature of her language learning motivation. Given the changes in graduation requirements in her final year and her ultimate choice of major, Hanh focussed more on the subjects in her exam group and paid less attention to English. Despite the extent of affordances for language learning, social support and near peer role modelling within and across her microsystems and exosystems, the place of education within her parents' hometown culture, and her filial obligations, Hanh's L2 motivational construction was disrupted by the shifting policies in the testing system and her ultimate choice of a business major in her future studies.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

This chapter aims to provide in-depth insights into the complexity and dynamics of language learning motivation within and across relationships and settings. The main focus is on the situational and contextual elements that shape learners' motivational trajectories over time. Different layers of settings and relationships from micro to macro levels are examined to explore their personal constructions of English learning motivation in the Southern Vietnamese rural context. The sections correspond to the three research questions within the theoretical and analytical framework underpinning this study. Section one presents and discusses further the motivational affordances for language learning provided by significant others in the microsystems. Section two looks at the larger picture by highlighting learners' multiple social relationships, sociocultural values, education systems, and other aspects related to English learning, with an emphasis on their synergistic effects. Section three sheds light on the temporal nature of language learning motivation by investigating different milestones and events throughout learners' past and present English language studies.

9.1 Significant others as motivational affordances for rural Vietnamese students learning English

The person-in-context relational view of motivation encompasses a fusion of “social relations, activities, and experiences and multiple micro- and macro-contexts” in which learning is situated (Ushioda, 2009, p. 220). This complex interrelated system particularly emphasises the roles and contributions of significant others whose different degrees of involvement in students' language studies help to generate, shape, and maintain their L2 motivation. Arnold and Fonseca (2007) expound that “language learning is a social event where significant adults, normally parents and teachers, provide the learners with mediated, meaningful experiences to help them to construct knowledge actively”

(p. 108). In addition to their scaffolding functions, these persons also offer learners suggestions, orientations, and feedback that “serve to affirm, sustain, or change adolescents’ motivation and engagement” (A. Ryan, 2000, p. 101). This section elaborates on the motivational affordances for high school students’ language learning provided by significant others in the rural Vietnamese context.

9.1.1 English language teachers at school

As language learning mostly takes place at school, teachers play a key role in facilitating learners’ access to English texts, igniting their language learning interest, encouraging them, building up their confidence, and ultimately sustaining their motivation (Chambers, 1999; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2001a; Gardner, 2001; Williams & Burden, 1997). Borg (2006) points out that language teachers differ from those of other disciplines in terms of teaching content, teaching approaches, and the nature of classroom interaction. Language teachers are in charge of both imparting language knowledge and skills to learners, and are a learning resource themselves. In addition to such a variety of roles and responsibilities, Dörnyei (2001a) argues that language teachers tend to focus more on teaching the curriculum than motivating students and that “the former cannot happen without the latter is often ignored” (p. 27). In actuality, teachers contribute significantly to all motivational stages of the language learning process (Williams & Burden, 1997). The discussion below covers three prominent motivational affordances provided by school English teachers, among a vast number of other dimensions emerging from the data.

9.1.1.1 Teachers as the main source of English

In rural areas in Vietnam, most students have limited learning opportunities and language affordances, so school teachers are the primary providers and sources of knowledge and interactional activities in the target language within their microsystems. Working with Indonesian students in similar rural settings, Lamb (2002, 2013b) points out that learning English with teachers at school accounts for a significant proportion of language studies. The constraints of lack of

reference materials and facilities inevitably lead to the fact that many if not most students rely solely on teachers for language input. My observation of the library at Vision High showed that there were only a couple of outdated English exercise books, and no CDs or DVDs for English learning. The students stated that every time they had any questions about English, the first and only person they thought about was their school teacher. A common repercussion of this situation confronting English teachers, especially those with large-size classes, is catering for individual students' needs. Despite the workload and busy timetable, most of the local teachers were willing to respond to their students' queries. Manh revealed:

If I come across something new in English when I am surfing the Internet or reading books, I will note it down and bring it to class to ask my teacher. He has never refused to give me an explanation. Sometimes we do not have enough time in class; he may either remain in class during the break or asks me to go to the staff room to answer my questions. (CSManh)

Another feature that distinguishes learning English from other school subjects is its focus on classroom interaction which requires a large amount of time for communicative activities. An obstacle for Vietnamese learners is, as Sa (2014) maintains, that "[the] teacher is the immediate resource for them in class, and in most of the cases of EFL learning, [the] teacher is the only resource of language that they are exposed to" (p. 125). English teachers usually function as the only capable interlocutors in class that students turn to when they want to practise speaking or have difficulty expressing themselves. With the exception of those who can afford to take private tuition, students depend primarily on their teachers for oral practice, correction, and feedback. One of the school teachers stated:

Most of the students are very weak at English, especially speaking skills because they do not have the opportunity to practise outside class time. I am well aware of this and try to conduct as many communicative activities as possible. The main point is to help them step by step in the hope that they can speak at least a few basic sentences in English. (ITTrung)

For students who are passionate about learning English and intend to take an English language major in their future studies, teachers go beyond their routine teaching activities by giving them more advanced materials or certain privileges in class. In Manh's case, his teacher gave him more challenging tasks than his classmates and asked him to be a model for the rest of the students when it came to a certain activity. Diem received more special attention from her English teacher towards her final year despite claiming to have to "swim by herself" in the top class earlier in her studies at high school (ISDiem201013). Her teacher grouped her with other students specialising in English and gave them more advanced drills to revise for the upcoming examinations. The preferential treatment and affordances provided by these English language teachers fuelled their determination to pursue English no matter how challenging it was.

9.1.1.2 Arousing and sustaining language learning motivation

Girard (1977) states that one chief responsibility of language teachers is generating and maintaining learners' L2 motivation. Now that a majority of rural Vietnamese students tend to have their first exposure to English through formal studies, school teachers are the very first persons to introduce English to them. Being the primary source of language affordances, teachers are likely to be in the foremost position to trigger learners' L2 motivation. Both Diem and Phong found that their interaction with English language teachers had a substantial impact on their attitudes towards learning the language. They attributed their preliminary language learning interest, especially in vocabulary and pronunciation, to their teachers whose utterances in English, with its distinct sound features, during the first few lessons intrigued them.

Along with teaching approaches and classroom activities that help to sustain learners' L2 motivation (discussed later in 9.3.3.1), teachers can motivate them by developing positive prospects from language studies. This can be achieved by fostering beliefs about language learning success and failure (Aragão, 2011;

Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011; Murphey, 1995), or using role models (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 1998). Oxford and Shearin (1994) add:

Teachers can inculcate the belief that success is not only possible but probable, as long as there is a high level of effort . . . For students to be motivated, they need repeated evidence - often from teachers but also from successful users of the target language who were once in the students' own position. (p. 20)

All the teachers asserted that they continually addressed the importance of learning English to their students during and outside their class time by sketching various scenarios of language use in their study and future work. They also used the role models of themselves or school alumni as successful learners of English to motivate their students. Peer and near peer role modelling has been widely reported to have positive impacts on students' L2 motivation in many Asian contexts such as Taiwan and Japan (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 2002; Murphey & Arao, 2001). A great number of students confirmed the motivational value of their teachers' awareness-raising activities and role modelling:

My teacher keeps complaining about my classmates' low attitudes towards learning English and emphasises how important language learning is on a regular basis. She talks a lot about what we can do with English in the future and encourages us to invest more in it. She also uses successful examples of other senior students or those who have already graduated. For me, I took on her words immediately because I am keen on learning English but for many of my classmates, it is quite hard to instil the idea into them. Her strategy was repeating these issues from time to time. I think they [his classmates] become more aware but her words tended to have temporary effects only. (CSPhong)

These approaches to enhancing students' understandings of the necessity of learning foreign languages are also adopted in other teaching contexts (Chambers, 1999; Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001; Lamb & Wedell, 2014), which provide corroborating evidence of their effectiveness. Although these microsystemic elements tend to have certain immediate effects on learners' L2 motivation, their long-term impacts remain less clear.

9.1.1.3 Building up students' language learning confidence

The lack of confidence in target-language communication is a common challenge for EFL learners, especially those in rural contexts where language practice mainly takes place within the confines of the classroom. The fear of making mistakes, having poor pronunciation, being laughed at by peers, or receiving negative feedback from teachers are among the factors cited by the students for their diffidence and reticence in class. Bao (2013) observes that Vietnamese students often withdraw from communicative activities as much as possible due to low confidence and lack of negotiation skills. All the teachers insisted that they endeavoured to encourage student talking time by conducting various communicative activities but concurrently conceded that such an effort is unfortunately under time and curricular constraints. Discussing his English language teacher's attempt to enhance language learning confidence among his classmates, Manh said:

Interviewer: Do you take part in many class activities?

Manh: Yes. Our English teacher gives us a lot of communicative games. He said he wanted us to be more active and not to be shy. He said we should not be scared of making mistakes. He always gives us compliments and high scores to encourage us.

Interviewer: Has he made any comment about your language studies?

Manh: He said I had been doing very well. I should keep up the good work by joining both class and school activities.
(ISManh081213)

One key to building up learners' communicative confidence is showing that the teachers actually care about them and want them to improve their skills (ITTrung, ITKieu, and ITLan). On this point, Lopez and Aguilar (2013) emphasise that "by showing genuine interest in students' learning processes, teachers will inspire trust, confidence and a motivating learning environment" (p. 121). Data from interviews, casual conversations, and informal interactions with the case study participants also indicate that compliments and encouragement

from their English language teachers enhanced their linguistic confidence. These instances represent the affective aspects of their language learning in relation to teachers as their chief significant others within the school microsystem (Lamb & Wedell, 2014; Lopez, 2011).

9.1.2 Rural parents

Within the home microsystem, parents have significant influences on children's academic attitudes and performance (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Palfreyman, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997; You & Nguyen, 2011). Spera (2006) believes that parents have “a unique role as socialising agents” that contributes to children's academic achievement, perceptions of educational value, and motivation (p. 458). However, the extent of parental involvement in children's education, specifically language learning, depends on their educational, socioeconomic, sociocultural backgrounds (Chambers, 1999; Fan & Williams, 2010; Gao, 2012; Lamb, 2012). Three major motivational affordances from rural parents are discussed to highlight their engagement in children's English language studies.

9.1.2.1 Parental support

Parental support is primarily represented in the study as paying school and private tuition fees, buying textbooks and stationery, and covering expenses for other academic activities. In other words, their involvement in children's schooling is mostly conceptualised, as in Lamb's (2013b) study, in financial terms. A high proportion of parents in rural areas of Vietnam are pre-literate, so they find it hard to offer their children help with academic work, especially in learning English. These parents also have a low income, meaning that they can only offer basic learning conditions for their children. Instead, they strive to respond to their children's language learning needs by doing small things such as buying dictionaries and reference books from second-hand bookshops. However, some financially comfortable parents may send their children to private English classes to develop more language skills. Hanh's mother said:

My husband and I did not have any schooling at all, so we can't help our children with their homework. When I look at their books, I know nothing. The only thing we can do is pay the private tuition fees and buy the stuff they need for their study. I usually tell them that we do not feel sorry for having to spend too much money on their study. The most important thing is whether they want to study or not. (IPHanh)

The involvement of Hanh's parents in her language studies confirms Bray's (2013) remark that "investment in [private] tutoring may give a feeling that they are doing what they can for their children at crucial stages in their children's lives" (p. 20). Also, in the case of Manh's father, who was able to use English, intervened more actively in his language studies. He made substantial efforts to teach and practise English with him at home. Although he could not help Manh directly with his English exercises for school, he served as a conversational partner and infused English into home activities and interactions. He thus provided a contextually-rich environment for English language learning, even if his own proficiency was limited. Such a practice is relatively common in Asian families whose parents are competent in English and are thus more involved in their children's language studies (Gao, 2012; Shim, 2013; You & Nguyen, 2011).

These examples can be taken to confirm that rural parents, depending on their socioeconomic and educational background, have different kinds and degrees of involvement in their children's English learning. All the students expressed the determination to do their best in their studies so as not to waste the parents' hard-earned money and commitment. Even Hanh, who had a resigned attitude towards learning English, stated that "I feel guilty about not learning English well enough to deserve my parents' financial investment. Sometimes when I think about my parents, I force myself to go to my desk and do English homework" (ISHanh201013).

9.1.2.2 Instillation of educational values

A large number of rural parents in the present study have very low literacy backgrounds. In their time, these parents were more concerned with meeting their

day-to-day living expenses than pursuing a higher level of education. However, the pressing need for English for job applications and workplace communication nowadays has refocused parental attention on children's language studies. The case study participants reported that their performance at school and issues regarding their future choice of study were common topics at meal times or family gatherings.

Different parents have different approaches to inculcating the value of education, especially language learning, into their children. In Phong's words:

My father does not have much time at home because of his work. However, when he has free time, he often talks to me and my sister about the importance of going to school. He uses examples of those bad guys in the news who do evil things to society because they do not have a good education and turn out to be burdens on their families. He wants us to avoid those things, study well, and have a good job in the future. (ISPhong110313)

Phong's father chose to use negative role models from the mass media as a form of warning. In contrast, Hanh's mother referred to the role models of her neighbours who were successful in their language studies for her to follow. Diem's parents used their own examples and their financially challenging conditions as a consequence of not having a good education. The aim of these different parenting styles was to help their children to be more aware of the role of education for their present and future lives.

9.1.2.3 Parental expectations and aspirations

On the significance of parental expectations and aspirations, Fan and Williams (2010) note that these elements "stood out as a strong positive predictor" for adolescents' engagement and motivation in learning English as well as other subjects (p. 69). During interviews and casual conversations, all the parents expressed strong commitment to supporting their children to reach a high level of education so that they could have a better socioeconomic future. Their only expectation was, as Phong's mother said, that "They [her children] will be able to

have high qualifications, find a decent job, and support themselves in the future” (IPPhong). These parents also tried to help their children to see the rewards of having excellent language proficiency, such as the ease of job applications and a variety of job offers. In this regard, Hanh’s mother insisted “Nowadays any job requires English. Knowing English is a real advantage” (IPHanh).

Whereas most parents generally want a good future for their children, some state explicitly what area of study or occupation they expect them to follow. This leads to the issue of students’ conformity or resistance to parental aspirations. In Manh’s case, his father wanted him to learn English well because he himself had a strong interest in the language. Under his influence since childhood, Manh developed a strong passion for learning English and opted for an English language major in his future studies. In contrast, Hanh showed signs of protest against her mother’s wishes:

My mom wanted me to become a secondary school English teacher because she believes that this job is good and non-competitive. However, I don’t think I have teaching skills and most importantly I don’t have an aptitude for learning English. I want to do business instead. I tried to persuade her. She agreed but asked me to promise to continue with my language studies. (CSHanh)

Parental expectations and aspirations, and the macrosystemic values underpinning such parental orientations deeply influence students’ academic choices and L2 motivation (Butler, 2015; Hang, 2009, 2010; Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2011; Lamb, 2013b; Roman, Cuestas, & Fenollar, 2008; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Negotiations with parents regarding their future majors and desired jobs also help students to make choices about the amount of effort to expend in their English language studies.

9.1.3 Other family members

The close ties among members in typical Vietnamese family structure (Them, 2000, 2006) brings about a shared concern over children’s education and well-

being across the family. In Noels' (2001) words, "familial influences on motivation are not restricted to parents, but, depending on the background and life experience of the learner, other members may also play important roles in supporting motivation" (p. 56). This is especially true when learners are not directly supervised by their parents but rather by other members of the extended family. In Phong's case, his grandmother monitored his day-to-day and academic activities and sometimes helped his parents to cover his tuition fees. The grandmother also gave him occupational counselling based on her life experience and exchanges with other people. Phong attributed his L2 motivation not only to his parents but also to his grandmother because they all were important to him and he wanted to live up to their expectations.

Support and affordances from extended family members can also come in the form of study materials, reference books, learning equipment, encouragement, or career orientation. Knowing he was interested in learning English, Manh's overseas cousin gave him a laptop computer to access learning resources on the Internet. She also shared cultural information about English-speaking countries with him. In Phong's case, he received old study materials from his aunt who had just finished her university degree. In addition to encouraging Phong to learn English, the aunt also gave him advice on career choice.

A subtle motivational aspect in relation to other family members is that some learners want to act as a source of language affordances for them. This often happens to students with siblings or cousins who are at school age and are also learning languages (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; Palfreyman, 2011). Phong was committed to helping his younger sister to develop a passion for learning English. To this end, he taught her some English vocabulary and helped her with homework assignments. As a role model for his sister, Phong felt a strong desire to improve his own language skills.

9.1.4 Private English language teachers

An increasing number of rural students have taken private English classes with teachers who work inside or outside their high schools. Access to private English classes largely depends on their family's income. This practice aims to help low-achieving students to revise school knowledge or provide extended knowledge for students taking English in the university entrance examination.

In the first instance, students go to private classes because they are unable to keep up with the formal class progress. Private teachers help them to review the knowledge they learn at school by giving them a lot of repetitive practice and explanations. Commenting on this, Hanh said “the teaching techniques are pretty much the same as in the formal class, but the teacher gives me more detailed and repeated instructions. There is more time for practice on grammar and vocabulary so that weak students can master the points” (ISHanh201013). Private teachers also encourage students not to give up learning English even when it is not their choice of future major by explaining its potential importance to them.

Where students are committed to learning English to gain admission into their desired university, private teachers provide them with the points that school teachers do not cover in class. In Diem's words, “only a few students choose to learn English, so my school teacher cannot spend too much time with us. We have to take private classes to get more advanced knowledge” (ISDiem140713). Having limited help and resources from their formal English learning setting, these students count on private teachers for extra support and affordances for examination revision and preparation.

However, not all students see the motivational value of private English tuition. Manh decided to withdraw from the private class after the first month because his teacher and the learning environment failed to meet his needs and expectations. Such actions demonstrate students' agency in evaluating the motivational effects of private teachers with regard to their learning goals and the extent to which these goals are met. This also shows the complexities of students' attitudes

towards private tuition and the effects of this practice on their language development (D. H. Anh, 2013; Yung, 2015).

9.1.5 English teachers at foreign language centres

Going to foreign language centres is a special privilege that only students from a solid financial background can afford. The courses there attend more to individual learners' needs by taking into account both cognitive and affective elements. Students have an opportunity to work with teachers from English-speaking countries, which enhances their communicative skills and promotes natural language use. Teachers at foreign language centres aim to create a stress-free learning environment so that students can develop their communicative confidence and actively participate in classroom activities. Hanh, the only student in the present study to go to a foreign language centre, stated that "Studying there is fun. The American teacher is very humorous, friendly, and devoted. He is very careful with correcting my pronunciation. He encourages me to talk in a comfortable manner so I feel really free in his class" (FSHanh180114). The distance between students and teachers is narrowed insofar as they are not hesitant to bring their points or questions forward. While such a resource-rich setting far exceeds what is available in rural areas, for Hanh, it also supported her motivation in terms of meeting fellow students who were adults and under great pressure to learn English for their jobs. This aspect is discussed in the next section.

9.1.6 Classmates, peers, and near peers

Peer interaction across settings has been found to exert profound motivational impacts on learners (Dörnyei, 2002; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; A. Ryan, 2000). Peers constitute a learning network for both classroom and extracurricular activities. Diem connected with some other students who took the same exam group to set up a private English class with Mr Hung. This activity enabled Diem and her peers to better prepare for the university entrance examination, thus maintaining their L2 motivation. Manh and Phong enjoyed the

peer activities in my Thursday English class which enhanced their communicative confidence and public speaking skills. For Hanh, peer company in the private English class was one of the incentives for her to keep this practice.

However, peers may also create pressures or fears that undermine students' motivation. Gao (2008) asserts that peer relationships, especially peer competition, may be a threat to their motivation, causing "feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, anxiety, and frustration" (p. 180). Since he was moved to the second top class, Phong found himself in a continuous struggle to keep up with his new classmates. The pressure to do well in all academic subjects to retain his place in the class drained his language learning motivation. Consequently, he spent less time on English and more on other disciplines to ensure acceptable academic performance. In addition, peers' affective influences on learners, for instance, the fear of being different from others, may result in "their tendency to align themselves to group norms" (Kozaki & Ross, 2011, p. 1348). This is shown in Manh's case when he wanted to practise English with his classmates but was denied the opportunity: "Sometimes I speak a few sentences in English to my classmates over our session breaks but they laugh at me. They say I must be crazy" (ISManh090413). Not receiving peer support, Manh chose not to use English outside the English class so as not to be seen as "abnormal."

Peer and near peer role modelling is another important motivational dimension in language learning (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 1998; Walqui, 2000). In Murphey and Arao's (2001) view, peers and near peers "present[s] students with powerful 'identificatory moments' of possibility" (p. 9). They do not necessarily have to be successful learners of English to function as role models; instead, they may have certain characteristics or experiences that students can draw on. Hanh used to take little heed of the advice and warnings about learning English from her mother and teachers. The experience with her classmates who were older than her and already employed but still had to take English courses at the foreign language centre gave her real-life insight into the importance of learning English. The failure of other peers and nears peers also serves as an alert for

learners. Negative examples from some of Phong's neighbourhood peers who had quit school early, had unstable jobs, and ended up becoming a local nuisance sustained his determination to pursue higher education.

Interestingly, seeing themselves as the role model for other peers fuelled students' L2 motivation. Diem was a case in point. She was always among the top students at school, for which she gained admiration from other students and neighbourhood peers. Her mother said "When the kids in the neighbourhood see Diem going home with school awards for her academic excellence, they are full of praise. They say sister Diem studies so well and they want to be like her" (IPDiem). This honour was a great incentive for Diem.

9.1.7 Social others

9.1.7.1 Teachers of other subjects

Dörnyei (2005) postulates that language learning does not take place in a vacuum but is "embedded in the complex tapestry of other activities in the particular school" (p. 86). English is, in most cases, part of the school curriculum, leading to an inevitable outcome that teachers of other disciplines may affect learners' L2 motivation. On the one hand, they may be flexible in terms of classroom requirements or workload so that students can have more time for English practice. Diem was given less homework in other school subjects in her final year when she had to concentrate more on English for the university entrance examination. On the other hand, the demands from teachers of other subjects may be a hindrance to students' English language studies. This depends on their stage in the study programme. Apart from Diem, all the case study participants were only halfway through high school, so they were expected to maintain a high level of performance in all disciplines. The need to meet academic requirements meant that these students had to balance their time and effort across subjects, thus challenging their persistence in learning English. Therefore, other teachers can either support or hinder learners' language aspirations and commitment.

9.1.7.2 School stakeholders

Having less direct relationships with students, school stakeholders tend to have a top-down influence on students' L2 motivation. The students in the present study referred to the school principal as the main stakeholder within the school microsystem. He was in charge of monitoring all academic activities and ensuring the implementation of education policies. He also set achievement targets for the whole school and each class individually. The students reported that the principal occasionally talked about the escalating necessity of learning English in his Monday address to the whole school. For Diem and Phong who were in the top classes, the principal paid more frequent visits to their classes to boost their morale and reminded them of their leading roles in the school. Despite having infrequent contact with the students and showing different levels of concern for their academic performance in different classes, the principal worked more closely with English teachers. According to Mr Trung, the head teacher of English, "the principal and vice-principal usually have meetings with the English teaching staff to discuss the learning outcomes and strategies for encouraging students to learn English" (ITTrung). This suggests that school stakeholders have a more encompassing but less explicit motivating role.

9.2 The synergistic effects of ecological systems on learners' motivation

The previous section discusses the various motivational affordances for English learning provided by significant others in a wide range of microsystems, namely school, home, and private tuition. These affordances for language learning and social relationships are seen as "significant predictors" of motivation (Wentzel, 1998, p. 207). However, the complexity of interpersonal relationships within and across settings and individual learners' perceptions and agency in working with such motivational sources have not been adequately addressed. Thoms (2014) reminds us that:

The value of an affordance is partly determined by how a participant perceives it, and this perception in turn affects his/her decision whether to make use of it or not at that particular moment, a factor that is captured in

the construct of a learner's engagement with his/her environment. (pp. 426-427)

According to this view, learners do not receive affordances from their social milieu and the learning environment passively; instead, they use their own agency in different ways to deal with different learning situations. This section focuses on the synergistic effects of multiple social relationships and the sociocultural values embedded in students' meso-, exo- and macrosystems that affect such relationships on learners' personal constructions of L2 motivation.

9.2.1 English as a compulsory school subject

The fact that English is compulsory in the school curriculum has certain correlations with L2 motivation (Gardner, 2001; Ho, 1998; Kikuchi, 2009). Its status demands concerted efforts among stakeholders, especially English language teachers, and parents to foster students' positive attitudes within diverse mesosystems and exosystems at school, at home and in other settings.

9.2.1.1 The cooperation between the school and the education department

In addition to their coordination in terms of implementing English learning policies and assessment, the provincial education department and the local school administered a number of extracurricular activities and contests to arouse students' English learning interest and provide them with further language affordances and opportunities for language practice (see 2.3.3). The students displayed varying degrees of commitment to these contests in response to the enthusiasm from the provincial and local stakeholders. For Diem as a high-achieving learner of English, she was excited about these competitions because of the honour associated with being a school representative and the opportunity for her language skills to be evaluated. Such evaluation helped Diem to keep track of her progress and prepare herself better for more important examinations. Meanwhile, Manh and Phong, who did not perform as well in English as Diem, held different views. Although not selected for the provincial annual written examination for excellent students, Manh opted to undertake the online English

test which was accessible to all students irrespective of their language levels. He managed to reach round twenty out of a total of thirty rounds; unfortunately, he could not enter the final. He said “such an experience helped me to revise my knowledge and have an idea of my real ability. I felt a little sad but did not expect to win the competition because I knew I couldn’t make it” (ISManh081213). Unlike Manh, Phong knew of such contests but made no effort to participate in them as winning a prize was a dream that he never expected to come true. As the lowest achiever among the four case studies, Hanh did not bother to think about these events because she did not have any interest at all in them. These reactions show students’ different approaches and attitudes towards using affordances for language learning within such meso- and exosystems. Also, students’ decisions to either take part in these extracurricular activities or not appear to be related to their self-efficacy and the extent of their interest in learning English.

9.2.1.2 School-parent communication

Communication between parents and schools has often been found to correspond differentially with students’ motivation, performance, and learning outcomes (Fan & Williams, 2010; Grolnick, Friendly, & Bellas, 2009; Linse, van Vlack, & Bladas, 2014; Shim, 2013). Fan and Williams (2010) assert that either formal or informal contact with school teachers enables parents to identify parenting styles, advice, and guidance that will enhance children’s engagement, intrinsic motivation, and attitudes towards learning English. In these studies, school-parent collaboration is in the form of meetings between the two parties and parental involvement in children’s academic and extracurricular activities. The parents in the present study also met with school teachers for issues related to their children’s performance at school but showed less engagement in their academic activities.

The parents were invited to a meeting with the school principal and their children’s form teachers at the beginning and end of each semester. The main

meeting content revolved around their children's academic performance, problems at school, and other administrative issues. This was also an opportunity for parents to voice their concerns about their children's study and their expectations from the school and teachers. In recent school-parent meetings, parents had shown growing attention to their children's English language studies, as one teacher stated:

Parents used to ask about their children's learning outcomes in other main subjects such as Maths, Chemistry, Physics and Literature during the meeting. In recent years, they have started to care more about English. Some parents even phoned me to ask if I had any private English class at my house for their children to attend. (ITKieu)

In addition to these meetings, the parents received academic reports from the school every half semester, and could request private meetings with the principal and form teachers in case their children had certain problems at school. These were other channels for the parents to get updated about their children's school progress and figure out interventional measures. Hanh's mother said:

Every time I receive the school report, I look at her learning outcome for each subject very carefully. I want to see how she is doing with not only subjects like Maths or Physics but also English. I have to know which one she is not good at so that I can seek more support from teachers and acquaintances. (IPHanh)

All the parents I worked with shared the same view about the rising salience of English and no longer considered it a supplementary subject. Like Hanh's mother, they never skipped any school meetings and checked the academic reports very thoroughly. Such close parental observations served as a frequent reminder for the students. Hanh, Manh, and Phong were afraid of having low scores because their parents would know them from the school reports. What caused their fear was not the scolding they would receive from their parents but the sadness visible on their faces. In Phong's case, his fear was twofold:

First I have to show the report to my grandmother and then my mom. My mom usually only compares the results with the previous time and asks me to do better. However, my grandmother may get upset and I am really scared of her loud words and wincing face. (CSPhong)

School-parent communication effectively serves its primary purpose as a two-way exchange of information within students' mesosystems. Teachers can develop an insight into parents' expectations and concerns while parents can keep themselves up-to-date with their children's academic performance. The exchanges between parents and schools also remind students that their studies are being closely observed both at school and at home.

9.2.1.3 Communication between parents and private English teachers

Parents send their children to private tuition usually in the hope of successful entry to higher education and a better socioeconomic future (Bray & Silova, 2006). Private teachers have, therefore, become parents' point of trust for their children's academic attainment. All the parents in the present study agreed that formal schooling alone could not cater for their children's English learning needs and the demanding nature of tertiary admission. They expressed willingness to enrol their children for private English classes despite a concern about the tuition fees. However, the parents who actually sent their children to private classes worked with private teachers in different ways. One school teacher who held English classes at her house observed:

Interviewer: Do parents contact you about their children's study in the private class?

Ms Trang: Yes but just a few of them do. Sometimes they phone me to ask about their children's recent study progress and check if they attend the private class regularly. Sometimes they just want to know when the tuition fee is due. There is not much face-to-face contact though.

Interviewer: How many private students do you have and how many parents contact you?

Ms Trang: Around twelve students but only two or three parents contact me. (ITTrang)

Ms Trang's revelation accords with the data from the students in that their parents rarely contacted the private English teachers about their study. Despite acknowledging private teachers as a crucial learning resource for their children, the parents contacted private teachers much less frequently than school teachers. This suggests that although private tuition has received growing attention from parents, they still hold school education in higher esteem.

9.2.1.4 Students' reflections

Students develop different attitudes towards the status of English as a compulsory school subject. This macrosystemic perspective on the role of English arises from their personal interests, social interactions, and future scenarios that shape their perceptions of its importance. Most of the case study participants agreed that English should be a mandatory component of the curriculum and mentioned various reasons for continuing to learn it even when it was not obligatory:

Interviewer: If English wasn't a compulsory subject at school, would you learn it?

Manh: Yes, definitely. I will still learn it anyhow. I learn it so that I can find a good job in the future. Also, I am curious about its linguistic features. As I used to say, I would feel irritated if I come across any words I don't know on the street.

Interviewer: Would you still learn it if it was not part of the future job requirements?

Manh: Yes, because it may be useful for me when I travel overseas. (ISManh280513)

The social practicality of English was the chief impetus for students to learn it. In the event that English had not been taught at school, they might have sought alternative resources. In Thoms' (2014) words, "from an ecological view, then, a

successful language learner wields a certain degree of agency over his/her environment. It is out of a learner's social activity and awareness that affordances arise in language learning contexts" (p. 426). Phong mentioned taking private English classes or buying books for autonomous study (ISPhong270513). This does not mean that all students had the same positive view about learning the language. Hanh would have been relieved if English had not been compulsory:

English is actually important but I wouldn't learn it if it was not an obligation. Many of my classmates would jump with joy if this was true. We learn it to cope with the curriculum and examinations only. Our main priority is for the subjects in our exam group. (ISHanh290513)

Hanh and her classmates' attitudes towards learning English confirm a common observation that some students in East Asian countries like China and Vietnam "either mentally withdraw or look for strategies to pass the required exams with a minimum of effort" (Trang & Baldauf Jr, 2007, p. 80). These instances suggest learners' diverse views about the pragmatic value of learning English which result in differing degrees of L2 motivation.

9.2.2 High school testing reforms

Exam-based language teaching has a substantial impact on students' motivation to learn English. Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009) note that "learning environments that require high-stakes testing . . . may further exacerbate motivational problems. Secondary and tertiary school entrance exams generate a washback effect of exam-centred syllabi and curricula" (p. 404). In the present research context, the macrosystemic changes in testing requirements and policies (see 2.1.2) complicated the issue of L2 motivation.

9.2.2.1 The first wave of change

The optional status of English in the high school graduation examination induced significant changes in students' attitudes towards it. Students who were not really interested in English nonetheless used to learn the language because it was a required subject in the graduation examination. Hanh reacted to this policy

change in the same way as the majority of the students at Vision High. She attempted to persuade her mother to let her stop taking private English classes and going to the foreign language centre. However, her mother strongly rejected the idea, insisting that she should continue the English course at the language centre to maintain her language skills. This indicates parents' consistent stance on the long-term significance of learning English although some students may care more about its relevance to their immediate studies.

Unlike Hanh and other less interested students, Phong still displayed his perseverance in learning English regardless of the changes in the testing system. He said:

My friends do not want to learn English because of the exam change. My English teacher keeps reminding them that we still need to learn English for class tests and school exams, and it is also important for our future, but she seems to be more easy-going with them now. For me, I still think learning English is important. (ISPhong160814)

Phong noticed the changes in how his English teacher dealt with low motivated students as a result of the new policy. However, the shifts in his peers' and his teacher's attitudes did not dissipate his L2 motivation. This indicates his resilience against negative macrosystemic impacts.

9.2.2.2 The second wave of change

After receiving public opposition to the earlier testing policy change and observing the motivational decline among high school students, the Vietnamese education stakeholders decided to reinstate the compulsory status of English as a graduation requirement. Hanh was among the numerous students who were critical of these abrupt changes, likening themselves to "white mice" in the stakeholders' testing experiments (see 8.7.2). However, she also admitted that the revised policy was reasonable in view of the mounting importance of English for all walks of life. She thought that her mother was right in encouraging her to proceed with private English tuition (ISHanh160814). Hanh's renewed

motivation to learn English shows how students use their agency with regard to language learning in the face of ongoing changes in the testing system.

9.2.3 Future prospects

Kramsch and Steffensen (2008) posit that “the ‘learner’ includes not only the here and now of his/her learning, but memories of previous learnings, projections of future scenarios, subjective appraisals, fantasies, identifications with remembered, relived, and potential selves” (p. 23). The idea of building up future visions has been found to be potentially motivating to students in their language studies (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Their future projections may involve personal, exosystemic and macrosystemic elements such as entering a desired university, having rewarding occupations, or communicating with English speakers. The status of English as a lingua franca and the process of globalisation have enhanced students’ perceptions of the importance of learning English as it is argued that “many children and adolescents now grow up with a global consciousness” (Arnett, 2002, p. 777).

9.2.3.1 University entrance and studying at university

With the introduction of a new exam group, namely Group A1, in the university entrance examination that included English in more university majors in 2012 (see 2.1.3), avid students had more choices for their tertiary study. The head teachers of English at Vision High remarked:

There has been a slight increase in the number of students who opt for English since 2012. Not all students are equally good at natural science subjects and the modified regulations by the Ministry of Education and Training has given students who are good at English more chance to enter university. This shows that education stakeholders have gradually recognised the salience of English in the globalised world nowadays. Other school teachers and I have been encouraging students to learn English because they can have more career choices. (CTTrung)

The escalating importance of English for Vietnam's socioeconomic and cultural development has been acknowledged in the recent revisions in university admission requirements and the tertiary English programmes (Harman et al., 2010; Hayden & Nghi, 2010; Tinh, 2006; Wright, 2002). These policy changes are regarded as emerging opportunities for some students but challenges for others. Phong said "I am good at Maths and Physics but very terrible at Chemistry. So I have little hope for taking Group A. I think Group A1 would be my better choice" (CSPhong). More options for the university entrance examination enabled him to review his academic strengths and weaknesses before deciding on the exam group he would take in the entrance examination. Higher achievement in English compensated for his defects in Chemistry, allowing Phong to study for his favourite major in electronics. For Manh, his parents wanted him to pursue English because he could easily switch to other lower levels of study such as a college or vocational school in case he failed the university entrance examination. Diem took both Groups A1 and D for two different university entrance examinations, meaning that her possibility of going to university would be higher.

In the case of Hanh, she considered it a potential pressure having to continue learning English later at university. This required her to maintain a certain level of English to avoid what her mother called "language fossilisation" which happened to people who stopped learning English for a long period of time. This was the main reason why her English teachers, both at school and in private classes, and her mother insisted on her continuing to learn English even when it was not a requirement for her university entry.

9.2.3.2 Occupational opportunities

Having better job offers is a potential extrinsic value of learning English (Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Lamb, 2004a). Ho (1998) notes that high proficiency in English is an important factor for attaining professional and social mobility in Taiwan. The same is true in Vietnamese society where English is a prerequisite for many job

applications and promotions (Cong, 2006). The teachers and parents in the present study referred to occupational opportunities as the most powerful evidence to convince their students and children about the rewards of learning English. One teacher explained:

Nowadays, any job requires a certain level of English. Most students here are not good at it. This is their biggest disadvantage, compared with urban students. I always talk about this to my students and advise them to expend more efforts in their English language studies. (ITLan)

All the case study participants agreed on the motivational value of future job prospects, whether they were language enthusiasts or less interested learners. As competent learners, Diem tried to learn English well to get the best job offer while Manh and Phong wanted to find a job that would satisfy their interests. As a low-achieving learner, Hanh's ultimate goal was to meet the language requirement in the job she would apply for.

9.2.3.3 Communication in English

The rapid progress of globalisation has blurred the geographical distance between countries but language differences remain a barrier. Warschauer (2000) notices an ever-increasing use of English in international communication and work-related environments. In Ryan's (2006) view, "globalisation dictates a re-evaluation of some of our basic attitudes towards language, language teaching, and language learning motivation" (p. 24). English as a global language has profound influences on learners' attitudes and motivation. For learners in rural areas, language awareness, though recently developed, is even more intense than their urban or suburban counterparts because they are witnessing marked changes in their hometowns brought about by globalisation.

From discussions in the mass media and interaction with social others, Manh saw a rising flow of foreign business people investing in his hometown. Despite their various nationalities, English was their language of communication at work. His observations assured him that pursuing English would be beneficial for his future

communication needs. For Phong, he sometimes went to nearby beaches to practise English with foreign tourists. This activity helped him to build up communicative confidence and language skills. Phong's efforts substantiate Lamb's (2004b) assertion that "successful language learners are not simply passive recipients of knowledge or 'input', but must actively seek out affordances in their local context of learning" (p. 230), in this case one that is relatively remote from many opportunities.

While Manh and Phong attended to their personal language development, Diem's concern was more community-oriented. She wanted to help other learners in the community to be good at English. Her ambition was to open a foreign language centre for poor workers and students from rural backgrounds like her. She believed that good language skills would enable herself and these learners to communicate better at work and with foreigners and thus to access better occupational and life opportunities.

9.2.4 Family pride

Taking pride in children's academic achievement is not exclusive to Asian parents but is central to their social norms. Salili (1996) states that "in collectivistic cultures, academic success of the child is a great source of pride for the entire family while academic failure would be perceived as letting one's family down or causing the family to lose face" (p. 57). Likewise, Vietnamese culture is imbued with high appreciation of education across families, including extended ones (Hall, 2008). All the parents in the present study attributed family honour to children's academic excellence. Diem's mother said that "when I meet people in the market place or on the street, they praise Diem for being so outstanding at school. As her parent, I feel so happy about this. It is a great honour indeed" (IPDiem). In Hanh's case, children's schooling was a common topic of discussion among her aunts and uncles during extended family get-togethers. Her extended family attached high value to children's academic success which could pave the way for success later in their lives.

The parents also used successful students in their extended families, in their neighbourhood, or in the news, as role models for their children. Hanh's mother elaborated on her strategy:

Sometimes I intentionally talk about Mr A or Mrs B whose children either have good jobs or are studying at famous universities. Everyone in the commune shares their success stories. Through this, I want to express my wish that she and her brother can perform as well as those children. (CPHanh)

Hanh's mother mentioned these examples as a reminder that Hanh should expend more effort in her studies. Convincing as these stories might be, Hanh still stuck to her own stance, confessing her weaknesses: "I am not a good learner. I know I should try my best but most of the time I just want to procrastinate. Not everyone who studies can study well. I am one of them" (FSHanh). Hanh's case vividly illustrates the gap between students' perceptions and actions. She knew what she was supposed to do but usually failed to attain it in reality.

9.2.5 Filial piety

Filial piety has been a guiding principle encompassing generational relationships across East Asian families (Salili, 1996; Shwalb et al., 2010). Chow (2007) finds a strong connection between Chinese students' perceptions of filial piety and their academic motivation. Similarly, Hang (2010) insists that filial piety is one of the most important motivators for Vietnamese university students in their language studies. There are different ways for children to show appreciation to their parents for their upbringing, among which academic success is the most common. According to Salili (1996), "Asian students are socialised to value education and consider it a duty towards their parents. Hence, they assume more personal responsibility for their own learning by devoting more time and effort" (p. 60). Reflecting on his view of filial piety, Manh stated:

Interviewer: What do you think about filial piety?

- Manh: I have to do something to help my parents. I have to pay them back.
- Interviewer: How does this link to your study?
- Manh: My parents invest money and efforts in my study, so I have to study well to make them happy.
- Interviewer: How about in the future?
- Manh: I will earn money and take good care of them but first of all I have to try my best in my study now to find a good job with a high salary in the future. (ISManh280513)

Like Manh, other students considered it their most pressing filial duty to perform well at school. They believed that their parents would take great delight in their academic achievement. The material rewards from a good education would also enable them to better look after their parents in their old age. This point supports Lopez and Cardenas' (2014) remark that "education is not only seen as a measure of self-worth but more importantly as a means to secure financial stability in order to help parents or family in the future" (p. 304). While Vietnamese cultural values usually dictate filial piety as a child's responsibility, Diem took it more in the sense of a personal will:

My parents have brought me up, sent me to school, taken good care of me, and given me almost everything. When I grow up and have a job, it is my turn to look after them. Any pious child will do so. I do it voluntarily. (ISDiem140713)

Filial piety is displayed not only to parents but also to other extended family members who contribute to a child's upbringing. Phong wanted to study well to make both his parents and grandmother happy. Although taking care of his grandmother would be the responsibility of his parents, aunts, and uncles, he felt that he should also do something for her in return for her devotion. Responding to filial responsibilities is as important a social obligation as a personal desire. It therefore acts as a significant motivator for Vietnamese students.

9.2.6 Gratitude

Showing gratitude to supportive others is another prominent social value in Vietnamese culture (D. H. Dung, 2005; Them, 2000). Moral debt or gratitude is one of the three fundamental norms within Vietnamese ethos, the other two being filial piety and merit (McLeod & Nguyen, 2001, p. 136). In the present study, the students viewed their academic achievement as a representation of gratefulness to significant others. For Diem, her private English teacher did not charge her for the private tuition, which she considered a moral debt that she had to return. Her efforts in class and at home brought her an entry into a high-ranking university in Vietnam and the teacher received the news of her success with great satisfaction. In Manh's case, his overseas cousin both gave him material support for language learning and tutored him in English. She also promised to sponsor him to study in Australia upon his high school graduation. Both her enthusiasm and promise inspired Manh to study English harder. Although not all students received extra support from social others, the desire to express their gratitude to those who actually did so energised them towards reaching their language learning goals.

9.3 Learners' motivational trajectories within and across settings and relationships

Language learning experiences and the motivation associated with the language learning process have been depicted as non-linear and fraught with ebbs and flows (Dörnyei, 2005, 2012; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Waninge et al., 2014). In Ushioda's (2013a) words, "there are major changes and dissonances in students' experiences of learning English as they progress through successive stages of education" (p. 8). Contextual elements, experiences, and learners' shifting perceptions of the relevance of language learning to their studies influence their decision to pursue or withdraw from it. The dynamicity of L2 motivation and the complexity of settings and relationships interwoven in the language learning process make it difficult to map it out or characterise learners into particular types. In this regard, Lamb (2007) calls for further theoretical inquiry into "the subtle ways in which motivation evolves, the aspects which are permeable and

those which are not, and its complex interrelationship with contextual factors” (p. 760). Observation of learners’ motivational changes over time is challenging but not impossible. What is more demanding is giving a full account of both internal and external factors, given their individual and synergistic effects, which provoke these fluctuations. In the light of these limitations, this section aims to discuss in detail some important instances of situational, contextual, and relational elements and milestones that contributed to learners’ motivational trajectories.

9.3.1 Students’ initial language learning experiences

For many learners, their previous language learning experiences significantly affect their follow-up attitudes and motivation. Ushioda (2013a) notes that “looking further back to students’ earlier experiences of learning English in school, it seems that the quality of these initial learning experiences may similarly function as a litmus test for students’ long-term motivational trajectories and self-regulatory processes” (p. 9). The most common venue where students have their first contact with English is formal classes at school. The way students are taught in their first English classes and the impressions they have with the language may, in Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) words, “invite, permit, or inhibit engagement” throughout the language learning process (p. 15). This highlights the relationship between such initial experiences and students’ development of either interest or disinterest in learning English.

Both Phong and Diem attributed their L2 interest to their first lessons at secondary school in which they were attracted to English linguistic features. Their initial classroom impressions ignited their passion for learning English and inspired them to participate in a variety of activities for English practice. The positive experiences from such first moments triggered and sustained these students’ motivation as they proceeded to higher levels of study.

Conversely, Hanh’s anxiety arising out of her English language studies at secondary school left a negative impact on her language learning attitudes which evolved into resignation and sometimes resistance. It has been established in

other studies that anxiety has a causal relation with low achievement and the development of negative attitudes towards language learning (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 2002; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012a). Dewaele (2011) regards anxiety as one of the “main culprits for lack of progress in foreign language learning” (p. 25). In Hanh’s case, language learning anxiety not only resulted in low achievement but also a belief that she could not learn English by any means. She compared herself to “a duck listening to thunder” in listening classes at secondary school, implying that she was totally hopeless at learning the language and somewhat frightened. Her resignation towards learning English became more obvious as she went to high school.

While most students first learn English at school, a small number of them start using English in more informal contexts prior to going to school. Their experiences with English initiated outside the classroom context may have even more profound correlations with their language learning attitudes and motivation (Lai, 2015; Lai, Zhu, & Gong, 2015; Oxford, 2015; J. C. Richards, 2015). For Manh, his father had taught him English long before he learned it at school. The interaction with his father at home helped Manh to develop some English vocabulary and an ability to communicate in basic English, which immensely facilitated his studies at school. The supportive home environment also kindled his language interest at an early age. Manh displayed a strong commitment to learning English and also found joy in his learning activities. His case demonstrates that the home setting can also contribute substantially to arousing students’ passion for learning English (Gao, 2006, 2012; Lee, 2010; Linse et al., 2014). Their perseverance and motivation may be even more intensive and sustained than those whose language learning interest is initiated at school.

9.3.2 School transitions

Students respond in different ways to the transition from secondary to high school, depending on their perceptions of the importance of the changes. Lemos (2001) contends that “motivated behaviour changes with changing conditions”

(p. 131). Going to high school is not simply an upgrade to a more advanced level of study but it is also a significant milestone for students. As partial goals in the Vietnamese education law (Vietnam National Assembly, 2005, chapter 2, section 2), high school students are expected to develop a certain degree of autonomy in their study and vocational knowledge which are necessary for tertiary study and future careers. Unlike their younger secondary school counterparts, they start to make crucial academic and occupational decisions. In addition, the pressure of the university entrance examination at the end of Year Twelve requires students to make academic preparation soon after they enter high school (D. H. Anh, 2007; Hayden & Nghi, 2010). This examination is likely to be either more motivating or less motivating for students, depending on their choice of exam groups (Falout et al., 2009; Warden & Lin, 2000).

Most of the students were aware of the upcoming challenges in their studies and the significance of the transition from secondary to high school. They started to think about future occupations and the exam groups they would take upon entering high school. For Phong, he wanted to become an electrician but was not good at natural science subjects. He believed that he should be focussing more on English to make up for his weaknesses in scientific areas. For Manh, both he and his parents wanted him to take an English language major at university, so he considered it a core subject at school. In Diem's case, obtaining a tertiary qualification was viewed as the best way to attain both material and symbolic resources. She worked out a clear study plan and academic goals from Year Ten. All these students expended substantial effort to practise English within and beyond the classroom, and sought language affordances within different microsystems to supplement their language studies at school.

However, compared with the rest of the case study participants, Hanh was slower in adjusting to the new learning environment because she could not overcome her more dependent learning styles she had experienced at secondary school. She had to struggle with the subject of English at high school in terms of adapting to her teacher's approaches, meeting class requirements and ceasing rote learning

which had been a useful learning strategy for her language learning at secondary school. The demanding nature of learning English at high school as well as her low adaptability to changes discouraged Hanh from pursuing the language. Instead, she chose to specialise in other school subjects and learn English mainly to cope with tests and examinations.

The transition from secondary to high school is a milestone that often marks students' increasing maturity in their perceptions and actions. While most of them start to set more concrete academic goals and devise plans for achieving them, a few students still lag behind, finding ways to adapt to the new learning settings. The language learning motivation associated with the whole process of changes thus varies among students. Some become more committed to learning English whereas others yield to the challenges in their English language studies and focus on other subjects instead.

9.3.3 English teaching and learning at high school

Learners' motivational trajectories are not a straight line, even for the most motivated ones. Their motivation ebbs and flows within and across settings and relationships. According to Dörnyei et al. (2015), "when motivation was conceptualised in such a situated manner, one could not help noticing the considerable fluctuation in learners' motivational dispositions exhibited on an almost day-to-day basis" (p. 4). The common process-oriented research practice which attempts to identify the causal relationships between language learning motivation and individual as well as environmental factors (e.g. Dörnyei, 2000, 2001b, 2002; Hiromori, 2009) fails to provide "a realistic account of the motivational phenomenon observed in real life situations" (Dörnyei et al., 2015, p. 4). Framing motivation from an ecological perspective, Thoms (2014) insists on the need "to understand that which emerges from the moment rather than to analyse separately the different variables that underlie the moment" (p. 726). The school context which accounts for most of students' language learning time best offers moment-by-moment analyses of their motivation.

9.3.3.1 Teachers' approaches

In a traditional Vietnamese class, “it is the teacher who decides who talks, when they talk, what they say, how they say it and when they stop talking” (Bao, 2007, p. 205) and “they spend most of their lesson time explaining abstract grammar rules and guiding their students in choral readings” (Canh & Barnard, 2009, p. 23). Consequently, teaching approaches have a strong impact on students' motivation (Kikuchi, 2009; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010; Trang & Baldauf Jr, 2007). However, in the words of one English teaching staff member, “each teacher has their own teaching styles and approaches. In general, students like something new. Each lesson must be different to intrigue students. Repeating the same teaching style on a daily basis will definitely frustrate them” (ITQuynh). This shows the teacher's perceptions of the need for utilising and constantly innovating motivational and affective strategies for language teaching depending on the local context and students' idiosyncrasies.

Most of the students indicated certain dissatisfaction with their teachers' approaches which partly undermined their motivation to participate in classroom activities. While Diem did not find sufficient challenges from the lessons and tasks in formal English classes, Hanh had to struggle in her English studies to adapt to her teacher's methods and lack of experience. Other students were unhappy with their teachers' inadequate attention to individual needs or exam-oriented approaches. Students' disappointment with English language teaching at school is not uncommon in other EFL contexts. In Lamb's (2007) study, he also finds that learners make very frequent complaints about aspects of language teaching at school and teachers' performance. As a result, they had to expend more personal effort in language learning or taking private language tuition. These show students' appraisals of the constraints of the language affordances provided by school teachers and their agency in looking for alternative support and resources available to them in their own contexts.

These reflections mainly suggest students' criticisms of general classroom practice whereas in reality different teachers have different methods and even the

same teacher will teach differently on different occasions. Despite her continual frustration, Diem was sometimes delighted with the video clips that her English teacher used to illustrate the teaching points. Manh enjoyed every moment of his English lessons, especially when his teacher asked him to be a role model for the rest of the class in communicative activities. His initial shyness on the first few role-modelling occasions was soon overwhelmed by the pleasure of receiving special attention from his teacher. Even Hanh, who claimed not to be interested in learning English, still had some nice experiences during her language studies:

That day my teacher checked my vocabulary. I was lucky that I had revised them in the private class just the day before. I got all the words right and my teacher praised me for doing a good job. It was my first time to receive a compliment in the English class. I came back to my seat and my classmates also praised me. Although it was out of luck only, I felt really great about it. (CSHanh)

The positive feedback from her teacher created Hanh's good feelings during that particular class session. Although she did not mention its motivational value, the fact that she talked about the experience implied its significance to her. Students' varying reactions and emotions in different English classes within the same learning context help to "uncover the moment-by-moment complexities of motivational process at work in the L2 classroom" (Ushioda, 2012c, p. 69).

9.3.3.2 Student-teacher rapport

Students' attitudes towards learning English are partly affected by social relationships, especially with their English teachers. In his research with Vietnamese students, Sa (2014) finds that approachable and enthusiastic teachers foster a sense of closeness, comfort, and security for students. These elements enhance students' confidence in interacting with teachers and active engagement in classroom activities. In the present study, teacher-student rapport tended to be built on teachers' actual classroom behaviour, with a strong emotional touch.

Most of the students enjoyed the pleasure of having their English teachers remember their names. Manh said: “In a large class of forty to fifty students, when the teacher remembers my name, it means he has some special ideas about me” (CSManh). Apart from his form teacher, only the English teacher remembered his name. Because of this, Manh was asked to answer the teacher’s questions more often than the rest of the class and could gain more bonus marks. Dörnyei and Murphey (2004) note that “a teacher knowing a student’s name, and the student knowing that the teacher knows it, is extremely important for that student’s constructed identity in that class” (p. 27). Drawing on this strategy, one of the English teachers in the school developed her own way of motivating her students. She not only remembered her students’ first names but also tried to memorise their full names because they would be even more excited. Sometimes she slightly modified their names to be the same as those of Vietnamese celebrities. This strategy of student renaming created fun moments in her English lessons and the students felt good about themselves (ITLan). However, this may have caused some discomfort for low-performing students. Hanh was very scared of having her name remembered by the teacher because she might be summoned to the blackboard at any time. She stated: “I am this bad at English. If the teacher knows my name, she will call me to respond to her questions more often. I can’t survive it” (CSHanh). This shows that the same motivating strategy may be highly effective for some students but may cause anxiety to others and that teachers should be cautious in adopting a particular motivating approach.

Most research on motivational strategies tend to focus on creating a comfortable classroom atmosphere, building up students’ confidence, setting goals, or giving encouraging feedback (Chambers, 1999; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Ruesch, Bown, & Dewey, 2012). While these activities provide students with positive experiences in their English language studies, their effects on students’ L2 motivation may only last temporarily. What this study suggests teachers also need to do is to demonstrate that they earnestly want their students to make progress. Phong’s English teacher’s approach is a case in point (see 7.2.3). The teacher helped low-achieving students to improve

their English by giving them more customised support than the rest; these students expended more effort in their English language studies in return for her kindness and made very rapid progress. Although Phong did not receive as much support from his teacher, her enthusiasm and devotion to other students touched him. This suggests that in addition to classroom activities, teachers can motivate students by showing a real concern for their language development and providing enthusiastic support. In other words, reaching the heart of students may have as much motivational effect as tapping into their mind.

9.3.3.3 The effects of test and exam results

Test and exam results function as a parameter against which students evaluate their own progress and adjust their learning strategies. In Chang's (2005) research with twenty-eight university students in a web-based environment, academic achievement is commensurate with the amount of effort expended over the semester and is the basis for the students to formulate their own approaches to more effective study. In a similar vein, scores have been found to have a strong link with students' motivation, efforts, and language learning plans (Noels, 2003; Noels et al., 1999). In the present study, test and exam results are not only seen as a means for the students and significant others to monitor their language learning progress but they also have motivational, emotional and interpersonal implications.

For Diem, academic results played a crucial role in her studies. As a student in the top class, she had to compete with her classmates to retain her place. Lower scores mean a higher risk of being ousted from the class. In her words, "In class A1, we are under intense score pressure. Ranking in the class is very important to everyone. After each test or examination, we are too anxious to wait for the results" (ISDiem201013). Peer competition and the fear of class transfer were among the drivers for Diem to do her best. Indeed, peers have profound impacts on students' L2 motivation and commitment to their language learning (Gao, 2008; Kim, 2006, 2009; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Pyun, Kim, Cho, & Lee, 2014).

In Phong's case, comparing results across semesters helped him to keep track of his progress and set goals for the coming semester. Such comparisons enabled him to pinpoint his weaknesses and develop strategies for overcoming them. Also, Phong strove to achieve good scores to make his parents happy. He stated:

Of course I am studying for my own future but I am also afraid that my parents feel dismayed. I remember my mom's sad face when she saw some low scores in my academic report in the first semester at high school. I promised myself that I had to do better the following semester. (ISPhong010413)

Despite admitting that he was not a high achiever in his studies, he tried to maintain stable academic progress to please his parents. Unlike Diem and Phong, who placed so much emphasis on academic achievement, Hanh did not care much about her academic results. Her main goal was to have passing scores:

I am used to having low scores in English. For me, a passing grade is enough. Thanks to taking private classes and going to the foreign language centre, I can get seven or eight (on the scale of ten) in English sometimes. I feel excited but this only lasts momentarily. It does not make a big difference. I know I am not good at it at all. (FSHanh101213)

Gaining either high or low scores in English did not influence Hanh's attitudes towards learning the language. Her case confirms the points made by Falout et al. (2009, p. 412) that academic achievement does not necessarily correlate with whether students develop or lose interest in learning English. However, this contrasts starkly with findings from the other case study participants where scores were one of the most salient motivational elements. Also, significant others' reactions to students' academic results may have certain effects on their attitudes towards language learning.

9.3.3.4 English learning during the semester and summer holidays

Students' motivational changes at different time points, especially outside the semester, have not been discussed much. The students in the present study

display substantial variation in their L2 motivation during and after the semester as well as their adaptive learning styles at different points in time.

During the semester, while Diem, Manh and Phong spent a lot of their available time improving their language skills, Hanh learned English only to cope with the school tests and examinations. However, all of them expended much more effort to revise their notes prior to each end-of-semester examination. Their increased motivation under examination pressure is easy to understand and common to most students; yet, the nature of the pressure varied among the four case study participants. For Diem and Phong, they had to achieve high scores to ensure their places in the top classes. For Manh and Hanh, they were more concerned with passing the examinations to be eligible to move up the next year.

There are also great differences in students' L2 motivation over the summer holiday. After the semester examinations, Diem was no longer busy with other school subjects. She could focus wholly on her exam group, especially English, in preparation for the university entrance examination. She was more committed to learning English than the other students because she was in her final year at high school. Phong took advantage of the summer holiday to practise speaking with his study partner and learn more vocabulary. His summer diligence came from an awareness of his weakness in speaking skills and, importantly, he wanted to make use of my presence at the research site to help him at that time. For the other two cases, their motivation drastically declined. Despite his particular interest in learning English, Manh demanded a short break after the semester examination to refresh his mind. However, his post-examination procrastination was soon overwhelmed by his desire to improve his language competence, especially reading and writing skills. In the following weeks, he was better-prepared with the homework. In contrast, Hanh did not show much interest in learning English over the summer. She often asked me to cancel the private class meetings, citing numerous reasons.

These examples suggest the dynamics of students' L2 motivation and their idiosyncratic appraisal of the language affordances as well as learning opportunities at different points in time. Their motivation is not an ever-upward or downward line for either avid or less interested learners respectively (Kim, 2009; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Pawlak, 2012; Waninge et al., 2014).

9.3.3.5 Student placement at high school

Placement based on academic merit at Vision High (see 2.3.5) was found to be both motivating and discouraging to the students. This practice provoked strong peer competition, especially among the students in the top classes. In addition to its special privileges, being in the top classes was a great source of pride for the individual students and their families. These microsystemic elements were the main drivers for them to do their best. However, to maintain their places in the top classes, they had to ensure high achievement in all school subjects. Both Diem and Phong considered this their major pressure because their winning card was solely English while their classmates were good at not only English but also other subjects. Diem displayed a high degree of resilience and could make steady progress in her studies. She developed a suitable learning strategy and allocated a certain amount of time for English practice within her busy timetable. Conversely, Phong had a difficult time balancing his performance across different subjects. He did not plan his studies thoroughly enough to cope with the requirements from his teachers and the school stakeholders. Consequently, his English learning results declined, as did his L2 motivation.

9.3.4 Private English tuition

Along with formal language teaching, private English tuition is emerging as a significant motivator for students. Lamb (2007) notices two contrasting patterns: “on the one hand, a general fall in enthusiasm for the process of formal learning in school, and on the other hand, a sustaining of very positive attitudes towards the language and of actual learning activity in informal contexts” (p. 771). Students have various reasons for taking private tuition, either as a personal need

or under the influence of significant others. The impetus behind going to private classes thus varies on a case-by-case basis.

In Diem's case, her reason for taking private tuition arose from the constraints of the teaching content at school which was inadequate for her language level and the demands of the university entrance examination. In relation to this, Menezes (2011) maintains that "the resources available in a classroom are usually insufficient for successful language acquisition. Learners must look for affordances beyond the classroom" (p. 63). The private English language teacher provided her with more advanced language knowledge and further language practice. Also, Diem went to the private English class based on her perception of its importance to her present studies; thus, she demonstrated a strong commitment to this activity, indicating her ability to appraise the affordances and constraints within her own learning contexts.

For Hanh, it was quite the opposite. She took private classes at an English language teacher's home and at a foreign language centre more under her mother's encouragement than on her own initiative. She was among the students who Anh (2013) classifies as taking private tuition as a form of "making up for poor ability and keeping up, studying to pass the examinations . . . and not understanding the lessons" (p. 8). Her motivation to attend these classes mainly came from the belief that she should not waste her parents' money rather than a desire to improve her language skills.

Resorting to private tuition also marks students' appraisals of the changing situations and emerging needs in their language learning. Phong did not take private classes in any subject over his first two years at high school. He mainly relied on the formal English class, personal effort, and peer learning. As the final year was approaching, he determined that these activities would not provide him with sufficient knowledge to cope with the university entrance examination. He planned to take private English classes in Year Twelve to have more language practice and guided examination revision.

To sum up, private English tuition has become an indispensable learning support along with formal language teaching at school. Students take private classes for different pragmatic, personal, and social reasons, and their motivation to do so varies accordingly. These facts indicate the gradually descending motivational value of language learning at school and the ascending motivational impacts of private tuition (Lamb, 2007). This is also consistent with Menezes' (2011) remark that "we must acknowledge that schools cannot gather all the necessary affordances for language development" (p. 71).

9.3.5 Final year at high school

The final year at high school is a crucial milestone for all Vietnamese students in which they have to undertake two important examinations: high school graduation and university entrance examinations. Both events, especially the university entrance examination, are the gateways to students' higher education and employment. According to Hayden and Nghi (2010):

Performance on the [university entrance] examination determines not only whether a student will be admitted to higher education but also, taking into account preferences indicated by the student, the institution and training programme to which the student will be admitted. (p. 24)

The main concern for the case study participants at this stage was thus pass these examinations to gain entry into their desired universities. With this in mind, some students prepared themselves for the university entrance examination as soon as they entered high school while others waited until the final year to decide on their area of specialty. The intensity of revision for these examinations and their expended effort also escalated in the final year, revealing that students adapted their language learning to the critical demands of the changing situations.

Upon entering high school, Diem had a clear vision of what she would specialise in in her studies and formulated a careful plan for it. Despite having to ensure good performance across all subjects in the top class, her main focus was on English and the other two subjects in her chosen exam group. She thus spent a

substantial amount of time outside formal and private classes improving her language skills. In her final year, she gave English utmost priority over other subjects. As the examination was approaching, she postponed all other recreational and peer activities, including playing baseball, her favourite sport, to be wholly devoted to exam revision. Her desire to respond to the expectations of her parents and private teachers, to achieve her language learning ambitions, to better her life, and to fulfil filial duty all turned into great sources of motivation for her.

The other three students were on the brink of the final year when I ceased my data collection. Their preparation for the university entrance examination was not as exhaustive as Diem's. Although they had already decided on their future majors well before the final year, their efforts only became more intense towards the end of Year Eleven. As Hanh took a natural science exam group, she decided to spend less time on English and stop going to private English tuition; however, English would remain part of her future study plan once she could enter university. Phong and Manh, who would take English in the university entrance examination, started to think seriously about taking private tuition in addition to their personal efforts and formal English learning at school. They had not taken any private English classes prior to the final year. The immediacy of the university entrance examination displaced Phong's concern over his parents' tuition burden and Manh's earlier disappointment with private English classes. Phong also stopped participating in all social club activities so that he could have more time for English practice.

The changes in L2 motivation towards the final year at high school indicate students' agency in regulating their activities according to the importance of English to their studies and personal needs. Despite Hanh's gradually growing understanding of the necessity of English for her academic and economic future - through the real-life examples from her classmates at the foreign language centre - she had to leave it and prioritise subjects in her exam group. Conversely, Diem,

Phong and Manh focussed more on English through more autonomous learning sessions and external support.

9.3.6 Critical incidents with significant others

In addition to parents and teachers who continuously supervise, support, and encourage students throughout their language learning pathway, a number of social others within their social networks who also enter the process or events relating to them have left certain motivational footprints (Benson, 2011; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011; J. C. Richards, 2015). The aim here is not to showcase all incidents concerning these persons that change the students' perspectives but rather highlight the motivational value of these significant others, be that a minor or major piece in the overall motivational jigsaw, and each student's agency in grasping the learning opportunities and affordances available within his/her own contexts and social relationships.

Upon his entry into high school, Phong's sister also started going to secondary school and learning English formally. He decided to tutor her with a view to kindling her interest in learning English. This commitment encouraged Phong to invest more time in improving his language skills to teach his sister as well as to be a good example for her. In this case, language learning motivation comes from the learner's perception of himself as a resource for social others.

In Manh's case, both material and linguistic support from his overseas cousin on her home country visit enabled him to make more rapid progress in his language studies. With the gift of a laptop computer, he had more access to online resources. His cousin also shared her linguistic and cultural knowledge with him from her previous language learning experiences. They also had regular contact on Skype for English practice after she left Vietnam. His cousin was both a provider of resources and a learning resource to Manh.

In Phong and Manh's cases, they were active in their language learning by either functioning as a learning resource for others or making good use of their

available resources. However, as Menezes (2011) notes, “not all of them [students] will be able to perceive the affordances or take advantages of all the ones offered by the environment” (p. 63). This is true of Hanh as she was more passive in seeking out language learning resources; consequently, her mother had to look for English classes for her. A critical incident arose out of her mother’s casual conversations with her fellow traders at the market where she worked. She learned that taking English courses at foreign language centres would enable her daughter to make faster progress in English. She encouraged Hanh to attend the courses at a language centre in the city. This led to another incident that changed Hanh’s perspective. During the English course there, Hanh studied with other learners who came from different occupational backgrounds and ages but still had to learn English. From such real-life role models, she was more aware of the importance of learning English for her future. Although she acknowledged that it did not change her attitudes towards learning English much, the experience at the foreign language centre was a significant motivational boost.

Despite having minor impacts on learners’ motivational trajectories, the critical incidents relating to significant others somehow change their language learning perspectives. Also, the motivational scope is not only limited to those significant others who learners have direct contact with, such as parents, teachers, siblings, cousins, classmates, but also extends to individuals that they have indirect or even no communication with, such as Hanh’s mother’s fellow traders.

9.4 Summary

This chapter has responded to the research questions by interpreting the findings in the light of the theoretical and analytical frameworks. Each student worked with diverse motivational affordances depending on their social interactions and relationships in different settings and their family backgrounds. At school, students studied English mainly with their English language teachers whose approaches and classroom manners, to varying degrees, impacted on their attitudes towards learning the language. Various micro-, meso-, exo- and

macrosystemic elements including national testing systems, school policies, expectations of school stakeholders and teachers of other subjects, peer attitudes, and different stages in their studies contributed to shaping their language learning motivation. At home, parents had a primary role in providing good learning conditions for students as well as inculcating the value of education and local societal and cultural norms. Students' perceptions of parental financial and emotional investment, filial values, and their future prospects were the main drivers behind their efforts to learn English. Extended families also supported their English language studies in different ways, with motivational affordances dispersed both locally and globally. A further point is that some students saw themselves as motivational affordances for social others, especially their siblings and peers from similar rural backgrounds. Informal learning contexts such as private English classes at their teachers' homes or courses at foreign language centres offered students additional practice to meet their individual needs in learning English. Their interactions with peers and near peers in such classes also enhanced their awareness of the importance of learning English for their socioeconomic futures. These ecological elements, interpersonal relationships, and their synergistic effects contributed to students' different motivational trajectories over time.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter begins by addressing the research questions and then discusses the theoretical, methodological and practical implications of the research. It highlights the significance of adopting a situated approach to exploring L2 motivation from an ecological perspective. The chapter also draws conclusions about the value of a qualitative case study design utilising a combination of data collection methods and instruments to gain in-depth insights into the complexity and dynamics of motivation within and across settings and relationships. Despite some limitations regarding the participant population and the applicability of findings to other contexts, this study provides a fresh theoretical and methodological approach for future research on L2 motivation, especially studies emphasising a lifewide adaptive perspective on language learning and teaching. The chapter ends with my closing remarks.

10.1 The research questions revisited

10.1.1 Research question one

<p>What are the motivational affordances for high school students learning English in rural areas in Vietnam?</p>

Despite the constraints of their learning conditions in terms of school facilities, family incomes, and local learning resources, the case study participants received diverse forms of support and affordances from significant others. In addition, they demonstrated personal agency in utilising the motivational affordances available in different settings and thus developed their own approaches to learning English. Some of these students also served as motivational affordances

for significant others, which energised them to expend more effort in their language studies.

10.1.1.1 Significant others as motivational affordances

The school setting

Most of the case study participants had their first access to English at school where school teachers were usually the chief source of language texts. They influenced these students' development of language learning interests to different degrees. By and large, English teachers enhanced the students' awareness of the importance of learning the language through their own experiences. Some teachers also used the success stories of school alumni to motivate their students. Their teaching innovation and enthusiasm were a further source of inspiration. Classroom interactions tended to improve the students' communicative confidence. In contrast, one case study participant developed language learning anxiety partly as a result of her poor performance in the subject of English and the lack of rapport between her teachers and herself. Also, large classes, limited time, and teaching focuses were major deterrents, making it hard for teachers to cater for the students' individual needs. In the context of the local school, the majority of students chose to specialise in natural science subjects and tended to have a low level of English. School teachers had to spend more time helping these students to reach the required English level, restricting their time for those who were genuinely keen on learning English and/or who wanted to gain more advanced linguistic knowledge beyond that in the textbook.

In addition, school stakeholders and teachers of other subjects exerted certain impacts on the students' language learning attitudes. Stakeholders tended to have top-down influences through their comprehensive roles at school in terms of implementing education policies and setting overall achievement targets. These goals were passed down to teachers of English and other subjects. Since English was only part of the school curriculum, the students had to balance their time and efforts across all subjects. Teachers of other subjects had either facilitating or

inhibiting effects on the students' L2 motivation depending on their academic requirements and empathy for those who specialised in the English language.

Peers were also an important source of motivational affordances. Some of the case study participants received enthusiastic peer support, whereas others were ridiculed for using English outside formal class sessions. In rural high schools, not many students were really interested in learning English because of the difficulties confronting them. Setting up a peer group for language practice was not an easy undertaking. Also, peer competition, especially in top classes, was another challenge for avid language learners. Despite having English as a winning card over their classmates who were achieving less in the language, these students had to expend much more effort in the context of multiple disciplines to keep up with their peers in terms of overall academic performance.

The home setting

In the home context, parents played the most significant role in shaping and sustaining the case study participants' motivation. They supported their children, mostly by paying tuition fees and buying English books. One parent who was able to use English was more actively involved in motivating his son by providing further opportunities for language practice at home. The encouragement and expectations embedded in parents' accounts of the difficulties in their life also helped to change the students' perspectives with regard to learning English. In some cases, the students' extended families also showed concern over their education. Grandparents, cousins, and relatives not only provided financial support but also facilitated their access to cultural materials that were beneficial to their language development. Some cousins might go further by tutoring them in English.

Private tuition

Although taking private English tuition has gained traction in rural areas in Vietnam, not all students could afford it. The students in the present study tended

to primarily go to English classes at their teachers' homes. Despite not focussing on listening and speaking skills, private English teachers were important learning resources for the students to keep up with their school progress and/or to prepare them for the university entrance examination. These teachers helped low-performing students to revise the school programme with more practice and individualised support. They also provided students who specialised in English with more advanced knowledge and exam-taking strategies. Their enthusiasm and, in some cases, tuition fee waivers were substantial motivational incentives. However, one student had negative experiences with private English classes mainly because of the mismatch between the teaching content and the school curriculum and because the private teacher's language proficiency and her teaching approaches fell short of his expectations. He withdrew from private tuition and relied on his English learning at school and personal effort.

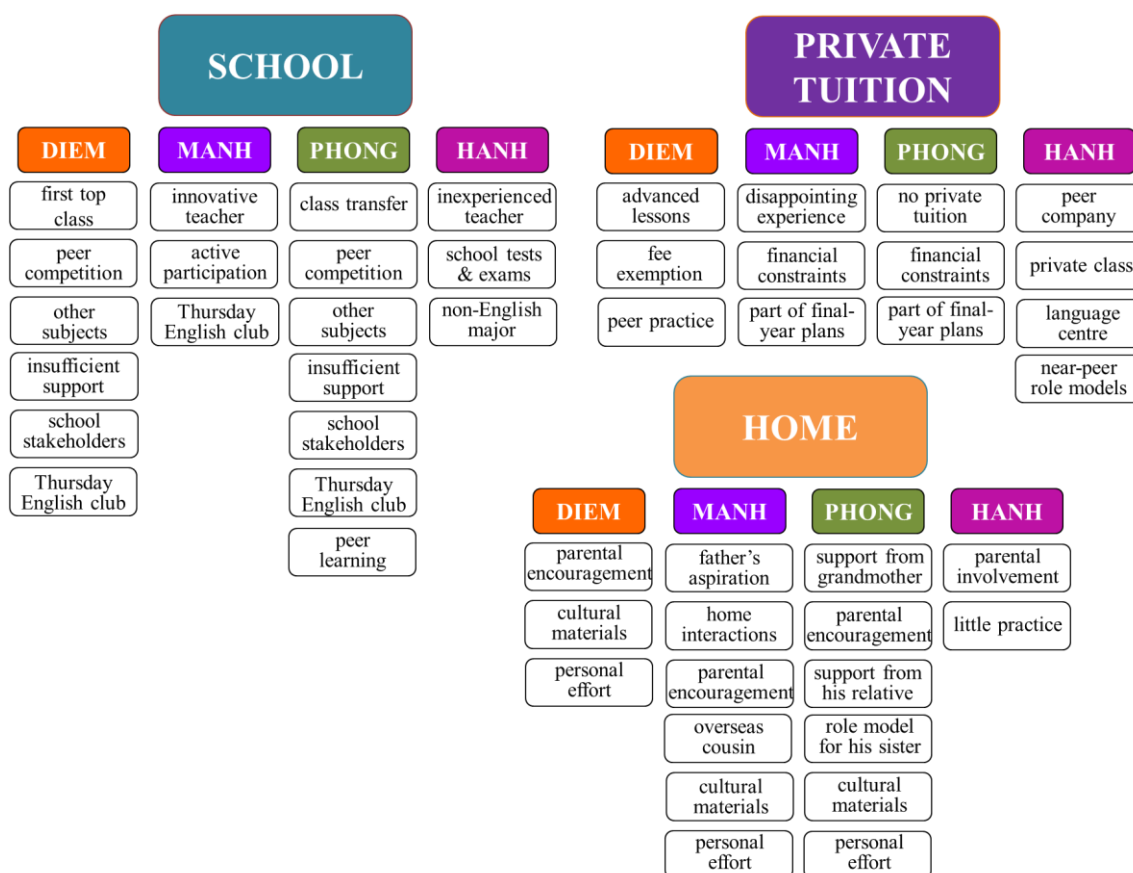


Figure 10.1: Motivational affordances for the four case study participants

One case study participant, who came from a more financially comfortable family, attended English courses at foreign language centres. Her parents sent her there in the hope that she could develop more rounded language competence. During these English courses, she had the opportunity to interact with both Vietnamese and foreign teachers from English-speaking countries, and could benefit from further communicative practice in the class and detailed corrective feedback. The courses at foreign language centres also helped to change her perspectives on the importance of learning English by exposing her to positive near peer models in the class.

Figure 10.1 on the previous page summaries the motivational affordances for the four case study participants in different language learning settings.

10.1.1.2 Learners as motivational affordances for significant others

This subtle theme emerged out of the students' social interactions and their perceptions of the importance of learning English for themselves and significant others. A couple of the case study participants saw themselves as language affordances for their siblings, peers, or learners from similar rural backgrounds. Their own passion for the language and their awareness of its importance were the main drivers in helping others. While one student actually tutored his sister in English, the other aspired to a vision of becoming an English language teacher to help her peers who came from similar backgrounds. These activities and prospects contributed to sustaining and fuelling their L2 motivation.

10.1.2 Research question two

What are the synergistic effects across settings on these learners' language learning motivation?

The present study showed that a number of ecological elements and social relationships permeated all settings in which language learning took place. Their

effects on the case study participants' L2 motivation could not be simply singled out in a linear manner; rather, these elements had cross-setting impacts that transcended the sum-part disparities.

The role of English as a compulsory subject in the high school curriculum provoked shared concerns among significant others at different levels. At stakeholders' level, the provincial education department cooperated with local high schools in creating more opportunities for the students to practise English outside their formal class sessions. They organised both paper-based and online English contests to boost their motivation to learn the language. At the school-home level, communication between school stakeholders and parents and between formal English teachers and parents was mentioned as one of the motivational sources. Together they observed the students' performance, both at school and at home, to address their concerns and rectify problems in a timely manner. Some parents also connected with private English teachers with a view to giving their children extra learning support.

At a more macro level, recent revisions in the testing system in Vietnam resulted in varying attitudes towards learning English among the students in this study. One student who tended to have low interest in her English language studies expressed relief at the removal of English from the graduation examination after the first wave of testing change took effect. She did not see the immediate need of learning English and thus developed resigned and somewhat resistant attitudes towards learning it. She spent much less time on language learning, stopped going to private English tuition, and tended to solely focus on her exam group. Once the role of English as a compulsory subject in the graduation examination was restored as a result of the second wave of policy change, this student had to review her language learning plans to adapt to the new situation. Conversely, the case study participants who specialised in English maintained their perseverance regardless of such changes.

The value of learning English to future prospects also had a motivational impact. All the case study participants' main goal at high school was to enter university. Most if not all the students taking an English language major displayed a high degree of commitment. One student, despite her ultimate choice of a business major which did not require English as one of the subjects in her exam group, still maintained her language studies because she would have to continue it at university. The significance of English in future job applications and workplace communication were other factors underpinning the students' L2 perceptions and teachers' and parents' efforts in raising their awareness.

Social norms and values also pervaded the students' L2 motivation. Three major aspects arising out of the data comprised family pride, filial piety, and gratitude. Most of the students wanted to bring honour to their family through their academic success, paving the way for a better economic future. This would enable them to suitably respond to the financial and academic support from parents, teachers, and significant others. They viewed this as an act of fulfilling their filial piety towards their parents and grandparents, and as a token of gratitude to those who helped them in their language learning endeavours.

10.1.3 Research question three

<p>What are the learners' motivational trajectories within and across settings and relationships with significant others?</p>

Within the same rural context, each student developed their own motivational trajectory. Their English learning progression was largely contingent on their previous learning experiences, the changes in their learning environment, and critical incidents with significant others.

The students' previous experiences affected their English learning attitudes in different ways and the contexts for their initial contact with the language varied. While some students developed an interest in learning English from their formal

language studies at secondary school, one was soon overcome by anxiety. These attitudes were influenced by their teachers' approaches, their levels of English, and teacher-student rapport. At home, one father facilitated his son's access to English prior to going to school. Such home support tended to have a positive impact on this student's development of interest and gave him a good start in learning the language.

Language learning is a complex and prolonged process in which students experienced changes in their learning environments. These changes might either offer them more language learning affordances or present certain challenges. The transition from secondary to high school was normally perceived as a key event determining their academic future. Most of the case study participants who were interested in learning English made a resolution at this point to specialise in the language. Conversely, one student who was not so keen on learning English had to struggle with issues regarding her learning styles and the requirements in the new environment she had never encountered before, thus tending to shift her planning away from taking English as her future major.

At high school, the students' L2 motivation was challenged by the lack of resources and support from their school English language teachers, school policies, and their choices of university major. Some students looked for alternative resources to achieve their personal goals. These students displayed a high degree of L2 motivation and perseverance despite the difficulties in their learning conditions. However, one student became resigned and even resistant to learning English, and resorted to private tuition to make up for her lack of personal effort. Also, the students' attitudes towards English were largely contingent on the exam groups they would take in the university entrance examination and the testing policies. The students who specialised in English were strongly committed to learning English, whereas the one who studied towards a business major appeared to learn it just to cope with school tests and examinations.

The students showed great individual differences in their motivation to learn English in their final year in which their main concern was to gain admission into their desired universities. To this end, the three students who were interested in the language expended more effort in their studies in both formal and informal contexts. For the other student, she spent more time on the subjects in her exam groups and partly withdrew from learning English.

Critical incidents with significant others in relation to the students' language learning also impacted on their L2 motivation. These events occurred through the students' direct or indirect interactions or relationships within their social milieu. Through these incidents, significant others provided them with various language affordances or changed their perspectives on learning English.

10.2 Implications

10.2.1 Theoretical implications

With motivation research recently inclining towards a more situated paradigm, ecological systems theory offers an analytical tool to delve into language learning motivation from a person-in-context perspective, providing insights into how learners interact with different environmental elements within and across multiple sociocultural settings. Ushioda (2015) states that “the learner actively participates in shaping the developing linguistic interaction, and the learner also constitutes part of the dynamic physical, historical, social and cultural context within which the interaction is taking place” (pp. 47-48). Sociocultural values permeate all levels of social interactions and interpersonal relationships through which students become either motivated or demotivated in their language studies. Major theoretical implications of the present study involve considering students' motivational trajectories on a moment-by-moment basis, the synergistic effects of various ecological systems on their motivation, and the role of emotions in motivation inquiry.

The mutually constitutive relationship and ongoing interactions between the learner and the learning context were the primary drivers for motivational dynamics (Dörnyei, 2009c; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Waninge et al., 2014). Contextual and relational shifts trigger learners' motivational fluctuations that occur even in a single spontaneous encounter within their social milieu. This expands the scope of investigation of L2 motivation from contextual to situational levels. This micro perspective uncovers the moment-by-moment complexities and dynamics of motivational processes. The present study showed that learners' language learning motivation varied across settings and situations. The implication of such momentary analyses is that they facilitate an in-depth understanding of learners' motivational trajectories by documenting their changes in specific situations and over time.

Accounting for the interplay of various sociocultural systems is another important implication for exploring motivation within and across settings and relationships. Learners do not learn languages within one setting, but rather switch between settings which entail “a complex system of motivation, behaviours, interactions, and experiences” (Ushioda, 2012c, p. 63). In other words, language learning is not a uniquely individual activity but rather involves complex reciprocal interactions between the learner and the social environment. Williams and Burden (1997) propound that “learning must be viewed holistically with as much emphasis being placed on relationships and interactions as on the participants and the content of what is learned” (p. 190). Learners' motivation is thus impacted by a multiplicity of personal and environmental elements and relationships which are inextricably connected. According to van Lier (2004), “these ‘linkages’ allow the researcher to track instigative and debilitative forces between one ecosystem and another” (p. 210). It was evident from this study that sociocultural influences on students' language learning motivation were interrelated, multi-layered, and not merely the sum of individual factors. Instead, they had a synergistic effect on their motivational progression and trajectories. Exploring the synergy of motivational elements in the environment is crucial to a better understanding of how motivation is implicated in learners' social

interactions. This also responds to “the need for multi-level conceptualisations and multi-level analyses of motivation in context” (Volet, 2001a, p. 326).

The most significant theoretical implication of this study is the role of emotions in research on language learning motivation. This study revealed that emotions not only circulated within and across settings but also defined the settings, suggesting not only the presence of emotions along the language learning process, but also their place in shaping students’ motivation. Students experienced different types of emotions, both positive and negative, during their English language studies. Their affective reactions were of both personal and interpersonal nature as a result of their interactions within the social milieu. For instance, students viewed their parents’ delight with their language learning success as a major source of energy for their language pursuits. These findings substantiate a growing body of research that weaves emotions and motivation together (e.g. Dewaele, 2011; Dörnyei, 2009c; Imai, 2010; Lopez & Aguilar, 2013; Lopez & Cárdenas, 2014; Pavlenko, 2013; Turner, Meyer, & Schweinle, 2003). Indeed, MacIntyre (2002) argues that “emotion just might be the fundamental basis of motivation, one deserving far greater attention in the language learning domain” (p. 45). In their research, Meyer and Turner (2006) view emotion and motivation as “integrated and simultaneous”, with each contributing to the development of the other (p. 384). Arnold (2011) states that “positive affect can provide invaluable support for learning just as negative affect can close down the mind and prevent learning from occurring altogether” (p. 11). These emotional valences influence learners’ appraisals of social relationships, the learning environment, and themselves (Bown & White, 2010a, 2010b) and, as a result, influence their motivation. Given the role of emotion, it needs to be regarded as an important theoretical entity for inquiry into language learning motivation. This aligns with the realisation that “although we had not specifically incorporated emotion into our theoretical approach to motivation, our empirical findings consistently pointed to its importance in interpreting students’ reports of motivation” (Turner et al., 2003, p. 380).

10.2.2 Methodological implications

This study explored language learning motivation within students' complex and evolving relationships with significant others in multiple learning settings over time. The adoption of a longitudinal case study design with a strong focus on methodological triangulation, the special attention given to the construct of reciprocity within researcher-participant rapport, and the use of retrospections and scenarios have profound implications for gaining the trust and support of all the participants, and for developing a multidimensional understanding of students' motivational trajectories from an ecological perspective.

Given the contextually contingent nature of the present inquiry, one prominent implication of the longitudinal case study design is that it provides in-depth insights into individual students' experiences and how their motivation was shaped and reshaped over time. However, in order to effectively study motivation from this pioneering ecological perspective, a particular set of methods, tools, and data sources which diverges from the traditional ones utilised in contemporary motivation research is needed to obtain data in both formal and informal settings. In this study, interviews based on social practice approaches were conducted both on site when I was in Vietnam and on Skype when I returned to New Zealand. The strength of interview from a social practice perspective as implemented in this study was its focus on the process leading to the interview, the contextual background constituting interviewer-interviewee interactions, and the co-construction of meaning, thus providing a rich and situated account of L2 motivation. Also, Skype interviews were particularly effective and efficient for my longitudinal data collection because I only had a limited amount of time in the research field and for the majority of the time, my participants and I were working in two distant parts of the world. Further, observations both at school and at home by means of one-on-one private tuition were crucial for interpreting and validating the interview data. Without the private tuition at the participants' homes, I would not have been able to observe their informal language studies as well as to have opportunities to interact with

their family members and at times to be witness to their family's decision-making processes concerning their English learning. Complementary data sources, especially the case study participants' Facebook statuses related to their English language studies and our interactions on Facebook Messenger, were invaluable after I had left the field. This online environment was also intriguing to the teenage participants because they loved using Facebook and accessed it frequently. Sometimes, it was the students, not me, who initiated Facebook chats to inform me of their latest progress in learning English. Despite the flexibility afforded by this research design, there was a lot of work to undertake in the field. Prominent challenges for me involved eliciting data without pushing the participants or intruding on their privacy, personal life, and study time. These factors varied case by case and required a high level of adaptability and resilience as discussed in 4.2.5.

In addition, my one-on-one private tuition at the participants' homes demonstrated my commitment to establishing a reciprocal relationship between the participants and me, which in turn enabled me to win their trust and support. By seeing the reciprocal value of participating in my study, the students, their parents, the school teachers, and school stakeholders showed great enthusiasm throughout the whole data collection process. One-on-one private tuition as well as other interpersonal strategies adopted in this study also highlighted the fact that reciprocity did not always demand material rewards; instead, it involved mutual sharing of experience and interest, and especially using my own expertise to help the participants.

Finally, the present study took into consideration different time dimensions, helping to better capture the case study participants' English learning experiences and how their motivation progressed along different stages of their language studies. I made use of both student retrospections on their previous English language learning and future scenarios. Obtaining data from a retrospective perspective provided insights into how students learned English as well as affective aspects associated with their previous language learning. The utilisation

of scenarios for data collection activated students' language learning visions. This was an effective tool for obtaining a future perspective on their English language studies. This technique also encouraged even very taciturn students to talk. Further, integrating scenarios into interviews was a productive alternative to the traditional question-answer format that might be boring for teenage students. As the present study revealed, such a combination of retrospections and scenarios had substantial implications for obtaining rich insights into students' motivational trajectories over time.

10.2.3 Implications for English language teaching

In Firth and Wagner's (2007) words, English language learning should be seen "as a ubiquitous social activity, as an interactional phenomenon that transcends contexts while being context dependent" (p. 807). Findings from the present study pointed to the fact that students not only learned English within the L2 classroom but also made use of motivational affordances within and across diverse learning settings. The case study participants' motivation was affected by a multiplicity of ecological elements, social relationships, and personal as well as community-oriented goals which determined their choice of continuing or withdrawing from their study as well as influencing the amount of effort expended. One major implication for English language teaching arising from this study is to emphasise the interplay among different language learning settings, to attend to students' language learning needs in the face of the local education system, to account for various affective dimensions of classroom interactions, and to help students to develop language-associated visions.

With technological developments and the widespread use of English, White (2012) states that "learning is no longer hermetically sealed within the classroom, with the teacher and the textbook as the sole or principal source of target language texts and learning opportunities" (p. 8). Similarly, Richards (2015) subscribes to the view that learners should actively utilise all the learning resources available to them in different settings. He also reviews a vast number

of learning activities outside the English class that are beneficial for language development. In Legutke's (2012) words, "the classroom needs to be redefined as an arena where these different contexts [e.g. media, personal networks, and intercultural contacts] for language exposure and language use are linked in a meaningful way" (p. 113). A far-reaching implication of the present study is to highlight the need to incorporate different social resources for language learning within and across settings. It revealed the motivational value of the cooperation among school English teachers, parents, private teachers, and social others in creating supportive learning conditions for students. Figure 10.2 below represents the motivational affordances for language learning relating to significant others within and across settings. Concurrently, enhancing students' awareness of and facilitating their access to these social resources are necessary. These activities would empower students with a lifewide approach to learning English.

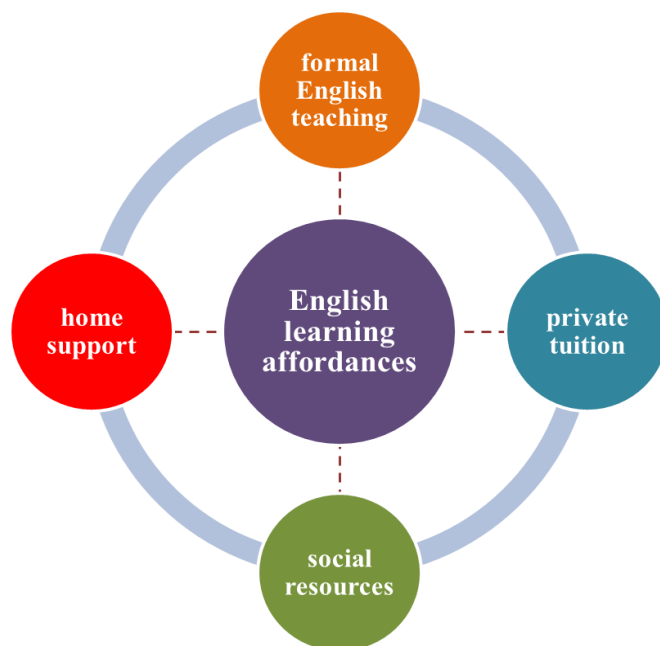


Figure 10.2: Motivational affordances for language learning relating to significant others within and across settings

The local education system also has an impact on students' attitudes and motivation. In contexts where language learning is exam-oriented, students may be extrinsically motivated (Clément, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996; Csizér, Kormos, & Sarkadi, 2010; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). In other words, they may learn

English only to cope with tests and examinations rather than have a genuine interest in the language. One of the tasks for language teachers is to kindle students' passion for language learning while still responding to their ultimate goal of passing examinations. The present study showed that most students were frustrated with their school teachers' approaches and classroom manner which focussed on examinations, resulting in inadequate support for those students who were particularly keen on learning English and/or wanted to attain more advanced linguistic knowledge. An implication of these findings is to emphasise the need to develop measures to improve the quality of the classroom life in order to better cater for individual students' needs.

It was also evident from this study that some students developed language learning anxiety and even resistance, partly as a result of classroom interactions and teaching practice. Affective dimensions in language teaching have been widely found to impact on students' language learning attitudes (Arnold, 2009, 2011; Arnold & Fonseca, 2007; Garrett & Young, 2009; Imai, 2010; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012b; Young, 1999). According to Meyer and Turner (2002), "through studying student-teacher interactions, our conceptualization of what constitutes motivation to learn increasingly has involved emotions as essential to learning and teaching" (p. 107). In the same vein, MacIntyre (2002) notes that "a consideration of affect is valuable, if not essential, to any discussion of the source of the engagement that many authors see as the key to motivation" (p. 51). English teachers can motivate students by enhancing students' positive emotions and reducing negative emotions, especially anxiety, because "language anxiety has consistently shown a negative correlation with second language achievement and with the perception of second language proficiency" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 41). In addition, most students in the present study were committed to learning English partly because they wanted to delight their parents and significant others. Imai (2010) states that "emotions are not just an individual's private inner workings in response to external stimuli but are socially constructed acts of communication that can mediate one's thinking, behaviour, and goals" (p. 279). Thus, another important implication for language teachers is to employ emotions

as a resource to motivate students. In this vein, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012b) recommend that “it is possible for teachers to approach influencing students’ emotion in at least two ways: (a) to set up conditions to provoke a reaction; and (b) to work with the cognition that modifies the emotional schema” (p. 200). Also, teachers can help students see the emotional rewards of learning English to themselves and social others such as personal and family pride, their joy at successes, and public admiration.

Activating students’ imaginary powers through English language teaching has positive implications for igniting and sustaining their L2 motivation. The present study indicated that the case study participants’ ideal selves were imbued with both personal and interpersonal elements. In other words, they were inspired by the scenarios of what they could do for themselves and significant others with a good command of English. This aligns with the findings of recent research on the motivational values of imagery (Al-Shehri, 2009; Dörnyei, 2014a; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Magid & Chan, 2012). Guided imagery helps students to develop both immediate and distal goals; as a result, they become more committed to learning English because they can visualise their future success (Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Magid & Chan, 2012). Language teachers can assist students in building, strengthening, and sustaining certain language learning visions by helping them to see the value of their language studies for themselves and significant others. In this regard, Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) propose a programme for motivating students to learn languages through creating, strengthening, substantiating, operationalising, enlivening, and finally counterbalancing language-related visions.

10.3 Limitations of the present study

Some limitations of this study concern the participant recruitment methods, the sociocultural homogeneity of the participants, and the generalisability of the findings to other language learning contexts.

Since the participant recruitment was based on students' voluntary decisions, the data might not represent all aspects of L2 motivation and their experiences in different settings. Most of the participants were avid language learners who wanted to receive extra English resources from taking part in this study. Also, most of them came from poor families with parents having rather low literacy levels. This affected the way the parents supported their children's education in both financial and academic terms. The parents may have been more concerned with their children's overall performance at school rather than with a particular subject such as English. Only one student took English courses at a foreign language centre. The findings related to private tuition at foreign language centres thus mainly relied on her sole reflections and experiences.

The research field was within the confines of a rural district in a Southern province in Vietnam. Each geographical region in Vietnam has its own socioeconomic and cultural practices, resulting in the different societal expectations, educational involvement, school ethos, teaching styles, and parental commitment. While the sociocultural homogeneity of the participants facilitated understandings of the local norms and values, it might fail to encapsulate the perspectives of school stakeholders, teachers, parents, and students in other rural areas. In this regard, Ellis (2012) comments that research findings vary across contexts because "what works in one context may not work in another" (p. 19). Contextual elements were of great importance for the theoretical conceptualisation of language learning motivation in this study; thus, its applications in other contexts, either within or outside Vietnam, would require re-integrating sociocultural features of the target group.

However, the issue of generalisability is not the main driver for qualitative researchers (Lazaraton, 2003; Schofield, 2002). The primary aim of this study was to gain in-depth insights into the motivational trajectories of Vietnamese students learning English in a rural high school. Although the small number of participants could provide highly rich accounts, applying the findings to a larger

population, especially a more socioculturally heterogeneous group, should be judiciously considered.

10.4 Recommendations for future research

The present study could be a point of departure for future research that adopts an ecological perspective on language learning motivation, opening up further inquiry into L2 motivation, including the motivational role of emotions in language learning, of lifewide adaptive learning approaches, and of private English tuition as an emerging learning setting.

Insights into students' emotional reactions to certain situations would shed light on how their motivation ebbs and flows along their language learning pathways. Turner et al. (2003) point out that "as we work in classrooms, live with our data, and become more familiar with theories and models of emotion, we become more convinced that emotion plays a central role in understanding the process of motivation" (p. 386). Emotions in language learning and their relation to motivation have been under-researched due to the lack of thorough theoretical bases (Pavlenko, 2013). Also, Bown and White (2010a) note that "a further gap is that few studies to date have addressed the dynamic nature of emotions, the ways they unfold and change over time" (p. 433). Both motivation and emotion change over time depending on personal and external factors embedded in the language learning environment. Spotting students' emotional changes situation by situation would better account for the temporality and dynamics of language learning motivation. For these reasons, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012a) insist that "the importance of affective reactions behoves teachers and researchers to elevate the importance of emotions to a prominent place on our agendas" (pp. 112-113).

The interplay between lifewide approaches to language learning and students' motivation could also be an avenue for further investigation. Some students in the present study made good use of the language affordances and social support in different learning spaces, namely formal classes, home, private classes, and

online. These resources partly helped them to improve their language competence and confidence. This was a motivational reward for their personal effort and adaptive learning styles, considering the constraints of their language learning environment. White (2012) observes that “the last two decades have seen a compelling shift in the broadening of the contexts for language learning: teaching and learning increasingly take place within and across multiple contexts, both real and virtual, in-class and out-of-class, with co-present and remote partners” (p. 8). These findings provide corroborating evidence for the positive effects of lifewide learning approaches on students’ commitment to their language pursuits. This strand aligns with research on language socialisation which “examines macro- and micro-contexts in which language is learned and used” (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p. 96).

In contexts where private English tuition has been or is becoming popular, exploring its motivational impacts on students’ language learning would be another significant research direction. The present study explored learners’ motivational trajectories within and across a multiplicity of settings. To this end, it aimed to provide a balanced focus on different settings and thus did not give particular weight to language learning in private English classes. Given the rising concern for the role of private tuition in general education and language learning (see Bray, 2013; Mariya, 2012; Nunan, 2003; Yung, 2015), understanding students’ motivation behind this practice could usefully inform the collaboration between schools, parents, private English teachers as well as private language institutions and other stakeholders.

10.5 Closing words

The present study presents different snapshots of high school students’ motivational trajectories. Viewed together, they make a vivid mural of language affordances provided by significant others in a complex system of settings and relationships. In the rural context where learning resources and facilities are restricted, the value of this study lies in its consideration of multiple supports for

English language learning within and across settings. Language learning has crossed the confines of the classroom and acknowledged the contribution of diverse ecological elements. Students learn English not only with their school English teachers but also with different significant others and from a wide range of cultural materials. One of the ways to ignite and sustain students' language learning motivation is to help them to realise the potential learning resources surrounding them. In other words, fostering a lifewide adaptive approach to language studies would be a rewarding experience for students learning English in rural areas. This could not only have a positive impact on their language learning motivation but also show them the various sources and learning opportunities beyond their formal language learning.

On a personal note, this study established new long-term relationships between the participants and me. After the data collection ceased, we continued to stay in touch: the students frequently asked for my advice on their language learning plans as a trusted brother and teacher. Sometimes just a couple of questions from them regarding my health and study were more than enough to strengthen our rapport. Seeing how they progressed and made strides in their English language studies was a really meaningful experience for me as a researcher and a teacher. I felt every single success of the students far more strongly than I did my own.

In terms of English language teaching, this study has sharpened my perspectives on the elements that motivate students, especially those from rural areas, within and beyond the classroom. I gained a better understanding of students' learning habits, the constraints present in their language learning conditions, their goals, the decision-making processes with regard to their English language learning, and their motivational ups and downs. The research findings confirm my belief that teaching English simply by conveying linguistic knowledge and providing practice within a couple of contact sessions a week is not sufficient for improving students' language skills and maintaining their interest. My job as a teacher is thus not limited to preparing interesting lesson plans and enhancing the quality of classroom life but concurrently building up students' awareness of the benefits

from learning English, of the learning resources available around them, and of the importance of developing critically adaptive language learning within and across a range of settings. Each of the four case study participants, *Diem*, *Manh*, *Phong* and *Hanh*, has provided us with glimpses of what is possible in learning English from within rural contexts in Southern Vietnam and beyond.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pilot questionnaire on the language learning attitudes of students from rural areas in Vietnam

This questionnaire is part of my PhD study in Applied Linguistics at Massey University, New Zealand. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Please respond to them in as much detail as you can.

A. Participant's information

1. Which province are you from?
2. How long have you been learning English?
3. What is your current English level? (tick the box)
☐ elementary ☐ pre-intermediate ☐ intermediate
☐ upper-intermediate ☐ advanced
4. How often do you study English by yourself? (tick the box)
☐ every day ☐ three times a week ☐ twice a week ☐ once a week
Others (please specify):
5. Why do you choose to study at this frequency?
.....

B. Motivational factors for learning English

1. *When you were at high school, how important were the following factors to your English learning? Circle a number in the scale and explain why you think so. One example has been provided for you.*

1 = unimportant 2 = of little importance
3 = moderately important 4 = important 5 = very important

e.g. Personal interest	1 2 3 ④ 5
Your reasons: <i>I am happy to spend a lot of time on English as I really like it.</i>	
1.1 Personal interest	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.2 Examination pressure	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.3 Future prospects	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.4 International communication	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.5 Peer pressure	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.6 Peer models	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.7 Pressure from parents	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.8 Parental expectations	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.9 Family honour	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	
1.10 Models from family members	1 2 3 4 5
Your reasons:.....	

2. Do you have anything in common with each of the following students when you were at high school? Tick the box(es) and specify the common features in the space provided. One example has been provided for you.

e.g. Hung tries to learn English to be able to communicate with foreigners. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify: <i>I learn English to travel around the world.</i>
2.1 Tuan is very interested in learning English because he wants to be a translator. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.2 Tu tries to learn English to get a provincial scholarship for excellent students. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.3 Na 's parents put pressure on him to learn English as it is important for his future. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.4 Trang tries to learn English well to support her parents in the future. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.5 Thao 's parents do not pay attention to her English learning at all. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.6 Anh 's parents encourage her to learn English, so she has made great progress. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.7 Thu always tries to learn English well to live up to her parents' expectations. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.8 Ha tries to learn English to find a good job like a family member of hers. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.9 Thang 's parents are English teachers and he wants to follow in their footsteps. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.10 Nam tries to learn English to go and live with his family overseas. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:

2.11 Chau tries to learn English to bring honour to her family. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:
2.12 Nga tries to learn English well to respected by others. <input type="checkbox"/>	Please justify:

3. Please fill in the blanks with your answers to the following questions about your English learning at high school.

3.1 Was it important to learn English?

.....

.....

.....

3.2 Did you find it stimulating to learn English? Why?

.....

.....

.....

3.3 How did your parents help you in your English language studies?

.....

.....

.....

3.4 Have your parents ever got disappointed with your English outcomes? Why?

.....

.....

.....

3.5 If your brother/sister was excellent at English, would you try to be as good as him/her? Why?

.....

.....

.....

3.6 Have you ever admired anyone because he/she is excellent at English? What have you learned from him/her?

.....

.....

.....

3.7 What do your neighbours usually say about excellent learners?

.....

.....

.....

3.8 Do you know of any excellent learner in your province? How do you know them?

.....

.....

.....

Please feel free to contact me at huycuong2006@gmail.com for further queries, comments, or additional information. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix B: Sample guides for interviewing the students in the first interview round

Before the interview:

Begin by asking the student some ice-breaking questions related to, for example, his/her school activities or plans for the day => telling him/her that we are going to have an interview which is more or less the same as our usual conversations.

Interview questions/main points

Below are some of the guided questions for interviewing the students in the first round of interviews. They were not necessarily used exactly for each participant and further individualised questions were asked depending on aspects emerging from the actual interactions.

1. Em học tiếng Anh được bao lâu rồi?
How long have you been learning English?
2. Em có gặp khó khăn gì khi học tiếng Anh không?
Do you have any difficulty learning English?
3. Em có thích học tiếng Anh không? Tại sao?
Do you like learning English? Why/Why not?
4. Theo em học tiếng Anh có quan trọng không? Tại sao?
Is learning English important to you? Why?
5. Em có sách tham khảo nào cho môn tiếng Anh không?
Do you have any other book for learning English apart from the coursebook?
6. Ngoài giờ học ở trường, em dành bao nhiêu thời gian học tiếng Anh?
How much time do you learn English excluding class time?

7. Em có tham gia nhóm học tiếng Anh nào không?
Do you participate in any English learning group?
8. Em có xem phim, đọc báo để cải thiện tiếng Anh không?
Do you watch movies or read newspapers in English to improve your language skills?
9. Em có đi học thêm tiếng Anh không? Tại sao?
Do you go to private English classes? Why?
10. Em định làm công việc gì trong tương lai?
What job do you want to have in the future?
11. Xin việc đó có dễ không? Có cần tiếng Anh để xin việc đó không?
Do you think it is easy to get that job? Is English important to get that job?
12. Ba mẹ có giúp gì cho em trong việc học tiếng Anh không?
How do your parents help you with your English language studies?
13. Ba mẹ có thường xem sổ liên lạc của em không?
Do your parents often look at your academic report?
14. Ba mẹ thường nói gì khi em đạt điểm cao/điểm thấp? Điều đó ảnh hưởng tới thái độ học của em như thế nào?
What do your parents usually say when you get high/low scores? How does this affect your attitude towards your study?
15. Các thành viên khác trong gia đình có giúp em học tiếng Anh không?
Do other family members help you with your English study?
16. Anh/chị em của em học tiếng Anh giỏi không? Họ có giúp em học tiếng Anh không?/Em có giúp họ học tiếng Anh không?
Does your brother/sister learn English well? How has he/she helped you with your English language studies?/ How have you helped him/her with English?

Appendix C: Major points and questions in some follow-up interviews

Second interview round

For the second round of interviews, I formulated different questions for different interviewees due to the complexity of their feedback in the first interview. Samples of major points of discussion in this round are as follows:

1. Momentary instances of emotional perceptions and how these are linked to the students' motivation to learn English
2. The students' perceptions of the significance of their present learning activities and how these are linked with parental investment.
3. The relationship between parental attitudes towards the students' test and exam results and the students' L2 motivation
4. How critical incidents contribute to shaping the students' emotional and motivational changes
5. How the students relate their L2 motivation to future scenarios
6. How family situations impact on their L2 motivation

Third interview round

For the third interview round, I made use of various techniques to activate students' ideal selves. Questions in the forms of hypotheses (e.g. using if clauses) were utilised to achieve the present purposes. Sample questions are as follows:

1. If English wasn't a compulsory subject at school, would you take it?
2. If English wasn't a job requirement, would you take it?
3. What do you think your future would be like without English?

4. What advantages or disadvantages do you possess/face in terms of learning English?
5. Have you ever imagine yourself living abroad?
6. Have you ever imagined yourself speaking English fluently?
7. Have you ever imagined yourself studying overseas?
8. Have you ever imagined yourself making friends with people around the world?
9. Have you ever imagined yourself working in an international company?
10. Have you ever imagined yourself entering an English speech contest and winning it?

The following scenarios are based on the fact that you are a very excellent English learner.

11. You have a cousin around your age who is very bad at English. He is not hard working as well. He doesn't know how important English is to his future. What advice would you give him? How would you persuade him to learn English? How are you going to help him?
12. You are the president of the English club at your school. You notice that not many students want to go to the club meetings because they are not really interested in learning English. What would you do to promote the club's activities and attract their participation?
13. You are going to a remote district in our province where not many children have opportunities to learn English. What are you doing to do to help them with their English?

Appendix D: Sample guides for interviewing the parents

Interviews with the parents were carried out approximately three months after I started one-on-one private tuition with the students at their homes. The interview guide included the main points for discussion during the interview and the questions varied case by case and largely depended on aspects emerging from the actual interviews.

Before the interview

Greeting => asking some ice-breaking questions related to, for example, the parents' work of the day => giving the parents some feedback on their children's English learning, strengths and weakness from my observations over the last three months => steering the conversations to the points in the interview guide.

Interview questions/main points

1. Thông tin cơ bản về phụ huynh (công việc làm ăn, xuất thân của gia đình, trình độ học vấn của phụ huynh, thời gian ở nhà, thời gian sinh hoạt cùng con, có thường hay trò chuyện với con không)

Parents' basic information (jobs, family origin, educational background, amount of time at home, amount of time available for their children, frequency of having conversations with their children)

2. Quan điểm của phụ huynh về tầm quan trọng của việc học (tiếng Anh)

Their views on the importance of education/learning English

3. Phụ huynh có quan tâm tới việc học của con hay không? Quan tâm như thế nào?

Do they pay attention to their children's academic progress? How?

4. Quan sát của phụ huynh về việc học tiếng Anh của con (thái độ học tiếng Anh, thời gian tự học ở nhà). Phụ huynh có thường nhắc nhở con học tiếng Anh hay không?

Their observations of children's English learning (attitudes, amount of time for learning English on their own at home). Do they often remind their children to study English?

5. Phụ huynh làm gì để khuyến khích con học tốt hơn?

What do they do to encourage their children to study better?

6. Phụ huynh có kỳ vọng gì từ con không?

Do they have any expectation from their children?

7. Ai là người có sức ảnh hưởng nhiều hơn đối với các con? Ảnh hưởng như thế nào?

Who in the family has more influence on the children? How?

8. Cách giáo dục con của phụ huynh? Phụ huynh có dùng các tấm gương từ anh em họ hàng, bạn bè hoặc hàng xóm của con để khuyến khích con?

Parenting strategies? Do they use their children's cousins, friends, and neighbours as role models to motivate their children?

9. Phụ huynh có phối hợp với nhà trường và giáo viên dạy tiếng Anh không? Phụ huynh có thường liên hệ giáo viên ở trường và giáo viên dạy thêm về những vấn đề liên quan tới việc học tiếng Anh của con không?

Do they cooperate with the children's school and English teacher? How often do they contact the school teacher/private teacher for issues related to their children's language learning?

10. Phụ huynh cảm thấy thế nào khi con họ học giỏi?

How do they feel when their children study well?

11. Kế hoạch của phụ huynh cho việc học của con trong tương lai

Their plans for their children's future study

12. Phụ huynh có chia sẻ hay hỏi thêm gì không?

Any further sharing or questions?

Appendix E: Pilot questionnaire on best research practices in Vietnam

This questionnaire is part of my PhD study in Applied Linguistics at Massey University, New Zealand. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Please respond to them in as much detail as you can.

1. How much time did you spend doing research in Vietnam?

.....
.....
.....

2. What was your research discipline?

.....
.....
.....

3. What was your first impression of working with Vietnamese people?

.....
.....
.....

4. What were some of your initial difficulties doing research in Vietnam?

.....
.....
.....

5. How could you resolve the difficulties?

.....
.....
.....

6. What were the attitudes of research participants and local authorities toward researchers such as yourself?

.....

.....

.....

7. Was it important to establish a good relationship with those who were directly related to your research? Why?

.....

.....

.....

8. What are the best ways to set up a good relationship with the research participants?

.....

.....

.....

9. What is your view of material rewards to research participants? Did you use them while doing research in Vietnam? Why/Why not?

.....

.....

.....

10. What would you suggest to novice researchers to Vietnam?

.....

.....

.....

Could you please send your feedback to me at huycuong2006@gmail.com? Your further comments are most welcome. Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix F: Massey University Human Ethics Committee Documentation



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

19 April 2012

Huy Pham
[Redacted]
PALMERSTON NORTH 4410

Dear Huy

Re: Innovation in English Language Teaching to Learners in Rural Areas in Vietnam

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 16 April 2012.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc Dr Arianna Berardi-Wiltshire
School of Linguistics and International
Languages
PN231

Prof Cynthia White, HoS
School of Linguistics and International
Languages
PN231

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

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E humanethics@massey.ac.nz animalethics@massey.ac.nz gtc@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix G: Information sheet



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher and contact detail

Pham Huy Cuong

Brief profile: *Pham Huy Cuong has been a full-time English lecturer at University of Economics and Law, Ho Chi Minh City National University since 2008. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at the School of Humanities, Massey University, New Zealand.*

Correspondence:

School of Humanities

Massey University, Private Bag 11222

Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand

Office phone: +64 6 356 9099 ext. 80856 (New Zealand) or +643869476 (Vietnam)

Email: h.c.pham@massey.ac.nz

Supervisor and contact detail

Professor Cynthia J White

Brief profile: *Professor Cynthia White is a professor of Applied Linguistics at the School of Humanities, Massey University, New Zealand.*

Correspondence:

School of Humanities

Massey University, Private Bag 11222

Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand

Office phone: +64 6 356 9099 ext. 81141

Email: c.j.white@massey.ac.nz

Appendix G: Information sheet (cont.)

Research aims

The present study aims to

- obtain insights into the motivational trajectories of high school students learning in rural areas of South Vietnam.
- highlight the salience of significant others such as teachers, family, peers, near peers, and the community in the motivation research agenda.

Participant recruitment and project procedures

All Year Ten students in the school will be invited to voluntarily take part in the research project as the primary research participants. The number of participants is expected to be (but not limited to) 15 students. This study does not interfere with the participants' current learning activities in class and their academic outcomes; thus, there is no potential bias against those who wish to or not to participate. The data collection process will be divided into two phases with activities as follows:

Phase 1 (on-site) for approximately six months from March to August 2013:

- The researcher and participants will sit for interviews preferably once a month.
- The researcher will occasionally have informal conversations/interactions with the participants during their break time at school or in other settings.
- The researcher will conduct weekly one-one-one private tuition to help each participant with their English learning. If the number of participants exceeds the estimation, group meetings of no more than three students will be made on a weekly basis.
- The participants will also have the opportunity to join some English activities at school.

Phase 2 (off-site and online) for about one year from August 2013 to July 2014:

- The researcher and participants will have informal Skype interviews every two months. The interview time will be arranged at the participants' convenience.
- Participants will also share their stories and feedback on certain issues on the group Facebook page at their convenience.

In addition, the school's teachers will be invited to share their views on the factors that may be significant to their students' motivation to learn English in the form of informal interviews or casual conversations. Participants' parents are also invited for a maximum of two interviews with the researcher over the whole data collection period.

All the data collected will solely serve the purpose of the present study and will be destroyed six months after the project completion. The researcher is committed to preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and their responses. A summary of the project findings will be made available to all participants upon request.

Appendix G: Information sheet (cont.)

Participants' rights and benefits

You are under no obligations to join the project and reserve the rights to

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

At the same time, you will enjoy the following benefits:

- having free private English tuition at your home with free learning materials.
- participating in free English sessions and extracurricular activities at school to improve your communication skills.

Project contacts

If you have any further queries about the research project, please feel free to contact the researcher or his supervisor at the above contact details.

Massey University Human Ethics Committee's Approval Statement

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

School of Humanities

Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 ext. 81902 F 06 350 5662 <http://soh.massey.ac.nz>

Appendix H: Cover letter to the school principal



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

Dear (name of the school's principal),

I am writing to request the permission for conducting my study entitled *An ecological perspective on the motivational trajectories of high school students learning English in rural areas in Vietnam* at your school as part of my programme leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics.

My fieldwork at your school will span approximately six months, from 25th February to 15th August, 2013. I would like to recruit approximately 15 students who are in Year Ten for my research. At the same time, I would like to invite some teachers of English for interviews, to conduct some English sessions during official class time, to liaise with the English club (if there is any), and to have access to the students during their break time. For more details of my data collection procedures, please refer to the attached Information Sheet.

As far as I am concerned, it is essential to underscore that the aim of my study is to reflect the teaching and learning of English at your school the way they are and thus not to place them under scrutiny. I would like to assure that the identity of the school, the teachers and the students who participate in my study will be kept confidential.

If you are interested, a summary of the research findings will be made available. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have further queries about the study.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Truly yours,

Pham Huy Cuong

School of Humanities

Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 ext. 81902 F 06 350 5662 <http://soh.massey.ac.nz>

Appendix I: The school principal's consent form



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet, the cover letter and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I am willing to offer the researcher the opportunity to work with the language staff and the students, and the access to all relevant background information as stated in the Information Sheet and cover letter.

I understand that the name of the school and that of individual teachers and students participating in the project will be kept absolutely confidential. I also understand that the school is free to withdraw from the project at any time.

Signature: Date:

Full name – printed:

Position: School:

.....

School of Humanities

Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 ext. 81902 F 06 350 5662 <http://soh.massey.ac.nz>

Appendix J: Consent forms for students, local teachers, and parents



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree ☐/do not agree ☐ to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish ☐/do not wish ☐ to have my recordings returned to me.

I wish ☐/do not wish ☐ to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. I also understand that I reserve the right to withdraw from the project at any time and decline to answer any question.

Signature: Date:

Full name – printed:

School of Humanities

Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 356 9099 ext. 81902 F 06 350 5662 <http://soh.massey.ac.nz>