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## THÈSE

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dans l'École Doctorale Sciences de l'Homme, du Politique et du  
Territoire (ED SHPT n°454)

**Mise en œuvre d'une pédagogie dialectique  
et constructiviste dans l'enseignement  
primaire du vietnamien**

**Implementation of a dialectical constructivist  
pedagogy in primary Vietnamese language  
education**

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# Implementation of a dialectical constructivist pedagogy in primary Vietnamese language education

## Abstract

In the context of the fundamental and comprehensive current reform of education in Vietnam, the need of determining its basic theories of education as well as the teaching and learning models has significantly grown. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, constructivism-based pedagogies have been carried into Vietnamese education through a model of teaching and learning that had been adapted from Colombia, entitled Vietnamese Escuela Nueva (VNEN). A profound deployment of the constructivism-based pedagogical reform was required with the aim to establish learners' competences rather than merely providing knowledge to them as was done in the traditional education. Whereas the competence-based curriculum aligned with the constructivist pedagogy has become an intensive preparation of the education reform in Vietnam, teachers' beliefs and understandings toward the constructivism-based teaching and learning approach have attracted researchers' attention. This PhD thesis comprises four studies.

*The first study* was targeted to explore the Vietnamese primary-school teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning materials, namely self-study textbooks published by the VNEN project, in order to determine to what extent they think these textbooks support them to implement the constructivist approaches in Vietnamese language instruction, as described in the VNEN policies. We collected data from a survey involving 167 primary school teachers who used the set of textbooks. Comparing with the international literature about concepts and functions of self-study textbooks in instruction, the study recognised that the VNEN textbooks developers had tendency to reformat the traditional textbooks as ready-made materials that are thought to support primary pupils to construct knowledge and skills by themselves. In addition, the results revealed inconsistency in the teachers' beliefs toward the targeted textbooks. On one side, these textbooks were believed as flexible materials supporting pupils' self-study. On the other side, the textbooks were still treated as fostering meticulous and fixed processes of learning activities under both teacher's and pupil's close adherence. Furthermore, the mismatches between the VNEN textbooks and their original version from Colombia in terms of essence and functions were also explored, the former were regarded as not suitable to pupils coming from

disadvantaged regions, which are characterised by low-knowledgeable pupils, poor resources and lack of the parents' support, whereas the original model (*Escuela Nueva*) was 'rooted' from these disadvantaged regions. Finally, through the open-answer survey, the strengths and shortcomings in terms of content and physical quality of the self-study textbooks, from the points of view of the teachers, were collected and used as bases for improving their quality.

*The second study* is an investigation of Vietnamese primary teachers' beliefs on dialectical constructivist pedagogy. This pedagogy was approved by Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in the pedagogical reform since 2012. For teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools, the dialectical constructivist approach envisions learning as a process of self-constructed, social interaction, experienced-based, that needs to be immersed in a scaffolding and equitable environment. We collected data from a survey questionnaire of 279 teachers and from observations of 18 class sessions conducted by teachers who answered the survey; and post-observation interviews with 9 teachers whose classes had been observed. We synthesised the international literature on the theory of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy together with the policies of the *Escuela Nueva* (EN) model from Colombia. All the original elements of EN were faithfully reproduced by VNEN model in Vietnam including 1) 3-in-1 self-instructional textbooks; 2) comprehensive, continuous assessment through daily written comments; 3) student management with regular elections; 4) new classroom arrangement and fixtures with round tables, learning corners, and maps on the wall; and 5) active integration of parents and the local community into the child's educational process. However, some mismatches between the guidance and its deployment were found out through our survey. There has been a tendency towards a simplified interpretation and modelled application, even far difference between the original pedagogical intentions of the dialectical constructivist approaches to VNEN policies indicated in the official documents. In addition, an inconsistency was found between what the teachers thought about the VNEN pedagogy and what they actually implemented in their classroom. Specifically, the participants appeared to respect the constructivist pedagogies and had sensible knowledge of these approaches in teaching Vietnamese language; however, they implemented these approaches in a different way. The follow-up interviews about the classroom observations provided the reasons and understandings that are responsible for the mismatch between their expressed beliefs and their implementation of VNEN pedagogies.

*In a third study*, we continued to make a step forward in designing a constructivism-aligned instructional model in order to accommodate the dialectical constructivist features into the Vietnamese language instruction. Based on the dialectical constructivism alignment model, we focused on describing the design of a formal model for Vietnamese language instruction in which core features of dialectical constructivist pedagogies are synthesised with essential aspects of Vietnamese education and culture. The designed model was deployed in six lessons in Reading and used in the following experimental study.

*In a fourth study*, the feasibility of the implementation of a constructivist-aligned instructional model in teaching primary Vietnamese language was validated and evaluated through an experimental study. Through the spiral approach of Learning-through-action method applied in the experimental period, the participants' teaching practices showed meaningful changes from a traditional way of teaching to a more dialectical constructivist way of teaching in terms of 1) the method to setting learning aims; 2) the ways pupils acquire new knowledge; 3) social interaction in classroom; 4) prior knowledge and experience exploitation; 5) the ways teachers support pupils' learning; 6) learning environment of classroom and 7) methods of assessment. In addition, the experiment had an impact on the pupils' reading competences and their high-level thinking strategies. The teachers expressed their perception toward the dialectical constructivist-aligned lessons, regarding the development of their pupils' language and thinking competences and teachers' professional development. At the same time, the teachers also proposed concrete adjustments on the designed model that can be applied to complete the teaching model and make it a better guideline. The teacher participants perceived the challenges for enacting the newly designed curriculum of first-language instruction at primary education in Vietnamese culture and education, including the challenges in changing their mind and habits of teaching regarding lessons of Vietnamese language instruction, and challenges coming from the institutions. Finally, the pupil participants also showed their positive attitudes toward the designed lessons. This experimental study brought opportunities to improve the constructivist-aligned model and enhance the quality of teaching Vietnamese language at primary education in order to meet the new requirements of the current pedagogical reform in Vietnam.



# Mise en œuvre d'une pédagogie dialectique et constructiviste dans l'enseignement primaire du vietnamien

## Résumé

Dans le contexte de la fondamentale et profonde réforme éducative actuelle au Vietnam, s'est ressenti le besoin de déterminer sur quelles théories de l'éducation elle se fonde, ainsi que ses modèles d'enseignement et d'apprentissage. Au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, des méthodes pédagogiques constructivistes ont été mises en œuvre dans le système éducatif vietnamien, adaptées de Colombie et nommées *Vietnamese Escuela Nueva* (VNEN, "école vietnamienne nouvelle"). Un déploiement étendu de la réforme pédagogique constructiviste était nécessaire, en se centrant sur les compétences des apprenants plutôt que simplement leur présenter des connaissances, comme dans l'éducation traditionnelle. Alors que la construction du curriculum fondé sur les compétences et aligné sur la pédagogie constructiviste est devenu l'objet d'un travail intense au sein de la réforme de l'éducation au Vietnam, les croyances et la compréhension des enseignants à propos de l'enseignement-apprentissage constructiviste ont attiré l'attention des chercheurs. Ce travail de thèse comprend quatre études.

*La première étude* a visé à explorer les croyances des enseignants du premier degré vietnamiens à propos du matériel d'enseignement-apprentissage, c'est-à-dire les manuels d'auto-apprentissage publiés par le projet VNEN, afin de déterminer dans quelle mesure ils pensent que ces manuels les aident à mettre en œuvre une approche constructiviste dans l'enseignement du vietnamien, comme décrite dans les programmes du VNEN. Nous avons collecté, *via* une enquête par questionnaire, des données à propos de 167 enseignants de primaire ayant utilisé l'ensemble de ces manuels. Cette étude a montré, en comparant ses résultats avec la littérature internationale sur les concepts et fonctions des manuels favorisant l'apprentissage par soi-même, que les concepteurs des manuels VNEN avaient une tendance à reformater les manuels traditionnels sous la forme de matériel prêt à l'emploi, pensé pour aider les élèves du primaire à construire leurs connaissances et compétences par eux-mêmes. De plus, nos résultats ont montré des incohérences dans les croyances des enseignants à propos des manuels. D'une part, ils pensent que ce sont des outils flexibles favorisant l'apprentissage par soi-même. D'autre part, les manuels sont considérés comme favorisant les processus prédéterminés et rigoureux des activités

d'apprentissage, sous l'observance précise de l'enseignant et des élèves. De plus, nous avons également exploré les différences entre les manuels VNEN et leur version originale de Colombie, en termes de composition et fonctions, et les premiers ne conviennent pas aux élèves des régions désavantagées, caractérisées par des élèves ayant un bas niveau scolaire, de faibles ressources, non aidés par leurs parents, alors que le modèle original (*Escuela Nueva*) avait pour cible les régions désavantagées. Enfin, *via* les réponses des enseignants aux questions ouvertes, nous avons collecté et analysé les avantages et inconvénients des manuels en termes de contenu et qualité matérielle, à des fins d'amélioration de leur qualité.

*La deuxième étude* est une enquête sur les croyances des enseignants vietnamien du primaire à propos de la pédagogie constructiviste dialectique. Cette pédagogie a été approuvée par le Ministère vietnamien de l'éducation et de la formation (MoET) dans sa réforme de 2012. Cette approche considère que l'apprentissage, dans notre cas, du vietnamien en primaire, est un processus auto-construit, d'interaction sociale, fondé sur l'expérience et qui doit être mené dans un environnement étayant et équitable. Nous avons recueilli des données, par questionnaire, à propos de 279 enseignants, observé 18 classes conduites par des enseignants ayant répondu au questionnaire, et mené des entretiens avec 9 d'entre eux. Nous avons réalisé une synthèse de la littérature internationale sur la théorie de la pédagogie constructiviste dialectique, ainsi que sur le modèle *Escuela Nueva* de Colombie, et montré que toutes les caractéristiques originelles du modèle étaient fidèlement reproduites dans le modèle vietnamien VNEN, dont les suivantes : 1) manuels d'apprentissage par soi-même trois-en-un ; 2) évaluation globale et continue par des commentaires écrits quotidiens ; 3) élections régulières pour favoriser la gestion des élèves ; 4) nouvelle disposition et installation des classes avec des tables rondes, des coins, et des cartes murales ; et 5) l'implication active des parents et des communautés locales dans le processus d'apprentissage des élèves. Toutefois, nous avons mis au jour quelques écarts entre le guidage et le déploiement de la méthode. Il y a une certaine tendance à une interprétation simplifiée et une application modélisante, et une différence importante entre les intentions pédagogiques originelles de l'approche et la politique VNEN officielle. De plus, nous avons mis au jour une incohérence entre les représentations des enseignants à propos de la pédagogie VNEN et ce qu'ils ont réellement mis en œuvre dans leur classe. Plus précisément, les participants ont fait preuve de respect à propos des pédagogies



constructivistes et ont témoigné d'une connaissance précise de ces approches dans l'enseignement du vietnamien ; toutefois, ils ont mis en œuvre ces approches différemment. Les entretiens post-leçons nous ont éclairée sur les raisons et leur compréhension des approches qui étaient la cause du décalage entre leurs croyances et leur mise en œuvre du modèle VNEN.

*Dans une troisième étude*, nous avons poursuivi en concevant un modèle d'enseignement fondé sur le constructivisme afin de mieux faire correspondre les caractéristiques de la pédagogie constructiviste dialectique à l'enseignement du vietnamien. Inspirée du modèle de l'alignement constructiviste, nous avons décrit la conception d'un modèle formel d'enseignement du vietnamien dans lequel les éléments principaux des pédagogies constructivistes dialectiques sont synthétisés avec les aspects essentiels de l'éducation et la culture vietnamiennes. Le modèle que nous avons conçu a été déployé en 6 leçons de lecture et utilisé dans l'étude expérimentale suivante.

*Dans une quatrième étude*, la faisabilité de la mise en œuvre d'un modèle d'enseignement-apprentissage constructiviste pour l'enseignement primaire du vietnamien a été validée et évaluée *via* une étude expérimentale. Au travers de l'approche spiralaire de l'apprentissage-par-l'action appliquée dans la phase expérimentale, les pratiques des participants ont montré des changements significatifs, passant d'une manière traditionnelle à une manière plus constructiviste dialectique d'enseigner, selon 1) une méthode de se fixer des buts d'apprentissage ; 2) les façons d'acquérir de nouvelles connaissances pour les élèves ; 3) les interactions sociales en classe ; 4) les connaissances initiales et la prise en compte de l'expérience ; 5) le guidage de l'apprentissage des élèves par les enseignants ; 6) l'environnement de la classe ; 7) les méthodes d'évaluation. De plus, l'expérimentation a eu un impact sur les compétences en lecture des élèves et leurs stratégies cognitives de haut niveau. Les enseignants ont exprimé leurs perceptions des leçons fondées sur le constructivisme dialectique en lien avec le développement des compétences langagières de leurs élèves et leur propre développement professionnel. Ils ont également proposé des ajustements concrets au modèle, permettant de le compléter et de l'améliorer. Les enseignants participant à l'étude ont compris les défis de la mise en œuvre d'un tel curriculum refondu pour l'enseignement primaire du vietnamien, au sein de l'éducation et de la culture vietnamienne, ainsi que les défis en lien avec les institutions. Pour finir, les participants élèves ont également fait preuve d'attitudes positives envers les leçons du

nouveau modèle. Cette étude expérimentale amène des opportunités pour améliorer le modèle fondé sur le constructivisme ainsi que la qualité de l'enseignement du vietnamien à l'école primaire afin de faire face aux nouvelles exigences de la réforme pédagogique actuelle du Vietnam.

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## List of Abbreviations

CA:	Constructivist alignment
CBC:	Competence-based curriculum
CLA:	Casual layered analysis
DBR:	Design-based research
ILOs:	Intended learning outcomes
MoET:	Ministry of Education and Training
VNEN:	Vietnam Escuela Nueva
OBTL:	Outcome-based teaching and learning
TLAs:	Teaching and learning activities
ATs:	Assessment activities



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the research**

In the field of language education, first language instruction not only takes the role to help learners explore a science of language, but also equips them with a language instrument for mastering other subjects, supporting future careers and the getting lifelong learning skill. Especially, regarding elementary school pupils, language-use competences become more crucial because they establish an initial background for their continuous learning at higher levels. Any practice, therefore, that ties pupils to memorise and passively accept merely knowledge transmission is said to be an insufficient method. Prescribed content-based curriculum with teacher-centred approach and direct instruction method are not able to create opportunities to satisfy their social interactive needs in order to self-construct their competences in the target language. In the current context of teaching and learning Vietnamese language as a first language, learning is focused on passive knowledge-transmission from teachers and textbooks to pupils in order to help them master contents in preparation for the next classes and the following school levels. According to this perspective, memorisation plays a crucial role in leading to the success in learning a language (Hoang, 2011; Pham T.H.T., 2011). With rote memorisation, pupils can just at best acquire short-term knowledge for exams and strengthen their memory capacity. However, learning is more than preparing for exams. What is first language education all about if it is not preparing pupils for language competences for lifelong learning? In other words, language learners having self-studying capacity are better than pure memorisers or imitators. Therefore, first language instruction needs to develop learners' language competences through establishing self-constructing capacities in a social interactive environment.

Within the time period this thesis has been conducted, the Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Education and Training campaign in Vietnam has hectically been prepared in order to respond to the requirements of the labour market of the global knowledge economy. The reform has been aimed at making a shift from a prescribed content-based curriculum to a competence-based education curriculum, targeted to elevate learners' knowledge, train human resource, foster talent, and produce workers with cultural and scientific knowledge, professional skills, creativity and discipline at work. This paradigm shift has been done hand in hand with the advocacy of constructivist pedagogies which are

mainly competence-based and learner-centred approach. For many decades, educators have emphasised the importance of constructivist pedagogies and educational practices in pupils' and young pupils' (McCombs and Miller, 2007; Waite-Stupiansky, 1997). Constructivism is a learning theory that encourages teachers to recognise that learning is constructed out of individual, exploratory actions within the society (Wadsworth, 1996). It suggests that learning is connected to learners' prior experiences, interactions, and expansion of knowledge (Tracey and Morrow, 2012; Wright M., 2008). In language education, the kind of constructivist-based curriculum motivates the learners not only to develop language-use competences but also to cultivate the capacities of self-studying, critical thinking (Totten et al., 1991) and communication and cooperation (Confrey, 1985). In Vietnam, the Government has officially promulgated the National Curriculum of Basic Education (from Grade 1 to Grade 12) that is based on the expected outcome-competences defined for young learners (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training-MoET, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018) in order to replace the former curriculum that is grounded from rigidly prescribed contents.

At the beginning of this century, in order for the country to seek better international integration into an increasingly globalised world, the Vietnamese Government has launched educational innovations requiring school teachers to adopt 'Western' pedagogies, the so-called: "reform in 2000". As being stated in the Vietnamese Government's document entitled *Strategies for Educational Development 2001-2010* (Vietnam-MoET, 2001b), this reform is aimed at making a shift from a passive, teacher-centred approach to an active, learner-centred style of teaching to promote children's development, autonomy and creative thinking. Its emphasis is on the development of first-language competences through encouraging self-studying, studying by doing, collaboration and comprehension rather than learning by memorising and cramming, which has been the commonly accepted language classroom practice in Vietnam (Do, 1997; Hoang, 2011; Nguyen T., 2003; Vietnam-MoET, 2001a, 2001b, 2006). The noticeable concern of this reform has been that the centralisation of educational policies authorises not only nationally-mandated curriculum, as do many countries in the world, but also nationally-mandated textbooks. The national textbooks have been treated as the most significant agent of the pedagogical reform rather than school teachers' professional capacities, as well as their correspondent long-held beliefs. There has been mounting evidence to infer the apparent failure of this reform that has emerged from

a nationwide debate on the textbook quality and its centralisation policy. Nearly ten years since the launch of the pedagogical reform, the pupils' learning has still been considered to be passive (Le M.H., 2018a; Nguyen T.B., 2010).

Ten years later, with the purpose of overcoming the shortcomings of the former pedagogical reform, a new primary schooling model adapted from Colombia and covering from grade 2 to grade 5, entitled Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN), has been introduced in Vietnam under the support of the World Bank (2010–2017). The VNEN is meant to introduce a paradigm shift of the roles of pupils and teachers in the classroom. The official documents and manuals of the project reference the constructivist approach as one of the scientific theories that legitimise this particular schooling model (Dang T.A., 2015, 2016, 2017). On the surface, the implementation of VNEN appears to be a close reproduction of the original model. However, some aspects of VNEN in practice in fact directly contradict the principles and philosophies of the original model (Le M.H., 2018b; Nguyen N.A., 2015). Rather than encouraging more teacher autonomy, child-centred pedagogies, and local adaptation, the implementation of VNEN has reproduced the rigidity, conformity and textbook centralisation that have been constraints toward the pedagogical reform in Vietnam conducted since 2000.

According to Pham T.H.T. (2011), the main reason of the failure in pedagogical reforms at Vietnam in specific and at Asian education in general is that reformers often 'import' Western-developed practices to local classrooms without careful examination of their appropriateness within the socio-cultural context of these locals. Correspondently, these approaches face a high risk of failure because the fundamental assumptions of the reforms are based on Western notions of progress and efficiency which more and less conflict with traditional Vietnamese perceptions and culture values (Nguyen X.T., 2013). To ensure the success of pedagogical reforms in Vietnam, there has been a suggestion that the Vietnamese Government cannot merely borrow the original version of innovation and impose it on teachers' and pupils' practices, or purely make a process of quantitative expansion and "plug" new education into new contexts (Le M.H., 2018a; Nguyen N.A., 2015). Rather, the principles of Western pedagogical theories need to be modified to become culturally appropriate in the Vietnam context (Hoang, 2011; Le M.H., 2018a; Pham T.H.T., 2011). Accordingly, the education reformers do not purely aim at investing in the "teaching and

learning materials” quality to transfer them to local teachers’ practices; it is more essential to take into account a collection of discrete moments of everyday reproduction of the innovative pedagogies in classroom local contexts that are indispensably influenced by the teachers’ long-held beliefs about education (Le M.H., 2018a, b; Mantilla, 1999).

The main aims of this research is not to debate the rights and wrongs of the education reforms but to contribute to studies and discussions about the implementation of pedagogical reforms in Vietnam through considering the introduction of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy to Vietnamese language instruction at primary education in Vietnam context. *First*, we begin with reviewing the socio-political and economic context, especially the features of Vietnamese culture and education that has certainly and directly influences on the orientation and success of the pedagogical reforms (Chapter I.1). At the same time, the main points of the two latest pedagogical reforms, as well as the leading orientations of the forthcoming reform in Vietnam, will be analysed and discussed (Chapter I.2). *Next*, we synthesise and analyse the core features of the dialectical constructivist approaches under the Western education perspectives and those through the mirror of the educational reformers in Vietnam, with the aim at finding out the matches and mismatches between two points of view as well as initially determining the causes leading to these statements (Chapter I.3). *In addition*, the theories of the dialectical relation between teachers’ beliefs and their teaching practices are seriously considered to develop proper explanations for the convergence or divergence between what teachers think and what they practice in teaching (Chapter I.4). *Finally*, a reasoning basis for designing a dialectical constructivism-aligned instructional model in the cultural and educational context of Vietnam is founded to prepare the ground for the experimental research (Chapter I.5).

In the empirical part, with keeping in mind the importance of contextual factors, we will carry out a survey study to explore local school teachers’ beliefs toward the policies described by VNEN, including the set of self-study textbooks, the self-governed committee of pupils, and closer partnership between the school and the local community (Chapter II.1). Especially, our next study will be aimed at unfolding the teachers’ beliefs regarding the constructivist pedagogies in Vietnamese language instruction mandated by the VNEN model (Chapter II.2). Based on the results of the first two studies, we will make a step forward with an experimental study in which the designed instructional model would be

operationalised in the teaching and learning context of primary schools in Vietnam. The goal of this study is to fill the gaps in researches on the application of a constructivist approach into Vietnamese language education through an instructional model appropriately designed with local-context characteristics and with a focus on the interaction between Vietnamese teachers and the newly designed model. The whole thesis is an active response to the call for adopting and refining educational theories developed elsewhere (in Western countries) to an Asian context in general and in Vietnamese context more specifically. The results of our studies will contribute to the theory and practice of the constructivism-aligned model to mother language education, as well as to teacher professional development.

### **The study goals**

To examine these aforementioned issues, four research questions are identified:

1. What are the teachers' beliefs toward whether the self-study textbooks support their teaching practices to implement the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools, as described by the Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN)-model policies?
2. What are the teachers' beliefs and understandings regarding the dialectical constructivist pedagogies mandated in Vietnamese language education under the VNEN model?
3. What changes are there in the teaching and learning process in classroom practices through the enactment of the designed instructional model in Vietnamese cultural context?
4. How are the effects of the constructivist-aligned model on primary school pupils' performance in reading comprehension and cognitive strategy acquisition?

### **The Thesis Structure**

This *Introduction* section has provided the background information concerning pedagogical reforms in Vietnamese language education at primary schools and emphasised the gap in research about adopting/adapting innovative pedagogies into local contexts. The research questions directing the study goals were presented.

*Part 1* reviews theoretical aspects in five chapters. *Chapter I.1, Vietnam Context of Culture and Education*, introduces the reader to basic information of historical, economic and social



context of Vietnam that have indirect and direct influence on pedagogical approaches of teaching Vietnamese language. Particularly, the features of Vietnamese culture described as a combination between the indigenous culture and Confucianism theory have been made up Vietnamese teacher's and pupil's long-held beliefs that contribute to determine how teaching and learning happens in Vietnamese language teaching classes.

Next, *Chapter I.2, Primary Vietnamese Language Instruction through Pedagogical Reforms*, reviews the contextual characteristics of Vietnamese education in general, Vietnamese language education specifically, and the approaches of curriculum and textbooks in Vietnam. Especially, a critical analysis and synthesis of the two latest pedagogical reforms in 2000 and 2010 are described and shed some light on the forthcoming pedagogical reform.

*Chapter I.3, The dialectical constructivist pedagogies in primary Vietnamese language instruction*, synthesises the core features of the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching and learning language from the international literature. Through a critical consideration of the VNEN policies, we explore how the VNEN policymakers interpreted the constructivist approach as well as the policies of EN from Colombia. This interpretation includes the conceptualisation of these approaches in the international literature. At the same time, a review of teachers' responses to pedagogical reforms in general and constructivist approaches in particular under the VNEN policies is carried out. These reviews are used as the bases for examining the data we collect from the participants.

In *Chapter I.4, Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices*, we review the theories of teachers' beliefs towards constructivist approaches in relationship with their practices. The methods to survey the beliefs and practices are also defined. We use these reviews as a basis for building a methodology to exploring teachers' beliefs toward the constructivist pedagogy and their practices under the VNEN policies.

*Chapter I.5, A design-based instructional model aligned to constructivism*, shows how theories of a constructivist-aligned model are applied to design an instructional model of Vietnamese language at primary schools, which features dialectical constructivist approaches to learning compatible with essential aspects of Vietnamese culture.

*Part II* focuses on our survey-based studies, comprising two chapters. *Chapter II.1, Teachers' beliefs toward VNEN textbooks in implementing dialectical constructivism in Vietnamese language*

*education*, explores to what extent teacher participants thought that the VNEN textbooks support them to implement the dialectical constructivist pedagogy. The strengths and weaknesses of the set of textbooks are also synthesised from the teachers' responses. Based on these survey results, we suggest the characteristics of learning materials that facilitate the enactment of dialectical constructivist approach in teaching in general, and specifically in Vietnamese language education.

*Chapter II.2, Implementation of constructivist pedagogy in Vietnamese language education: from teachers' beliefs to practice*, focuses on mixed method research to explore the teachers' beliefs toward the dialectical constructivist approach and their implementation of this pedagogy in Vietnamese language education at primary school. In this chapter, first, we report quantitative results from the teachers' responses and uncover what the teachers believe about the dialectical constructivist pedagogy under the VNEN policies. Next, we present qualitative results from classroom observations to recognise to what extent the teachers employ the constructivist pedagogy in their teaching practices through Reading lessons. We try to find out matches and mismatches between the pedagogy they express in the questionnaire responses and the pedagogy they deploy in practice. Finally, the qualitative results from in-depth interviews identify what the teacher's thinking reflects in their teaching practice.

In a *third part*, we explore how to build a dialectical constructivist model and to measure its effects in real-world settings. *Chapter III.1, A dialectical constructivist instructional model in primary Vietnamese language education* shows the example units that will be used in our experimental settings. *Chapter III.2, Effects of the dialectical constructivist instructional model on the practices of primary teachers in Vietnamese language education*, presents the process and results of an experiment on the deployment of the dialectical constructivist instructional model in a specific context of Vietnamese culture. The results are focused on the changes in the teaching process. *Chapter III.3, Effects of the dialectical constructivist instructional model on pupils' performance* describes the effects of the experiment detailed in the previous chapter on pupils' performance in reading comprehension and cognitive strategy acquisition; the participating pupils' perception toward the constructivist-aligned model; and the challenges recognised when the designed model is enacted.

*Part IV* is an overall *Conclusion and Discussion*. In this latest part, we revisit the major findings of our four studies and discuss their methodological limitations. We suggest further studies that may be conducted to contribute to better an understanding of the aforementioned research issues. Finally, we emphasise on recommendations for improving the pedagogical reform in the field of Vietnamese language education at primary schools in Vietnam.

## **Part I. Theoretical Aspects**



## **Chapter I.1. Vietnam Context and Theory: Culture and Education**

Vietnam has achieved remarkable progress through nearly the first 20 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in term of improving access to basic education, at primary education level. However, the quality of education in the country comes down to educators, policy-makers and the society as a whole. Pedagogy is considered a crucial factor in determining the quality of education (Alexander, 2008), and in Vietnam, many educators who have conducted research on the successes and shortcomings of the currently-used pedagogical approaches proposed that priority should be given to improving pedagogical practices (Nguyen N.A., 2015). In a same line, the Government of Vietnam considers the reform of pedagogy important for the improvement of the quality of Basic Education (Vietnam-National-Assembly, 2000). This chapter examines current pedagogical approaches of Vietnamese language instruction at primary education in Vietnam.

In this chapter, the first section provides a brief overview of Vietnamese context, including demographic information and significant socio-historical and economic characteristics of Vietnam and their deep influences on the process of Vietnamese language education. The second section draws a picture of Vietnamese cultures that directly impact on every discrete moment of everyday application of the pedagogical approaches in classrooms. Two next

sections describe the core features of Vietnamese education in general, and specifically Vietnamese language instruction, throughout the stream of the national history. The last section introduces two latest pedagogical reforms conducted in Vietnam since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century and discusses their successes as well as their shortcomings. The orientations of the forthcoming pedagogical reforms will also be mentioned and discussed in the last section.

### **I.1.1. Demographic information, Socio-Historical and Economic Context of Vietnam**

#### **I.1.1.1. Geographical and Demographic Information**

Vietnam is a tropical, S-shaped country in Southeast Asia, bordered on the north by China, in the west by Laos and Cambodia, on the east by the Pacific Ocean. Vietnam covers an area of 332,8000 square kilometres, and is divided into three parts: The North with the country's capital Hanoi, the Central Area, and the South with Ho Chi Minh city and the whole area of the Mekong Delta, where mainly produces rice for the country and for exportation (Ashwill and Thai, 2005).

Vietnam has a population of approximately 90.5 million people (Viet Nam Population, 2016) and has 54 ethnic groups, of which the Viet people (Nguyen Q.K. and Nguyen, 2008) is the largest, comprising nearly 90% of the whole population. The official language is Vietnamese.

#### **I.1.1.2. Historical, Economic and Social Context of Vietnam: Milestones**

Vietnam has a long history together with the rise and fall of the nation. In this section, only significant events are depicted to define their influences on Vietnamese society, economy, culture and national education.

The invasion of Chinese began from 111 BC and lasted to AD 938 when Vietnamese succeeded on the battle of the Bach Dang rivers, finishing more than 1,000 years under the Chinese domination. During the period of time from AD 938 to before 1858, Vietnam people witnessed the establishment, prosperity and decadence of many feudal dynasties together with the magnanimous history of struggles against the re-invasion of the Chinese Feudal and the campaign of building the country. In 1858, Vietnam was colonised by the France and remained for nearly 100 years later. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the people of Vietnam experiencing two historical wars, the wars liberation from French colonialism (1946–1954)

Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education and American imperialism (1954–1975). These wars caused huge destruction in the country including the loss of approximately 3.4 million Vietnamese lives (Pham L.H. and Fry, 2004) and the literacy rate decreased around 18 percent in 1979 (Index Mundi, 2014). In 1975, the country has reunified under a communist government.

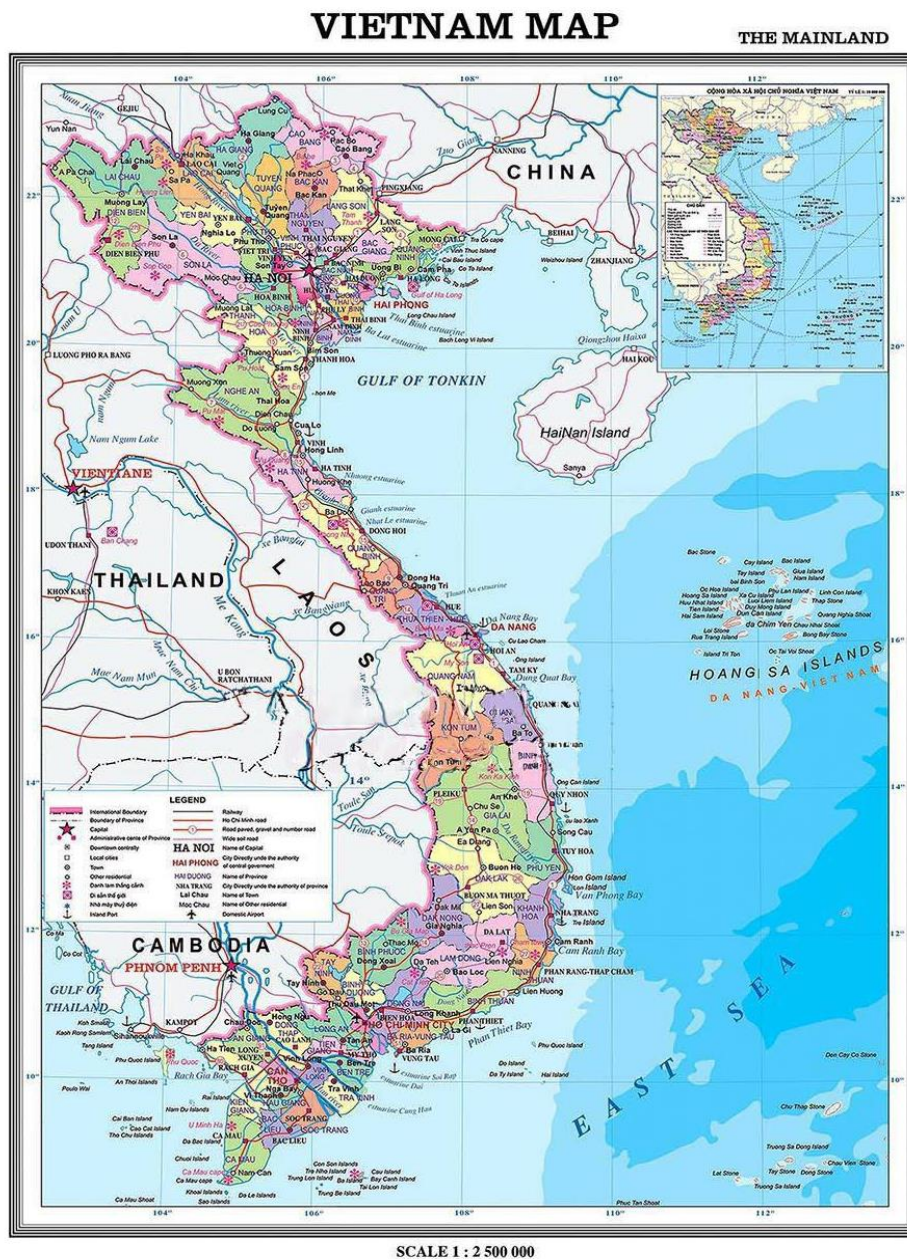


Figure I.1. The map of Vietnam country

After the country unification in 1975, Vietnam spent difficult periods of protecting the country border from incursions of neighbour countries. At the same time, the isolation through trade embargo by the United States was believed to place Vietnam in challenging circumstances: one of the world's five poorest countries with its doors tightly closed to the



outside world (Glewwe, 2004). Such difficult situations pushed Vietnam to conduct a number of reforms in the economic sectors (Pham T.H.T., 2011).

In 1986, Vietnam began implementing Reformation Movement [*Doi moi*], which has transformed the nation's economic institutions and external relations. As a result, Vietnam led to more than three decades of rapid economic growth, very significant declines in poverty and was recently ranked among the "lower middle income" countries.

### **I.1.2. Culture values of Vietnamese people**

Under the Confucian heritage culture settings deeply influenced by Confucianism, this section offers a brief view of the popular cultural attitudes to teaching and learning which both underpin and express existing understandings of teachers' work and status in Vietnamese society as well as the relationship between teacher and learners. Cultural features, obviously, influence teachers' beliefs toward their work, toward relationships between teacher and pupils, and classroom mechanism and environment, so they directly impact on the educational quality (Le M.H., 2018a; Nguyen P.M. et al., 2006; Pham T.H.T., 2011). Based on this assumption, the teachers will undertake particularly relevant actions, behaviours as well as professional decisions that are likely to influence the aims of education and teaching they wish to obtain and characteristics of classroom quality they wish to favor.

The Vietnamese indigenous culture was influenced by the country's geographic features and Vietnamese people's living conditions. During more than thousand years of Chinese domination, this culture adopted and adapted the cultural values of Confucianism and Taoism and Buddhism (Ngo T.H., 2015; Nguyen T.H., 2002; Tran N.T., 2008). Vietnamese indigenous culture has also been influenced by Western cultural values through the period of French domination and American invasion as well as the globalisation (Pham L.H. and Fry, 2004). The following section explores elements of Vietnamese values at two sides of one point leading both positive and negative impact on the learning process and the relationship between teachers and pupils.

#### **I.1.2.1. Respect for Knowledge and Teachers**

Influenced by Confucian teachings, Vietnamese people show respect for knowledge and thus, respect for who provide the knowledge, teachers (Nguyen P.M. et al., 2006). The

knowledge is considered to be more valuable than wealthy materials because it is believed that with knowledge, people can create everything (Tran Q.V., 2006). Books comprising knowledge are respected as “books of sages and saints”. Teachers are considered the prevailing image of a moral guide to students and a source of unlimited wisdoms. The important role of the teacher is strongly emphasised in a number of Vietnamese proverbs and folklore such as “Without a teacher, you will surely not be successful” [*Khong thay do mat lam nen*]; “Teaching one word can make a teacher, even half of word can still make a teacher” [*Nhat tu vi su, ban tu vi su*]; or “If you want your child to be knowledgeable, you have to respect the teacher in the first place” [*Muon con hay chu phai yeu kinh thay*].

On one side, it is such a belief that encourages positive affect on the education, teachers and pupils and their relationships. The respect toward knowledge and teachers is seen to foster people to learn by any mean, stimulate the students’ motivation and passion in their learning. This point in Vietnamese culture is in the same line with “visible learning” theories researched by Hattie (2009).

Accordingly, Hattie (2009) wrote that “the key components of passion for the teacher and for the learner appear to be the sheer thrill of being a learner or teacher, the absorption that accompanies the process of teaching and learning, the sensations in being involved in the activity of teaching and learning, and the willingness to be involved in deliberate practice to attain understanding” and asserted that “it is among the most prized outcomes of schooling” (p. 23).

As such, it can be inferred that respect for the knowledge as well as teacher is a positive factor that promotes learning. However, some negative sides are also recognised. The knowledge respect according to Confucianism emphasise on theoretical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge in ancient classic books is traditionally appreciated and considered universally correct. Along with these, the method of quoting and citing of classics and examples [*tam chuong trich cu*] has been largely applied in social communications and also in teaching and learning (Chan, 1999; Ngo, 2015), which has *stimulated ‘rote’ learning* [*boc ve*].

Besides, the respect of the teacher and knowledge leads to that the teacher and materials of study are accepted as the authority without questioning or critically considering it, because it is believed that this authority always gives the ‘correct’ answers. As a result, like other Asian students, Vietnamese ones are deemed to be passive to receive knowledge and,

consequently, have had little experience in studying independently, making public criticisms and critical thinking (Go and Mok, 1995), becoming *surface learners rather than deep learners* (Robertson et al., 2000; Ryan and Louie, 2007).

Furthermore, the unreasonable respect of the teacher leads to *the hierarchical order in society and classroom*. Confucianism emphasises a hierarchical order with its core objective of building a stable and well-ordered society [*chinh danh*] (Berthrong and Berthrong, 2000). Hierarchical relationships are manifested by respect for age (An old fox not easily snared) [*Song lau len lao lang*], position and family background. Accordingly, hierarchical relationships in society are defined through two subjects, superior and inferior; the relationship between teacher and student in classroom environment is affected by this order. As a result, students *established a 'fear' and 'over-reliance' to the teacher*. The feeling of 'fear' prevents students from making mistakes and, thus, stop them from trying out new experience whereas 'trial and error' and experience are the prerequisite components for learning to occur (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Likewise, the 'fear' toward the teacher also hinders the development of social skills, ability to discuss and negotiate ideas, to learn in peer, etc., which are component of social constructivist learning model (Vygotsky, 1978). At the same time, 'over-reliance' on the teacher hinders students from learning by their own pace. Instead, they depend on the teacher and/or textbooks' instruction as well as group leader if they work in a group; they turn students into passive listeners who solely listen and do not make contribution to the collaborative task (Ta, 2012).

#### **I.1.2.2. Collectivism or Sense of Belonging**

The Vietnamese indigenous culture is shaped by the country's geographical features and its people' living conditions. Like other countries in the Southeast Asian region, the Vietnamese people originate from an agriculture-rooted culture and frequently face with many unexpected natural calamities, so they have learnt that cooperating with each other is the best way to survive and develop (Carrington et al., 2010). As such, they have formed strong community bonds and have maintained a developed sense of belonging or collectivism (Tuong, 2002). According to Hofstede Geert (1986), collectivism pertains to a value system in which people's actions, beliefs, attitudes and identities are determined to a large extent by the community they belong to (i.e., their families and class). A Vietnamese folklore example is given such as "In unity, there is strength" [*Mot cay lam chang nen non. Ba*

*cay chum lai nen hon nui cao*]. As collectivists, Vietnamese people tend to seek harmony in the community they belong to, and each individual is encouraged to strive for common benefits (Tuong, 2002).

On one side, harmony as a process of harmonisation in the light of Confucian idea, which is gained through finding compromise between differences and the resolution of conflict from different angles, is a positive factor that promotes the development of community as well as cooperative learning through discussion, negotiation, conflict resolution and adaptation to the world (Kolb and Kolb, 2005).

On the other side, the effort to maintain harmony veers often over to the other side – suppression and oppression (Nguyen T.M.H., 2015). This is considered as a negative factor of social behaviours because being oppressed and trying to suppress the inner self, one will lose the chance to speak up and share ideas with others that lead to tolerate injustice in society as in the Vietnamese proverb “A bad compromise is better than a good lawsuit” [*Di boa di quy*]. Likewise, in an environment where people keep their ideas unspoken, there will be no interaction, no reflection, no experience sharing, no visible learning, and dependence from in-groups, which limits the learning that can take place (Hattie and Learning, 2009; Kolb and Kolb, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **I.1.2.3. The Virtue Focus**

Sharing the common feature with other cultures, the cultivation of virtue is emphasised with the aim that the individual be *a good person*. For both male and female, Confucian heritage sets adorable virtues for them to follow (five constant virtues for a man concluding kindness, decorum, uprightness, wisdom and faithfulness [*nhan, le, nghia, tri, and tin*]; four constant virtues for a woman consisting diligent work, tasteful appearance, proper speech and good moral [*cong, dung, ngon va hanh*]). Accordingly, personal interests of ‘I’ should be limited to the interests of ‘We’ (Ngo V. T. H. et al., 2015).

Beside the positive affection of the virtue focus as creating excellent people in society, the negative side can be recognised that ego-effacement of each individual is deprived for common values. An individual who is concealed by group/community is difficult to be a self-confident and self-esteemed person. In learning, this prevents the students from the opportunities to get practical experiences so they do not feel confident to self-assess and give feedback on their classmates.

#### **I.1.2.4. The Family Value and Filial Piety**

The Vietnamese indigenous culture, being impregnated with the values of Confucianism, considers family to be a foundation community from which societal communities are expanded (Dam, 1994). Confucian individuals are required to keep the family and family relationship at the centre of their life. Family is also viewed as an educational environment for individuals to cultivate virtue and to have significant influence on the stability of society (Doan, 1999). Therefore, in Confucian philosophy, filial piety is a virtue of respect that individuals must show for their parents and ancestors and have responsibility for taking care parents as a way to pay the ‘debt’ of parents who give them life and take care of them (McLeod et al., 2001; Tuong, 2002).

On one side, these values are seen to be noble targets orienting for people to become good and useful in their society and respectful children in the families. Striving for academic success is the most common way for young people to show their filial piety to their parents. As such, their success brings a ‘good name’ or pride to their families and their parents and help the child pay their debt back to their parents (Tuong, 2002).

On the other side, it is popular among Vietnamese families that parents decide everything related to their child, even job their child will do and partner who their child will live with for the whole life. In another case, child has to accept that the parents’ sayings are always right (for the reason the parents can ‘make’ [born] him/her) so the child get lost his or her own ideas and becomes dependent on the parents as in a Vietnamese proverb “Don't teach your mother/grandmother to suck eggs” [*Trung ma doi khon hon vit*].

In this section, we portrayed the indigenous culture of Vietnamese people that is deeply influenced by Confucianism philosophy. In each cultural values, we discussed how each cultural feature is understood in Vietnamese society and its positive as well as negative sides toward social development and toward learning process in school. In such a cultural context, the features of education in Vietnam through historical periods also decisively contributes to pedagogical reforms that are described in the following sections.

#### **I.1.3. Education in Vietnam**

The Vietnamese history that was characterised by successive foreign domination, colonisation, national separation and reunion certainly influenced on the education orientation and development. Table I.1 summarises a number of characteristics of

Vietnamese education through the periods claimed to be heavily foreign-reliant and not well endowed (Harman et al., 2010).

Throughout the history, education has always taken a central role in Vietnamese culture and society. To Vietnamese people, education is seen as the key to advancement and families often sacrifice a lot to ensure their children get the required education for better opportunities. Over the last 30 years since the Reform Movement [*Doi moi*], Vietnam education sector has experienced positive development and gained considerable achievements. The literacy rate is over 90%, and it keeps growing; more than 98% of children of primary school age children attend schools, with rates of enrolment for both boys and girls at about the same rate (Nguyen Q.K. and Nguyen, 2008). The new school curriculum and textbooks have been reformed to set the preconditions for improved educational quality. The current fundamental and comprehensive education reform campaign in the country has ambition to develop Vietnam education to become a progressive education in the world.

Notwithstanding this remarkable progress in education, the country faces a number of challenges in securing quality of education, particularly with regard to the conditions for quality, including infrastructure, resources, management, teacher supply and, especially, effective pedagogy, through which educational quality is most directly mediated (Nguyen N.A., 2015). With the aim of achieving good-quality education, pedagogical reform was recently put at the top of the agenda in the country's education development policies and strategies (Vietnam-MoET, 2013).

**Table I.1. Vietnamese education through the main periods of history**

<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Important landmarks</b>	<b>Formation, development and typical features of Vietnamese language education</b>
111 BC-938	Chinese domination	Vietnamese people learnt Chinese characters and used them for writing (Han scripts). The education was deeply influenced by the Confucian philosophy as sets a powerful interpersonal norms for daily behaviours, attitudes, and practices demanding reflection, modernisation, persistence, humility, obedience to superiors, and stoic response to pain (Kim U. and Park, 2000; Pham T.H.T., 2011).
939-1858	The rise and fall of Vietnamese Feudal dynasties; deep embedment of the legacies from Chinese domination	The education was featured by examination-orientation, heavily textbook-based teaching and rote learning. The opportunity to touch to education mainly offered to dignities' children in the feudal dynasty (Huyen, 2002; Nguyen T.M.H., 2015).
1858-1954	French colonisation	The traditional Confucian-oriented education was replaced by French-Vietnamese education that aimed mainly at training people to serve the colonial apparatus (Wright S., 2002). French was the dominant language. The education sector received a minimum investment by the colonial regime, resulting 95% of the population being illiterate (Vietnam-MoET, 1995).
1954-1975	North-South division with the North allied with the Soviet Union and the South supported by the United States	After the country's Independence Day in 1945, three key national tasks were defined "fighting against poverty, illiterate and invaders". The new Government confirmed "the birth of a new education system with its mission to preserve independence and rehabilitate the country. The French curriculum was no longer taught and replaced by a Vietnam curriculum" (London, 2011). Learning how to read, write and calculate was perceived as a criterion for demonstrating a person' education and were seen as a patriotic symbol (London, 2011). The new education system was built on three fundamental principles: national scientific, and popular, and aimed at serving the national ideals and democracy. The National Language was compulsorily used in the whole system of education in Vietnam.
1975-1986	North-South reunification and supported by Soviet Union	In 1975, Vietnam was reunified, the Vietnam government focused on two tasks: 1) removal of leftover influences from the old education system; 2) implementation of anti-illiteracy activities for people in the age group of 12-50 years (London, 2011). The government's goal was to universalise and nationalise the curriculum under a centralised educational system but faced many economic and social challenges.
1986-present	The educational Reforms	In 1986, the government decided to decentralise of the market through the " <i>Doi moi</i> " reform and invested more funding allocations for schools and institutions and the whole education system (Kelly, 2000). The education system from Pre-school to Higher education was reformed and completed. The official languages of instruction in Vietnam schools are Vietnamese and English (as a foreign language). The education Law was first passed in 1998 and updated in 2005 and 2012. Primary education is compensatory level; lower secondary education will also be next compensatory and universal.

## **Chapter I.2. Primary Vietnamese Language Instruction through Pedagogical Reforms**

The following section presents a picture of Vietnamese language instruction in primary education in Vietnam, by describing briefly history of Vietnamese language, next examining the time allocated for instruction, the goals in Vietnamese language learning, the materials used in Vietnamese language instruction classes, the role of teachers and learners and methods of assessment at primary school.

### **I.2.1. Vietnamese Language Instruction at Primary Education**

#### **I.2.1.1. A Brief Introduction of Vietnamese Language**

The official national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese [*tiếng Việt*], which is spoken by the majority of the country's citizens. In the early history of the language, during the periods of Chinese domination and Vietnamese Feudal regime, Vietnamese people learnt Chinese characters and used them for writing (Han scripts), but pronounced them in a different, Vietnamese way (London, 2011). Besides, in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, the Vietnamese people adapted Chinese characters to invent an ancient Vietnamese script for writing, referred to as *Chu Nom*. All efforts were aimed to preserve and strengthen the awareness of national independence and to ensure the Chinese not to assimilate the Vietnamese people (Kim U.



and Park, 2000). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a system of Vietnamese language writing that uses the Latin letters and accent marks to show tone was built and developed by the Jesuit priest Alexandre de Rhodes. This system is the original version of National Language of Vietnamese people [*Quốc ngữ*] that has been continuously developed and completed. Compared with the Han and Nom scripts, the National Language is much easier to use in spoken and written communication. Therefore, at the time of being born, the National Language became popular and brought the Vietnamese masses to literacy during the French and American colonial periods up to now.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, France colonised Vietnam. The traditional Confucian-oriented education, which had been built and maintained by Vietnamese people, was replaced by French-Vietnamese education with the aim of training to provide technical workers for the colonial economy. Under the French-Vietnamese education system, French was the dominant language and the language of instruction at higher education levels (Wright S., 2002).

After Vietnamese people took control and declared the country's independence in 1945, the new Government confirmed the birth of a new education system with its mission to preserve independence and rehabilitate the country. The national language was officially and compulsorily used in the whole system of education in Vietnam. Since then, although having been spent the fluctuation in the development together with the change of the nation, the National language of Vietnamese people has maintained and flourished (Wright S., 2002).

### **I.2.1.2. Teaching Grades**

Primary education in Vietnam consists of 5 grades: grades 1–5 for children (at the age range 6-11), basically dividing into two periods: the first from grade 1 to grade 3; the second including grade 4 and grade 5. Vietnamese language as a national language is basically introduced to pre-school children and officially taught to them at Grade 1. Vietnamese language instruction at primary is organised into an independence subject comprising sub-subjects such as: Sub-subject for Beginner, Reading, Vocabulary and Grammar, Story-telling, Spelling, Hand-writing training and Writing. Children of the first period have on average 8 thirty-minute lessons per week whereas the second period groups weekly spend on average 8 forty-minute lessons. The school week is typically five days, beginning on

Monday and going through Friday, pupils almost attend school for whole day, around 8 hours per day.

### **I.2.1.3. Instructional Aims**

A document on Vietnamese language curriculum goals has been issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, which reflects the government national language policy at Basic Education in general and specifically at primary education. This official document takes the role of a direction for all educational and teaching activities in schools.

Vietnamese language education is an important subject of primary curriculum comprising both science of language and literature, integrating aesthetic and humane characteristics. This subject equips pupils an instrument to learn other subjects of primary education programme. Through learning Vietnamese language and literature, pupils are intended to develop general and specialised competences for good living, effective working and lifelong learning.

The goals of Vietnamese language subject at Basic Education in general and at primary education in particular are officially published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, which are described as follows:

*Personality goals:* Help pupils establish and develop major virtues as the love for nature, family, homeland; awareness of ancestors; the love for beauty and honesty; motivation of learning and working; the responsibility toward oneself, family, society and environment.

*Linguistic competence goals:* Help pupils build and develop general competences of Vietnamese linguistics at all skills as reading, writing, speaking and basic listening; reading correctly and fluently texts; understanding main contents and information of texts; linking and comparing with content and information outside the texts; writing correctly by dictation; writing several sentences, passages and short essays; speaking clearly; listening and understanding what speaker means.

*Literature competence goals:* Help pupils distinguish poem and story, know how to read poem and story; recognising the beauty of artistic words; have knowledge, imagination and emotion toward the beauty, honesty of people and the world around expressed in the literature texts.

(The General Education Curriculum, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

#### **I.2.1.4. Materials**

At the time of this research conduction, there are two simultaneously series of Vietnamese language teaching textbooks currently used at primary Vietnamese education and complying with the national curriculum. The former set of textbooks consisting ten pupils' books has been published through the education reform in 2000. The latter set comprising eighteen pupils' books is considered as the edited version of the former and has been used since 2010, under a following education reform, called the Vietnamese Escuela Nueva (VNEN) model. These books were designed and written by a group of Vietnamese textbook witters nominated by the MoET. Table I.2 presents the available textbook series package.

Each volume of the Vietnamese language textbook is organised into six sub-subjects (Grade 1 excepted: two volumes) that train pupils' language skills: reading (fluency and comprehension), writing (dictation and training to write different types of texts), speaking and listening (in dialogues or monologues; formal or informal...). However, the focus is on reading and writing skills. The opportunities for pupils' skills to be trained are shown in Table I.3.

From Table I.3, much more time is spent on the beginner sub-subject of Grade 1 than on the other grades, which emphasises on building the primary base of language competences for pupils in order to master Vietnamese language as an instrument to learn other subjects. According to this table, the skills of reading and writing take up a dominant time period. The primary pupils take on average two periodic-term examinations of the Vietnamese language subject per school year that mainly exam pupils' knowledge and skills of reading, writing and vocabulary-grammar. Hoang (2011) observed how these textbooks have been used in primary schools: the textbooks are used as script of teaching and learning contents that teacher and pupil typically work through one activity after another. (Peysen et al., 2006) warns that the linear manner of using textbooks in Vietnam does not really match with the nature of an integrated and active approach demanded by the recently education reforms in Vietnam.

**Table I.2. Vietnamese language teaching textbook series package at primary education**

	Titles	Pupils' books	Teachers' manual	Publication year
<b>Traditional Textbooks (The Education Reform 2000)</b>	Vietnamese Language Grade 1 (V1 and V2)	X	x	2000
	Vietnamese language Grade 2 (V1 and V2)	X	x	2000
	Vietnamese language Grade 3 (V1 and V2)	X	x	2000
	Vietnamese Language Grade 4 (V1 and V2)	X	x	2000
	Vietnamese Language Grade 5 (V1 and V2)	X	x	2000
<b>Self-study textbooks (The Education Reform – VNEN 2010)</b>	Vietnamese Language Grade 1 (V1 and V2)	x		2000
	Vietnamese Language Grade 2 (V1A V1B; V2A, V2B)	x		2010
	Vietnamese Language Grade 3 (V1A V1B; V2A, V2B)	x		2010
	Vietnamese Language Grade 4 (V1A V1B; V2A, V2B)	x		2010
	Vietnamese Language Grade 5 (V1A V1B; V2A, V2B)	x		2010

**Table I.3. Time allocation of sub-subjects in the Vietnamese language programme at primary education**

Sub-subject/Grade	Classes (35 minutes – 40 minutes)/week				
	1	2	3	4	5
Beginner sub-subject	12				
Reading		2	2	2	2
Vocabulary and Grammar		2	1	1	1
Spelling		2	1	1	1
Story Telling		1	1	1	1
Writing		2	2	2	2
Hand-writing Training		1	1		
<b>Total classes/school year (35 weeks)</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>245</b>

### I.2.1.5. Teachers' and Learners' Roles

The focus of instruction is on the language structure more than on its use. This was found in a research of Hoang (2011) when observing the 18 classes of Reading and Vocabulary-Grammar of Vietnamese language instruction. Furthermore, Vietnam, as other Asian

countries, are claimed to be among the nations with 'high power distance' emphasising hierarchical relationships (Hofstede G and Hofstede, 2005). Accordingly, teachers take the exclusive role of delivering knowledge, whereas students are taught to obey and listen to teachers (Ladd and Ruby Jr, 1999). Another role of teachers is supposed to assume is feedback-giver who immediately correct students' mistake whenever they occur. Finally, teachers assume the role of evaluator, grading students' performance on tests and exams.

In such a teaching context, students are expected to be good listeners and good imitators of their teacher. Most of the time, classroom interaction is one-way, between the teacher and students as individuals. Students answer teachers' questions when being asked. At the end of the semester, students are expected to cram what they have learnt in their lessons that require rote learning. This conclusion was synthesised from previous research observing Science lessons (Ngo, 2015), and Reading, Vocabulary and Grammar (Hoang, 2011) at primary education.

#### **I.2.1.6. Assessment**

Traditionally, at basic education in Vietnam, learning is strongly examination-focused. In Vietnamese language education, paper-based tests or examinations are the almost dominant assessment form focused at testing reading, writing and vocabulary-grammar knowledge. The summative assessments with scores decide the whole of pupils' learning results. Teachers take sole-role in making assessments and judgements on pupils' learning. However, in 2016, the Vietnamese MoET promulgated (Vietnam-MoET, 2014), complemented by MoET (2016) to make progresses in testing and assessing at primary education. Accordingly, teachers were encouraged to combine between summative and formative evaluation through observing and noting pupils' learning activities and behaviours during the learning phase. At the same time, pupils have right to self-assess and assess each other.

In summary, Vietnamese language education at primary schools in Vietnam demonstrates the teacher-centred approach to instruction. The teacher is put in a position constrained by the curriculum (in this case, the textbook), decides the learning purposes and learning methods and assessment forms of learning outcomes. The latest pedagogical reforms that has been introduced in Vietnam in 2000 and 2010 are aimed at make a shift from passive, teacher-centred approach to an active, learner-centred style of teaching to develop students'

comprehensive language competence. The following sections will introduce the two latest pedagogical reforms in 2000 and 2010 at primary education in general and in Vietnamese language education in particular. The reformed characteristics in terms of aims, pedagogical approach, materials used in each programme, expected roles of teachers and pupils and types of assessment, will be examined.

## **I.2.2. Overview about Curriculum and Textbooks in Primary Vietnamese language education**

### **I.2.2.1. Relationship between Curriculum and Textbook in Vietnamese Education**

As a traditional feature of Vietnamese education, textbooks specify the curriculum. Accordingly, the curriculum is based on “students and teachers working their way through a large number of textbooks in a lock-sequenced series of lesson (which are numbered to coincide with each section of the textbooks)” (Duggan, 2001, p. 208). In this respect, the structure, the curriculum content of each subject are loaded by the content of textbook in a fixed sequence. For each grade, textbooks display a table of contents that lists in detail learning contents pupils will learn in a given week, learning contents as lessons being illustrated and developed. Therefore, in pre-service teacher education, student teachers are also trained to deliver instructional programmes based on the content of textbooks. In short, student teachers are trained in both the academic (content) aspects of a subject and also the particular methodology for delivering the subject.

Regarding Basic Education, an overall curriculum comprises many curricula of different subjects (e.g. seven subjects at the first period and nine subjects at second period of primary education programme), each subject having from 2 to 3 textbooks and other referenced materials. Under these curricula, a pupil has to work with a big number of textbooks whereas primary school student teachers have to be trained to teach all subjects in specific methods. This approach of curriculum and textbook in Vietnam has revealed its shortcomings: 1) primary school teachers and pupils find the academic and theoretical characteristics of the curriculum overwhelming because it covers a large number of subjects and range of contents 2) the national curriculum becomes fragmented and congested when putting many subjects in a ‘juxtaposition’ way; and 3) as a result, school teachers are “locked into the practice where the textbooks provide the subject content and this cannot be varied owing to the tight test” (Duggan, 2001, p. 208). Besides, school teachers are under heavy

pressure of conducting the curriculum according to the time allotment every week, month, semester and school year. So the ironic term that is rather popular among Vietnamese teachers is “running after the curriculum” (i.e., teacher effort to fulfil the curriculum as mandated in the time distribution).

The overall picture of relationship between curriculum and textbook of Vietnam education is drawn to partially reflect the image of school teachers owning characteristics formed as a result of long-held education regime, including textbook-reliance and lack of professional autonomy (Duggan, 2001; Hoang, 2011).

### **I.2.2.2. Approaches of Curriculum Development**

#### **a. Content-based Curriculum as a Current Approach**

As a traditional approach of curriculum development in Vietnam, content-based curriculum is being applied in Basic Education. According to this approach, the most important concern is building the contents of knowledge that will be transferred to learners. So the curriculum is a description of contents that each subject needs to cover. The essential aim of this kind of curriculum is to describe knowledge contents. The strength of this approach is that the knowledge content is clearly defined and quantitated, easy to be measured and evaluated. However, it brings many shortcomings: 1) teaching and learning are purely understood as a process of knowledge transmission and passive reception; and 2) teachers and educational administrators ‘stand outside’ as safe-guards of the curriculum, which does not stimulate them to engage in or become creative.

Regarding the curriculum of Vietnamese language education, the national curriculum has been reformed and used after the year of 2000, through two pedagogical reforms, entitled “the 2000” and “the VNEN model” respectively. The curriculum design is based on the integrative approach between content-based and outcome-based; accordingly, it describes outcome knowledge and skills pupils need to acquire after a period. Basically, the curriculum stresses on the Vietnamese language knowledge and skills. An example is illustrated below.

**Table I.4. The content-based curriculum of Vietnamese language education subject  
– Grade 4**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>
(Literature and Linguistic)	
Some essays, poems, plays about nature, country, people and some topical issues of society.	Reading passages of literature, science and newspaper. Reading in emotional way literature texts, poems or plays. Defining the meaning and art and literature values of texts.
Plot of story and character of story, words of story-teller and words of characters of story.	Giving ideas on characters, images and word usage in texts. Learning by heart some texts; know how to use the dictionary.

## **b. Competence-based Curriculum as a Forthcoming Approach**

### **b1. Competence**

To understand what the competence-based curriculum is, we need to define what the term “competence” is. According to (OECD, 2005), competence is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context (OECD, 2009).

For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competence that may draw on an individual’s knowledge of language, information-technology skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating.

Parry (1996) defines the competence as a cluster of related knowledge, attitudes and skills that fulfil several criteria: 1) affects a major part of one’s job, 2) correlates with performance on the job, 3) can be measured against accepted standards, and 4) can be improved via training development. On the other side, Spencer and Spencer (1993) include personality characteristics such as motives and traits and list five types of competence characteristics, namely motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge, and skill.

According to the Curriculum of General Education released by (Vietnam-MoET, 2018), the “competence” is defined as capacity of mobilising knowledge, skills and personal psychological traits such as values and attitudes, etc., in order to successfully solve a certain category of work or learning situations and for professional or personal development in a specific context. The fundamental and comprehensive general education reform in Vietnam implemented since 2018 is a competence-based approach deploying the strategies of



building education curriculum, developing teacher education programme, composing teaching and learning materials, defining methodologies and assessment, etc.

## b2. Competence-based Curriculum

Potolea (2012) confirmed that the competence is a central concept which operates at all curriculum levels, all curricular domain and disciplines, and in every disciplinary module that belongs to a discipline structure, becoming, this way, the organiser of the entire curricular construction, a curricular constant for all the levels, profiles and school programs.

A competence-based curriculum (CBC) is defined as a form of education that derives from an analysis of a prospective or actual role in contemporary society. The such curriculum attempts to certify student progress on the basis of demonstrated performance in some or all aspects of those roles (Grant et al., 1979). Jones (2002) proposed three methodological landmarks that should characterise a CBC: 1) a description of the competence, 2) a mean for assessing the competence, and 3) a standard by which the student is judge to be competent. Therefore, in order to design a CBC, a common vision on the competences that will be acquired by students must be adopted. Because it will determine a shared point of view on learning, it must take place and helps organise the context in this respect. The design of the instructional strategies will be linked with the type and structure of the competences and will depend on the way the learning context is shaped, and that must reflect both the work market requests and lifelong learning principles.

The term of competence-based curriculum is aligned with an outcome-based teaching and learning (OBTL) that states the general outcomes a student is intended to achieve. The outcome-based curriculum recalls the older notion of teaching goals, but placing them in a more systematic context. This is different from the teacher-based curriculum or content-based curriculum, which simply lists the topics for teachers to ‘cover’ (Biggs, 2014). In a competence-based curriculum, assessment is carried out by seeing how well a student’s performance compares to the outcome statements criteria. The assessment is criterion-referenced rather than compares a student’s performance with others’ and then grades it according to a predetermined distribution.

### **I.2.2.3. Textbooks and Competence-based Curriculum Development**

Textbooks are used as a supporting teaching instrument to fulfil the curriculum objectives through concretising the contents described in the curriculum (Ur, 1996). The pupils' book usually comes with other materials such as a workbook, a teachers' book or even additional multimodal texts for reference as a textbook package (Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2008). For language education, a textbook is a published book specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities (Sheldon, 1988). Therefore, textbooks, if efficiently and reasonably designed, will be effective documents to give cohesion to language teaching and learning processes by providing direction, support and specific language-based activities (Mares, 2003), and foster effective and quick language learning (Cunningsworth, 1995).

In the context of Vietnamese primary language education, textbook development can be recognised by two approaches: traditional textbooks used so far, and self-study textbooks applied in VNEN model.

#### **a. Traditional Textbooks**

In our context, textbooks are documents pupils use during their learning in class or self-learning at home, including pupils' textbooks and workbooks. Besides, teachers' books are considered as teachers' references. The set of textbooks of primary Vietnamese language education can be categorised into two periods: Vietnamese for beginners, and for Graders from second to fifth. The content structure turns around two poles of familiar themes (*Uncle Ho Chi Minh, Four seasons, Our common house – The Earth, Holidays, Sports...*) and skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Pupils practice four language skills every week, spinning around the themes and through sub-subjects as reading, writing, story-telling, spelling, hand-writing training, grammar and vocabulary in succession. In term of language lesson structure of traditional textbooks, each lesson of sub-subjects is designed to help pupils master relevant knowledge and skills. In general, knowledge and skills are described in a linear and rigid manner from the first content to the last contents through exercises or questions to exploit learning contents.

In Vietnam, textbooks used to be considered as mandatory and require teachers to 'stick' to. During a long time, the textbook contents have been believed as the best design for teaching and learning on over the country. Assessment on teachers' teaching quality was

also based on how well textbooks' material was being taught. Even, teaching some knowledge outside the textbooks was under-evaluated. The Act 896, issued in 2006 by Vietnam MoET, was aimed to release teachers' overly-reliance on the textbooks and encourage them to use the textbooks with flexibility, autonomy and creativity (Vietnam-MoET, 2006), especially suitable to specific contexts. However, the Act is not effective in practice because it is contrary to teachers' long-held beliefs of textbook role. Therefore, the Act may be still like a political agenda in theory rather an action plan in practice (Nguyen C.T., 2006).

At the same time, there have been many researches showing the weaknesses of the traditional textbooks of primary Vietnamese language instruction used in the reform 2000. The textbooks are considered to be heavily influenced by respect for academic knowledge and a teaching method aimed at 'loading' knowledge. They incline to sophisticated theoretical content rather than practical application which engages pupils in solving real-life issues (Hoang, 2004; Tien-Dung, 2008).

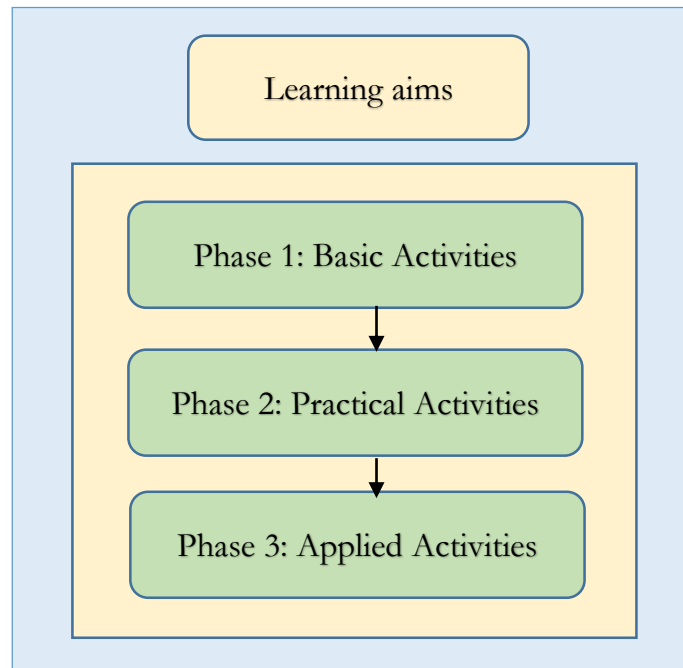
#### **b. VNEN Model Self-study Textbooks**

Basically, VNEN model developers were still based on the traditional curriculum and textbooks to develop their self-study textbooks. In detail, the requirements of knowledge and skills of the curriculum, time schedule, as well as topics and texts of traditional textbooks, remain in the new textbooks. According to the official documents of the VNEN model, the self-study textbooks innovative characteristics are as bellow:

First, this set of textbooks is integrated as a "3-in-1" material: used by teachers, pupils and pupils' parents. In this way, the textbooks are considered to comprise learning contents (as pupils' traditional textbooks), teaching and learning methodology (as teachers' traditional books), and exercise and practice (as pupils' workbooks). According to the VNEN developers as well as major specialists, the innovative conceptions of the VNEN are integrated into the self-study textbooks; therefore, when school teachers conduct their teaching with the use of self-study textbooks, they concurrently fulfil the pedagogical reform in large scale (Dang T.A., 2017). This idea reflects the conventional way of the pedagogical reforms in Vietnam: reform is started with textbooks and through textbooks (Duggan, 2001; Le M.H., 2018a).

Second, self-study textbooks are confirmed as a ‘open’ materials, which means “flexible, adjustable and changeable” (Dang T.A., 2017). Again, teachers are encouraged to use the textbooks creatively in order to make teaching contents suit to specific pupils.

Third, the basic structure of every lesson consists in the three following phases to obtain the learning aims availablely defined at the starting of each lesson (Figure I.2).



**Figure I.2. Three-phase procedure of a VNEN lesson**

Each phase is described in detail as follows: *Learning aims*: refer to the targets knowledge, skills/competences, attitudes/virtues that pupils are required to obtain whilst and post their learning. The learning aims are expressed by “verbs” that can be measured at three levels: remembering, understanding and applying (Dang T.A., 2017). *Basic activities* include three sub-activities: 1) Creating pupils’ interests in lesson (observe pictures/real things or classroom environment); 2) Connecting to pupils’ prior knowledge; 3) Analysing and creating together with discussing and interacting with teacher and other pupils to build new knowledge. *Practical activities*: These activities help pupils combine between theory and practice, at the same time, teachers can base on the practice results to check to what extent pupils obtain new knowledge. *Applied activities*: Pupils apply the new knowledge in specific situations at home or in their community.

The VNEN developers confirmed the self-study textbooks help pupils be able to self-study under clear orientation. The pupils develop their thinking through self-study and study in

group that are considered to suit with the constructivist approach (Dang T.A., 2017). In short, the self-study textbooks are regarded as a new approach compared with the traditional textbooks in which pupils can self-study with orienting activities/tasks. Teachers are encouraged to use this kind of textbooks in a flexible way in their teaching practice. In practice, professional trainings of VNEN model for in-service teachers focus on instructing them how to use the self-study textbooks and how to make adjustments on the available textbook contents (Le M.H., 2018a).

The next section will describe the forthcoming approaches of curriculum and textbooks in general and of Vietnamese language education at primary schools in particular that have been defined by Vietnam MoET in 2018.

#### **I.2.2.4. Introduction of the Forthcoming Curriculum and Textbooks**

##### **a. Features of the Forthcoming Curriculum**

Vietnamese language education is both about science of language and literature, and is an ‘instrument’ subject to learn other subjects of primary education program. Through learning Vietnamese language and literature, pupils develop general and specialised competences of each subject for good living, effective work and lifelong learning.

###### a<sub>1</sub>. Requirements in terms of main virtues and general outcome competences

Vietnamese language education contributes to build and develop pupils’ virtues and general competences according to different requirements that are suitable to different subjects and education levels.

###### a<sub>2</sub>. Requirements in terms of specialised competences

###### \* Linguistic competences:

Reading competences: Reading in accuracy, fluent way; acquiring the main content of text, both explicit and implicit ideas; understanding the lesson learnt from reading texts. Reading competences requires reading techniques and reading comprehension. Regarding pupils of Grade 1 and Grade 2, reading competence focuses even on reading with suitable speed and understanding simple contents of texts. Regarding pupils of Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5, the emphasis inclines to reading comprehensively a specific content, topic, lesson learnt from the texts.

Writing competences: From Grade 1 to Grade 3, pupils’ writing competence requires the exact of spelling, vocabulary and grammar and being able to write short sentences and

passages; from Grade 4 to Grade 5, pupils are required to write short complete essays belonging to types of story-telling, description and simple introduction. Being able to write essay to tell stories read, witnessed or attended or stories imagined by pupils; to describe familiar things and phenomenon; to introduce familiar things and activities with pupils' life. Pupils are able to write passage in order to express the emotion, thought toward a story, poem... or raise ideas toward simple issues in learning and life; to able to write some types of texts as narration, message, invitation, timetable, papers...; know and apply the procedure of producing texts (including three phases: Opening, Deployment and Closing).

Speaking competences: Expressing ideas and emotion; knowing how to use gestures when speaking; telling clearly a story read, listened; know how to share and exchange emotion, attitudes and thoughts; describing about objects or simple procedure.

Listening competences: Listening and understanding with an appropriate attitude and acquire basic contents; recognising speakers' emotion; know how to response toward what is listened.

\* Literature competences

Distinguishing the texts belonging to story and poem; recognising text content and attitude and feelings of writer; primarily understanding several factors of text form such as word, character, plot, comparison, humanisation); knowing how to make association, imagination in speaking and writing. Toward pupils of Grade 1 and Grade 2: recognising who and which the text talk about; recognising characters of story. Regarding pupils of Grade 3, Grade 4 and Grade 5: knowing how to read in emotional way; telling and summarising main content of story, poem; commenting on characters, things and attitudes, sentiments of writer; applying rhetorical figures of humanisation and comparison on speaking and writing; Understanding the meanings or lessons learnt from the texts; writing passage and essay to tell a story or describe the feelings; being able to make association and imagination.

The above outcome competences of Vietnamese language instruction toward primary pupils have been published by Vietnamese MoET in December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (Vietnam-MoET, 2018). These outcome competences also align with the goals of primary school education in Vietnam: help pupils establish fundamental basics about morality, understanding, physical education, aesthetic and basic skills to learn and work and move to higher education level (Vietnam-National-Assembly, 2005). An example of reading outcome competences for fourth graders is described in Table I.5.

**Table I.5. Outcome competences of Reading for 4<sup>th</sup> graders described in the new curriculum**

Reading techniques	Reading comprehension	
	Literature texts	Information texts
0.a. Reading fluently and emotionally various types of texts (story, play, poem, description) with 90 – 100 words per minute. Expressing well emphasised words/phrases.	1.a. Understanding explicit and implicit contents of texts.	1a. Defining explicit and implicit details and contents.
0.b. Reading in silence with 130 – 140 words per minute.	1.b. Defining some emphasised details. Know how to summarise texts.	1b. Explaining the meaning of noticeable details. Know how to summarise texts.
0.c. Know how to use Vietnamese language dictionaries.	1.c. Understanding topic of texts.	1c. Understanding topic and main contents of basic information.
0.d. Know how to note in short ideas, important details.	2.a. Recognising realistic or imagined texts.	2a. Recognising the characteristics of familiarly information texts: texts introducing book/film; text instructing simply how to make/use a good; thank-you/sorry letter; petitions for absence from class; invitation letter.
	2.b. Recognising some factors of time, place, main details, main characters of a story or play.	2b. Recognising the position and purpose of reference list.
	2.c. Recognising characters' features through performance, gesture, action, language use.	2c. Recognising the arrangement of ideas, information according to time procedure or cause and effect relation.
	2.d. Recognising the procedure of details in a story: time or place procedure.	2.d. Recognising the outline of an information: Opening, Main content, Ending.
	2e. Creating another ending for a story.	3.a. Expressing own ideas about the information of text.
	3.a. Expressing individual emotion, though after reading a text.	3.b. Recognising ideas, information through images, signals, data in texts.
	3b. Talking about individual's favourite characters, passage or poem and explain reasons.	4. Further reading: about 60 pages/year, 170 words/page.
	3c. Describing the individual solutions for the similar circumstance.	
	4.a. Further reading about 120 pages per year, about 210 words/page.	
	4.b. Learning by heart at least 12 cantos, poems about 100 words.	

### **b. Features of the Forthcoming Textbooks**

Through the textbook, the innovative pedagogies are expected by the Vietnam MoET as well as reformers “to be clearly identified in the textbooks and therefore transferable to classroom practice” (Hoang, 2011). In the VNEN model, the constructivist pedagogy is

expected to be fulfilled in classroom practice through the set of self-study textbooks (Dang T.A., 2017). Furthermore, the policy of textbook centralisation that has remained through the educational reforms for many decades hinders the innovative pedagogies to become true in classroom practices (Le M.H., 2018a; Pham T.H.T., 2011).

At the same time Vietnam MoET has introduced the competence-based curriculum, policies of textbooks also changed. Accordingly, teachers' teaching is not purely based on the textbooks, teachers' new task is composing teaching materials based on the national curriculum (Thu-Tam, 2018). In detail, teachers raise the sense of initiative in composing and selecting teaching materials, organising the time spent for every teaching contents and activities. The time allotment, rigidly applied in the previous curriculum, is now encouraged to be flexible and to be decided by school teachers (Vietnam-MoET, 2018).

Noticeably, one national curriculum will be employed by many sets of textbooks composed by groups of authors whose competences satisfy the requirements mandated by Vietnam MoET. This policy is expected to increase teachers' autonomy toward their professional decisions and put teachers in right position as the most important agent of any pedagogical reforms.

### **I.2.3. Pedagogical Reforms in Vietnamese Language Primary instruction**

#### **I.2.3.1. General Orientations**

Efforts to improve pedagogical approaches began in Vietnam schools in the 1990s, along with curriculum and textbook reforms, in accordance with the resolutions of the Central Party. Many pedagogical reforms in Vietnam have been made since 1990s to improve outdated curriculums, content and education methods; to shift from teacher-knowledge indoctrination to guidance on proactive thinking, thus encouraging the development of individual capacities and promoting student autonomy in their learning process; to enhance students' self-study and team-work capacities, and enable students to put acquired knowledge into practice. All were aimed to produce the highest-quality human resources for the country's development (Vietnam-MoET, 2013). The next section makes a critical introduction of two latest pedagogical reforms conducted in Vietnam since the beginning of this century.



### **I.2.3.2. The 2000 Pedagogical Reform**

#### **a. Aims**

As stated in the Vietnamese Government's document entitled *Strategies for Educational Development 2001-2010*, dated 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2001, this reform was aimed at

“changing from a teacher-centred approach to learner-centred style of teaching to stimulate children's development, autonomy and creative thinking. Regarding Vietnamese language instruction, its emphasis was on the development of pupils' language competence through encouraging self-learning, studying in communicative practice, collaboration and comprehension rather than rote learning by imitation and cramming, which had commonly been accepted language classroom practice in Vietnam (Vietnam-MoET, 2001a, 2006).

#### **b. Pedagogical Approaches**

The pedagogical approaches introduced through the national curriculum were student-centred including *active learning, integrated teaching, communicative language teaching and activity/task-based learning*. Table I.6 makes an overall description of the pedagogical approaches of the 2000 reform that were defined by the Vietnam MoET, together with a parallel comparison with a synthesis of their underlying international pedagogical theories.

In conclusion, it appeared that the teaching and learning of Vietnamese language was defined and practiced with over-simplified notions, inconsistent with those of learner-centred approaches described by international pedagogical research.

#### **c. Strategies for the Implementation of Reforms**

Compulsory textbooks are deployed as a central element of the pedagogical reform strategy. Through these textbooks, student-centred pedagogy is intended to change the classroom activities for primary student learning Vietnamese language. The centralisation of education policy in Vietnam authorises not only national-mandated curricula, as do many countries in the world, but also nationally compulsory textbooks as its own specific feature. This acknowledgement conforms to the historical development of the textbooks in Vietnam with heavily centralised politics in education (Caldwell, 2005).

**Table I.6. Pedagogy stated by Vietnamese MoET (2000 reform) and its relevant counterparts introduced by international theories**

The statements of Vietnam MoET	The synthesis from international research
<b>1. Active learning</b>	
* <i>Convergences:</i> Teaching is viewed as creating opportunities for students to learn how to learn and use language in communication (Do, 1997); taking advantages of learners' experiences in terms of linguistic (Nguyen T., 2003).	
* <i>Divergences:</i>	
<p>The factors of interactive learning environment; exploitation of students' personal characteristics like interests and culture; learning styles; and the intrinsic motivation of learning seem to have been ignored.</p> <p>Active and discovery learning seems understood by MoET as doing assignments or answering by themselves in the lessons found in the prescribed textbooks (Nguyen M.T., 2002-2007) or discover the knowledge in the textbooks (Do, 1997).</p>	<p>Active learning is essentially based on children's interests and culture experience (not only their linguistic knowledge); ensures students to engage in their exploration and interaction with, and reflections upon, the learning environment (Drake and Burns, 2004).</p> <p>Active learning emphasises the intrinsic motivation, helping learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Whyte, 1995) and immerse themselves in deep learning with self-regulated (Leonard, 2002).</p>
<b>2. Integrated approach</b>	
* <i>Convergences:</i> Being stated as reducing the cumbersomeness of the curriculum and to provide more opportunities for practice. Two approaches: Vertical transfer (integrating knowledge and skills of the present school years with those of previous years); Horizontal transfer (integrating the development of linguistic skills and thinking skills with the pupils' enlarging knowledge of nature and society; integrating teaching of language with literature) (Dang H.M., 2005; Do, 2002; Peyser et al., 2006).	
* <i>Divergences:</i>	
<p>Transform the integrated approach into the organisational structures of textbooks. Thematic organisation of the textbooks is seemingly just a 'juxtaposition' of sub-disciplines such as reading, story-telling, spelling, hand-writing, vocabulary and grammar practice.</p>	<p>Genuine integration makes a shift separate subject matters and student experiences into integrated content and organisation (Drake and Burns, 2004).</p>
<b>3. Communicative language approach</b>	

\* *Convergences*: not merely developing linguistic knowledge and skills promotes thinking and learning competence in general (Oxford, 2001); help learners construct the meaning through social activities and authentic communicative situations.

\* *Divergences*:

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Separate linguistic knowledge and skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing); neglects social and cultural aspects.

Language competence is noted as integrating cognitive and socio-cultural processes (Oxford, 2001).

Knowledge is still considered as being taught, not being learnt as (Clark E., 1997) suggest and learners receive knowledge instead of constructing knowledge.

It advocates making connections to help learners construct the meaning, acquire deep understanding to develop language competence (Richards J. C. and Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2002).

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#### **4. Task-based learning**

\* *Divergences*

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Tasks include the two language modes: productive activities (writing and speaking) and receptive activities (listening and reading) (Nguyen T., 2003). Do not indicate various dimensions from linguistic, cognitive, socio-cultural and pedagogical perspectives embedded in tasks designed (Oxford, 2001).

Task-based language learning is included as extensions of the communicative language teaching movement to develop learners' communicative competence (Richards Jack C, 2005).

Tasks appears merely to be activities or tools to helps pupils develop skills.

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#### **d. Materials**

In the context of textbook centralisation, teachers of each grade all over the country use the same set of textbooks every day. Moreover, in Vietnam the textbook is considered as *prescribed curriculum*, which involves not only content of the subjects but also the sequence of topics, pedagogical strategies, and timeline to employ in teaching them (Venezky, 1992). According to (Duggan, 2001), the textbooks bind teachers to a rigid pattern of delivering each lesson, this in itself reduces flexibility in teaching and restricts student exposure to such activities, as problem solving and integrated learning.

#### **e. Teachers' and Learners' Roles**

Under this policy of textbook adherence, the national textbooks are treated as the most significant agent of the pedagogical reform. The essence of learner-centred education is expected by MoET to be clearly identified in the textbooks and therefore transferable to classroom practice by school teachers. Therefore, the main role of the teacher is as a planner of the lessons based on the textbook content and as a transmitter of knowledge from the textbook. Learning is generally considered to be the process of accumulating knowledge and memorising information in the textbooks rather than the acquisition of practical skills. So students' roles are listening to the teachers' explanation; completing the assignments in class meeting and exercises/questions in the textbooks.

#### **f. Assessment**

The teaching and learning approach determines assessment method. Since 2000, the Vietnam MoET has promulgated three circulars that prescribe about testing and assessment at primary education in general and Vietnamese language subject in specific (Vietnam-MoET, 2014, 2016). The general orientation is from summative-focused assessment to formative-focused assessment in order to release the pressure for children and evaluate the process of pupils' learning and training. This orientation results in the change of assessment methods, from paper-based only periodic examinations to combining between periodic examinations and observation on pupils' performance during their learning process. The pupils' learning results, in the past, was only assessed through grading (1–10 grade scale); currently, teachers are required to give feedback by comments in words to encourage the pupils' progress.

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**g. Shortcomings**

First, the textbook centralisation policy has bound teachers and their professional autonomy in the range of prescribed contents that have to be covered. The teachers have taken the role of technicians of teaching who have to transfer the textbook contents to the pupils, rather than professionals who autonomously design and conduct the teaching practice. Second, during the 2000 pedagogical reform, the assessment was still based on traditional-style examinations that created considerable tensions for both teacher and pupil. The learning was aimed at preparing for examinations that put heavily pressure on the teachers' shoulders, preventing them from expand their professional understandings and to embrace the new expectations. Third, there were critics claiming that the textbooks were heavily influenced by respect for academic knowledge and a teaching method aimed at 'loading' knowledge. They are evaluated theory-focused and lack practical applications that help pupils to solve real-life issues (Hoang, 2004; Tien-Dung, 2008). Finally, according to Le's research (2018), the attempt to change the education system mainly failed because Vietnam MoET did not clearly explain the new directions of "student-centred learning", nor did it provide adequate training to teachers and school administrators. In short, nearly ten years since the start of the pedagogical reform, pupil learning is still considered to be passive (Le M.H., 2018a).

**I.2.3.3. The 2010 Pedagogical Reform – the VNEN Model**

In the context of apparent failure of the 2000 pedagogical reforms, the Vietnam government has forwarded a progressive direction with the release of (Vietnam-MoET, 2013), called "Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Education and Training". Accordingly, reforming the education system cannot depend on the changes in separate parts of a system, so the entire education system must be fundamentally and comprehensively overhauled in order to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. In this context, the *Escuela Nueva* model (also called as New-School model) originating from Colombia has been 'imported' into Vietnam for a comprehensive educational reform.

**A description of the *Escuela Nueva* model**

The EN model of Colombia was born in the context of the high rate of illiteracy among rural children aged from 6–12 years old of this country; in addition, drop-out rates in rural areas have remained fairly constant in the period 1978-1987 (Colbert V. et al., 1993).

Schedules are often quite rigid, such that students cannot leave to participate in agriculture without being force to repeat the entire year. Furthermore, pedagogy in teaching and learning (specifically in language and mathematics) is passive, centred around rote memorisation and imitation. Teachers are often received little supervision or support from educational authorities. Finally, rural communities and parents participate little in their childrens' education. Therefore, the multi-grade methodology and classroom is posited as an alternative pedagogical approach that brings together students of different ages and abilities in order to cope with children's different rates of development (McEWAN, 1998, 2008).

Escuela Nueva is a rural multi-grade schooling model, emerging in Colombia in the 1970s as a scalable low-cost educational innovation model that can be disseminated to other under-resourced regions around the world, and impacting the lives of over five million children. In the period of 2010–2016, this educational model was introduced, and quickly spread out over the country, first, at primary education system. Entitled Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN), this project was funded an amount of USD 84.6 million by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and supported by the World Bank. VNEN brings to Vietnam a new primary schooling model, covering grades 2-5. At the pilot period, VNEN was only applied in 24 primary schools in 2010, several years later, the model quickly expanded throughout the country and attracted 3,745 schools. Notably, many schools not funded by the Global Partnership for Education grant also adopted the VNEN model in some form. To date, approximately 20% of all primary schools in Vietnam are implementing the VNEN model.

#### **a. Aims**

The VNEN model has been adopted to reaffirm the commitment of the Vietnam government about the campaign of Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Education and Training toward a more progressive direction. The VNEN-based reform is considered as a strategy to 'repair' the shortcomings of the former reform that has since become the basic blueprint for numerous policies changes in order to establish an education system meeting new demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **b. Pedagogical Approaches**

The EN pedagogies promote active pedagogy, self-instructional learning, teacher autonomy, student leadership and collaboration, and a closer partnership between the school and the local community. Among myriad possible understandings of active learning, EN specifies it as classroom practices designed to simulate the students' own discovery and construction of knowledge (Mogollón and Solano, 2011; Tabulawa, 2003). It can be concluded that EN in fact draws upon Western progressive education theories that have become popular around the world (Tabulawa, 2003; Vavrus and Bartlett, 2012) and it demonstrates positive impact on student achievement (Forero-Pineda et al., 2006).

The VNEN model has adopted these pedagogies of EN together with stressing on the constructivist pedagogy as one of the scientific theories that legitimise this particular school model (Dang, 2015, 2016, 2017). Accordingly, VNEN is meant to introduce a paradigm shift in the roles of students and teachers in the classroom.

### **c. Pedagogical Implementation Strategies**

In order to implementing the VNEN pedagogies, the Government as well as the VNEN developers have adopted and adapted the EN policies and applied them on Vietnamese context. First, the self-study textbooks are considered as one of the priority strategies of the VNEN model. In the early stage of the EN development, the model's co-founders Oscar Mogonllón and Vicky Colbert have intentionally made explicit and systematic each step and component of the model to facilitate future replication (Colbert Vicky and Arboleda, 2016). The self-study textbooks are under the design of ready-made materials with clear progression of exercises and commands in order to enable the students to self-study without having to rely on teachers' guides. This kind of materials has been particularly effective in multi-grade schooling contexts where the teachers have to divide their attention between multiple levels of instruction simultaneously (Colbert Vicky and Arboleda, 2016; Little, 2001).

Adapted to the Vietnam context, the self-study textbooks have been composed and used popularly together with the widespread of VNEN model. However, the rigid and content-based curriculum and traditional textbooks are still a basis for the self-study textbook development instead of flexible and grass-rooted curriculum as in the original model. Accordingly, all lesson units are designed in the textbooks adhering to three following

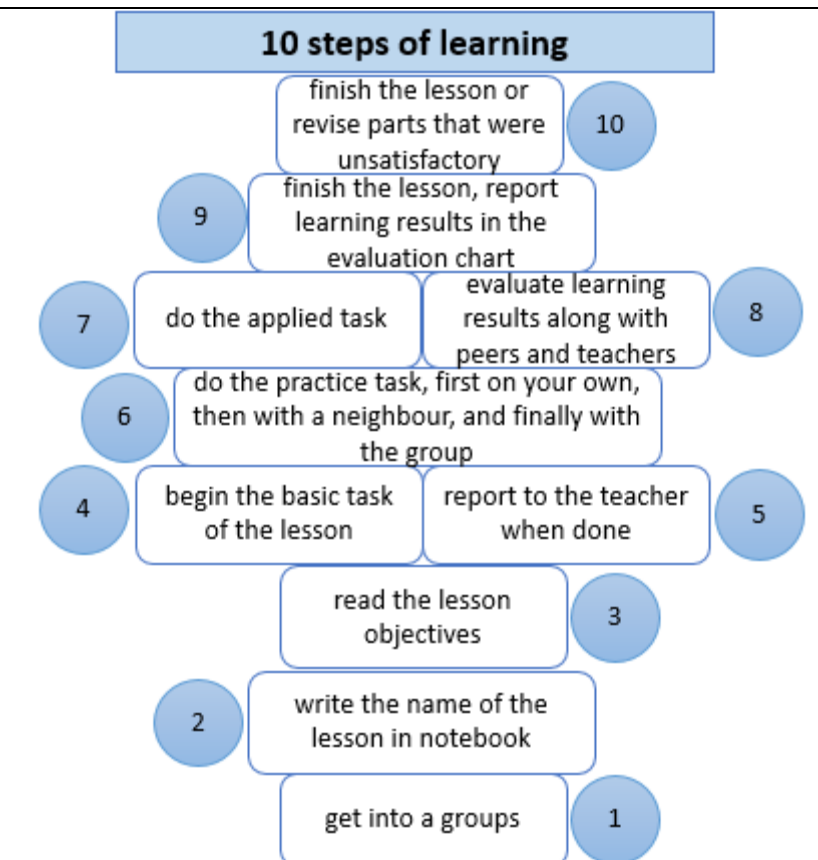
phases to support for the students' self-studying (see Table I.7). Every lesson unit of the self-study textbook comprises three-phase procedure with meticulous and ready-made activities that require students to step-by-step following in order to acquire the new knowledge and skills.

**Table I.7. Learning procedure designed in the self-study textbooks**

Phases	Learning activities	Aims
<b>1. Basic Activities</b>	Warming up	Pupils engage in warming-up activities. Ex: game, sing and dance, story-telling...
	Calling for students' experience	Pupils connect their experience to the forthcoming lesson topic.
	Exploring new knowledge	Pupils follow the self-study textbook instruction and work in small groups to construct new knowledge.
<b>2. Practice Activities</b>	Applying the knowledge on similar cases or different cases	Pupils practice and consolidate the new knowledge and skills through practice.
<b>3. Applied Activities</b>	Applying the knowledge on students' daily-life situations.	Students match their schooling knowledge with the daily-life in practice.

Second, to support the self-study textbook implementation, the VNEN developers have supplemented a ten-step process of learning under the VNEN model: 1) get into a groups; 2) write the name of the lesson in notebook; 3) read the lesson objectives; 4) begin the basic task of the lesson; 5) report to the teacher when done; 6) do the practice task, first on their own, then with a neighbour, and finally with the group; 7) do the applied task; 8) evaluate learning results along with peers and teachers; 9) finish the lesson, report learning results in the Evaluation chart; and 10) finish the lesson or revise parts that were unsatisfactory (see Figure I.3). Ten-steps of self-learning is demonstrated in a poster that is required to hang up in every VNEN classroom during school year. According to (Le M.H., 2018b), not only is the VNEN learning experience structured by written commands, it has been transformed into a mechanistic process: learning can always be achieved in ten steps.





**Figure I.3. Ten-step learning process of VNEN model (VNEN Manuals- Vietnamese MoET)**

Third, class organisation is also rearranged to support the VNEN model approaches. If in a traditional classroom of Vietnam, the arrangement of desks and chairs is in neat rows and facing the board, in a VNEN classroom, the desks are rearranged into roundtables so that students can be seated in small groups. Their desks are covered in colourful markers and crayons, a medium-size whiteboard and other arts and crafts materials. Books, references of different disciplines and pupils’ learning products are also arranged as a class library in showcases so that pupils can access to when they need. The walls are decorated with posters, maps, and other student projects. So, the class arrangement is aimed at to create good environment that lend pupils to independent study (Thomas et al., 1992).

Finally, in order to establish pupils’ self-student leadership, self-government and collaboration among students, the student class vote a self-governed committee comprising a leader who takes the role as “mini-teacher” and four committee members who in turn charge of taking care some issues of class such as learning, sport, art and entertainment and ‘external’ relations. Besides, the student class is also divided into groups and has group

leaders who are considered as spokesman of each group. In many learning situations, “mini-teacher” represents for the teachers to instruct other students to do learning activities.

#### **d. Teacher’s and Learner’s Roles**

The VNEN model make a shift between the roles of teacher and student. Teacher are people who are becoming “guides on the side rather than on the stage” (Flynn, 2004). In the VNEN classroom, there has not been seen the image of teacher standing in front of the whole class to give lecturing or write on the big class board when the pupils are taking note and listening. Instead, the teachers stand beside groups of students, observe their learning process and are ready to help when they raise a “sad face” (a symbol means needing help), or give feedback and make some checks in case the pupils raise a “happy face” (a symbol of tasks finished). Instead of the whole-class lecturing, the teacher is required to divide his or her time into the group lectures. However, instead of multi-grade classes of the original model, Vietnamese teachers work in single-level class so they have to repeat the same lectures many times, from this group to another.

In such a teaching context, students of the VNEN class are encouraged to be independent learners in constructing knowledge by their own pace, at the same time, to be cooperative and self-governed.

#### **e. Assessment**

The learning assessment is encouraged to be multi-directional that stimulates self-assessment combining with mutual assessment and teachers’ assessment. Pupils’ learning results are now not only basing on summative tests at the end of each period such as semester or school years but also rooting on formative assessments that are collected during the learning process of pupils, through various activities such as discussion, presentation, raising questions, or completing own learning products, etc. Besides, the VNEN model calls the involvement of communities in educating children through support children’s learning and assessment.

#### **f. Shortcomings**

By the 2015-2016 school year, the model had been expanded to all 63 provinces of Vietnam with a total of 3,745 participating schools, both rural and urban, surpassing the goals of the project one year before the deadline (Le M.H., 2018b). From the government’s perspective, the big success of the project has been evidenced by the expanded number of participating

schools, including schools receiving the funding from the Global Partnership for Education and schools voluntarily adopted the VNEN model without being funded is big success of the project.

However, quantitative indicators cannot provide a complete picture of ‘scaling up’ education reforms (Le M.H., 2018a), whether at global or national level (Coburn, 2003). In the ending stage of the project, especially as the self-evaluative report of VNEN project that confirmed the great success of the VNEN had been circulated online at the end of 2015, there has been controversies in media related to the VNEN model. Notably, Giaoduc.net [Education.net], a very popular online newspaper, published a series of editorials by educators who had experimented VNEN in their classroom, even pupils’ parents were deeply involved in the discussion. Most of the opinions are aimed to criticise the project by pointing various problems such as overly-formulaic textbook exercises; grammatical mistakes in the self-instructional guides; the challenge of arranging desks into round tables in current narrow classrooms leaving no space for the teacher to walk around the class and causing uncomfortable space for pupils; and inadequate preparation for teachers and administrators.

The mismatches between the original model, EN of Colombia and the adopted model, VNEN of Vietnam have been synthesised through research and media (Hoang, 2016; Le M.H., 2018b) and are described in Table I.8.

After nearly two first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Vietnam has been abuzz with ambitious educational reforms. Many studies found that, despite the apparent influence of the learner-centred approach (Saito et al., 2008), these study findings reflect the concern expressed by Duggan (2001) that the reform process might be more a matter of continuity rather than of change. Accordingly, the pedagogical approaches of learner-centred and constructivism have not been deeply deployed in classroom practice. Although the constructivist approach is confirmed as a core pedagogy of the VNEN model, the constructivism is still an abstract idea, not easily grasped by teachers whose entire education and training process has followed a “banking pedagogy” model of teachers depositing knowledge into the students’ mind (Freire 1993; Nguyen and Hall 2017).

**Table I.8. Mismatches between VNEN and its original model**

<b>EN - Colombia</b>	<b>VNEN - Vietnam</b>
Applying multi-grade methodologies that bring together students of different ages and abilities.	Applying single-grade classes, students have the same age and more and less equal abilities.
Being associated almost exclusively with rural schooling and small-size classes.	Being widespread both rural and urban schooling, especially, the urban classes with very big-size classes (40 students on average).
The flexible and grass-rooted curriculum that is designed by local teachers and based on the needs and characteristics of local context.	The rigid and national curriculum that requires teachers closely to implement fixed contents and is composed by MoET and used in common over the country.
Teachers are autonomous to design and develop their teaching materials	Self-study textbooks are reformatted from the traditional textbooks with more instructions and activities, especially ready-made forms and meticulous instructed lessons.
Enhancing the relationship between schools and communities in rural regions; learning contents integrate local issues.	Connection with the community is not clear; learning contents are prescribed by the curriculum and textbooks.

Many previous studies of the educational reforms have repeatedly found that new innovations are inevitably reinterpreted and mediated at the classroom level as they map against teachers and administrators' long-held beliefs and practice (Pham T.H.T., 2011). Our research thus seeks to investigate the perspectives of the local teachers toward the VNEN pedagogies, specifically the constructivist approach, and explore the extent to which these pedagogies are implemented in the specifically local context of education and culture. Our work would be base for the design of constructivism-aligned curriculum that will be employed in the experiment of this research.

An examination of the specific contexts of history, society, politics, economy and culture of Vietnam provides a general picture in which education and educational reforms are directly influenced. The synthesis and analysis of the two latest pedagogical reforms in Vietnam in terms of aims, approaches, strategies, roles of teachers and learners and assessments revealed the limitations of these reforms. This suggests a need to reconsider local teachers' long-held beliefs together with the classroom context. Any educational reform is not purely a process if quantitative expansion and impose pedagogical approaches into new context.



### **Chapter I.3. The Dialectical Constructivist Approach in Primary Vietnamese Language Instruction**

Vietnam has implemented the reform in teaching and learning for its centralised education at primary education. Through a curriculum and textbook innovation which has taken place in year 2000, the application of advanced educational theories adapted from Western cultures have been deployed (Do, 2002). In the past few recent years, the Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Education and Training at all levels of the Vietnamese education system has been considered as an urgent task of the enterprise of fostering industrialisation and modernisation in Vietnam (Centre-Committee, 2012). In this context, the educational reform initiative entitled Escuela Nueva has been introduced as a new primary schooling model in Vietnam, covering grades 2–5. Being explicitly confirmed by experts who adapted and developed this model, the general trend of the reform is to move education to what in theory is described as a dialectical constructivist approach. However, as previous studies on attempts to introduce constructivism to Vietnam have found, constructivism is an abstract idea not easily grasped by teachers whose entire education and training process has followed a “traditional pedagogy” model of teachers depositing knowledge into the students’ minds (Freire, 1993; Le M.H., 2018b).

This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the dialectical constructivist approach among alternative notions of constructivism. Then, the application of the dialectical constructivist approach in the field of first language education under the VNEN-based reform will be clarified. Key features of the dialectical constructivist approach of Vietnamese language education will also be defined and analysed so that these features can be used as a criteria list for classroom observation to define to what extent the teachers' practices meet this list. Together with the descriptions of the dialectical constructivist approach, the comparison between this approach and the traditional approach that has retained for many decades in Vietnam education is also carried out to reveal differences, even contradictions, between them. In other words, the comparison will define challenges of the dialectical constructivist application in Vietnam context.

### **I.3.1. Dialectical Constructivist Approaches**

#### **1.3.1.1. A Variety of Constructivist Pedagogical Approaches**

The constructivist pedagogical approaches have originated from different researchers. In detail, the basic ideas of constructivism stem from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Especially, Socrates is a person who is known as the first constructivist in literature. Despite of this idea, (Von Glasersfeld, 1995) emphasises that the first ideas about constructivism was brought up by Giambattista Vico. In addition to this, there are people who think constructivism as the reflection of Kant's philosophy.

The multiple roots of constructivism, however, are plentifully developed through two mainstreams in the research of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget's research described cognitive development as occurring through a process of *adaptation (adjustment)* to the world (Hogan and Tudge, 1999). Adaptation comprises the sub-processes of *assimilation* and *accommodation*. Assimilation occurs when an outside event is brought into an existing scheme. During this process, we modify or change new information to fit into our schemas (what we already know). Accommodation occurs when we restructure or modify what we already know so that new information can fit in better; at that time, low-level schemata are modified and transformed into higher level schemata (Piaget, 1985). Rejecting Piaget's assumption that it is possible to separate learning from its social context, Lev Vygotsky argued for the importance of culture and context in forming understanding; hence, learning was defined not to be a purely individual process but a social construct as mediated by

language via social discourse (Harris and Graham, 1994; Ngo V. T. H. et al., 2015; O'Donnell, 2012; Pitsoe, 2007). In addition, basing on the various understandings of the concept, the research of (Moshman, 1982) provided a description of alternative views of constructivism, characterising by *exogenous*, *endogenous*, and *dialectical constructivism*. Thus, there is no single constructivist theory. The essential variety in understanding constructivism is in the conceptualisation of the relative roles of the individual and the context in which the individual is embedded. Despite differences in approaches to constructivism, there are also commonalities among various perspectives. At the heart of most cognitive approaches to understand the constructivism is the notion that knowledge is constructed by the learner and influenced by the learners' previous experiences; the individual is "active", accordingly, human cognitive development is not just responding to stimuli, as in behaviourism, but engaging, grappling, and seeking to make sense of things based on utilising prior knowledge and experiences (Pitsoe, 2007).

(Marshall, 1996) noted that the purpose of the above discussion is to illuminate the difference among a number of theoretical frameworks and identify their contributions and limitations in understanding classroom learning. Thus, the notable issue in this study is necessary to be clarified is how the dialectical constructivist approach is distinguished from the others in terms of understanding and application.

#### **1.3.1.2. What is a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy?**

The dialectical constructivism that is best illustrated by Vygotsky's theory (1978), was developed by (Moshman, 1982) and synthesised and enriched by (O'Donnell, 2012). The source of knowledge, from these perspectives, lies in the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment. Cognitive development occurs because of a dialectical relationship between the individual and the social context in which the learner develops (Hogan and Tudge, 1999). The implications for teaching from this perspective of the dialectical constructivism is that the teacher provides a model for the student's learning and scaffolds their efforts until they develop competence in a particular skill (Green and Gredler, 2002). The teacher scaffolds the efforts of the child until the child develops competence in the particular skill being targeted.



### **1.3.1.3. Dialectical Constructivism among Alternative Concepts**

#### **a. Dialectical Constructivist Approach vs. Traditional Approach**

##### ***a1. Arguments Around the Constructivist Approach and Traditional Approach***

Pedagogical beliefs of teaching and learning are widely categorised into knowledge transmission or knowledge construction. Although the reality might be complex and multifaceted, teachers with teacher-centred and content-oriented perspectives tend to adopt teaching practices—tend to lecture others excessively—that have been known as a traditional trend and have rooted in education of Vietnam in specific, and Asian countries in general. In contrast, teachers with student-centred and learning-oriented perspectives tend to adopt constructivist teaching practices that are considered a progressive trend coming from Western education (Sing and Khine, 2008). Notably, (Poplin, 1988) drew a sharp contrast between constructivism and explicit instruction, arguing that explicit instruction is a form of rote instruction that is decontextualized.

Constructivist approaches, however, are not without critics. (Kirschner et al., 2006) argued that minimally guided instruction (representing problem-based learning, project-based learning, and inquiry learning) is ineffective. In contrast, (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007) disagreed with the assumption that problem-based learning and inquiry learning are minimally guided because students learn contents, strategies, and self-directed learning skills through collaboratively solving problems, reflecting on their experience, and engaging self-directed inquiry. This group of authors pointed to the important role of scaffolding of various kinds that are present in these approaches.

##### ***a2. The Teaching and Learning Beliefs of Constructivist Approach vs. Traditional Approach***

In 2009, OECD published two indices of teachers' beliefs about constructivist approach and traditional approach, as follows.

From the constructivist perspective, teachers should engage their teaching in a more student-centred environment, rather than teacher-centred one. They should not be the sole provider of information; they are not responsible for transmitting knowledge to students (Doolittle and Hicks, 2003). Instead, they are responsible for creating a learning environment in which students interact with peers and the teacher, and for providing students with opportunities to use previous knowledge to construct new knowledge. In this

environment, teachers facilitate the learning process of students by giving directions and clues. Constructivism proposes that students build their knowledge based on previous knowledge, so they need to be actively involved in the learning process (Brady, 2004). Furthermore, in a constructivist classroom, students interact with each other as well as with content, which enables them to be active participants and to be responsible for their learning processes. Therefore, the more active students are in the learning process, the more likely they are to be engaged (Brady, 2004). In some cases, constructivist teachers need to use direct teaching, at which point they should establish the extent of opportunities for students to construct knowledge by themselves (Marlowe and Page, 2005). Since the dialectical constructivist is believed that knowledge is constructed internally through exchanging ideas among learners as well as by learners' own experiences, it is important for teachers to create an ideal environment for students (Brady, 2004).

**Table I.9. The beliefs of constructivist approach and traditional approach (OECD, 2009, p. 93)**

<b>Constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning</b>	<b>Traditional beliefs about teaching and learning</b>
The role as a teacher is to facilitate students' own inquiry.	Effective/good teachers demonstrate the correct way to solve a problem.
Students learn best by finding solutions to problems on their own.	Instruction should be built around problems with clear, correct answers, and around ideas that most students can grasp quickly.
Students should be allowed to think of solutions to practical problems themselves before the teacher shows them how they are solved.	How much students learn depends on how much background knowledge they have; that is why teaching facts is so necessary.
Thinking and reasoning processes are more important than specific curriculum content.	A quiet classroom is generally needed for effective learning.

Regarding traditional approach, teachers in a traditional manner and function take role as information sources during teaching (Brooks, 1999). They are also responsible for disseminating information to students. Teachers with a traditional approach look for correct answers to know whether students learn what is taught. Thus, while constructivist teachers need more time to prepare a learning environment than "traditional teachers", the latter cover the learning subject in a shorter time than constructivist teachers (Slavin and Davis, 2006).

## **b. Other Relevant Constructivist Concepts**

The dialectical constructivism is also distinguished from three other kinds of constructivism: social constructivism, exogenous and endogenous (Green and Gredler, 2002; Moshman, 1982).

### ***b1. Social Constructivism***

Social constructivism can be seen as a variation of Moshman's dialectical constructivism. According to (Green and Gredler, 2002), the goal of learning from a social constructivist perspective is to construct and reconstruct meaning, knowledge, and context through discourse communities. If dialectical constructivist involves the interaction of the individual with the environment, then social constructivism specifies a particular kind of environment, that is community. Thus, the individual interacts and participates within a social context, is influenced and changed by that context, and in turn acts to change it (Green and Gredler, 2002). The implication for teaching is that pupils participate in discourse and activity practices that are themselves continuing to evolve, resulting in the co-construction of knowledge. As such, this relationship between individual and environment, social constructivism is regarded to make the dialectical constructivism more specific.

### ***b2. Exogenous Constructivism***

Exogenous constructivism rooted in the mechanistic metaphor of knowers as machine and information-processing theories. The construction of knowledge is thus fundamentally a reconstruction of structures (empirical relationships, presented in formation, observed behaviour patterns, etc.), preformed in the external reality (Moshman, 1982).

Exogenous constructivism is characterised by the belief that knowledge is derived from the external environment. Thus, the construction of knowledge, or learning, is fundamentally a reconstruction of structures that are present in the environment (Moshman, 1982). The task of teaching from this perspective is to provide the student with an explicit representation of desired knowledge that in turn can be easily assimilated by the learner. The learners' role is to develop an internal representation that is similar to the external representation. This type of constructivism is similar to the information processing type of constructivism identified by (Prawat, 1996) and discussed more fully by (Mayer, 1996). Thus, it can be said that the exogenous constructivist features are aligned with traditional approaches in teaching and learning.

### ***b3. Endogenous Constructivism***

The next kind of constructivism is endogenous constructivism, rooted in the organismic metaphor of knower as biological organism and internally constructed new knowledge from existing knowledge through the child's active inter-coordination of his cognitive actions.

Endogenous constructivism is characterised by an adaptation process of cognitive development illustrated by Piagetian theory (Moshman, 1982; Piaget, 1985). According to (Piaget, 1985), the adaptation process comprises the sub-processes of *assimilation* and *accommodation*; the construction of new knowledge virtually comes from within (endogenous). The individual constructs new knowledge structures from existing structures rather than from the environment. The task of teaching, from this perspective, is to create an environment to prompt exploration and facilitate the learner's experience of rethinking ideas (Green and Gredler, 2002). As discussed above, this kind of constructivism is also rejected by some researchers due to overemphasise the individual's learning process, separating learning from its social context.

The two kinds of constructivism, exogenous and endogenous, are considered as the same line with traditional conceptions in teaching and learning. To mediate and make progressive steps based on these conventional approaches, Moshman's framework suggested a dialectical constructivism that regards the continual interaction between the individual and the social environment. The next section will focus on the dialectical constructivism in teaching and learning Vietnamese language as a first language.

#### **1.3.1.4. Key Features of Dialectical Constructivist Approaches**

The key word "dialectical" making the constructivist approach different from other relevant kinds of constructivism can be defined as follows. Regarding the source of all knowledge, it is considered as the continuing interactions between an individual and the environment. Moshman (1982) argued that new knowledge is a constructed synthesis which resolves the inevitable contradictions arising during the course of such interactions. Such a synthesis may be seen as an equilibration of assimilatory and accommodatory poles in the dynamic interaction of the inseparable knower and known (p. 175). Accordingly, new knowledge does not simply impose itself on the other as the exogenous constructivism. Different from the endogenous constructivism, the dialectical constructivism takes the individual and the environment as equal sources of knowledge. The community and diversity between the

dialectical constructivism and other kinds of constructivism support the determination of its core features in the following description.

The dialectical constructivist perspective has provided implications to teaching and learning and has re-conceptualised teaching and learning. Within a dialectical constructivist perspective, teaching and learning are defined as a continuous interaction in which learners are actively involved in interactive activities on social environment with the teacher and peers and use their existing knowledge to construct new knowledge (Moshman, 1982; Pitsoe, 2007). Key features of a dialectical constructivist approach were formulated in many studies and proved to be consistent with characteristics of problem-based learning and inquiry learning (Anderson R.D., 2007; Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). In our work, we applied these introduced by O'Donnell, 2012, summarised in Table I.10, then explained in more detail.

**Table I.10. The characteristics of dialectical constructivism in language teaching and learning**

<b>Features</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
1. Knowledge is constructed by learners.	1.1. Pupils rely in active processes to construct their own knowledge.
	1.2. Pupils' own pace of knowledge construction is respected.
2. Learning is social participation	2.1. Pupils work in peers, small group, or communities.
	2.2. Pupils actively share ideas.
3. Knowledge is based on experience and authentic tasks	3.1. Pupils' experience is provoked.
	3.2. Pupils are immersed in realistic learning situations.
4. Learning stresses scaffolding.	4.1. Pupils are logically supported in learning by their instructors.
	4.2. Learning contents are designed to be appropriate with pupils' proximal development.
5. Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable.	5.1. Types of communities, e.g., families, organisations, institutions, etc., are involved to support pupils' learning.
	5.2. Interactions of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil should be equitable rather than hierarchical.

### **1) Knowledge is Constructed by Learners**

The first characteristic of the dialectical constructivist approach is that learners construct their knowledge. Dewey said that education was not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but

an active and constructive process. Even when we use other people's ideas, we assess and modify them rather than just absorbing them in a pre-set form. From a dialectical constructivist viewpoint, the primary purpose of knowledge is to help humans function in the world, not to describe universal reality. Piaget maintained that learners construct ways to make sense of experiences, and will continue to use those constructions as long as they work. Clearly, those constructions are suited to specific needs and circumstances of each individual, so we would take his/her appropriate directions (Beck and Kosnik, 2006).

Learners cannot grasp new ideas without linking them to existing concepts, they must interpret new ideas in the context of their present interests and understandings. The individual learner's interests and understandings are definitely various so her process of knowledge construction also follows its own pace.

## **2) Learning is Social Participation**

Pupils' participation is an important part of dialectical approaches to constructivism. According to (Wenger, 1998), learners develop competence through participation in activities that are valued in the community, and from which meaning can be made. New knowledge is integrated with prior knowledge when the learners actively interact with their environment. According to (Vygotsky, 1978) when working with peers, in groups and community, a child can imitate the cognitive skills modelled by more skilled members of the community. The adults or other peers operate in the child's zone of proximal development to assist the child to perform in ways that he or she could not do without assistance. Eventually, the help fades, and the child internalizes the skills and can perform them without assistance.

Furthermore, (Bandura, 2000) confirmed that pupils may experience collective efficacy when they participated in a valued activity together. An individual who is identified among his group or community and experiences in collective efficacy is provided motivation to actively involved in learning (Johnson and Johnson, 1999).

### **3) Knowledge is based on Authentic Tasks and Experience**

According to (Saxe, 1988), the experience children have in their communities is an important contributor to their cognitive development. Many research pointed out that instruction is likely to be most effective when it capitalises on students' prior experiences and interests. The dialectical constructivist approach values and explores all aspects of student's experiences about society, culture as well as personal interests and values. The practical experiences of the students will prompt them to develop strategies for accomplishing their daily learning and work.

Furthermore, in the dialectical constructivist approach to learning, the tasks in which learners engage are situated in meaningful real-world tasks. In other words, the tasks are authentic and all participant have legitimate roles in accomplishing them (Jonassen et al., 1999).

### **4) Learning-Stressed Scaffolding**

According to Vygotsky (see O'Donnell, 2012), socio-cognitive development occurs through face-to-face interaction between a less knowledgeable member of a group and a more knowledgeable other, who scaffolds or supports the learning of the less knowledgeable individual (Hogan and Tudge, 1999). (Wood et al., 1976) defined scaffolding as "a process that enables a child or a novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which may be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). To fulfil effective scaffolding, the learner and guide jointly establish a zone of proximal development, in which the learner is able to perform at a level that he or she could not achieve without assistance. There is a notice that one the learner has a grasp of the target skill, the master reduces (or fades) his participation, providing only limited hints, refinements, and feedback to the learner (Collins et al., 1988). The eventual fading of support is critical so that the child can engage in independent activity. (Applebee and Langer, 1983) identified the following five features of appropriate instructional scaffolding, as in Table I.11.

**Table I.11. Features of scaffolding (Applebee & Langer, 1983)**

<b>Scaffolding</b>	<b>Features</b>
1. Intentionality	Each instructional activity should contribute to helping the learner complete the task.
2. Appropriateness	The task should difficult enough to require assistance.
3. Appropriate strategies	The teacher or guide model task-related strategies and asks questions for approaching the task.
4. Equitable relationship	The teacher and student are partners each other, the teacher does not play the role of evaluator. The teacher must invite the learner' efforts and redirect the learner's strategies.
5. Support fading	The teacher should fade his or her support when the learner can perform the task alone.

These features can be used as anchors to observe and evaluate a scaffolding activity.

### **5) Learning Communities should be Inclusive and Equitable**

The social environment will vary in complexity, ranging from the relatively simple interactional schemes between members of a dyad to more complex social environments. In various communities (families, organizations, institutions), teachers can promote high level cognitive activities by asking questions or handing tasks that vary in complexity. Asking/handing increasingly complex questions/tasks results in higher quality discourse that is not just important for interaction in classrooms but outside of schools (King and Rosenshine, 1993; King et al., 1998).

Furthermore, Dewey and Piaget stressed inclusion within the learning community and helping children develop a sense of dignity and their own ideas and way of life. In addition, as discussed above, an equitable environment where teacher takes role as partner rather than evaluator stimulates the scaffolding of strategies as well as the invitation to pupils' efforts in learning.

We will hypothesize, in our study to come on Vietnamese language instruction at primary, that the progressing characteristics of Confucian heritage culture, including collectivism, the virtue focus and the family value, are in alignment with the features of the dialectical constructivism; whilst the other characteristics, including 1) emphasising theoretical knowledge rather than empirical knowledge, 2) stressing hierarchical relationship in which the teacher is considered as superior and the transmitter of knowledge to students, and 3)



respecting stability and harmony among its human values, diverge from the dialectical constructivism.

### **I.3.2. Teachers' responses to the VNEN Constructivist Approach in Vietnamese Language Teaching**

In this section, we will examine the literature concerning teachers' responses to the reform toward the constructivist approach introduced by the VNEN model to Vietnamese education, through the particular policies of curriculum, self-study textbooks, classroom organisation, and the process of teaching and learning. According to Fullan, an educational innovation is multidimensional and there are at least three dimensions at stake (Fullan, 2001):

- the possible alternation of beliefs;
- the possible use of new or revised materials/resources; and
- the possible use of new teaching approaches.

All three aspects of change are necessary to achieve a particular education goal or set of goals. In the case of the VNEN model-based reform in Vietnamese language teaching, school teachers are required to adopt all three above dimensions. For the first dimension, the teachers of VNEN model are required to change their long-held beliefs of teaching that are in line with traditional approach into an innovative approach of teaching, namely the constructivist pedagogy. To implement the constructivist pedagogy in teaching practices, they are trained to use the self-study textbooks whose content designs are expected as means to transfer the constructivist approach to teaching practices. Likewise, the innovative teaching approaches based on the constructivist pedagogy are concretised through a three-phase procedure of one lesson, ten-step of pupils' learning process, class organisation, and assessment methods. Along with the self-study textbooks, these policies of the VNEN model are aimed at fulfilling the constructivist pedagogy in the practices of Vietnamese language teaching. Based on these requirements, teachers are expected to shift from the standpoint of knowledge transmitters into facilitators or instructors for the pupils' self-construction, making overall changes, even contrary to their long-held beliefs. Therefore, Fullan (2001) argued that all real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle.

The three above dimensions are all concerned with teachers' responses to the reform. Teachers' adoption of educational innovations or new practices depends on the degree to

which the assumptions inherent to the reform are congruent with their beliefs and understandings (Richardson Virginia, 2003). Wexler pointed out that the changing conceptions of professional performance can come into conflict with the daily practices and professional orientations of teachers (Wexler, 2002). Therefore, teachers' commitment toward a new pedagogical reform is one of crucial factor for deciding the success of an educational reform. Through a literature review, we recognise a continuum between two positions of teachers' responses toward pedagogical reform that are called as the *technician* and the *professional*. The understandings and characteristics of these two pedagogical positions are described as follows.

### **I.3.2.1. Teacher as Professionals**

A teacher standing on the *professional* position can make adaption toward the demands of pedagogical reform because they filter the new requirements through their existing professional ideologies, perspectives and identities (Broadfoot et al., 1988; Woods P., 1995). According to Helsby, the professionals have great and extensive knowledge, skills to use methods and procedure based on their theoretical knowledge and research (Helsby, 1997). Besides, they have over-riding individual or collective commitment to the well-being of their clients and the autonomy to produce their own judgements and decisions in that they feel free from external non-professional controls and constraints. Barrow modified the characteristics of the teachers as professionals who can adopt a collaborative stance toward teaching and get themselves involved in the decision-making processes concerning the larger community of educational practitioners outside their classroom (Barrow, 2007). Ginns and colleagues argued that teachers as professionals are required to be experts not only in subject matter but in social relations, interpreting, participating in and understanding the daily lives and interests of students, facilitating learning, and reflective practices (Ginns et al., 2001). Fullan (2001) supported the idea that collegiality measured through the frequency of communication, mutual support, help etc., is a strong indicator of whether change (pedagogical reforms) will be implemented. In sum, in the context of this study, we adopt the attribute framework of the teacher as professional that was synthesised by Hoang as follows (Hoang, 2011):

In the context of the pedagogical reform in Vietnam, teachers are required to become “professional” in their job. Especially, in the VNEN reform, as described in the training

manuals, the teachers are encouraged to be autonomous in their teaching practices. However, their professional autonomy here is fulfilled through adjusting the available contents in the self-study textbook rather than enhancing teachers' autonomy to all aspects of teaching and learning process. The constructivist pedagogy is considered to be implemented by completing the learning activities in the textbooks. Therefore, the VNEN teachers still over-rely on ideas and designs that were pre-determined by the VNEN developers. In short, the teachers' professional competences are limited under the centralised policies mandated by the VNEN model that makes constraints for teachers to become professionals.



Figure I.4. The characteristics of teachers as professionals

### I.3.2.2. Teachers as Technicians

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen strong changes in politics, economics, culture, and especially education that has led to changes in the national policies of education and teachers' pedagogical development. These changes are concerned not only with changing what educators do but who they are (Ball S. J., 2006). In Vietnam, the top-down education reform at the beginning of this century with the compulsory national curriculum and centralised textbooks has resulted in de-professionalising teaching. Particularly, teacher professionalism is devalued as being described and treated as *technicians* rather than *professionals*. The two noticeable attributes of the so-called technician are loss of autonomy and deskilling, a statement of losing control over the meaning and purpose of work. These

two changes have been resulted from the educational policies that have been conducted for some lately decades, specifically in Vietnam context.

There is an increasingly prescribed and narrowed curriculum (Carlson, 2005; Kim E., 2003), the development of curriculum is separated from the school teachers who directly deliver a product and implement plans (Hargreaves, 2001). The rendering and assessment on teachers' effectiveness as governable rather than autonomous (Leaton, 2007; Rowe, 2003). The control of the curriculum and textbooks conducted by administrators certainly leads to control teachers who use them in their daily practices (Pinar, 2004). Gradually, the teachers have no voice in the discourse of educational policies, acting as the object rather than subject of the educational restructuring (Ball Stephen J, 1995, 1997). In such position, the teachers are forced to adopt technician status in that they have little control over their work methods and processes. They become increasingly accountable to the government and display a tendency to comply with the existing hierarchical system. They also fail to take into account their prior experiential knowledge as professional teachers. The teachers of technician status allow the Government to impose them the role of passive implementers of externally driven changes within its centralisation agenda.

In the VNEN model, although the teachers are encouraged to become professionals in their practices, they are constrained by the centralised policies as conventional ways of pedagogical reforms in Vietnam. The constructivist pedagogy is expected to transfer to the teaching practices through the self-study textbooks rather than the teachers' professional competences. This poses the teachers to become technicians who implements the available ideas rather than the professionals, who have autonomy in profession as being required by the VNEN-model policies.

Educational reform has been compared as an unstoppable flood of similar ideas spreading across the globe, regardless of the culture and histories of the education systems (Ball S. J., 2006). In the such a context, school teachers are required to adopt and put into practice the new requirements. As a result, the teachers will have diverse responses to the governmental requirements for changes in the pedagogical reform of curriculum and textbook centralisation. Troman argued that teachers always adapt the policies of educational change through their filter of professional beliefs and practices, their responses are likely to range from compliance to resistance and rejection (Troman, 1996). In our context, we will adapt

the possible responses in teacher participants' beliefs and practices toward the pedagogical reform under the VNEN policies that range between *technician* to *professional* position. There may appear variations between the two positions of the teachers' responses, the practical results from the surveys will critically notice this.

In the present chapter, the dialectical constructivist approach was analysed in the comparison with the traditional approach and other relevant kinds of constructivism at all aspects of teaching and learning process. Especially, the core features of the dialectical constructivism are also defined as the basis for a survey research about the teachers' beliefs toward the constructivist pedagogy in primary Vietnamese language education, mandated by the VNEN model. However, the cultural differentiation certainly happening as the application of Western pedagogy in non-Western contexts leads to the adaptations that are conducted by the VNEN developers. From the standpoint of teachers, depending on their responses toward the requirements of VNEN-based reform, they are recognised as professionals or technicians.

## **Chapter I.4. Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices**

The initial goal of the research about teachers' beliefs has been to establish a clear psychological construct that could serve as an explanatory and predictive mechanism for explaining differences in teachers' practices (Fives and Buehl, 2012). The way teachers adapt or adopt new practices in their classrooms is considered to relate to whether their beliefs match the assumptions inherent to new programs or methods. Thus, understanding teachers' beliefs may be helpful to the development and implementation of new approaches. The present chapter focuses on teachers' beliefs and their relationships with teaching practices.

### **I.4.1. Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs**

Numerous research suggest that the school teachers are central to contribute to the effectiveness of any new policy implementation (Carrington et al., 2010; Prawat, 1992; Yilmaz and Sahin, 2011). Teachers' beliefs are an important factor that stimulates change processes in schools, as well as the adoption of new approaches and strategies to be used in classrooms (Fluck and Dowden, 2010). Over the past three decades, teacher beliefs have attracted much attention from researchers, the mark for this trend can be seen in the studies by scholars as Allwright (2014), Borg (2003), Cuban (1993), Eisenhart et al. (1998), Kagan (1990), Pajares (1992), and Verloop et al. (2001), etc. It is, however, not easy to provide an

overview of the literature in this field as different researchers have tended to conceptualise the notion of teacher beliefs in different ways. This chapter attempts to look at how the term has been defined and how teacher beliefs are different from other equivalent concepts.

#### **I.4.1.1. Definitions**

##### **a. Teachers' Beliefs**

In the initial definition by the *Oxford dictionary*, the belief definition is described as “An acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof”. The notions of teacher beliefs can be traced back to the research of (Nespor, 1987) and (Pajares, 1992). The former argued that people’s ‘beliefs’ “are crucial components of their practice” and “have important influences on the way they conceptualise tasks and learn from experience (p. 317). In addition, the latter defined ‘beliefs’ as “an individual’s judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition” (p. 316). Pajares also mentions:

“They travel in disguise and often under alias – attitude, values, judgements, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, and social strategy, to name but a few that can be found in the literature.”

Bullough, in a paper entitled “Methods for studying beliefs: teacher writing, scenarios, and metaphor analysis” (Bullough, 2015), pointed out that “beliefs have come to be understood as situated, grounded in specific contexts and practices, and, operating with differing intensities and levels of commitment, capable of shaping interpretations of events, thereby “[disposing] people toward particular actions” (p. 151). From the perspective that focuses on the things and ways that teachers believe, we adopt Pajares’ definition of beliefs as “the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives” (p. 316).

##### **b. Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs**

Pajares noted that teachers (of whatever their students’ level) do not just have ‘teacher beliefs’; rather, they have beliefs about specific topics or constructs, or about many different aspects (e.g., their roles, their students, the subject areas they teach, and the schools they work in, etc.) related to teaching, at varying levels of specificity; and in particular contexts these specific beliefs seeming to matter in varied ways (Pajares, 1992).

Research has indicated that teachers possess a vast array of complex beliefs about pedagogical issues. These pedagogical beliefs can be thought as strong indicators of teachers' instructional practices and serve as lenses through which new experiences can be understood, which instructional judgements and decisions are made, which teaching methods are manifested, which subjects and activities are chosen, how teaching and learning environments are, and how learning evaluation is applied (Borg, 2003; Cantu, 2001; Handal and Herrington, 2003; Pajares, 1992).

#### **I.4.1.2. The Structure and Functions of Teachers' Pedagogical Beliefs**

In spite of arguments that teachers' beliefs are important influences on the way they conceptualise tasks and learn from their practice, there has been relatively little attention on the structures and functions of teachers' beliefs. Therefore, many researchers attempted to define the structure of beliefs grounded in current research in cognitive psychology and cognitive science, and suggested several key functions of beliefs in teachers' thinking.

Regarding the structure of "teachers' pedagogical beliefs", we adapted the research process of Fang when he puts this concept in a wider perspective, teachers' cognition (Fang, 1996). 'Teachers' beliefs are considered as one of categories of teachers' cognition that is also called as 'teachers' thought processes', together with two other categories as *teachers' interactive thoughts and decision* and *teacher planning* (Clark C.M. and Peterson, 1986). Accordingly, teachers' pedagogical beliefs represent the rich store of general knowledge of objects, people, events and their characteristic relationships that teachers have that affect their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions, as well as their classroom behaviour. In these, the general knowledge comprises four dimensions that are importantly involved in the process of teaching: *subject-matter content knowledge* (science knowledge of the subjects); *pedagogical content knowledge* (knowledge of teaching/instructional methods); *curricular knowledge* (knowledge of alternative curriculum materials for given subjects/topics); and *personal practice knowledge* (teachers' experiential knowledge of students' learning styles, interests, needs, strengths and difficulties and a repertoire of instructional techniques and class management skills) (Beattie, 1995; Shulman, 1986).

Fives and Buehl argued that beliefs may serve different functions or roles in relation to teachers' knowledge and actions (Fives and Buehl, 2012). Accordingly, the beliefs may be



used by teachers to 1) filter and interpret information, 2) frame a specific problem or task (e.g. lesson planning), and 3) guide immediate action.

### **I.4.1.3. Belief and its Synonyms**

#### **a. Belief and Knowledge**

Among the confusion regarding the terms, some researchers managed to clarify the concept “beliefs” by making a distinction between beliefs and knowledge. Nespor (Nespor, 1987) argued that belief systems (that was initially defined in the *Oxford dictionary* as “a set of principles or tenets which together form the basis of a religion, philosophy, or moral code”) and Pajares (1992) argued that they “are by their very nature disputable, more inflexible, and less dynamic than knowledge systems”. Additionally, Nespor mentioned that knowledge systems are open to evaluation and critical examination; beliefs are not. This author went to the conclusion that beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organise and define tasks and problems, and are stronger predictors of behaviours. However, there is opposite notions of beliefs and knowledge when Grossman et al. (1989) came to a conclusion: “we recognise that the distinction [between teachers’ belief and knowledge] is blurry at best” (p. 31). A similar conclusion was made by (Woods D., 1996) and explained by Verloop et al. (2001) as “in the mind of the teachers, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined” (p. 446).

#### **b. Belief and Conception**

Another distinction is between “belief” and “conception” that is defined as “the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses”, from the *Oxford dictionary*. Perception is generally characterised by a multiplicity of labels which have been posited to describe, wholly or in part, the psychological context of teaching.

For the purpose of this study, it can be assumed that “beliefs” and “conceptions” and other terms such as “attitudes”, “perception”, “opinions”, even “understanding” are better to be synonymous. These components in turn impact on language learning and teaching that can be expressed as follows: if a teacher “believes” that a teaching method is ineffective, he or she “understands and perceives” how and why the method is ineffective. Indeed, these terms seem to be interchangeable in much of the literature (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

#### I.4.1.4. Methods for Studying Belief

When being as essentially interchangeable terms, teacher knowledge and beliefs are also defined as one component of teacher cognition. Almost 30 years ago, Kagan (1990) identified “five alternative approaches to measuring teachers’ cognition: 1) direct and non-inferential ways of assessing teacher belief, 2) methods that rely on contextual analyses of teachers’ descriptive language, 3) taxonomies used to assess teachers’ self-reflection and awareness of problem-solving strategies, 4) multimethod evaluations of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, and 5) concept mapping techniques” (p. 422). However, Kagan does not mention the teacher biography, autobiography, life history in her view and discussion; how beliefs form and develop over time; what contextual nature of beliefs is; or how beliefs may be expressed or enacted (Bullough, 2015).

Acknowledging the lack of research methods for exploring teachers’ thinking, development, and change, Bullough (2015) tried to explore three methods, each representing less a specific research method than a family of strategies. Accordingly, the first method of studying beliefs is *teacher writing*, especially including biographical writing; the second is the use of *scenarios*; and the third is the analysis of *teacher and teaching metaphors*. Along the way, for the exploration of teachers’ beliefs, both Kagan (1990) and Bullough (2015) agreed on the high value of *multi-method approaches* to the study of teachers’ beliefs. To make a clear agreement, they claimed that the most successful studies used multi-method approaches appeared to be superior because they are most likely to capture *the complex, multifaceted aspects of teaching and learning* (Bullough, 2015).

Based on the literature review of study methods of teacher beliefs, this section presents a research synthesis of the two above authors (Kagan and Bullough). Accordingly, the family of methods encompasses scenarios (spoken forms as part of an interview and clips of subjects’ own classroom teaching) (Rothbaum et al., 2006; Speer, 2005) and metaphors (Mapping the terrain and analysing discourse) (Bullough, 1992, 1994; Dooley, 1998).

##### a. Scenarios

Scenarios mainly take two forms: *videos including subjects’ own classroom teaching* (Speer, 2005) and *spoken form as part of an interview* (Rothbaum et al., 2006). Gill et al. (2004) concluded that teaching scenarios are a first step in examining beliefs change that more accurately reflects perspective teachers’ underlying beliefs than self-report. Concerning the first form of

scenarios, *videos of subjects' own classroom teaching* were introduced as an application of the critical incident technique on educational research. Accordingly, the critical incident technique, at its early use, is essentially a procedure for gathering certain important facts concerning behaviour in defined situations. For example, in a case analysis of teacher education, the incidents of teaching in terms of a range of guiding questions or tasks designed to reveal how the problem or issue represented by the incidents was understood by beginning teachers and then were to compare their thinking to the experts. This kind of exercise, on one side, helps the beginners build knowledge about teaching; secondly, clarifies the point of view regarding the specific critical incident. Concerning the teaching and learning, the expression of teachers in critical incidents, as well as the responses to these critical incidents, are thought as useful research data for opening the inner world of teachers.

About the second form of scenarios, the *spoken form as part of an interview* was also introduced as form of the critical incident technique. Often, through interview reports (or writings) of critical incidents, researchers identify critical incidents which are then analysed, organised, and perhaps rewritten for use in order to gain understanding of how a target group of participants thinks about, feels about, and would respond to the situations. A scale may be used to report the range of responses to the incidents, thus revealing difference in beliefs (Bullough, 2015; Gremler, 2004; Rothbaum et al., 2006).

However, scenario-based forms for the exploration of teachers' beliefs reveal the drawback as applying on specific contexts, that is, exploring the inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and actions. Speer (2005) noted that there are abundant reasons for inconsistencies in professed and attributed beliefs and practice, an issue of enduring importance (Fang, 1996). Because of this drawback of scenarios, this study is persevering with the multi-method approach as being mentioned in many researches.

## **b. Metaphors**

A simile is an explicit comparison; a metaphor an implicit comparison. "In a simile we say explicitly that one thing is like another; in a metaphor we simply speak of one thing as though it were another... [Metaphors] are a kind of concealed analogy" Green (1971), cited from Bullough (2015). Metaphors, particularly root metaphors, operate as implicit theories, loose schemas, that shape how the world of people and things is understood and establish

boundaries for meaning making, including about self and other (Bullough Jr. et al., 1991). Over time, according to Bullough (2015), interest in education-related metaphor has increased. In the line of the argument that behind every educational decision reside “root metaphors” (e.g., teaching is transmission), the author argued these metaphors tacitly shape thought and action.

Teachers’ beliefs of the nature of learning were also called “folk pedagogy” by Bruner (1996), as implicit and unquestioned assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning. Accordingly, the “folk pedagogy” is considered as normative beliefs that guide the teachers’ actions in the classroom. In short, “folk pedagogy” and metaphor are used to explore the nature of teaching and learning from the mind set of teachers, parents, students, and the general society (Bruner, 1996). These “folk pedagogies”, as well as “metaphor”, are not inscribed in any texts or teacher training materials. Rather, they are intuitive understandings that are transmitted from generations to generations through direct observation and participation in the process of education (Le, 2018b).

A research directed by Pham (2010) and aimed at implementing a student-centred learning approach at Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions, using a method suggested by Inayatullah (2004), Casual Layered Analysis (CLA), examined factors that affect the application a student-centred learning approach in Vietnam. Four layers of CLA comprise (see also Table I.12 for examples):

- The first component, which examines *the litany level*. At this level, problems are most commonly oversimplified and exaggerated, most commonly in purely quantitative terms.
- The second component, which is concerned with *systematic causes*. This level is beneath the surface and considered “proof” of the problem.
- The third component, which is *the discourse/worldview level*. At this level, underlying belief systems and deeper assumptions are revealed and unpacked.
- The last component, which is *the myth or metaphor level* which deals with “deep stories, the collective archetypes – the unconscious and often emotive dimensions of the problem or the paradox”. This is the deepest, most emotive, and most creative of all the levels.”

(Inayatullah, 2004, p. 12-13; cited from Pham, 2010, p. 22)

In applying this four-layer method to explore teachers' beliefs of student-centred learning that may support factors or barriers toward the implementation of this pedagogy in Vietnam context, Pham (2010) found out tensions, contradictions and invisible drivers of the traditional learning approach of teacher-centeredness at Vietnamese education institutions.

**Table I.12. A framework of Casual Layered Analysis of the traditional learning approach in Vietnamese education**

Levels of CLA	Layers of the learning approach reform in Vietnam
Litany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese learners are claimed to be 'rote', surface, passive, quiet learners who always use text as the definitive source of knowledge and do not participate in class.</li> <li>• Vietnam needs to change its education system</li> <li>• West is best??? What are the headlines of the criticisms and the alternatives?</li> <li>• Various educational reforms have been carried out to change the situation.</li> </ul>
Systematic causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big classes: the student-centered leaning approach is not supported in crowded classes</li> <li>• Individual and self-learning is limited by limitations of materials and resources</li> <li>• Too much content</li> </ul>
Discourse/Worldview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher's perceptions about teaching and learning that Confucian students only need to receive knowledge from teachers.</li> <li>• Culture of Power Distance is predominant. Students should obey and listen to teachers.</li> <li>• Culture as 'face' saving: not express personal ideas or answer a question in the formal class</li> <li>• New worldview: Sociocultural views of Vygotsky (1978)</li> </ul>
Myth/metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confucius sayings  <i>"One word said by the teacher is worth tons of gold"</i>  <i>"If you want to become a teacher, you first need to respect your teachers"</i> </li> </ul>

In summary, "metaphor" is one effective method to explore teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning essence. Based on these previous research results, we employ "metaphor" as an approach to define teachers' beliefs toward first language instruction in general and the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching and learning Vietnamese language in particular. The metaphor method was employed as follows:

*The first method for studying metaphor in teaching is mapping the terrain:* In the relationship between some metaphor expression and the conceptual system as well as the existing culture background, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that if a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. There were studies that explored that link between beliefs and the enactment of teacher role through metaphor-based reflection. Chen (2003) revealed “dominant” metaphors: *teaching as guiding, teaching as nurturing, teaching as stimulating, and teaching as telling* (Mahlios and Maxson, 1998). Nearly ten later, another study conducted by Saban et al. (2007) identified six “dominant” metaphors for teaching, the most common ones being *teacher as knowledge provider* (student as passive recipient of knowledge) and *teachers as molder/ craftsman* (student as raw material). These studies that identified the change of metaphors and dominant types of metaphors held by teachers through the time, at the same time revealed the change of teacher beliefs of teaching and learning. The changes are explained as having taken place together with the change of the cultural background and teachers’ experience through the time (Bullough, 2015).

Identifying metaphor analysis by using the method *mapping the terrain* has found place in numerous studies, usually involving a survey or questionnaire that after defines the specific metaphors (such as Teaching is Guiding, Nurturing, Molding, Transmitting, Providing Tools, and Engaging in Community), questions designed to elicit information about changes in beliefs over time as well as current desired views of teaching (Alger, 2009). The questionnaire can be started with asking teachers to check from a list a metaphor that best described their school experience; respondents were then to give reasons for the selection, and then generate a personal metaphor for teaching (Massengill et al., 2005). Furthermore, identifying metaphors occasionally finds a place as an item in belief questionnaires such as the Open-Ended Teaching Beliefs Questionnaire (Buehl and Fives, 2009) in which teachers express their thoughts through freely statements rather than “yes/no” answers or multiple-choice answers.

*The second method for studying metaphor is analysing discourse* that is described as an analysis of teacher language comprising written and spoken language through analysing field notes of

classroom observations, the videotaped lessons, and post-teaching verbalisations. Through the analysis of field notes and/or videotaped lessons, the researchers can identify plotlines and teaching metaphors. For example, the study of Pinnegar and her colleagues (London; Pinnegar et al., 2011) identified “12 [metaphorical] plotlines that accounted for these preservice teachers positioning as teachers: teacher as celebrity, teacher as creator, teacher as expert” and so on (p. 643).

As the other approaches to explore teachers’ beliefs, the metaphor analysis reveals its strengths and weakness. On one side, the strengths of the metaphor analysis include: First, metaphors tend to open up fresh perspectives on experience, new way for making meaning. They are ubiquitous, usually generated easily, and operate at various levels and are accessible (although not without difficulty). Next, at the deeper “root” layers, metaphors capture foundation of beliefs – “folk theories”. Finally, metaphors and changes in metaphors have also proven themselves useful for exploring changes in beliefs over time (Bullough, 1997).

On the other side, various weaknesses with metaphor analysis also have been identified. First, teachers’ responses to the metaphors may be distrust because some teachers have difficulty locating metaphors. Next, the ability to simplify complexity and enable discussion of the metaphors may lead to problems for researchers. Accordingly, no single metaphor can or will capture the whole of a teachers’ beliefs system, although root metaphors may get close. Finally, with honouring the richness of metaphorical language but forgetting its flexibility, researchers may assume meaning is shared when is not, and impose these meanings onto teachers.

### **c. The Mixed-method Methodology in Studying Beliefs**

In short, any single method to explore teachers’ beliefs owns its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, *mixed-method methodology* has recently been used to gather data for a rich and sophisticated comprehension of teachers’ beliefs. The methodological need for use of multi-methods that concerned both qualitative and quantitative research, is now commonly accepted and quite popular in educational research. Data from many sources of a mix-method research conduction can enhance the confidence in the findings of a study, at the same time, they enable the confirmation of each other and provide new ideas and fresh insights (Lichtman, 2012; Patton, 1990, 2002).

***c1. What is the Mixed Method Methodology?***

Mixed approach method is usually understood as a procedure for collecting, analysing, and “mixing” or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process in a single study for a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell and Clark, 2017; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003).

The mixed approach method is also seen as transformation procedures – the hybrid between the *sequential explanatory procedures* and the *concurrent procedures* (Creswell and Creswell, 2005). In detail, in the research of Borg (2003), a *concurrent design* that enables researchers to converge quantitative and qualitative data, is adopted to investigate two subdomains of teacher cognition – teacher perception and teacher belief. In another research that surveyed Vietnamese teachers’ beliefs and conceptions conducted by Nguyen V.H. (2012), in a concurrent procedure, the investigator collected both forms of data at the same time: the questionnaire survey was matched with the semi-structured interview; *the sequential explanatory procedure* implied collecting and analysing first quantitative and then qualitative data, that was done by the unstructured interviews and observation, in two consecutive phases within one study, and finally, the information in the interpretation of the overall results was integrated.

***c2. The Mixed-method Approach to Investigate Teacher Beliefs and Practices***

Nguyen, V. H. (2012) argued that “the rationale for mixing both quantitative and qualitative data within one study is descended from the fact that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends and details of a situation” (p. 166).

At first consideration, mixed approaches observations and interviews (qualitative data) are combined with traditional questionnaire surveys (quantitative data) with the hope of reducing limitations of approaches and methods if they are used alone. Alternatively, “one method can be merged within another method to provide insight into different levels or units of analysis” (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). Furthermore, teacher beliefs are a big collection of hidden traits that are influenced by culture, emotions, values, ethics, and learning and teaching experience. Therefore, “teachers’ beliefs can best be understood when they are triangulated by data collected from different actions in their context.



Triangulating data sources is a means for seeking convergence a cross qualitative (e.g., observation and interview), and quantitative (e.g., questionnaire) methods” (Creswell and Clark, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2005).

At a second consideration, quantitative method is often used at first for the following reasons. Firstly, this method can be used to collect some characteristics, attitudes, or behaviours of the population at a large scale; secondly, it is economical to have information about a large population from studying a smaller group of individuals; finally, the researcher being usually an outsider, it can be somewhat less biased (Babbie, 1990).

The last consideration is focused on the reasons for using case study for observation and interview as a type of qualitative method coming after the quantitative method. The nature of case study is understood as having “strong data in reality” (Cohen et al., 2007), because it allows generalisation through the observation of the characteristics of an individual unit in order to establish generalisation about the wider population to which that unit belongs.

Cohen et al. (2007) suggested that the case study approach of observation and interview is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events whereby teachers’ beliefs can be captured. This author identified some inherent advantages in the participant observation approach as “Observation studies are superior to experiments and surveys when data are being collected on non-verbal behaviour. In observation studies, investigators are able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and are able to make appropriate notes about its salient features”. This judgement approves classroom observation method in survey teachers’ beliefs. Additionally, the interview may bear some typical advantages for the appropriateness of using in qualitative methods. First, it may be used as the principal means to gather information having direct bearing on what teacher think. Second, interview can help explore “what is inside a person’s head”. Accordingly, it is possible to measure what a teacher knows (knowledge or information), what a teacher likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a teacher thinks (attitudes and beliefs). Interview, in fact, “can validate other methods, and help researchers to go deeper into the teachers’ answers of the preliminary survey questionnaire and their reasons for responding as they do” (Nguyen, V. H., 2012, p. 168).

In conclusion, while quantitative research is necessarily based on categories pre-determined by the researcher to explore teachers’ beliefs, qualitative research provides a unique

opportunity to enable the study of ‘meaning’ devoid of the same constraints. In addition, while qualitative research helps the researcher capture the teachers’ points of view, whereby it is possible to explore their beliefs, quantitative research allows the researcher to come to some generalisations about a target group of teachers which the individuals belong to (Denzin N. K. and Lincoln, 1994).

### **I.4.2. Teachers’ Practices of Teaching**

In this study, we adopted definition of “practice” from Buehl and Beck (2015). Accordingly, “practice” is defined as any action that is part of teaching process (e.g., planning, decision making, instructional strategies or approaches, assessment, reflection, working with families, and relationship building inside and outside school community). Thus, teachers’ practices are constituted by all activities they carry out during their teaching process, including all phases of preparation for teaching, officially interactive teaching, and teaching evaluation. All these teachers’ activities are conducted in specific environments of classroom, school and outside social communities; in relationships with students, school members, students’ parents and related community members. Notably, these activities with various power of influence, more and least, directly and indirectly influence on students’ learning achievement as well as their personal traits.

### **I.4.3. Teacher’s Beliefs and Practices**

#### **I.4.3.1. Reciprocal Influences between Teachers’ Beliefs and their Practices**

It has become widely recognised that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs play a central role in their teaching practices. However, some researchers described that the teachers’ beliefs also work as barriers to changes in the teaching practices (Fullan and Stegelbauer, 1991; Pajares, 1992).

##### **a. Beliefs influence Practice**

On first side, various researchers have concluded that teachers’ beliefs influence their practices. For example, a considerable number of researches supporting this stance can be mentioned here. The research of Wilkins found that for 481 American elementary teachers, beliefs about the effectiveness of inquiry were the strongest direct predictor of inquiry instructional practices (Wilkins, 2008); or the research of Brown et al., which explored that teachers’ conceptions of teacher feedback were differently related to their feedback practices (Brown et al., 2010). Further, teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs have routinely been identified as predictors of practices (Thoonen et al., 2011).

One more positive evidence of consistency between teachers' beliefs and practices, in a research on the attendance of teachers from Grades 4, 5 and 6 (Richardson V. et al., 1991), found that teachers' beliefs related to their classroom practices. Specially, they reported that teachers believed the subskills of reading must be learned before the meaning of text. The authors reported that teachers' beliefs about reading affected their instructional decision-making in the classroom practices.

#### **b. Practice influences Beliefs**

On the other side, Guskey argued that beliefs are precursors to practice, teachers' beliefs are shaped when one is engaged in specific actions and practices (Guskey, 2002). For instance, the changes in beliefs have been identified after experiences in which practicing or pre-service teachers engaged in specific classroom practices. Accordingly, engaging in specific teaching practices can increase teachers' sense of self-efficacy beliefs when they experience success with those teaching practices (Lumpe et al., 2012).

#### **c. Teachers' Beliefs are Disconnected from their Practices**

Many studies also found one more trend in the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practice, that is, no relation or disconnection, inconsistency between them happens. For instances, the research of Liu involving 1,340 primary school teachers showed that although 79% of teachers held learner-centred beliefs, the majority of them reported lecturing instead of using more constructivist practices with technology (Liu, 2011). Likewise, the research of Jorgensen et al. that assessed 25 teachers' beliefs about various pedagogical practices identified four areas of inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices (i.e., inclusiveness/importance of culture, group work, connectedness of ideas, and multiple pathways)(Jorgensen et al., 2010). For one more evidence of inconsistency between beliefs and practices, in a research, Duffy and Anderson (1984) found that, although reading teachers were able to articulate their beliefs about reading outside the classroom, their actual instructional practices were governed by the nature of instruction and classroom life. Such studies are used as evidence that beliefs and practices may not be related.

In summary, there is a reciprocal relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices; however, this relationship becomes more considerably complex when the strength of this

relationship may vary across individuals and contexts as well as the type of beliefs and practices being assessed. Thus, Fives and Buehl suggested that “it is not a matter of whether beliefs and practices are or are not congruent but rather the degree of congruence or incongruence between beliefs and practices” (Fives and Buehl, 2012)(p. 481). Instead of seeking evidence that beliefs are or not related, alternative lines of inquiry should seek to understand the variations in the relations between beliefs and practices as well as the consequences of belief congruence and incongruence.

#### **I.4.3.2. Predetermined Variations in the Reciprocal Relations between Beliefs and Practices**

Multiple factors are considered to account for the lack of congruency between teachers’ beliefs and practices. First, Kader mentioned some of these factors that may include the limitation imposed by bureaucrats (Khader, 2012). For example, a research of Hoang (2011), that surveyed 139 Vietnamese primary school teachers’ understandings about the policies of curriculum and textbook centralisation mandated by the government, explored that these policies raised constraints for teachers to enact the learner-centred pedagogical approach. Second, the lack of professional development and administrative support is partially responsible for the lack of congruence. A research of Le is an example for this reason. The pedagogies of the Viet Nam Escuela Nueva model including encouraging more teacher autonomy, child-centred pedagogies, and local adaptation have been introduced to apply in Vietnam locals. However, after six years of the model deployment, a case study of this author (Le M.H., 2018a) indicated that the teachers are not able to apply sufficiently this model, instead, they come back to the traditional ways with lecturing method and textbook dependence. They admitted to be lacking of professional trainings, material supports and administrative supports for rural-region teachers.

In addition, (Roehler and Duffy, 1991) also inferred that the complexity of classroom life can constrain teachers’ abilities to attend to their beliefs and provide instruction which aligns with their theoretical beliefs. Therefore, although most teachers have received the same type of training during their pre-service study as well as teacher trainings, their practices in the classroom vary (Richardson V., 1996). These authors suggested that contextual factors can have influenced teachers’ beliefs and, in turn, their classroom practices.

***Summary***

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice owns complicated and continuously changes. The research about the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices have taken an important role because its findings are of practical implications for enhancing the quality of teacher education, teaching and learning, and thus, improving the learning results. This chapter reviewed the body of research findings of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in order to elucidate its reciprocal influences between them (i.e. 'consistency' vs. 'inconsistency'). After introducing the theoretical frameworks underlying teacher beliefs and practice research, this chapter defined the theoretical background of the methods used to studying teacher beliefs and practices and addressed critical methodological issues emerging in studying teacher beliefs. Based on these issues, we suggest the approach of mixed-method under triangulated check, including the combination of scenarios (video recording video and post-teaching interviewing) and metaphor analysis. The theoretical background defined in this chapter takes the role of the director for designing research instruments to collect data of teacher beliefs and practices, described in Parts II and III of this thesis.

## **Chapter I.5. A Design-Based Instructional Model Aligned to Constructivism**

In previous chapters we have synthesised and analysed the Vietnamese context of education and culture, the features of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy, and the background theories of teachers' beliefs and practices. These synthesis and analysis bring about an overview picture about the feasibility of implementing the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in Vietnamese context. Accordingly, the implementation of the dialectical constructivist approach, a pedagogical theory from Western-education to first language instruction at primary education in Vietnamese culture as an example of Confucian heritage culture, remains challenging and problematic. Specifically, education in general and primary education in specific in Vietnam has had both convergences and divergences with the dialectical constructivism. Therefore, there is a need for designing an instructional model for primary Vietnamese language education in which features of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy are appropriately aligned with the characteristics of local context, including local teachers' long-held beliefs and cultural traits.

This chapter focuses on defining the background theories for the design of such an instructional model. Accordingly, a design-based research approach inspired by dialectical constructivist is employed to design the instructional model. This design is aimed at

developing the convergences between the dialectical constructivism and Vietnamese culture; at the same time, at considering the divergences between them to provide new educational guidelines to overcome certain barriers of the local contextual elements. Specifically, the dialectical constructivism-based teaching and learning directs to change the hierarchical relationship between teachers and learners that features for Vietnamese culture; instead, the equitable relationship between teachers and pupils and among pupils each other will create supportive conditions for pupils to self-construct new knowledge rather than being imposed from the teachers. In one subsequent chapter (Chapter III.1) of the Empirical Part, this teaching and learning model will be exemplified then tested (Chapters III.2 and III.3) through an experimental research in classrooms.

### **I.5.1. A Design-based Research Approach to Instructional Model Development**

#### **I.5.1.1. What is a Design-based Research?**

Design-based research (DBR) (also called design-research or development research) has been an emerging paradigm for the study of learning in context. It evolved near the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and was heralded as “a practical research methodology that could effectively bridge the chasm between research and practice in formal education” (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012, p. 16). Recent educational research have focused to exploring the potential of DBR to make a significant difference in the quality and utilisation of education research (Anderson T. and Shattuck, 2012; Bakker and Van Eerde, 2014; Juuti and Lavonen, 2006; Sandoval and Bell, 2010). So, what is a design based research?

The “design experimentation” approach is “an effort to bridge laboratory studies of learning with studies of complex instrumental interventions based on such insights” (Sandoval and Bell, 2010, p. 199). At the same time, Collin (1992) was putting forth the notion of educational research as a “design science” that required a methodology to systematically test design variants for effectiveness. According to Collin (1992), achieving such a design science, however, requires a sufficient understanding of the underlying variables at all relevant layers of a complex social system (schooling). This approach to educational research pursues simultaneously the goals of developing effective learning environments and using such environments as natural laboratories to study learning and teaching. Sandoval and Bell (2010, p. 199)

“settled on the term design-based research over the other commonly used like ‘design experimentation’, which connotes a specific form of controlled experimentation that does not capture the breadth of the approach, or ‘design research’, which is too easily confused with research design and other efforts in design fields that lack in situ research components”

Anderson and Shattuck (2012, p. 16) concluded that DBR is

“a methodology designed by and for educators that seeks to increase the impact, transfer, and translation of education research into improved practice. Furthermore, they stressed the need for theory building and development of design principles that guide, inform, and improve both practice and research in educational contexts”.

### **I.5.1.2. Why is Design-based Research used in Educational Research?**

Brown (1992) showed how insights from the laboratory were inherently limited in their ability to explain or predict learning in the classroom. Still, it has never been simple to translate theoretical insights into educational practice. The challenge, as she saw it, was to develop a methodology of experimenting with intervention designs in situ to develop theories of learning (and teaching) that accounted for the multiple interactions of people acting in a complex social setting. In addition, educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners agree that educational research is often divorced from the problems and issues of everyday practice. Such educational research that is detached from practice may not account for the influences of contexts, the emergent and complex nature of outcomes, and the incompleteness of knowledge about which factors are relevant for prediction. Its claiming success for educational interventions is certainly brought about in a particular setting that would be difficult to generalise to other settings.

According to Bakker (2014), DBR method can compose a methodology that potentially bridges theoretical research and educational practice and can produce explanations of innovative practice, because it aims both at developing theories about domain-specific learning and the means that are designed to support that learning. DBR thus produces both useful products (e.g., educational materials, educational models) and accompanying scientific insights into how these products can be used in education. It is also said to be suitable for addressing complex educational problems that should be dealt with in a holistic way. Importantly, it provides principle that can be localised for others to apply to new settings. In short, a DBR rooted from the needs, constraints, and interactions of local



practice can provide understanding how theoretical claims about teaching and learning can be transformed into effective learning in educational setting.

### **I.5.1.3. Defining the Quality of Design-based Research**

In accordance to the analysis of the original and emerging definitions of methodology suggest that a quality of a DBR is defined and synthesised by Anderson and Shattuck (2012), as follows.

The first criteria to define the quality of DBR is being situated in *a real educational context* or *authentic settings* so that the study results can be effectively used to assess, inform and improve practice in at least this one (and likely other) contexts.

Second, the DBR is characterised by *using mixed-methods*. Accordingly, DBR interventions are assessed on a wide variety of indices using multiple methodologies. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) concurred that “it is perfectly logical for researchers to select and use different methods, selecting them as they see the need, applying their findings to a reality that is both plural and unknown” (p. 17).

Third, DBR involves *a collaborative partnership between researcher(s) and practitioner(s)*. The partnership in a design-based study recognises that teachers are usually too busy and often ill-trained to conduct rigorous research. Likewise, the researcher is often not knowledgeable of the complexity of the culture, technology, objectives, and politics of an operationalising educational system to effectively create and measure the impact of an intervention. Thus, a partnership between them “is developed that negotiates the study from initial problem identification, through literature review, to intervention design and construction, implementation, assessment, and the creation and publication of theoretical and design principles” (p. 17).

Fourth, DBR involves *multiple iterations*. Design practice usually evolves through the creation and testing of prototypes, iterative refinement and continuous evolution of the design, as it is tested in authentic practice. The iterative adjustment and improvement of our interventions could be characterised by “research through mistakes”. Because design-based interventions are rarely, if ever, designed and implemented perfectly, thus there is always room for improvements in the design and subsequent evaluation. This characteristic of DBR is in line with the model Learning through action (Laws, 2013) that organises teaching

and learning activities in multiple iterations so that researcher and teachers can self-reflect and make appropriate adjustments and improvements on the design in theory and the intervention in practice.

Fifth, DBR *focuses on the design and testing of a significant intervention*. According to Brown (1992), an intervention may be a learning activity, a type of assessment, the introduction of an administrative activity, or be a technological intervention. Brown noted that an effective intervention “should be able to migrate from the experimental classroom to average classrooms operated by and for average students and teachers, supported by realistic technological and personal support” (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012, p.16). Brown also suggested the procedure to create an intervention: 1) assessing accurately the local context, 2) being informed by relevant literature, theory and practice from other contexts, 3) being designed specifically to overcome some problem or create an improvement in local practice.

Finally, the research on designs must *lead to shareable theories or evolve of principles* that help communicate relevant implications to practitioners and other educational designers. These principles are not designed to create de-contextualised principles or grand theories that function with equal effect in all contexts. Rather, design principles reflect the conditions in which they operate. These tools and conceptual models function to help us understand and adjust both the context and the intervention so as to maximise learning.

#### **I.5.1.4. Challenges with DBR**

A first challenge with DBR is the researcher’s bias that is certainly included in developing a design, because a researcher is intimately involved in the conceptualisation, design, development, implementation, and re-design of a pedagogical approach. This challenge is familiar to many forms of qualitative research in that none of these methods can or do claim that the researcher’s bias is removed from the research process. In order to minimise this concern in DBR as well as in qualitative methods, there is a suggestion that the inside knowledge adds as much as it subtracts from the research validity and a DBR requires comradeship, enthusiasm, and a willingness to actively support the intervention. Thus, the personal skill to hold all of these attitudes (objectivity and bias) simultaneously is a challenge and a defining feature of quality DBR.

The second challenge of DBR is exacerbated by the requirement for multiple iterations. Thus, DBR can be used as a basis for a multi-year and multi-faceted research agendas that

are difficultly managed to achieve the financial support or develop necessary vision and leadership.

In summary, DBR is defined as a method owning a number of significant characteristics that resonate with the calls for educational reform and for improvements in educational research. However, despite the benefits recognised through the above analysis, DBR has also received a number of useful critiques. Especially, the challenge coming from researcher's bias can make the assertions decrease their degree of credibility and trustworthiness. The next section will describe and analyse the use of constructive alignment (CA) (Biggs and Tang, 2014) in combination with DBR to minimise researchers' bias. Furthermore, the employment of CA in a DBR is also targeted to create a conditions and environments for generating constructivism-based learning and teaching.

## **I.5.2. Constructively-aligned Teaching and Assessment**

### **I.5.2.1. What is Constructive Alignment?**

Biggs (1996, 1999, 2012) defined constructivist alignment (CA) as “a design for teaching in which what it is intended students should learn, and how they should express their learning, is clearly stated before teaching takes place” (Biggs, 2014, pp. 5-6). Teaching is then designed to engage students in learning activities that optimise their chances of achieving those outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgements as to how well those outcomes have been attained.

For an example of outcome-based instruction, a mother teaching her child how to tie a shoelace focuses on that outcome, take the child through the motions of tying a lace until the act of tying can be carried out satisfactorily by the child.

(Biggs, 1999, p .6)

This approach to teaching is learner-centred in that the target is what the learner has to achieve and how the learner may best be engaged in order to achieve it to the required standard. The teaching design is outcome-based and assessment is necessarily criterion-referenced.

Tests can be categorised into two major groups: norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests. These two tests differ in their intended purposes, the way in which content is selected, and the scoring process which defines how the test results must be interpreted.

The major reason for using a norm-referenced tests is to classify students. Norm-referenced tests are designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students to

produce a dependable rank order of students across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers.

While norm-referenced tests ascertain the rank of students, criterion-referenced tests determine what test takers can do and what they know, not how they compare to others. Criterion-referenced tests report how well students are doing relative to a pre-determined performance level on a specified set of educational goals or outcomes included in the school, district, or state curriculum.

(Bond, 1996, p. 1)

According to Biggs, the designed curriculum based on constructivist approaches is called “constructive alignment” for some reasons. The term “constructive” comes from the constructivist theory which posits that learners use their own activity to construct their knowledge. The term “alignment” is a principle in curriculum theory which posits that assessment tasks should be aligned to what it is intended to be learned, as for criterion-referenced assessment. The intended outcomes specify the activity that students should engage in if they are to achieve the intended outcome, as well as the content the activity refers to. The teacher’s tasks are to set up a learning environment that encourages the student to perform those learning activities, and to assess student performances against the intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 2012, p. 97). The differences between the teaching design of CA and the ‘traditional’ teaching, as defined by Biggs (1996), are described in Table I.13.

**Table I.13. Differences between CA-based teaching and traditional teaching**

<b>Features</b>	<b>CA-based teaching</b>	<b>Conventional teaching</b>
Teaching design	outcome-based	content-based
Pedagogical approach	learner-centred	teacher-centred
Learning contents	focus on what learners has to achieve and how they may best be engaged to achieve it to the required standard	focus on what content the teacher has to “cover”
Teaching method	held with multi-methods	held constant with lecturing
Assessment	criterion-referenced, combines both formative and summative assessments (e.g. portfolio-based)	norm-referenced, summative assessment (e.g. paper final test)

Constructive alignment, first, is an instructional design approach that focuses on *learner-centeredness* rather than *teacher-centeredness*. The teaching is designed to engage students in

learning activities that optimise their chances of achieving the intended learning outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgments as to how well those outcomes have been attained. The instructional design is outcomes-based and assessment is necessarily criterion-referenced. Whereas traditional teaching is largely held constant with lecturing as the default method, and assessment is norm-referenced.

Next, the assessment form applied in a CA design is *combining both formative and summative assessments*. Among them, an authentic assessment by *portfolio* is encouraged to be employed in teaching practice. The *portfolio assessment* is understood as a negotiation between teachers and students about a series of learning activities that are likely to result in student's achieving the intended learning outcomes, such as reading set material, raising questions in class about that material, discussing with other students, swapping notes with a learning partner and keeping a reflective journal.

Finally, a constructive alignment design requires *reflection* on what happened. This defines what students are supposed to be able to *do* (apply) with the content they have learnt in some ways as solving problems, constructing hypotheses and applying to particular situations.

#### **I.5.2.2. Design of Constructively-Aligned Instructional Model and Assessment**

The design-based teaching aligned to constructivism approach consists of three interrelated components: 1) Intended learning outcomes (ILOs); 2) Teaching and learning activities (TLAs), 3) Assessment tasks (ATs), and 4) Standard grading criteria, as in Figure I.5. Accordingly, there are four stages in the design:

1. Describe the intended learning outcome in the form of verb (learning activity), its object (the content) and specify the context (teaching and learning activities) and a standard (criteria) the students have to attain;
2. create a learning environment using teaching/learning activities that address that verb and therefore are likely to bring about the intended outcome;
3. use assessment tasks that also contain that verb, thus enabling you to judge with the help of rubrics if and how well students' performances meet the criteria;
4. transform these judgements into standard grading criteria.

(Biggs, 2014)

Each component will be described in detail as follows.

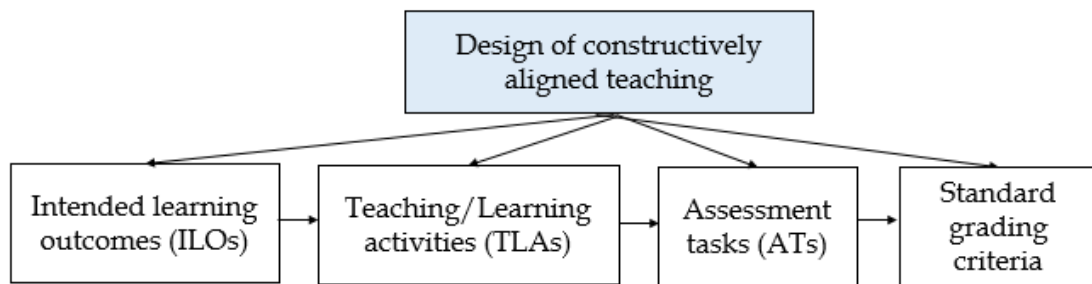


Figure I.5. A design of the constructive aligned teaching (Biggs, 2014)

### a. The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

According to Biggs (2012), the ILOs are statements, written from the students' perspective, indicating the level of understanding and performance that are expected to be achieved as a result of pupils' engagement in the learning experience. An ILO describes what and how a pupil is expected to learn after exposure to teaching. Such an outcome statement can be made at levels of national, institutional, programme, and lesson (unit). Below are two examples.

The ILOs of the reading course programme for primary schoolers:

*Read* texts in accuracy and fluent manner;

*Illustrate* main lessons of text, both explicit and implicit meanings;

*Summarise* lessons learnt from the texts.

The ILOs a reading lesson unit "Durian" (Mai Van Tao):

*Describe* the characteristics of durian's flowers, fruits, and shapes;

*Explain* the meanings of difficult vocabularies in the context such as *old honey, look slightly like, (fruits) ripened profusely and vigorously, adored...*;

*Infer* the authors' affection regarding the durian through words and phrases used in the texts.

The term "outcome" is used instead of "objective" because the former emphasises to what the pupil has to learn rather than what the teacher has to teach (as "objective" does).

Besides, the conventional presentations of “objective” such as “understanding, comprehend, be aware of...” do not convey the level of pupils’ performance, so it is difficult to assess whether the ILOs are to be met. Furthermore, well-designed lesson ILOs communicate an integrated and holistic overview of the lesson rather than a fragmented view into domains and sub-domains as the “objective” does.

The ILOs are recommended to be described in the form of a verb (learning activity), its object (the content) and specify the context and a standard the students have to attain. Biggs and Tang (2012) addressed some words to indicate the learning aims such as “understand, comprehend, be aware of” will not work because they do not give any indication of the level of required understanding. Therefore, taxonomies of verbs that classify cognitive levels as levels of outcomes are presented in Table I.13. This revised version is adopted from Bloom’s taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, pp. 67-68).

**Table I.14. Some ILOs verbs from Bloom’s revised taxonomy**

Remembering	Define, describe, draw, find, identify, label, list, match, name, quote, recall, recite, tell, write
Understanding	Classify, compare, conclude, demonstrate, discuss, exemplify, explain, identify, illustrate, interpret, paraphrase, predict, report
Applying	Apply, change, choose, compute, dramatize, implement, interview, prepare, product, role play, select, show, transfer, use
Analysing	Analyse, characterise, classify, compare, contrast, debate, deconstruct, deduce, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, organise, outline, relate, research, separate, structure
Evaluating	Appraise, argue, assess, choose, conclude, critique, decide, evaluate, judge, justify, monitor, predict, prioritise, prove, rank, rate, select
Creating	Compose, construct, create, design, develop, generate, hypothesise, invent, make, perform, plan, produce

The terms are defined as follows.

**Remembering:** retrieving, recognising, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory. E.g., describe the mother sparrow when it was trying to protect its baby sparrow from the threat of the dog (The excerpt named “*The sparrow*” of “*A Sportsman’s Sketches*”, Turgenev, 1952).

**Understanding:** constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic message through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarising, inferring, comparing, and explaining. E.g., summarise what the “*The sparrow*” story was about.

**Applying:** carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing. E.g., Take role of the mother sparrow (or baby sparrow, the dog) to tell the story.

**Analysing:** breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organising, and attributing. E.g., differentiate between how the mother sparrow reacted and how you would react in the such situation?

**Evaluating:** Making judgements based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing. E.g., predict how the dog reacts in front of the reaction of the mother sparrow.

**Creating:** Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganising elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. E.g., compose an essay, a poem, a song to tell about your emotion, thoughts about the story event.

The Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is powerful tool to fit today’s teachers’ needs because the structure of the revised taxonomy table provides them a clear, concise visual representation of the alignment between standards and educational goals, objectives, products, and activities (Krathwohl, 2002). Clear alignment of educational objectives with local, state, and national standards is a necessity. The Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy clarifies the fit of each lesson plan’s purpose, “essential question”, goal or objective, teachers can easily be used in conjunction with a chart.

There is a noticeable point that constructively-aligned teaching systematises what experienced teachers have always done: they state upfront what they intend those outcomes to be in the courses they teach, and always allows that other, unintended but desirable, outcomes will emerge that they may not have anticipated. So while the term “intended” learning outcomes is used, the teaching and assessment should always allow for desirable but unintended outcomes, as these will inevitably occur when students construct knowledge by their own pace and are responsible for their own learning.



In short, ILOs focus on what and how students learn, rather than on what topics the teachers teach. This requires an ILO that specifies not only what is to be learned, the topic, but how it is to be learnt and to what standard. The outcome statement thus specifies a verb that informs students how they are expected to change as a result of learning that topic, for example “describe X”, or “apply knowledge to Y”. That verb(s) should then be addressed in the teaching and learning activities (TLAs), and in the assessment task (AT).

In the next section, three other components are aligned: teaching/learning activities, assessment tasks, and standard grading criteria are regulated to be aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

### **b. Teaching/Learning Activities (TLAs)**

In place of teachers providing already processed knowledge for students, the latter are helped to do what they need to do in order to meet the intended learning outcomes of the course or lesson unit. Teachers create a learning environment where teaching activities address the verbs expressed in ILOs and therefore are likely to bring about the intended outcomes. Basically, TLAs include individual learning and collaborative learning with learning partners or small group; it requires frequent reflection through a reflective diary by teacher and pupils so that all learning activities mentioned in the ILOs are embedded in the TLAs in or way or another. Below is an example of ILOs and their related TLAs.

Intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for the reading lesson unit “Durian” (Mai Van Tao) and aligned teaching and learning activities (TLAs):

ILO1: *Describe* the characteristics of durian’s flowers, fruits, and shape of tree;

TLAs1: deeply read, discuss with partners, and note phrases and sentences used to described durian’s flowers, fruits, and shapes.

ILO2: *Explain* the meanings of difficult vocabularies in the context such as *old honey, look slightly like, (fruits) ripened profusely and vigorously, adored...*;

TLAs2: Deeply read, find and list difficult words to individuals, discuss in small group to try to find out the meanings of these words, and openly discuss in whole class members to get the appropriate meanings (under teacher’s at-last instruction and confirmation).

ILO3: *Infer* the authors' affection regarding the durian through words and phrases used in the texts.

TLAs3: Based on the phrases and sentences in the text, the authors' affection regarding the durian is inferred and expressed in oral or written statements by students.

### **c. Assessment tasks (ATs)**

What and how students learn depend to a major extent on how they think they will be assessed. Assessment tasks (ATs) must send the right signals to students about what and how they should be learning and how they should be learning it. Assessment tasks also contain the verbs expressed in ILOs that enable teachers and students to judge if and how well students' performances meet the criteria, with the help of rubrics.

There are two kinds of assessment: *formative and summative assessment*. In *formative assessment*, the results are used for feedback during learning that helps both students and teachers know how learning is being proceeded. So this assessment may operate both to improve the learning of individual students and to improve the teaching itself. Self- and peer- assessment are particularly helpful activities for training students to reflect on the quality of their own work. The evidences for formative assessment can be collected through students' involvement in learning (as group discussion), learning products (as speaking, writing discourses, even poems, drawn pictures). In *summative assessment*, the results are used to make the final evaluation on pupils' learning at the end of an instructional episode. Its purpose is to see how well students have learned what they were supposed to have learned. The evidence of summative assessment can be gathered through paper tests, oral tests or essays made by individual or groups of students. The combination between formative and summative assessment is encouraged in a constructive alignment.

Besides, the *assessment portfolio*, one of forms of formative assessment, comprising items selected by the students that they think they addressed each ILO, is also recommended to apply in a constructive alignment design (Biggs, 2012). The portfolio-based assessment tasks comprise items negotiated between teacher and the pupils that both of them think to be able to address the ILOs. The students have to decide on the evidences for their achievement of the ILOs in the form of items for their portfolio and to explain why they think the portfolio as a whole met the ILOs. The portfolio is supposed as being a learning

package, showing how each ILO will be addressed one way or another. Cohen (1987) expressed that alignment between the assessment and the intended learning outcomes has positive effect on increasing student performance. For example, with the aim of making a portfolio-based assessment on the pupils' performance after a reading lesson, the teacher designs for the pupils specific learning tasks in which the learning evidences can be collected to help the teacher make judgements about the pupils' final learning results. The learning tasks should be authentic tasks that create suitable environment for pupils to express their knowledge and skills relating to reading competences, such as fluent reading, reading comprehension (literal comprehension, interpretive or inferential comprehension, critical reading, or creative reading). ILOs and their related ATs are shown below.

Intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for the reading lesson unit "Durian" (Mai Van Tao) and aligned assessment tasks (ATs)

ILO1: *Describe* the characteristics of durian's flowers, fruits, and shape of tree;

AT1: Underly or highlight phrases or sentences that describes the characteristics of durian's flowers, fruits, and shape of tree. Modify some expressions to describe these parts of durian tree from your experience.

ILO2: *Explain* the meanings of difficult vocabularies in the context such as *old honey, look slightly like, (fruits) ripened profusely and vigorously, adored...*;

ATs2: Take note the meanings of these words. Alternatively, you can draw to illustrate the meanings of words or suggest a situation that these words can be understood.

ILO3: *Infer* the authors' affection regarding the durian through words and phrases used in the texts.

AT3: Speaking/write a short paragraph to express the affection regarding durian tree from the author's point and yourselves' point of view.

It is difficult to distinguish a TLA from an AT in the case of an aligned system. For example, students write a short paragraph to comment on the affection regarding durian tree from the author's point and yourselves' point of view, which is used later as evidence of their comprehension regarding the text content.

#### **d. Standard Grading Criteria**

The final step is to obtain a final grade for the student from the evidence presented as to how well the ILOs have been achieved. There are normally two aspects to grading: assessing the students' outputs against the stated criteria and combining results from several ATs to form a final grade. This can be done quantitatively or qualitatively. According to Biggs (2012), each letter (A, B, C, D, and F) represents a qualitatively different level of thinking.

In the case of the reading lesson "Durian" (Mai Van Tao), a qualitative approach should be taken as being the most suitable for the task and the context.

A – Able to determine phrases/sentences describing durian's flower, fruit, and shape of tree; sufficiently (and variously) explain the meanings of the list of difficult words; proficiently speak or write the main text content and individual-related affection.

B – Can determine phrases/sentences describing durian's flower, fruit, and shape of tree; satisfactorily explain the meanings of the list of difficult words; clearly speak or write the main text content and individual-related affection; barely failed A.

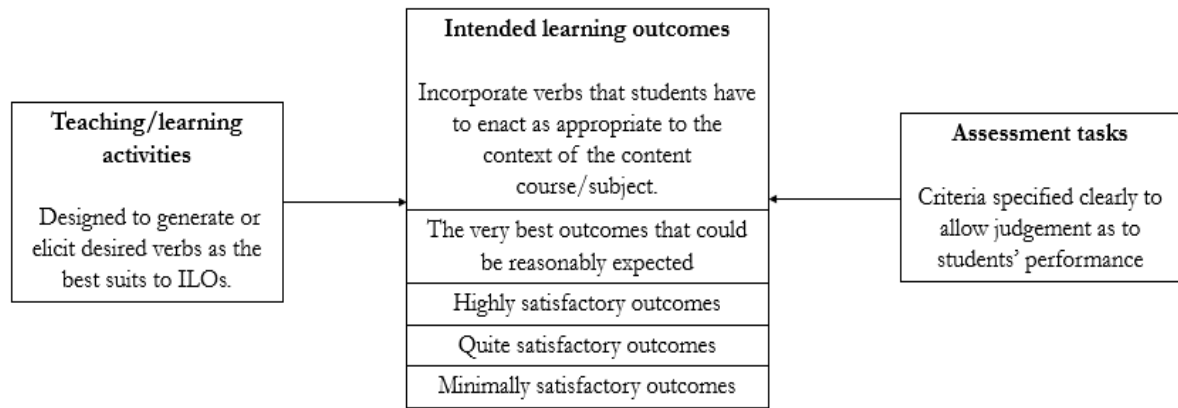
C- Can determine phrases/sentences describing durian's flower, fruit, and shape of tree; simply explain the meanings of the list of difficult words; simply speak or write the main text content and individual-related affection, barely failed B.

D- Can determine phrases/sentences describing durian's flower, fruit, and shape of tree; sparsely explain the meanings of the list of difficult words; cursorily speak or write the main text content and individual-related affection, barely failed C.

F – less than D, two of three tasks were not completed.

In summary, constructivist alignment is based on the twin principles of constructivism in learning, and alignment both of teaching and of assessment tasks to the intended learning outcomes. On one side, learning is considered as a process in which learners use their own activities to construct their knowledge. On the other side, the intended learning outcomes specify the activity students should engage in if they are to achieve the intended outcome,

the teachers' tasks then being to set up a learning environment that encourages the student to perform those learning activities, and to assess the students' performances against those intended learning outcomes. The alignment between intended learning outcomes and teaching/learning activities, assessment activities is described in Figure I.6.



**Figure I.6. The alignment between intended learning outcomes and teaching/learning activities, assessment activities**

Based on the alignment, to design a constructively aligned system of teaching, the teachers' tasks are to see that the appropriate learning activities, conveniently expressed as verbs, are:

- 1) nominated in the intended learning outcome statements;
- 2) embedded in the chosen teaching/learning activities so that performance them brings the students closer to achieving the ILOs;
- 3) embedded in the assessment tasks enabling judgements as to how well a given students level of performance meets the ILOs.

### **I.5.2.3. Design-based Instructional Model Aligned to Constructivism in Practice**

In the previous section, we described all the components of constructive alignment – writing ILOs, designing TLAs and assessing and grading students' performance. Now we describe the tasks of implementing constructive alignment in practice (programme, course, or subject). According to Biggs and Tang (2012), all procedures relating to implementing constructive alignment can be generalised to create quality enhancement procedures for the relevant contexts.

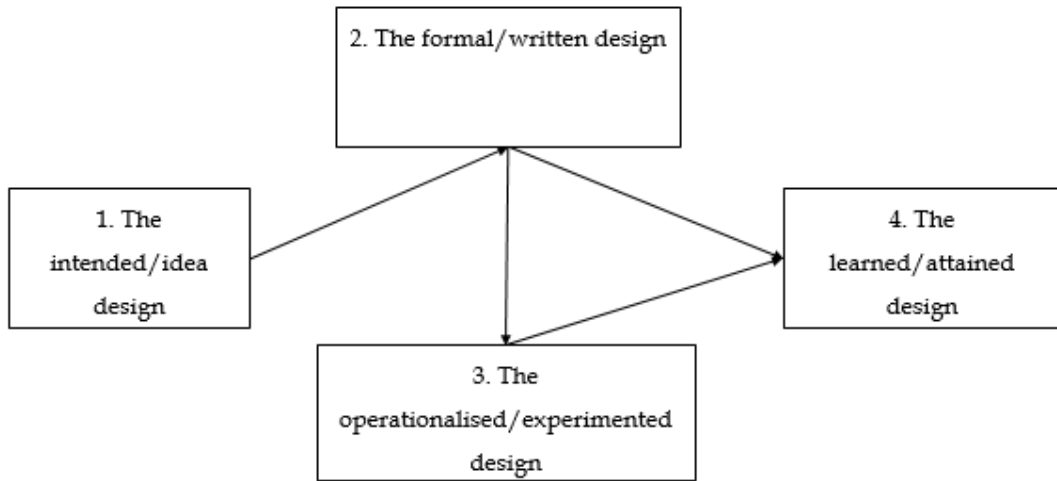
As previously mentioned, a combination of design-based research theory and constructive alignment literature is aimed at minimising the researchers' bias involving in the research; at the same time, it creates the condition and environment to deploy the constructivist teaching and learning approach. We suggest the term "instructional model" as representing a conjunction of the instructional design and the constructivist pedagogy in which the constructivism is used as a guide for decision-making at all instructional design stages. In detail, based on the aims of the curriculum/subject/lesson in term of performances that represent a suitable high cognitive level, teaching and learning activities are decided to elicit those performances, and assess pupils' performance. Therefore, in the teaching model, the learning aims are used to systematically aligned with the teaching methods and assessment.

A design of instructional model is a general concept that involves factors such as theoretical, practical, philosophical, social, and administrative aspects which inspires teachers and pupils' activities in practice. Accordingly, the model is conceptualised as a format of whole teaching and learning processes that goes beyond the use of single unit or lesson and is followed by the teachers and pupils and includes all the process of goal setting, planning, implementation, testing, and evaluation. The design of teaching and learning model can be considered at different levels: the intended, the formal/ written, the operationalised/ experimented and the learned/ attained model (Figure I.7) (Ngo V. T. H. et al., 2016; Trinh, 2005; Van den Akker, 2003).

The arrows in Figure I.7 show how a design-based teaching and learning is structured and measured. 1) The intended or idea design is written; 2). The implementation of the intended design is measured to assess whether it is implemented as intended; 3) Its operationalisation is documented via classroom observation. Teachers' and pupils' reflections of the operationalised curriculum were documented to determine which aspects of the designed teaching and learning they perceived; 3) as to fit the pre-determined goals and which characteristics of the design they think should be improved to meet these goals. Finally, the adjustments on the teaching and learning design are made to attain the planned design 4) as the outcomes of the operationalised and perceived design.

As such, a teaching and learning design aligned to constructivism is required to carry out lesson units, course, or programme in a specific context, and is applied in the such specific context. Furthermore, the feasibility of the design needs to be confirmed in practice

through multiple iterations of experiment before being generalised and applied on other relevant contexts. We will pursue the design of constructivism-aligned teaching and learning in the empirical part (Chapter III.1), in our context.



**Figure I.7. Design process of a constructively aligned instructional model**

This chapter described the suggestion of a combination between design-based research theory and constructive alignment with the aim to create a constructively aligned design of teaching and learning in specific contexts. Accordingly, a constructivist-aligned teaching and learning requires the alignment between intended learning outcomes and teaching and learning activities, assessment activities, and grading. Constructing a constructivist-aligned teaching and learning consists of building interrelated components: 1) describe the intended learning outcomes in the form of verbs; 2) create a learning environment using teaching/learning activities; and 3) use assessment tasks that also contain that verb to judge how well students' performances meet the criteria; and 4) transform these judgements into standard grading criteria.

**Part II. SURVEY-BASED STUDIES ON  
TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT DIALECTICAL  
CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY**





## **Chapter II.1. Teacher Beliefs toward VNEN Textbooks in Implementing Dialectical Constructivism in Vietnamese Language Education**

In the previous chapters, we presented the context of pedagogical reforms in teaching and learning Vietnamese language at primary education and the theoretical frameworks of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in the first-language instruction, teachers' beliefs and practices and the constructivist aligned curriculum. Especially, the two latest pedagogical reforms conducted in Vietnam at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were introduced and analysed in terms of pedagogical theory background, aims, time allocation, materials, teachers' and learners' roles and assessment methods. The analysis revealed that exploring teachers' beliefs on dialectical constructivist approaches and beliefs toward teaching and learning materials are what a pedagogical reform in Vietnamese first language instruction should aim at.

This chapter introduces to the survey process and results of the teachers' beliefs toward the VNEN textbooks that are aimed at stimulating dialectical constructivism. The first section begins with the review of research context about the VNEN textbooks. The second section describes the research design to collect teachers' beliefs data. The third section synthesises the survey results, including 1) teachers' beliefs to what extent the textbooks support them

to implement the dialectical constructivist pedagogies in teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools; 2) the teachers' beliefs toward the dialectical constructivist learning practice; and 3) the teachers' opinions of the strengths and weaknesses of the current textbooks and their suggestions and expectations toward the forthcoming sets of textbooks.

### **II.1.1. Research Context**

On the approval of the national project entitled “New-school model in Vietnam” or “Escuela Nueva – VNEN”, lasting from 2010 to 2016 in Vietnam (Dang T.A., 2015; Le M.H., 2018b), four sets of self-study textbooks (from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to 5<sup>th</sup> grade) were composed and promulgated by the Vietnam MoET. These textbook sets were first introduced at primary schools from 2010 to 2012, before being applied in a larger scale in 2012. In 2015–2016, there were 3,700 primary schools applying the VNEN model over the country. Although the VNEN project ended in 2015–2016, the application of VNEN pedagogical approaches together with the use of self-study textbooks have been remained in a large number of primary classes over the country. In the context of the fundamental and comprehensive education reform has hectically been conducted in Vietnam, the National Basic Curriculum has been published by the Vietnam MoET on December 27<sup>th</sup> 2018, the composition of teaching and learning materials based on the national Basic Curriculum is defined as the next important task. The current educational reform emphasises a competence-based curriculum and encourages teachers' professional autonomy in building their own teaching materials.

Whereas the current research in Vietnam has been focusing on developing teaching and learning materials in order to meet the requirements of the new curriculum, this study is about the primary school teachers' beliefs toward currently-used VNEN textbooks after six years of application.

### **II.1.2. Research Design**

This section provides starts with addressing research aim, methodology, participant and data collection instrument.

#### **II.1.2.1. Research Aims**

The main purpose of this study is to determine primary school teachers' beliefs about to what extent the self-study textbooks support their teaching practices to implement dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese language instruction. In addition, the

attitudes of teachers towards constructivist learning practices in terms of teaching procedure, teaching methodologies are also defined. Furthermore, the teachers' responses about the strengths and weaknesses will be taken into consideration and will be used as a basis for educators and researchers to write teaching and learning materials in order to meet the requirements of an innovative curriculum. The questions are identified to achieve these purposes are the following:

1. What are the teachers' beliefs on whether the self-study textbooks support their teaching practices to implement the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools as being described by the VNEN-model policies?
2. What are the attitudes of teacher towards the dialectical constructivist teaching and learning in practice, in terms of teaching procedure and teaching methodologies?
3. Which are strengths and weaknesses of self-study textbooks recognised by the school teachers through their experience in practice?

#### **II.1.2.2. Participants**

The school teachers who were chosen to participate in the survey have been involved in the VNEN project for at least five years and located in both urban and rural of the Mekong delta, the South of Vietnam. 167 primary school teachers working in these schools participated in this study. The study group includes of 84.4% female teachers (n=141) and 15.6% male teacher participants (n=26). The teacher participants' information is described as follows.

First, most of them range from 41–50 years old (37.1%, n=62) whereas 14.4% of them fall in the range of 26–30 years old (n=24) (Figure II.1). Second, the location of schools where these teachers were working for is expressed in Figure II.2. Third, the percentage of teachers coming from urban regions (80.8%, n=135) is dominant compared with teachers coming from rural regions (18%, n=30). Fourth, most of teacher participants had over 20 years of teaching (35.3%, n=59) whereas there were 16.8% (n=28) of the teachers having less than 5 years of teaching (Figure II.3). Five, concerning the teachers' educational degree, Figure II.4 shows that 68% of the participants (n=113) obtained the upper standard degree, this means those get bachelor degree, whereas 20.4% of them (n=34) met the standard requirement of primary school teachers, to obtain the college degree. Only 12% (n=20) of

them were owning lower-standard degree including many forms of short-term trainings such as basic education graduates plus two years of pedagogical training (12+2) or secondary education graduates plus three years of pedagogical training (9+3). The forms of these trainings are considered as a temporary solution in the context of serious lacking of teachers in Vietnam after the wars. These training forms no longer exist. Finally, regarding the resources of the teachers' schools, almost teacher participants' schools (74.9%, n=125) were basically equipped in terms of teaching and learning facilities, such as standard classrooms, a standard library, computers, etc. The number of poorly-equipped schools was not considerable (Figure II.5).

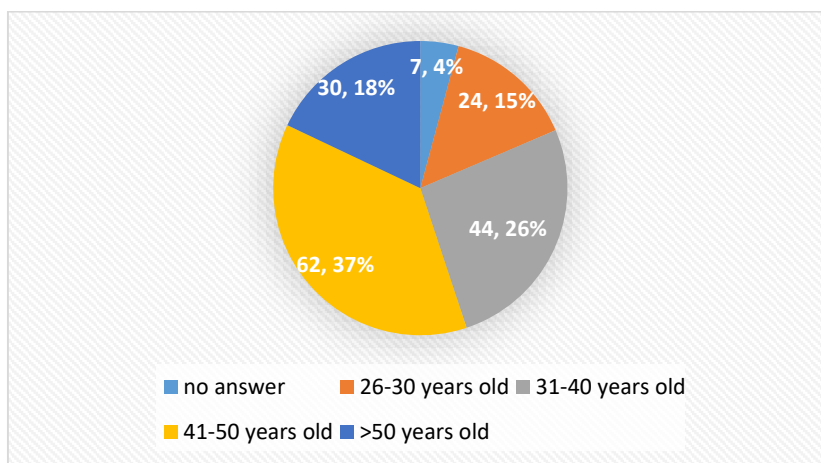


Figure II.1. Description of teacher participants' ages

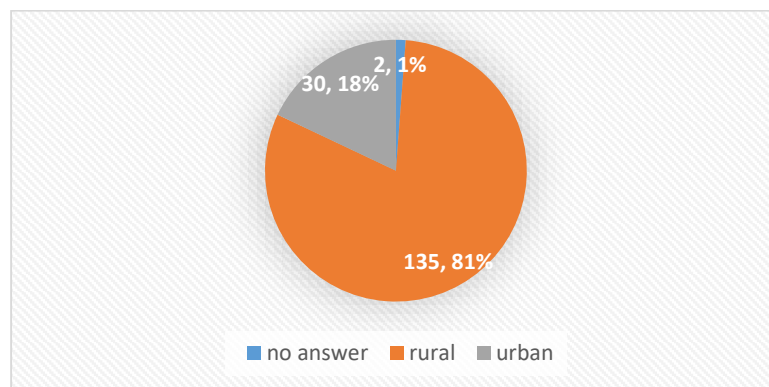


Figure II.2. Description of teacher participants' school location

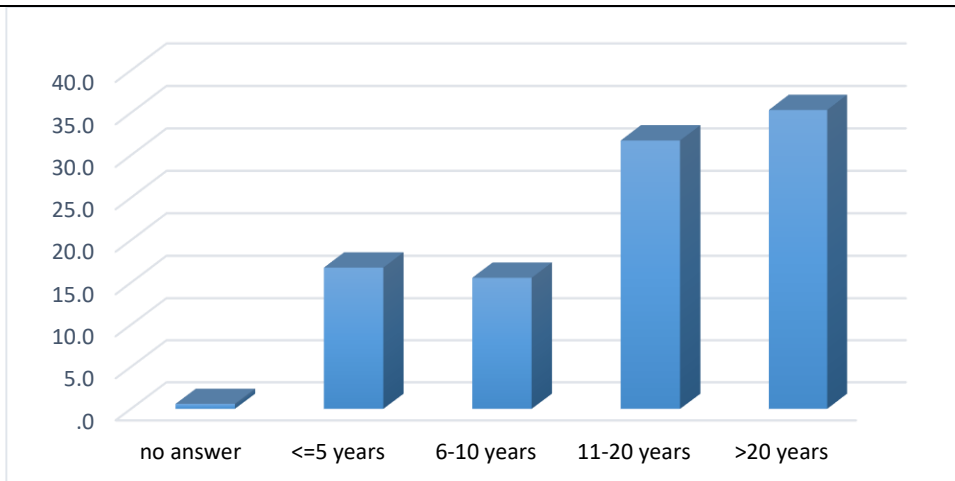


Figure II.3. Description of teacher participants' years of teaching

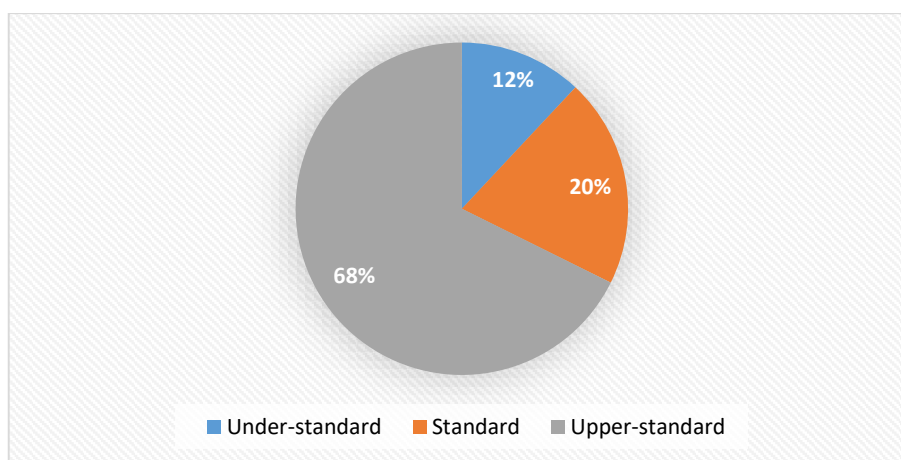


Figure II.4. Description of teacher participants' educational degree

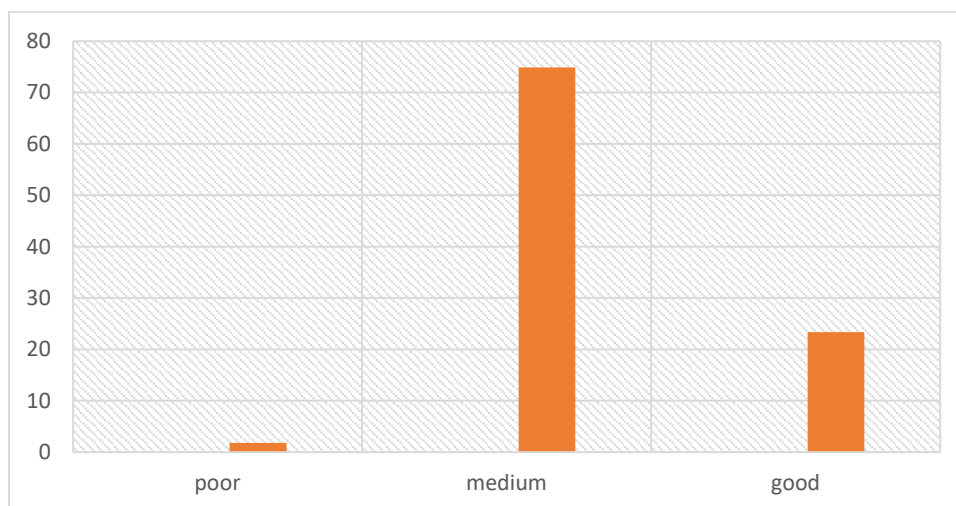


Figure II.5. Description of teacher participants' school resources

### II.1.2.3. Data Collection Methods

A questionnaire for surveying participants (*see Appendix 1*) was developed. The questionnaire was chosen for some reasons. Firstly, the data collected in a large scale from

a sampling community will tend to lead to generalisability so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitudes, or behaviour of this population (Babbie, 1990). Secondly, it is the least expensive way to contact a large number of respondents and it can allow an easy and quick data collection (Babbie, 1990). Thirdly, the questionnaire is usually the most commonly used format among all the research instruments (Cohen et al., 2007). Finally, it can be somewhat less biased in the respondents' answers while the researcher is usually an outsider during the survey was conducted. The questionnaire was first written in Vietnamese to be delivered to teacher participants, next translated into English, including five sections.

In detail, *Section A* (5 items) gathered background information about the respondents but carefully allowed for anonymity. *Section B* (2 items) asked the respondents to give their general judgements on the self-study textbooks. *Section C* (15 items) required the teachers to give their opinions on how the self-textbooks contents support them to implement every core features of the dialectical constructivist approaches (see Chapter I.2 for core features of the dialectical constructivism). *Section D* (2 parts) surveyed about the teachers' practices in Vietnamese language instruction, in terms of teaching procedure and teaching methodologies. Finally, *Section E* (2 items) called the teachers' points of view of strengths and weaknesses of the self-study textbooks and their expectations toward the teaching materials that will be applied in the forthcoming pedagogical reform in teaching Vietnamese language. This section was designed in the form of open-ended questions in order to allow for as much information to be provided as possible.

Data collection took place during March 2016 at the primary schools located in four cities and provinces including Can Tho, Hau Giang, Kien Giang, and Tien Giang in the South of Vietnam. In what follows, we will present the data analysis to generalise the major findings, draw conclusion and propose recommendations for teachers and textbook authors.

#### **II.1.2.5. Data Analysis**

Regarding teacher questionnaire survey, the teachers' answers are analysed and interpreted as in Table II.1.

**Table II.1. The code for data collected for Teacher Questionnaire 1**

Section	4.21-5.00	3.41-4.20	2.61-3.40	1.81-2.60	1.00-1.80	0
<i>Surveying participants' approvals</i>						
B, C	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure/Neutral	Disagree	Strongly	N/A
<i>Surveying participants' frequency of use</i>						
D	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	N/A
<i>Surveying participants' judgements</i>						
E	Well appropriate	Appropriate	Unsure/Neutral	Inappropriate	Absolutely appropriate	N/A

Standard deviation, frequency, percentage, one-way ANOVA, Mann Whitney U test and T-test were used for data analysis. Collected data was analysed with SPSS 20. The values obtained after the analysis were interpreted with the 0.05 significance level.

### II.1.3. Results

#### II.1.3.1. Teachers' Beliefs on the extent the self-study textbook support them to implement the dialectical constructivist approach

##### a. Teachers' General Beliefs toward the Self-study Textbook Essential Features (Section B)

The first survey result is to determine the general beliefs of the teachers toward the essential features of the self-study VNEN textbooks, after five years of use. Two dimensions are involved in this section, examined separately, including B1) *The self-study textbooks are believed as a meticulous and fixed procedure of teaching and learning activities that teacher and pupils faithfully adhere to;* B2) *The self-study textbooks are considered as a flexible procedure that prompts teacher's and pupils' activities.* The former item stands in the line with the beliefs of 'transmission' teaching whereas the later supports the beliefs of constructivism-based teaching (O'Donnell, 2012; OECD, 2009; Yilmaz and Sahin, 2011). The answers revealed the way the teachers use the self-study textbooks in their practices. The results are presented in Table II.2.



**Table II.2. Teachers' beliefs towards essential feature of the textbooks**

Items	N	Mean	SD
1. A meticulous and fixed learning procedure of activities for teacher and pupils to adhere	167	3.56	1.29
2. A flexible procedure of activities prompting for teachers' instruction	167	4.02	.667
Valid N (listwise)	167		

According to Table II.2, the teachers' beliefs toward the self-study textbooks inclined to the materials that support the teachers to implement the constructivist approach in teaching ( $M=4.02$ ; "Strongly Agree"). Standard deviations also revealed that the teachers are homogeneous in believing the constructivist teaching ( $SD=0.667$ ). However, there is a noticeable point from the table: the teachers also express their "Agree" ( $M=3.56$ ) with the feature as a "meticulous and fixed procedure" of the self-study textbook design. Besides, the corresponding standard deviation ( $SD=1.29$ ) shows a considerable gap among teachers' responses. The results indicate that although the teachers believe self-study textbooks as materials of supporting to implement the constructivist approach, there is inconsistency among teachers' thought toward this feature of the textbooks.

### **b. Teacher' Beliefs toward how the Self-textbooks Support them to Implement the Dialectical Constructivist Approaches (Section C)**

As aforementioned, in the context of teaching and learning in Vietnam, the textbooks are believed as a 'real' curriculum in practice; in addition, the policy of textbook centralisation has been remained for more than 50 years. Therefore, Vietnamese teachers are stuck in the beliefs of over-reliance on the textbooks' contents (Duggan, 2001; Hoang, 2011). This section is aimed at exploring how the school teachers use the self-study textbooks to implement the dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese language instruction. Each question or dimension in this section puts the teachers in the practical context of using the self-study textbooks to reveal to what extent this kind of textbooks facilitates the constructivism-based teaching and learning.






**b1.** About the first feature of the dialectical constructivism "*Knowledge is constructed by learners*", including two component dimensions, the respondents agreed that when working with the self-study textbooks, *pupils' own pace and progress* are respected ( $M=3.77$ ,  $SD=0.649$ ). The teachers' agreement means that pupils can complete learning activities/tasks designed in the textbooks with different progresses depending on their own capacities. The VNEN model approves the concept of differentiated instruction that is one of essential features of

multi-grade classes of EN model (McEWAN, 1998). However, the teachers expressed their “Neutral/Unsure” opinions ( $M=3.08$ ,  $SD=0.724$ ) when asked about to what extent pupils have their own voices in their learning rather than absolutely adhere the textbook’s instruction. The responses were homogeneous among teachers’ ( $SD<1$ ) which showed common opinion among the respondents. Although the teachers presented their respects to pupils’ own progresses, how to fulfil it in practice seemed not to be clear in the teachers’ beliefs. In accord with Hoang’s findings (2016), the self-study textbooks’ design that is characterised by available prescribed texts and activities/exercises/questions, together with being used in common over the country, created considerable constraints toward the respect for pupils’ own progresses. With the long-held beliefs of over-reliance on the textbooks, the honour for pupils’ own progress was purely understood as accepting the state ‘quick’ or ‘slow’ in term of the allowed period of time for finishing learning tasks/activities, rather than respecting the variety in pupils’ cognitive levels.

**b2.** For the second feature of the dialectical constructivism “*Learning is social participation*” (see Table II.4), including four variables ( $\alpha=0.653$ ), the teachers responded that the forms of social interaction “in pair” ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=0.619$ ) and in “small group” ( $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=0.654$ ) were deployed more frequently rather than the form of “whole class” ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=0.886$ ) as being used “sometimes”. This result can be explained through two of the VNEN policies that 1) organises pupils to sit and work in small group during a period (e.g., one semester); 2) instructs pupils to closely follow to the ten-step learning of the VNEN model. Exchanging with peer before discussing in small group corresponds with the third and fourth step of the ten-step. In the design of the self-study textbooks, the pupils are instructed to self-study basing on the ‘logos’ that are designed to direct pupils’ learning.

So, it can be said that the VNEN model and its self-study textbooks were thought by teachers to support them to facilitate the implementation of the constructivist approaches through social interaction in pair and small groups in teaching and learning Vietnamese language.

**Table II.3. Logos instructing pupils' self-studying**

No.	'Logo'	Corresponding learning form
1		Learning in individual
2		Learning in pair
3		Learning in small group
4		Learning in class as a whole
5		Learning in community (Applied activities)

There is a noticeable point that social interaction in community was regarded “*sometimes*” to happen ( $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=0.63$ ). Learning in community is one of the VNEN policies that creates various learning environments outside classroom for pupils. Especially, this VNEN policy emphasises opportunities of experimental learning for pupils in local community. However, this learning form was not fulfilled as frequently as it should be through the teachers’ responses. This result matches with the analysis on the VNEN textbooks carried out by Hoang (2016). Accordingly, the author argued that the VNEN textbooks were only designed in one phase of “Basic activities” whereas a typical VNEN lesson was considered to include three phase: “Basic activities, Practical activities and Applied activities”. Under a closer consideration to the textbooks, the author confirmed that the phases of “Practice” and “Applied” designed in the self-study textbooks actually focused on consolidating knowledge and main skills of the current learning contents rather applying the new knowledge and skills on solving real-world problems. This is considerable difference from the original meanings of “Practice” and “Applied” phases that the original model is oriented to. Compared with the Act 22/GĐĐT (Vietnam-MoET, 2016), the learning activities designed in the textbooks only activate pupils’ cognition at two first levels: knowing and understanding. At the levels of practice and application limited at *semantic meaning* (i.e., form-focused language use limited in a textual context) rather than *pragmatic meaning* (i.e., meaning-

focused language in a wide and new context). At this point, the teachers do not think that the self-study textbooks sufficiently support the teachers to implement the VNEN policies in general and the constructivist approach in particular.

**Table II.4. Teachers' beliefs toward the self-study textbooks in facilitating the dialectical constructivist features**

Items	N	Mean	SD
<i>C1. Knowledge is constructed by learners</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Responses for approval</i></span>			
3. Pupils' involvement in learning activities by their own pace and progress	167	3.77	.649
4. Pupils have a say in deciding what activities they do, how long they take and how they are assessed	167	3.08	.724
<i>C2. Learning is social participation</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Responses for frequency</i></span>			
Social interaction in pair	167	3.88	.619
Social interaction in small group	167	3.87	.654
Social interaction in class as a whole	166	3.21	.886
Social interaction in community	167	2.65	.630
<i>C3. Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Responses for approval</i></span>			
6. Connecting prior knowledge	167	3.72	.929
8. Authentic texts/communicative situations	167	3.80	.733
9. Experience in emotion and values	165	3.94	.502
<i>C4. Learning stresses scaffolding</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Responses for approval</i></span>			
10. Deductive process: partial knowledge/skills to overall ones; simple to complex levels etc.	167	3.92	.553
11. Respecting proximal development zone	167	3.81	.630
12. Cognitive procedure: observing language models, analysing and practicing, reflecting.	167	3.88	.579
13. Designing sub-questions or prompts to support pupils' cognition	167	4.02	.575
<i>C5. Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Responses for approval</i></span>			
14. Various types of learning environment are involved to support pupils' learning (family, organisation, institution, etc.)	167	3.3	.639
15. Multi-directed interaction with respect	167	4.02	.635
16. Self-assessment and mutual assessment	167	3.94	.848

**b3.** About the third feature of the dialectical constructivism, “*Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based*” ( $\alpha=0.744$ ) (see Table II.4), in general, the respondents agreed that the activities designed in self-study textbooks help pupils to connect to their prior knowledge

( $M=3.72$ ); and that pupils learn with authentic texts or communicative situations ( $M=3.80$ ). Furthermore, learning exercises/questions in the textbooks ask pupils to express their emotion and personal values ( $M=3.94$ ). So it can be concluded that the teachers believed the self-study textbooks can support them to implement the third feature of the constructivist learning.

In addition, the teachers were also asked to freely provide more details about pupils' prior experience required in the self-study textbooks. The learning activities are usually designed at the starting of a new topic or a new lesson. Most of respondents (31.2%,  $n=62$ ) said that the Vietnamese language knowledge and skills of previous grades are set as dominantly concern through the textbooks whereas a considerable percentage of the teachers (28.8%,  $n=48$ ) asserted that the designed questions focused on the language knowledge and skills of the sharply previous lessons. There was 15.6% of the respondents ( $n=26$ ) who agreed that pupils' experience of local society and culture were concerned to recall; and 14.4% of them ( $n=24$ ) supposed that the pupils' language experience of outside the classroom, in familiar communities was concerned. Especially, only 5.2% ( $n=7$ ) responded that the self-study textbooks had questions/activities to recall pupils' needs and interests. In short, the prior knowledge of pupils that is considered the base for new knowledge acquirements was nearly understood by the textbook composers as language knowledge belonging to previous lessons or grades. Pupils' prior knowledge, according to the teachers' responses, seems not to comprise pupils' experiences of society, culture, needs and interests. It can be concluded that, from the point of view of the participants, the self-study textbook developers shared the same view with the traditional textbooks composers in terms of understanding pupils' prior knowledge and experiences.

**b4.** The fourth feature of the dialectical constructivist approach, "*Learning stresses scaffolding*" consists four variables ( $\alpha=0.665$ ) (see Table II.4); however, the third variable was deleted for its Corrected item-total correlation was less than 0.3 (Hoang-Trong and Chu, 2008; Nguyen D.T., 2008; Nguyen D.T. and Nguyen, 2009). So the Cronbach Alpha of the fourth feature was 0.71 when the third variation was dropped. The teachers agreed that the self-textbook's design helped them to scaffold pupils' learning with deductive process of learning activities ( $M=3.92$ ); they expressed that the requirements of tasks/activities in the textbooks are appropriate with the pupils' differently cognitive levels, basing on the respect

for ‘the proximal zone of development’ (M=3.81); and there are also sub-questions and prompts to support pupils’ cognition (M=4.02).

**b5.** The last feature of the dialectical constructivist approach, “*Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable*” comprised three variables ( $\alpha=0.645$ ) (see Table II.4). Although the variables of this dimension were difficult to be gauged through the questionnaire, it needed to be observed in practice, the teachers’ responses provided the information of how they fulfilled the feature of learning environment. In the line with the above survey result (Item b2), the teachers were “Not sure” about various types of learning environment involving in pupils’ learning, especially local factors (M=3.3). The two other dimensions received the high approvals from the teachers (M=4.02; M=3.94 respectively).

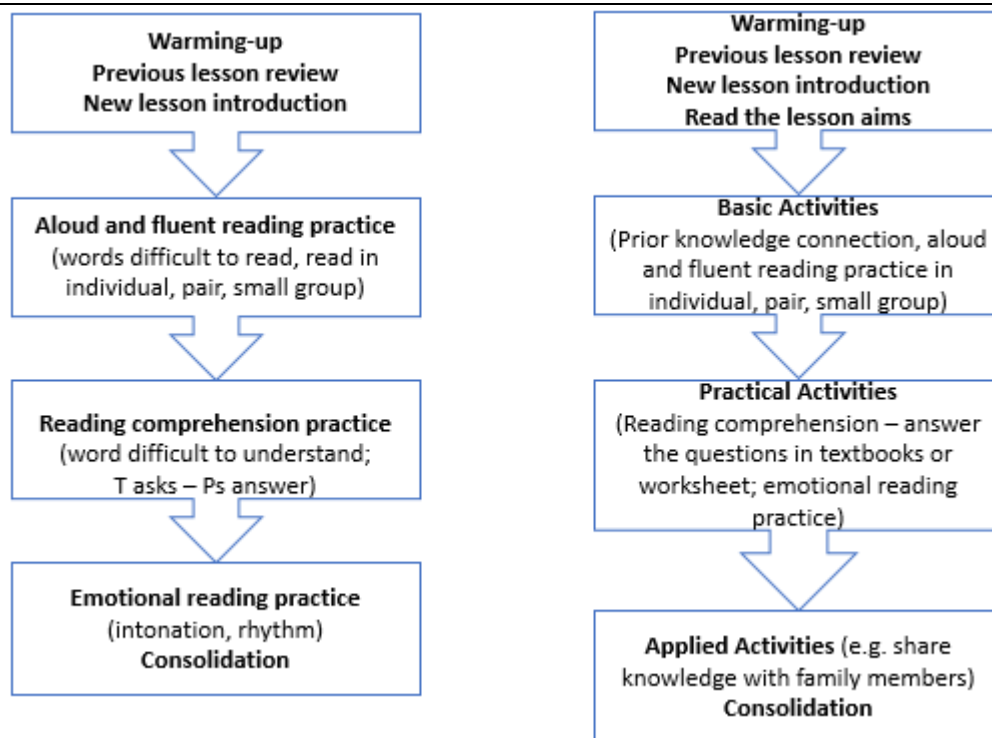
### II.1.3.2. Teachers’ Beliefs towards Dialectical Constructivist Learning Practices in Vietnamese Language Instruction

Participants were also asked about their beliefs towards their teaching practices when they worked with the self-study textbooks. Their responses were expected to gauge how they articulated the textbook use in practice to implement the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools.

**a.** Within this survey, we questioned about the regular teaching procedure of Reading class the teachers used to instruct their pupils (*see Appendix 1*). The first procedure was described according to the traditional concept whereas the second procedure employed the VNEN process (Figure II.6). Data from Table II.5 shows that there were nearly equal percentages between the teachers’ answers to the traditional and VNEN procedures, even the traditional process of reading a little more than the VNEN procedure (52.1%; 47.9% respectively).

**Table II.5. Reading process of the traditional and VNEN models**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Traditional process	87	52.1	52.1	52.1
	VNEN process	80	47.9	47.9	100.0
	Total	167	100.0	100.0	



**Figure II.6. Reading processes of the traditional and VNEN model**

As aforementioned, the VNEN textbooks are developed from the traditional curriculum and textbooks of the 2000 reform so, basically, they share common characteristics of topics, lessons and learning activities. The VNEN textbook editors rearranged and modified more contents and activities, especially designed these textbooks as ready-made textbooks (Dang T.A., 2015; Le M.H., 2018a) in order to help pupils self-study according to three learning steps of VNEN model: Basic Activities, Practical Activities, Applied Activities. Whereas the traditional procedure of Reading teaching has been criticised for too much focusing on the skill of *out loud and fluent reading*, the reading procedure based on the VNEN model is expected to spend an appropriate period of time and adequate activities to reading comprehension and developing pupils' language and thinking. However, the survey results revealed that the teachers still adhered the traditional way although they were using and working with the self-study textbooks of the VNEN model, under the VNEN model policies about the teaching procedure in general and reading teaching process in specific.

**b.** The second topic carried out in this section focused on teaching methodologies the teachers often use in student classes of Vietnamese language instruction. Data showed that two teaching methods characterising the VNEN-based learning, *practice and group discussing*, were used at a highest frequency ( $M=4.08$ ,  $M=4.01$  respectively) (Table II.6).

Besides, the groups of method/techniques consisting of *opening conversation, brainstorming, scaffolding, problem solving and learning games* were also employed at “Often” rate. Whereas another group of methods/techniques including *mind map, modelling, project-based learning and role playing* were used at the rate of “Sometimes” by the teachers when their pupils worked with the self-study textbooks. Noticeably, the *lecturing* method was also applied at the rate of “Often” (M=3.64). This showed that the teacher had tendency to mix between the VNEN methodologies and traditional methodologies that have been remaining in their long-held beliefs and habits when they employed the self-study textbooks in teaching and learning Vietnamese language.

**Table II.6. Teachers’ beliefs to teaching practice in Vietnamese language instruction**

	N	Mean	SD
Lecturing	167	3.64	.651
Mind map	167	3.36	.770
Open Conversation	167	3.96	.542
Modelling	167	3.27	.772
Brainstorming	167	3.99	.640
Scaffolding	167	3.83	.608
Problem Solving	167	3.89	.538
Project Based	167	3.32	1.032
Practice	167	4.08	.744
Role Playing	167	3.40	.661
Learning Games	167	3.74	.651
Group Discussion	167	4.01	.685
Valid N (listwise)	167		

c. Last point in this section, define the teacher participants’ general judgements about to what extent the self-study textbooks of the VNEN model were appropriate to facilitate the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching and learning Vietnamese language. Based on data shown in Table II.7, most of the teachers expressed their “Neutral/Unsure” toward the appropriateness of the self-study textbooks in facilitating the implementation of the constructivist approach (64.1%, n=107). Although there was a considerably number of the respondents choosing “*Appropriate and Absolutely appropriate*” (24.4%, n=41), reluctance



appeared in teachers' opinions. In the next section, the strengths and weaknesses of the self-study textbooks in teachers' daily use was expected to provide reasons of the teachers' judgement.

**Table II.7. Teachers' judgement on the appropriateness of the self-study textbooks with the constructivist approach**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	Absolutely Inappropriate	15	9.0	9.0	9.0
	Inappropriate	4	2.4	2.4	11.4
	Neutral/Unsure	107	64.1	64.1	75.5
	Appropriate	38	22.8	22.8	98.2
	Absolutely appropriate	3	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	167	100.0	100.0	

### **II.1.3.3. Teachers' Beliefs toward the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Self-study Textbooks, and their Expectations for the Further Sets of Textbooks**

At the end of the questionnaire, the open questions designed to ask about strengths and weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks in facilitating the constructivist approach encouraged participants to freely contribute with their ideas. We faithfully typed teachers' ideas in Vietnamese, counted the frequency of each idea, then we translated them into English. Concerning the strengths of the surveyed textbooks, the synthesis from respondents' answers could be categorised into four groups: 1) Benefits to pupils' learning; 2) Benefits to teachers' professional development; and 3) Benefits to pupils' parents in supporting their child's learning, and 4) The strengths of appearance and content of the textbooks. Similarly, the shortcomings of the self-study textbooks defined by the teacher participants are categorised into four corresponding groups: 1) Shortcomings for pupils' learning; 2) Shortcomings for teachers' profession; 3) Shortcoming for pupils' parents in supporting their child's learning; 4) Shortcomings of the self-study textbooks' appearance and contents; and 5) Shortcomings of the VNEN policies in teaching and learning practice. We compared each pair of strengths and shortcomings in order to draw a clear picture about the current-used textbooks from the teachers' point of view.

*a. Strengths and Weaknesses of the VNEN Textbooks toward Pupils' Learning***Table II.8. Strengths and weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks toward pupils' learning**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Available design of every learning activity help teacher and pupils easily carry out learning activities in class;	Low-level intellectual pupils cannot self-study with this kind of textbooks (e.g., slowly understand, getting lost compared with the progress of other pupils).
Pupils can self-study and practice following the self-study textbooks instructions;	
The textbook provides basic and comprehensive knowledge for pupils of each grade;	The self-study textbooks are designed based on activities/tasks/exercises so pupils cannot master knowledge/ skills of each subject;
Knowledge is designed in a spiral manner to help teachers orient their teaching and pupils are consolidated from low level to higher one;	
Pupils make more interaction each other;	Pupils with learning disabilities, or disadvantaged, cannot learn with this kind of textbooks.
There are many learning games and contents relating to real-world life;	
Each lesson is designed as a ready-made worksheet so pupils can complete it more quickly by their own.	

We collected many strong points that were considered to facilitate the implementation of the dialectical constructivist approach from the teachers' responses, including pupils' self-study with the textbooks, more interaction among pupils, learning through learning games and lessons from real-world life. However, teachers emphasised the advantages of ready-made forms that help pupils complete tasks by themselves and even more quickly than pupils worked with the traditional textbooks. It seems that the factor "quick", "complete" were stressed rather than pupils' deep learning. According to Hang (2018a), the ready-made forms of exercises/questions decreased pupils' involvement in thinking and finding the solutions. Likewise, how pupils' competences of language expression would be when they simply filled out some numbers or units? (Dang T.A., 2015; Do-Quyen, 2015). Furthermore, the constructivism-based learning must be more than "completing exercises by themselves [pupils]". It should be understood as a process of constructing new knowledge through interpreting existed experience, re-organise prior knowledge and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). During this process, pupils need scaffold from teacher or partners (Hogan and Tudge, 1999)(O'Donell, 2012).

Besides, the teachers also reported weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks toward pupils' learning. The most frequent idea was that the textbooks were unsuitable to low-knowledgeable and disadvantaged pupils who live in rural regions. This result from the survey revealed a mismatch between the VNEN model and its original model, EN in Colombia. Whereas the original EN model and its policies rooted from rural region and was "born" for firstly disadvantaged pupils at rural and remote regions who are usually low-knowledgeable compared to their counterparts in urban. It seemed that there was a mismatch between the essence of the EN model and its adaptation under the VNEN model in Vietnam.

***b. Strengths and Weaknesses of the VNEN Textbooks toward Teachers' Professional Development***

**Table II.9. Strengths and weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks toward teachers' professional development**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>Availably designed activities in the textbooks orient teachers' lesson plan;</p> <p>Based on the textbooks' available design, members of professional group are easy to make agreement [Professional groups of each grade have weekly conference to make agreement on how to teach a particular learning content before this content will be taught in practice next week];</p> <p>The textbooks are the sources providing basic knowledge of subjects and the basic ways to organise learning activities;</p>	<p>There are not manuals to support teachers' teaching;</p> <p>Teachers take much time to find more information and materials for teaching;</p>

According to the teachers' reports, the textbooks were recognised as materials supporting their profession, especially the orientation role toward teaching and learning activities. However, one of the most frequent difficulty mentioned by the teachers was that there were not teachers' manuals attached to the sets of self-study textbooks so the teachers took much time to find more information outside the available materials. It may be explained from the long-held reliance on the textbooks of the Vietnamese teachers. For a long time, textbooks have been regarded the only material for teaching and learning. So the teachers considered finding further information outside the textbooks as a considerable difficulty.

This is found as a second mismatch in the way teachers use the self-study textbooks between the original model of Colombia and the adaptive model, VNEN in Vietnam.

***c. Strengths and Weaknesses of the VNEN Textbooks toward Pupils' Parents in supporting their Child's Learning***

**Table II.10. Strengths and weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks toward pupils' parents in supporting their child's learning**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Pupils' parents can use the self-study textbooks to support their child's learning at home.	<p>Pupils' parents in rural region have low-intellectual background so they meet difficult to help their child learn;</p> <p>Pupils have not received the support from their parents in Applied activities;</p> <p>The current textbooks' design is different from the previous textbooks so parents feel difficult in using.</p>

Concerning pupils' parents, the 3-in-1 textbooks supported them to help their child's learning as being required by the VNEN model. However, again, the textbooks were regarded not to suit to pupils' parents living in rural region with low intellectual background. If the EN was mainly employed in rural and remote regions of Colombia where the parents had rich knowledge about agriculture to support their child's learning under the grass-rooted curriculum, the VNEN applied at wide scale in both very-central cities and rural regions under the same national curriculum. As a certain result, the teachers at rural regions found it was difficult for pupils' parents to supports their child' learning.

***d. Strengths and Weaknesses of the VNEN Textbooks of the Self-study Textbooks' Appearance and Contents***

It is obvious that the weaknesses of the textbooks' contents and form recognised by the teachers are overwhelming than their strengths. The most noticeable and frequent points were over-loaded contents in a lesson, over-focused on theory, unsuitable texts and tasks, and inauthentic texts and communicative-situations. The shortcomings of the traditional textbooks synthesised in many research (Hoang, 2011; Tien-Dung, 2008) were also recognised at the self-study textbooks by the school teachers who had been experienced in them. Being adapted from the EN model, the VNEN textbooks have still been under the national curriculum and textbook centralisation. Therefore, these drawbacks were

unavoidable. Besides, the physical characteristics were also mentioned as high prices, big-size and many volumes per grade, infirmed back of book etc.

**Table II.11. Strengths and weaknesses of the VNEN textbooks of the self-study textbooks' appearance and contents**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
The textbooks were carefully researched before transiting knowledge to pupils;	Some contents/words/phrases are not suitable to pupils living in different regions so they need to be adjusted;
The textbooks demonstrate clear learning objectives;	Some contents/text are not authentic;
The contents meet the standard of knowledge and skills required by MoET;	There are too many long-time taken lessons, teacher cannot cover within one class, pupils cannot acquire such amount of knowledge within a class time;
Their illustration is good;	There is some further knowledge compared with the previous textbooks so teachers must find the answers by themselves;
Logos are aimed at instruct pupils to self-study.	There are too many exercises that are required pupils to imitate available models;
	The textbooks lack of supplemented materials (e.g. visual aids), which causes definite difficulties for teacher.
	There are many overloaded lessons toward pupils;
	The current textbooks have higher prices than the traditional textbooks; many pupils of low-income families meet difficult to buy;
	The textbooks have rather big size and 4 volumes per class so pupils must take heavy bags.
	The quality of textbooks is insufficient, back of the book is easy to be burst;
	The textbooks are overwhelming knowledge focused;

***e. Shortcomings of the VNEN Policies in Teaching and Learning Practice***

- Teacher takes much time to instruct and lecturer separately each group;
- It is difficult to apply ICT in teaching under VNEN model;
- It should not limit to use class board as current state [With the aim to “remove” the image of a “knowledge transmitter” of traditional teachers when giving lectures in front of the whole class and “stuck” with class board, the VNEN policies required teacher not to use class board; instead of, giving lecture for each group. In practice, if teacher use class board for whole class lecture, he/she will be under-evaluated by their school

managers and inspectors who observe the class and this leads to bad influence on his/her promotion and salary].

## **II.1.4. Conclusion and Discussion**

### **II.1.4.1. Conclusion**

The study was undertaken to find out what primary school teachers think about the self-study textbooks in supporting them to implement the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools which were launched since 2012 and maintained through the VNEN project. This survey study is also aimed at exploring how the teachers believe about the dialectical constructivist learning practices in terms of teaching procedures and teaching methodologies they used on a daily basis. Finally, through the open-answers from the points of view of the teachers, the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks in the role of the materials supporting the teachers to fulfil the constructivist approaches are also defined. The study results aimed at to identify constructive recommendation for a course of action to improve teacher professionalism and the quality of teaching and learning materials to adapt the educational change and meet the requirements of the pedagogical reform in Vietnam at current times. In the context of the present pedagogical reform, the national curriculum has been promulgated as a basis for composing teaching and learning materials; in addition, many sets of textbooks will be published and used over the country. The Vietnamese MoET has ‘transferred’ the right to choose teaching and learning materials to school teachers in order to encourage the teachers’ professional autonomy. The study results become more important in taking the role as criteria for school teacher to evaluate and choose the textbooks in their teaching practices. The study results can be summarised as follows:

In general, the teachers believe the self-study textbooks of the VNEN model are designed in the alignment of the dialectical constructivist approach. However, the results revealed their inconsistency among their responses, they also think the textbooks characterised by fixed process of learning activities for teacher’ and pupils’ adherence.

The teachers believe that through working with the self-study textbooks, pupils’ own progresses are respected. However, the survey results revealed that the respect for pupils’ own progresses was understood as accepting the state ‘quick’ or ‘slow’ in term of the

allowed period of time for finishing learning tasks/activities in class, rather than respecting the variety in pupils' cognitive levels.

Learning activities/tasks/questions designed in the self-study textbooks only require pupils' cognition at the levels of *knowing* and *understanding*, two levels of applying and creating (Vietnam-MoET, 2016) are nearly ignored. In addition, the applied activities focus on semantic meaning rather than pragmatic meaning of language.

Pupils' prior knowledge is understood as language knowledge of previous lessons and grades rather than pupils' knowledge and experience of society, culture or interest and emotion.

About the practice of reading teaching, although the teachers were using and working the VNEN textbooks, they had tendency to apply the traditional procedure that was considered too much focusing on the aloud and fluent reading rather than reading comprehension and developing pupils' thinking and language.

Teacher used the VNEN-based teaching methodologies, characterised by activating pupils' learning such as *group working, discussion and practising, etc.* However, through the teachers' responses, they had tendency to mix these methods with the traditional ones, characterised by purely giving *lecture* and *presentation* that have been remained in their long-held beliefs and habits of teaching.

The teachers argued that the textbooks are not suitable to rural and disadvantage pupils whereas the original EN model rooted from the rural region and for rural and disadvantaged pupils. We revealed that there was a mismatch between the essence of the EN model and its adaptation under the VNEN model in Vietnam.

Textbooks have been regarded the only material for teaching and learning. So the teachers considered that finding further information outside the textbooks is a considerable difficulty.

From these results, some mismatches, even contradictions, were identified. First, the self-study textbook is one the original elements of Escuela Nueva that had been faithfully reproduced into the Vietnamese version of the project. Accordingly, this kind of textbooks is called as "*3-in-1 self-instructional guides that could be used by pupils, teachers, and parents*". Besides, using these textbooks facilitates teachers' professional autonomy and supports pupils to

self-study. These spirit and function of the self-instructional textbooks are still confirmed by the VNEN reformers (Dang, 2015, 2016, 2017; Le, 2018b). In the exploration of this study, we identified the concepts of the self-study textbooks of the EN model to be simplified, even different understood by the VNEN developers.

In detail, from the role of the textbooks editors, the VNEN developers expressed their subjective concepts of a self-study textbooks through designing ready-made exercises, meticulous procedure of learning activities, together with three steps of knowledge exploration and 10 steps of learning for all pupils. It appears that the constructivist learning and self-studying were understood as completing rote exercises/tasks designed in the textbooks following an available and meticulous procedure, without being challenged in their understanding of the materials. Even in many cases, pupils only need to fill in the blank of the available template; or choose True/False answers or multiple answers. In language education, such available templates and short answers are considered to decrease pupils' thinking and language-use competence.

From the school teachers' points of view, the traditional Vietnamese teaching and learning that dominated by the centrality of textbooks and the need to fully reproduce the written texts, the consequence of a long history of Confucian-influenced education (Le M.H., 2018a; Woodside, 1991), have remained as teachers' long-held beliefs. From the survey results, although the teachers worked with and used the self-study textbooks, they had tendency to follow the commands in the self-instructional guides rather than making necessary changes to ensure pupils' learning outcomes. Noticeably, the teachers have still believed the self-study textbooks as the foremost and unique materials for their teaching. As a result, it appears that the quality of textbooks significantly affects the teachers' pedagogical development. We may conclude that although the VNEN developers and editors expected to decrease the over-reliance on the textbooks of the teachers, the VNEN policies in general and the policy of the self-instructional textbooks in particular, seemed not to support the VNEN policies in practice. For more instance, there is an obvious mismatch between the essence of the textbooks of the original model and those of the VNEN model that is recognised from the teachers' belief survey. The Vietnamese teachers believed that the self-instructional textbooks of the VNEN model are not suitable to disadvantage and rural-region pupils as well as parents of these pupils.



From the consideration of the self-instructional textbooks themselves, the textbook contents and their physical quality have been controversial. The most noticeable points focus on inauthentic texts and inappropriate contents for all locals that reflected the story “one-size-fit-all” of the traditional textbooks of the previous educational reform. Furthermore, the physical quality of these sets of textbooks is also under-evaluated by the school teachers.

#### **II.1.4.2. Implications**

The National Curriculum of General Education has been published by the Vietnam MoET in December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the next important task defined by the MoET is publishing textbooks for Basic Education. According to the policy “one curriculum, many corresponding sets of textbooks”, Vietnam MoET is building the requirements, criteria for textbook evaluation. These criteria will be treated as a basis for composing, assessing, approving and using textbooks in the future. In this context, the school boards and teachers have right to choose textbooks that are considered the most suitable to their pupils and local context. In addition, textbooks are defined not to be the only teaching and learning material, teachers and pupils can exploit many various sources. The future textbooks need to make high attention to the supplement materials that are suitable to different regions over the country; especially, the supplement materials for disadvantaged pupils such as minor ethnic groups, disabled pupils, and pupils living in difficult regions of rural, boundaries and islands. This kind of textbooks should be composed in the light of the dialectical constructivist approach and should be flexible-in-use materials for teaching and learning.

First, the content load of textbooks over a period of time needs to be considered so that it is not over-loaded to teacher and pupils as it is in the current-use textbooks. To obtain this goal, textbooks composers should carefully look upon the amount of topics, units or lessons, tasks or activities, etc., over a definite period time so that they are suitable to each age of pupils. Especially, the textbooks built on the competence-based curriculum need to be escaped the prescribed and fixed contents in a linear manner, from the first to the last page; instead, to focus on competences that pupils are required to acquire. The way for the pupils to acquire these competences will be decided and fulfilled by the school teachers and school boards. Finally, to evaluate whether the pupils acquire the required competences,

Vietnamese MoET needs to build the descriptive criteria of outcome competence for each grade, each period of time in order to support the teachers to assess their pupils. With this suggestion, we hope school teachers to reduce the pressure of completing the prescribed curriculum; at the same time, to get rid of the conflict between what they think they should do and what they could not do because of the over-loaded teaching contents. Especially, pupils will learn in the context of local society and culture because the learning contents are designed by teachers and school administrators in the local. This suggestion will help the future textbook overcome the shortcomings of the previous textbooks in terms of unsuitable contents for different contexts.

Second, as partly being mentioned in the first suggestion, the future textbooks should be designed in a flexible way that create opportunities for teachers to promote professional autonomy and development. In this case, teachers who are considered as agents of the pedagogical reform can use the textbooks with activeness and creativity. To attain this goal, the future textbooks should be designed basing on outcome competences for each period of time such as one week or one semester. In order to help pupils acquire these competences, teachers themselves will define the detailed learning contents. Accordingly, the textbooks need to cover a broad range of content and pedagogy to create an autonomous environment for teachers to define the learning goals, to adapt various teaching methods, to employ different forms of assessment that suit their pupils and their reference.

Third, from the pupils' learning standpoint, the future textbooks can help pupils to be able to apply what they learn from their real-world life. So the new textbooks need support pupils to answer these questions: what can pupils do with what they have learnt? How can pupils apply what they have learnt on their daily life? Which competences do pupils acquire and how they use these competences in practices? To attain the third goal, the future textbooks should have some certain defining parameters, as follows:

The textbooks should not focus on providing knowledge, especially purely theoretical knowledge of Vietnamese language (including linguistic and literature knowledge). Instead, the textbook authors should select authentic issues, events or situations that are typical and representative for the real-world life. Based on these authentic lessons, pupils are encouraged to integrate their competences into approaching and solving the problem. At

the same time, they understand that knowledge from the textbooks cannot be powerful enough to help them solve various problem in real-life. Therefore, they are stimulated to explore and use relevant teaching materials outside the textbooks for giving valuable complementary sources for them in active learning and in the wide communicative environment of language.

The textbooks should help pupils to get understanding that language situations, methods of problem solving, conclusions, etc., may be one of possible cases that are suggested by the textbook authors. From the role of learners, they can suggest other situations, methods, conclusions. This way helps pupils establish critical thinking and reduce their over-reliance on textbooks.

Regarding the role of the textbooks to teach first language, the textbooks should help pupils develop their emotional competences. When they are introduced and acquainted with new language works, literature writings, pupils need to have opportunities to involve in these works through imagining, role playing, dramatize them or experiencing in role playing in characters of a story.

In terms of outcome competence assessment, traditional tests should be combined with alternatives such as projects, practical assignments, oral work, and portfolio-based assessment. These assessment forms help pupils be able to make their own topic decision, generate their ways to conduct learning, and engaging in participatory and collaborative learning. At the same time, the future textbooks need to build the outcome-competence description of each period of time that help teachers base on to make assessment on pupils' learning results, or pupils can base on them to self-evaluate their learning. This would be a significant way to reduce the pressure on teachers and pupils to cope with the examination.

In short, we hope to transform the textbooks-driven teaching to constructivism-driven learning. Working with the new textbooks, teacher have chances to invest their competences and experience in the lesson while pupils have opportunities to get actively involved in their lessons. This is far different from the state of both teacher and pupil over-reliance on the available and meticulous design that requires them to step by step to follow from start to end.

In this chapter, we reflected the teachers' beliefs toward the self-study textbooks of the VNEN model. The mismatches between the concept of self-study textbooks of the original model, EN from Colombia, and its adapted version in Vietnam, VNEN model are analysed. This analysis is the basis of implications for the future sets of textbooks that will be used in Vietnam. In the next section, we will explore the teachers' beliefs toward the core pedagogies of the VNEN model, the dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese language instruction at primary schools.



## **Chapter II.2. Implementation of Constructivist Pedagogy in Vietnamese Language Education: from Teachers' Beliefs to Practice**

In this chapter, we will focus on investigating primary school teachers' beliefs on the dialectical constructivist approach and their practices in Vietnamese language instruction. The synthesis and interpretation of the findings will be reflected on three issues: 1) the matches and mismatches found out between the teachers' articulated conceptions obtained through the survey and their teaching practices gauged through classroom observation together with their responses to the post-teaching interview; 2) which is the professional position of the teachers determined, as technicians or professionals; and 3) the explanations about the mismatches between the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, and the implications for enactment of the dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese language instruction in the context of Vietnamese culture. In addition, we will develop suggestions aimed to improve teacher education and professional development.

## **II.2.1. Research Design**

### **II.2.1.1. Research Questions**

In this descriptive and interpretive study, numbers of research instruments will be used to identify teachers' beliefs and practices. The research questions then sub-questions were identified to achieve these purposes:

**Question 1:** What are the primary school teachers' general beliefs toward teaching and learning Vietnamese language?

**Question 2:** What are the primary school teachers' expressed beliefs of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy mandated by VNEN model in Vietnamese language teaching? Is there any relation between teachers' beliefs of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy and their background information (gender, age, school location, school size, class size, years of teaching experience, educational degree, and teaching resources)?

The answers to these two above questions are collected from the survey questionnaire in a large scale. The statistical data is described and interpreted carefully to find out what teachers conceptualised Vietnamese language teaching and their articulated beliefs toward the dialectical constructivist pedagogy).

**Question 3:** To what extent are the samples of these participants' teaching practices consistent with their articulated beliefs toward the dialectical constructivist pedagogy under VNEN policy adherence?

The answer to this question is based on 18 class observations. These 18 classes were conducted by nine primary school teachers who had answered on the questionnaire survey beforehand.

**Question 4:** How can the matches and mismatches between the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices be explained from the context of Vietnamese education and culture?

The matches and mismatches between the teachers' expressed beliefs and their teaching practices are revealed basing on the data triangulation – comparison between the statistical data of the survey questionnaire and class observations data, as well as in-depth interview data.

### II.2.1.2. Research Process

This study will describe three survey processes of teachers' beliefs and practices of the dialectical constructivist approach. The focus of these processes is two approaches to teaching and language learning including knowledge transmission and knowledge construction (OECD, 2009); and the five features of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy (see Table I.9). Figure II.7 represents the interrelated processes of the study, described as follows.

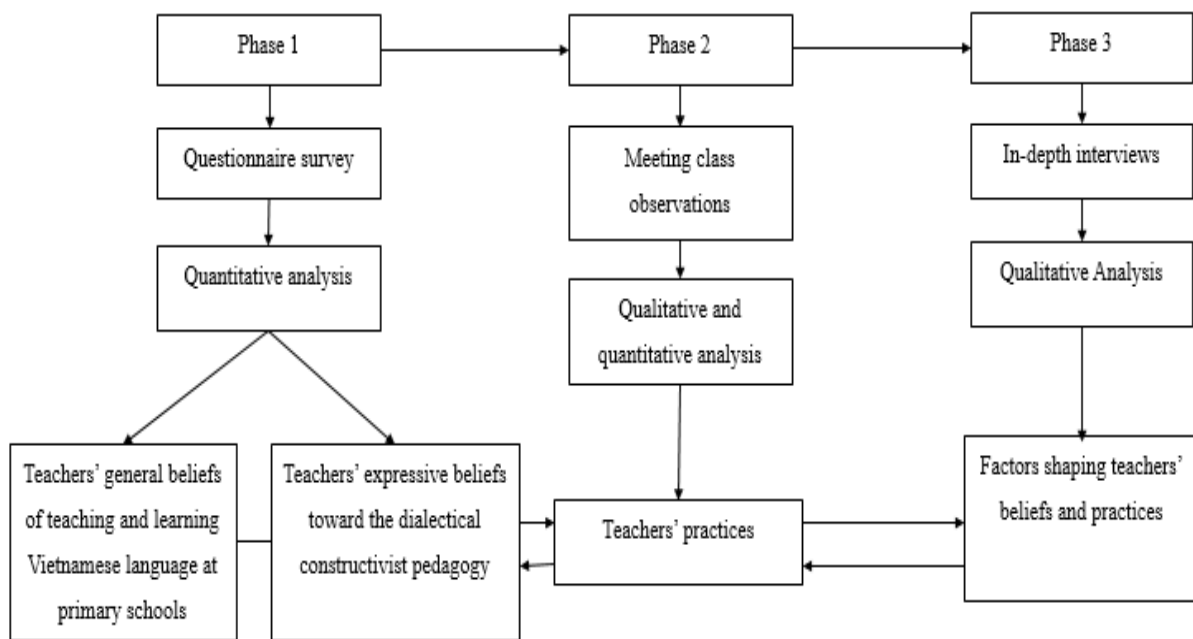


Figure II.7. Multiple data sources of the teachers' beliefs and practices

#### a. Phase 1

This Phase aimed to identify the potential predictive power of selected variables on teachers' beliefs (Dang T.A., 2015): 1) of teaching and learning Vietnamese language and 2) of the dialectical constructivist pedagogy mandated by the VNEN model. In detail, for the first point, the teachers' general beliefs were surveyed in terms of *the roles of teachers in first language teaching, the crucial targets of teaching and learning Vietnamese language and the essential process of learning Vietnamese language as the mother language*. For the second point, the teachers' beliefs of the dialectical constructivist approach were unfolded, specified by five features comprising *Learning is social participation; Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based; Learning stresses scaffolding; Knowledge is constructed by learners; and Learning environment should be inclusive and*



*equal*. The teachers' responses synthesised from the questionnaire survey (Appendix 2) were analysed with descriptive statistics.

In the questionnaire, *Part A* is aimed to collect background information of teacher participants, including gender, age, school location, school size, class size, educational degree, years of teaching and teaching resources. *Part B* of the questionnaire including *B1*, *B2*, *B3*, and *B4* was designed to collect data on teachers' beliefs toward teaching and learning Vietnamese language at primary schools in Vietnam context, including *B1*-the role of teacher; *B2*-the crucial targets of teaching; *B3*-essential process of teaching and learning; and *B4*-the dialectical constructivist features. *Part C* is aimed to unfold the teachers' opinions toward the current curriculum of Vietnamese language education. In addition, this part is also targeted to explore the teachers' thoughts about advantages and disadvantages of the VNEN application in the cultural context of Vietnam.

## **b. Phase 2**

This process is aimed to identify to what extent teachers practice at the classroom level reflected their beliefs and understandings toward the dialectical constructivist pedagogy that they had shown through their responses in the survey. As recommended in (Denzin Norman K and Lincoln, 2008), we used this quantitative result to obtain a general tendency or picture of the teachers' articulated beliefs of the pedagogical approach. Then, we undertook a qualitative work to enrich and elaborate the quantitative results. This helped us to form a more complete picture of the primary teachers' understandings of the pedagogical approach in teaching Vietnamese language in Vietnam.

In this study, classroom observations allow us to develop a holistic perspective on the implementation of the dialectical constructivism in Vietnamese language teaching practices, i.e., understanding of the context within which the dialectical constructivist approach is implemented, characterising teachers' and students' activities, and recognising which teaching and learning sequence is applied and how it is organised. Observed demonstrations were calculated in terms of percentage of time that children spent on-task and teachers spent on true/real teaching activities because the quantity of time allotment and engagement during the language lesson block may be critically important to understanding teaching effectiveness (Foorman and Schatschneider, 2003; OECD, 2009). According to Archer and Hugues, time on tasks or engaged time is defined as "the amount of time that

students are actively engaged in a learning tasks (e.g listening to the teacher, solving a problem, listening to other student respond, taking notes, reading)” (Archer and Hughes, 2010). Although the positive correlation between engaged time and achievement is still relatively modest, time-on-task is considered the prerequisite condition for increasing high levels of pupils’ success.

The tasks and the questions used in the observed lessons were quantified based on categories of the constructivist features with relevant variables (statements) pre-determined to find out the nature of learning and teaching activities. Additionally, the qualitative data was examined by descriptively representing what was going on in the classroom including i) how the lessons were structured; ii) which methods were used; iii) which class forms were applied; and iv) how pupils’ learning results were assessed. In order words, the number of occurrences under each category was marked and put into each other.

### **c. Phase 3**

This process is targeted to uncover the teachers’ thoughts of their application of the constructivist approach by conducting the post-teaching interviews. The content dimension of this process was configured with the other two processes. According to (Neuman S.B. and McCormick, 1995), questionnaires and follow-up interviews are administered to confirm behaviours and their events that occur in the study sessions. (Denzin Norman K and Lincoln, 2008) contend that questions and issues that may have been overlooked in the questionnaire can be elaborated through the data collected from interviews. In other words, interviews provided the context and further insight to the study that a questionnaire could rarely provide.

In this study, teachers’ interview responses were used to crosscheck the quantitative and qualitative results from the questionnaire survey and classroom observations. More significantly, this job aimed to ascertain if there were occurrences of congruence or incongruence between the teachers’ pedagogy and the aspects of the context just mentioned.

### **II.2.1.3. Sampling and Participants**

To make up the sample for the study, adopted an approach of partial systematic sampling with random selection within categories (Creswell and Creswell, 2005). We chose five

provinces and cities from the total 13 units of Mekong Delta in the South of Vietnam. Five provinces were selected: Can Tho city, Hau Giang, Kien Giang, Soc Trang, and Tien Giang. Schools from these provinces have been involved in the VNEN project at its early stages. After that, we randomly three schools from the schools of each city and province above. The total number of schools is 15.

The targeted groups participating in this study must be teachers who satisfy the following criteria: 1) being teachers of primary schools where the VNEN program has been applied; 2) holding educational degrees in primary education (regular-bachelor degree, in-service bachelor degree, associate-bachelor degree, college degree and high-school graduates plus a short training of primary pedagogy). The total number of teachers from these 15 schools are 279 teachers who met these above criteria. All of these teachers were participants of the study with the questionnaire responses that would be counted at a specific response rate.

Mekong Delta is known as the biggest delta in size and population in the South of Vietnam. Can Tho city is a central city among 12 other provinces. Although agricultural background covers almost the region, socio-cultural-economic complexity and diversity exist in each province. Accordingly, the random selection of schools sites with their teachers who met the study criteria was acceptable to the study population (Creswell, 2005). In order to guarantee the reliability and validity, the survey scale items are established based on pilot and the principles of survey administration that uses frequency distributions, internal consistency reliability indexes, internal item correlations, and factor analysis before this instrument is officially used.

The next step was to engage in purposive sampling in order to choose a group of teachers who were volunteer to conduct their teaching practices for classroom observation purpose. This step is popular in qualitative research to obtain a sub-sample of teachers for more intensive study and data collection. (Creswell, 2005; Neuman W.L., 2000) postulated that this sampling technique enables the selection of cases that satisfies the pre-determined particular information. In this study, we chose the sampled groups of teachers with some pre-determined purposes. First, we wanted to have informative cases that manifest the phenomenon intensively, but not extremely. This is termed by Patton (1990) as *intensity*. Second, we wanted to select participants who high satisfied the pre-determined criteria that is termed as *criterion sampling*.

Therefore, four primary schools in Can Tho city were selected for classroom observations. The two first schools are Tra An and Tay Do located in the environ of city; and the two second schools is Mac Dinh Chi and Ngo Quyen are in the city central. All of the schools are public schools and labelled as the national standard and have been joining in the VNEN project at the first stages. These schools are considered to provide Vietnamese language lesson practices that can be representative of the VNEN project in Vietnam. Besides, the locations of both are also presentative for the variety in terms of economic and society of Can Tho city. Accordingly, the environ locations are featured by low economic status such as low income, material lack, etc. Especially, children here have not received enough the parents' care on their learning because many of their parents must go far away to work for the lives; or are busy with farming for whole day. Conversely, the children whose schools locate in city centrals have better conditions for their learning.

Before conducting classroom observation, the researcher had conversation with the principals of the targeted schools to know teachers who are appropriate with the researcher's pre-determined criteria, comprising 1) high-qualified pedagogical experience; 2) experience years of at least 5 years, including VNEN experience; and 3) the standardised educational degree with at least getting college graduation. Finally, we chose to invite nine teachers of these four schools to participate in the case study for the classroom observations. These ten teachers participated all processes of study consisting of the survey, the classroom observations and the interviews after their teaching.

With enthusiastic support from the four school boards and teachers, we had good opportunities to observe representative Vietnamese language teaching classes of which were different from each other. In total, 18 Vietnamese language lessons taught by nine teachers were observed with note takings and video recordings. Information about the observed classes is presented in the part of data collection.

### **II.2.2. Data Collection**

As mentioned above, the data collection was conducted through teacher questionnaire (Phase 1), classroom observation with notes made by the researcher during and immediately after the observed lessons (Phase 2) and followed by in-depth individual interviews after teaching (Phase 3).

### **II.2.2.1. Survey**

#### **a. Reliability and Validity**

The teacher questionnaire was composed of 35 questions with five-point Likert scales and aimed to collect information about primary school teachers' stated beliefs toward 1) two approaches of teaching and learning first-language, including knowledge transmission and knowledge construction; and 2) five features of the dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese language education. In order to minimise the disadvantages of the quantitative survey, the researcher closely followed the ways that created the conditions and environment to obtain the most reliable data. First, a friendly and serious environment was made to help the teachers feel responsible and free to give their answers. The researcher discussed the purposes of the study and provided instructions to be followed with the teachers. The specific personal information of the participants was not required, which helped them feel free with their decisions. Second, the questionnaire sheets were distributed to each teacher and completed under a limited period of time, around 25 minutes, inside the teachers' room, with the researcher' attendance. The limited period of time and the researcher' attendance fostered the teachers to feel free and safe while they were giving responses. Third, to make sure that the statements of the questionnaire were understood as coherent and non-ambiguous, the questionnaire was piloted to determine the time spent to fill it out and to assess if its language expression was sufficiently unambiguous. Nine primary school teachers and five lecturers of Department of Pre-School and Primary Education of Can Tho University attended the pilot survey before the actual distribution to the participating teachers and suggested some adjustments on the questionnaire. The pilot showed that the questionnaire would take from 20 to 25 minutes.

#### **b. Questionnaire Structure**

The questionnaire, finally, was formed of three sections (Section A, Section B, Section C, Section D and Cover letter). The content of the statements was designed with reference to the theoretical background chapters (see Part I).

*Section A* included nine questions that disclosed participants' background information (gender, age, location of their school in city or environ, school size, years of teaching experience, educational degree, class size, and teaching resource of their school).

*Section B* comprised 15 statements asking teachers to express their beliefs of teaching and learning first-language education general beliefs. These 15 statements were grouped into three categories as follows:

*Section B1*, two statements were defined to express the main role of teachers: (S1) Teachers take the roles of knowledge transmission, presenting, and explaining the subject matter; (S2) Teachers take the roles as instructors and facilitators who instruct children construct knowledge.

*Section B2*, five variables were determined to articulate the main targets of teaching and learning Vietnamese language. Among them, three statements of knowledge transmission approach and five statement belonging to the constructivist approach. The former includes:

(S3) Guiding children learn all lesson units designed in the textbook;

(S7) Prepare for children to get over examinations and move to higher-level education;

(S9) Keep children class in order and solve contradiction among/between children. The latter comprises:

(S4) Instruct children the method of self-study;

(S5) Nurture children the love and interest in learning mother language;

(S6) Develop children the competence to use Vietnamese language in daily life;

(S8) Develop children social skills as communications, cooperation, problem solving, critical thinking...; and

(S10) Maintain democratic and active environment of the children classroom.

In *Section B3*, there were five indicators defined to describe the nature of teaching and learning process that stood in the same line with two approaches, *transmission* and *constructivism*. These consisted of two indicators of *knowledge transmission approach* as follows:

(S11) The process of transferring the knowledge, skills, from teachers and textbooks to children;

(S14) The process that children absorb as much knowledge as possible from the teachers and textbooks, practice and fortify in order to remember it;

and three indicators of the *constructivist approach* including:

(S12) The process that teachers help children make connection to their experience to construct new knowledge;

(S13) The process that teachers organise social interaction, share ideas among children, and attach them to the community; and

(S15) The process that children have opportunities to explore, discuss, and express their ideas to construct new knowledge.

*Section C* consisted of 15 statements that were designed, with reference to the theoretical background chapters, mainly from the fundamental conceptions of the dialectical constructivist approach (Moshman, 1982; Ngo V. T. H. et al., 2015; O'Donnell, 2012) mandated to teaching Vietnamese language in primary schools in Vietnam (Dang T.A., 2015) and methods for studying beliefs suggested by (Bullough, 2015). Although all aspects and features are interrelated, we focus on these aspects and features one at a time (Emmitt, 2006). The core surveyed items are based on five-point Likert type scales reflecting the following five features of the dialectical constructivist approach: “Learning is social participation” (S16-S19); “Learning stresses scaffolding” (S20-S22); “Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based” (S23-S26); “Knowledge is constructed by learners” (S27-S28); and “Learning communities should be inclusive and equal” (S29-S30).

Finally, *Section D* was designed to allow teachers express their own ideas under free answers. The questions required the teachers to give their ideas about 1) their evaluation toward the current curriculum of Vietnamese language education at primary schools to define which aspects of curriculum were stressed, including focuses on *providing knowledge, training skills, and building moral virtues*; and 2) *the advantages and disadvantages of the VNEN model application* in their own context and their aspiration on whether the VNEN model would be continued to be employed in the forthcoming education reform in Vietnam context. Each of these answers were calculated with their frequency to reveal the dominant factors that shaped the teachers' beliefs and practices.

The final section of the questionnaire is a *Cover letter* that appeared at the first page of the questionnaire. The cover letter was used to maximise response rates (adapted from Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003, p.17).

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### II.2.2.2. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is claimed to be a crucial method in the effective measurement of quality in teaching and learning and to provide insights to assess and improve the quality of teaching and learning (O’Sullivan, 2006). To obtain objective data from classroom observation, firstly, during the observation, the researcher took the role as an observer and an interpreter of the data as well. Thus in the field notes, the researcher tried to see the whole picture, not only of what was seen and heard but also grasped the influence of the social relationships that facilitated or hindered authentic data collection. Secondly, under the allowance of the teachers and school principals, video recording was conducted for each class meeting. Accordingly, one fixed camera was installed in a corner of classroom so that it could grasp the main activities of teacher and pupils. Another tool (smartphone) was also used by the researcher during the observation that aimed to catch some remarking segments that expressed intensively the teachers’ pedagogy. The whole video and some segments were used as bases to keep the researcher’s objective views and make the data more sufficient with details of teacher’s and students’ activities, various behavioural practices, and interactions occurring in the classroom that was difficult to grasp at a point of time. Finally, in order to closely follow the pre-determined purposes of classroom observation, before attending classroom observation, the researcher must prepare the observation instruments. There were three tools for classroom observations.

#### a. Classroom Observation Running Sheet

The *first instrument* is an observation sheet for field notes of what was going on in the classroom (*see Appendix 3*). The basis for this form design is the prescribed procedures for Vietnamese language lessons at primary school, for Reading lessons, under the VNEN model policies. Accordingly, a lesson of Vietnamese language teaching is spent through three Phases: Phase of Basic Activities (for pupils to explore new knowledge); Phase of Practice Activities (for pupils to practice the new knowledge); and Phase of Application Activities (for pupils apply the new knowledge on real-world situations) (*see Table I.7*) (Dang, 2015, 2016, 2017; MoET, 2012). Relevantly with these three phases, pupils’ activities of a teaching lesson are spent through a standardised, ten-step process to learning under the VNEN model: 1) get into a group; 2) write the name of the lesson in notebook; 3) read the lesson objectives; 4) begin the basic tasks of the lesson; 5) report to the teacher when



done; 6) do the practice task, first on their own, then with a neighbour, and finally with the groups; 7) do the applied task; 8) evaluate learning results along with peers and teachers; 9) finish the lesson, report learning results in the Evaluation chart; and 10) done with the lesson or revise parts that were unsatisfactory (see figure I.3).

These procedures are used in almost all lessons by VNEN teachers and pupils nationwide. Besides, the components of teaching lesson were noted in a corresponding way with the procedures. In detail, in each phase of the teaching lesson, the field notes grasped “Which teaching and learning methods are applied and how?”; “Which learning forms and learning tasks are applied and how?”; “Which assessment methods are applied and how?”. These field notes were used to gather information from the observations.

#### **b. Classroom Observation Checklist**

*The second instrument* used for Classroom observation checklist of the dialectical Constructivism-based practices (see *Appendix 4*). This instrument was used to quantify constructivist approach occurring in the 18 observed lessons. Its contents comprise five main features of the dialectical constructivist approach. Each feature was depicted with different sets of statements/indicators/descriptors (Good, 2002). The classroom teaching practices in the checklist were examined by teachers’ frequency estimations on a 3-point scale, ranging from “never or hardly ever – in some lessons – in almost every lesson”, then calculated into frequencies. This was evidence of to what extent teachers’ practice employed the dialectical constructivist approach and the extent teachers’ practice reflected their stated beliefs beforehand.

**Table II.12. The observed Vietnamese language teaching classes (Reading)**

Class	Lesson theme	Time amount	Grade	Class size
1	The house is being built	35 mins	5 (aged 10)	35
2	The world of colour	35 mins	4 (aged 9)	48
3	A range of border area	55 mins	5	42
4	An attractive flavour	60 mins	4	49
5	An attractive flavour	60 mins	4	36
6	The world of colour	70 mins	4	49
7	For justice	50 mins	5	42
8	The world of flowers and fruits	45 mins	4	48
9	The world of flowers and fruits	50 mins	4	36
10	Justice in an excellent way	50 mins	5	43
11	Protect peaceful sleeps	45 mins	5	43
12	The lesson of the right	40 mins	4	44
13	The full-honest hearts	45 mins	4	44
14	The full-honest hearts	40 mins	4	48
15	The equality between girls and boys	45 mins	5	35
16	The equality between girls and boys	40 mins	5	36
17	Is there any place where is brighter than my country?	40 mins	3 (aged 8)	42
18	Protect peaceful sleeps	40 mins	5	38

### II.2.2.3. In-depth Teacher Interview

An interview in an open conversation between the interviewer and the participants. In this way, the participants could share what they know and have learned and can add a dimension to the understanding of the situation that the questionnaire data could not reveal (Lichtman, 2012). In addition, the researcher words questions spontaneously to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. As a result, the researcher makes deeper steps into the given situation to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined (Kajornboon, 2004). In this study, the interview allowed to identify the opinions and evaluation of primary school teachers, to explore their advantages and difficulties the teachers meet when

teaching Vietnamese language under the VNEN policies, and the expectations that they may have with the enactment of the current Vietnamese language education.

Nine primary school teachers (one male and eight females) were interviewed face-to-face individually by the researcher for approximately 30 minutes. All of them were encouraged to be free in answering open-ended questions, which were focused on the VNEN Vietnamese language education curriculum, teaching and learning methods, and/or the particular observed Vietnamese language teaching lessons. Main questions for teachers were:

- Do you think that the current lesson was carried out to meet the learning aims defined at the beginning of lesson? Why do you think so?
- How do you think the current lesson (contents, learning and teaching activities) are relevant to the constructivist approach mandated by VNEN model? Why do you think so?

### **II.2.3. Data Analysis**

In our analysis of data the teachers' answers were interpreted as: 4.21-5.00 "Strongly Agree", 3.41-4.20 "Agree", 2.61-3.40 "Unsure/Neutral", 1.81-2.60 "Disagree", and 1.00-1.80 "Strongly Disagree". Collected data was analysed with SPSS 20.

#### **II.2.3.1. Teachers Background Information (Section A of Questionnaire)**

##### **a. Gender and Age**

The study group included 75% of participant teacher women (n=210) and 25% participant teacher men (n=68). The percentage of 41-50 year-old teachers accounts for 43% (n=122), the percentage of over 50 year-old teachers is 31% (n=88) whereas nearly 13% and 6.4% is made up by the group of 31-40 year-old teachers and 20-30 year-old teachers respectively.

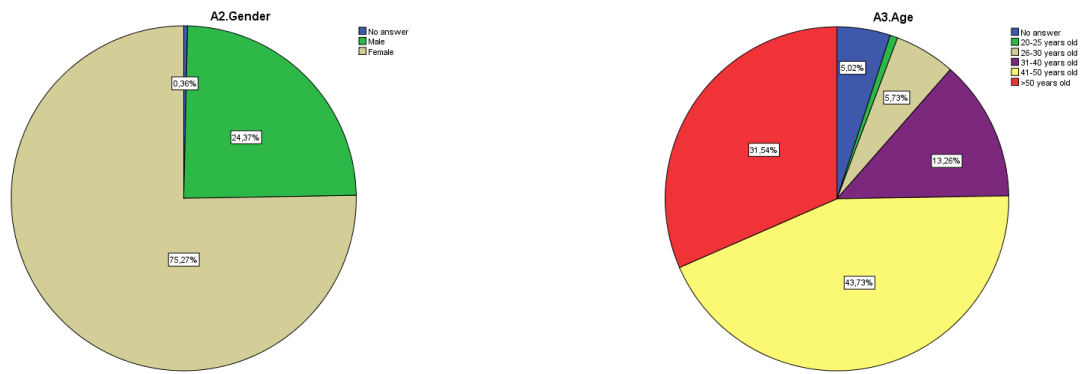


Figure II.8. The figuration of the participant teachers' gender and age

**b. Teachers' School Locations**

There were 64% (n=179) and 36% (n=100) of the participant teachers whose schools where they work were respectively located in the environ and in the central of the cities.

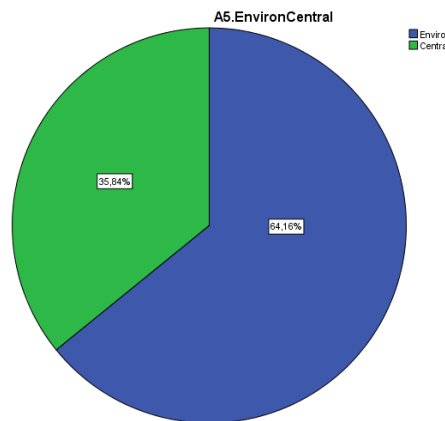


Figure II.9. The configuration of the participant teachers' school locations

**c. School Size and Class Size**

The participant teachers' school size (school ranks according to the classification of Vietnam education system: the lowest: under-standard, standard 1, and the highest: standard 2. The criteria of this classification were the quality and certificate of teachers, student achievement, and material facilities) and class size (the number of pupils in one class) were synthesised as follows: the number of standard rank 1 schools accounted 62% (n=175) from the responders; the remaining part is made up by 22% (n=61) and 14% (n=38) of the standard rank 2 and under-standard schools respectively. Regarding the participant teachers' class size, 60% (n=169) of the teachers' class size ranged from 16 to 35 pupils that is considered as the standardized size for a pupil class; 32% (n=92) classes

have 36-45 pupils, especially, 6% of classes (n=16) have big-size, more than 45 pupils per class. This characteristic is very common among pupil classes in Vietnam, especially in big cities.

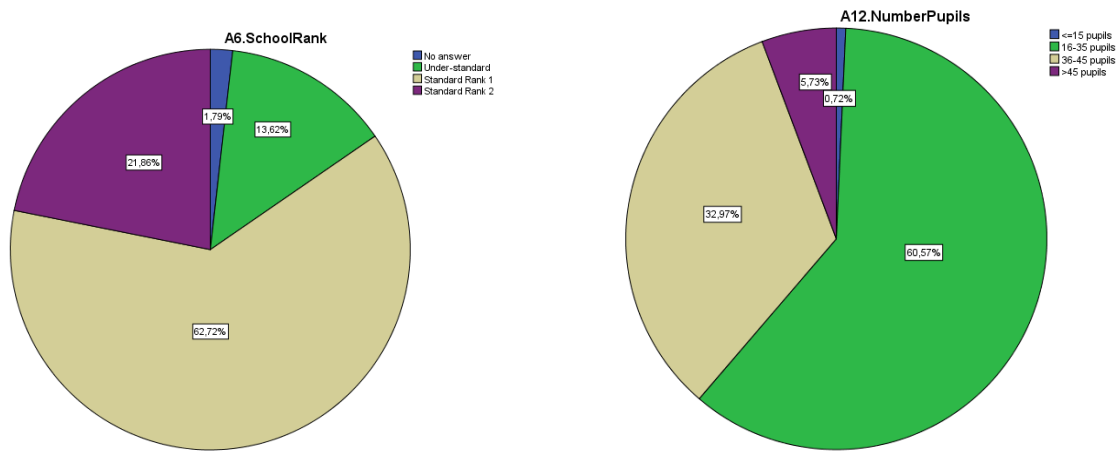


Figure II.10. The configuration of the participant teachers' school sizes and class sizes

#### d. Education Degree and Years of Experience

A large number of participant teachers (n=224, 80%) graduated from the university as primary bachelor of pedagogy and 12% (n=34) graduated from the colleges. A very small number of the participant were post-graduate (2%, n=5) and the intermediate degree teachers included 14 people (5%). At present in Vietnam education, the at-least requirement toward the degree of primary school teachers is college graduate, the intermediate degree is considered as lower than the requirement. The participant teachers had 9% 1-5 years (n=25), 6.1% 6-10 years (n=17), 28% 11-20 years (n=79), and 53% 20 years and up (n=151) professional seniority.

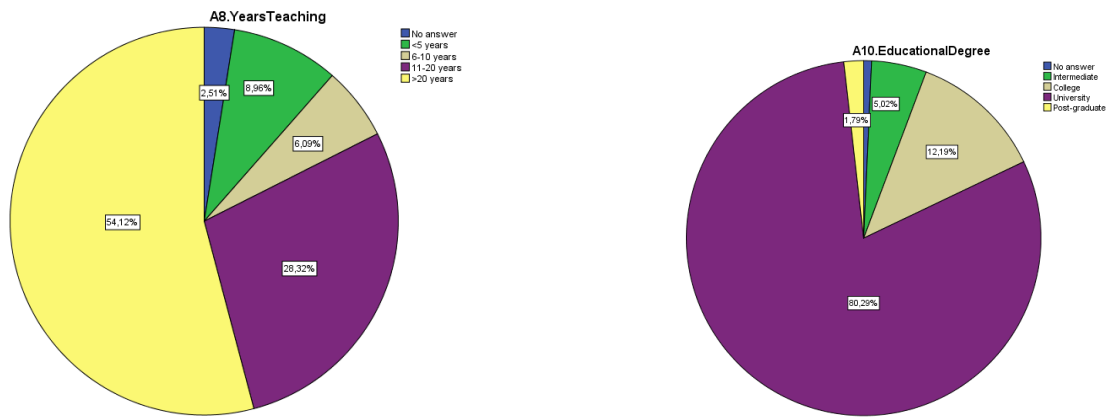


Figure II.11. The configuration of the participant teachers' educational degrees and professional teaching experience

e. Teaching resources

Finally, participant teachers were asked about the statement of the teaching resources of their current school and class, they were only 4% of the responds (n=10) of “Poor teaching resources”, 71% of “Medium” (n=199), and 25% of “Good teaching resources” (n=69).

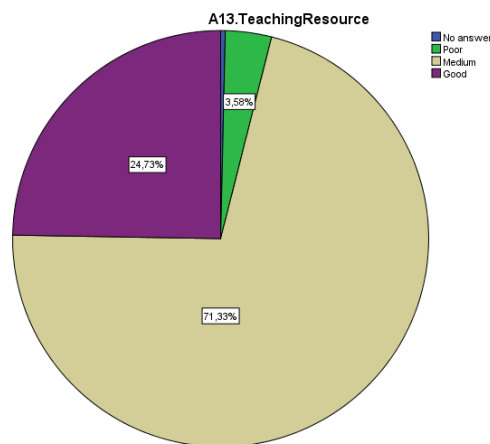


Figure II.12. The configuration of the teaching resources of the participant teachers' current school and class

II.2.3.2. Teachers' Expressed Beliefs on Teaching and Learning Vietnamese Language (Section B)

We processed a principle component analysis with a varimax rotation on the data, and noticed that three categories of teachers' beliefs toward teaching and learning Vietnamese language (Section B) were appropriate since their Cronbach's Alpha was bigger than 0.8 (Cronbach's Alpha = .855). This means the scale's reliability is high and correlation between component variables and total variable is sufficient (Hoang-Trong and Chu, 2008;

Nunnally, 1994; Nguyen D.T. and Nguyen, 2009). The items and their loadings are shown in Table II.13.

**Table II.13. Component loadings of the teachers' beliefs toward teaching and learning Vietnamese language**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items				
.855	15				
		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>Section B1. The main roles of teachers in teaching Vietnamese language for children</b>					
1. Role 1: knowledge transmitter		55.18	55.157	.292	.861
2. Role 2: facilitators		54.23	57.180	.393	.851
<b>Section B2. The crucial targets of teaching and learning Vietnamese language at primary schools.</b>					
3. guide children to complete all lessons in textbook		54.85	52.499	.569	.842
4. instruct children self-study method		54.35	54.401	.562	.843
5. nurture children the love for mother language		54.32	54.427	.602	.842
6. develop children competence to use language		54.28	55.266	.550	.845
7. prepare for children to pass examination		54.92	51.059	.579	.841
8. develop children social skills		54.24	56.034	.456	.849
9. keep children in a good order in class		55.04	52.724	.476	.848
10. maintain democratic and active in class environment		54.53	52.662	.566	.842
<b>Section B3. The teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning process of Vietnamese language education</b>					
11. the process of knowledge transmission from teacher/textbook to children		55.26	52.337	.502	.847
12. the process to connect with prior experience		54.43	55.018	.567	.844
13. the process of social interaction, idea sharing and community attachment		54.33	56.886	.420	.850

14. the process knowledge absorbance and consolidation	55.04	53.218	.474	.848
15. the process of exploring new knowledge	54.31	54.841	.554	.844

### a. Section B1 - Teachers' Beliefs on the Main Roles in Teaching and Learning Vietnamese Language

The category of the teachers' beliefs of the teacher's roles in teaching and learning first-language at primary school is expressed through two descriptions (S1) and (S2) in the questionnaire sheet. Table II.14 shows these statements and their numeric results.

**Table II.14. The frequency of the teachers' beliefs toward roles of teacher in mother language education**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Role: knowledge transmitter	279	3.35	1.174
2. Role: facilitator	279	4.29	.673
Valid N (listwise)	279		

This table shows that "Role 1" has a Mean=3.35 (belonging to No idea/Neutral range) (SD=1.174>1), whereas "Role 2" has a Mean=4.29 (ranging of Strongly Agree (SD=0.673<1). This shows that an overwhelming number of participant teachers agreed (57,1%, n=160) and strongly agreed (37.5, n=105) with teachers' role 2 "*Teachers is helping children construct knowledge, taking the roles of instructors and facilitators for children's learning*" as a feature of the constructivist pedagogy. Regarding Role 1, "*Teachers take the roles of knowledge transmitters, presenters, and explainers toward the subject matter*" (a feature of knowledge transmission pedagogy), 34% of the participants (n=95) disagreed with it, however, up to 57% of the teachers agreed (41%, n=116) and strongly agreed (16%, n=44) with it.



**Table II.15. The frequency of “knowledge transmitter” Role**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No answer	2	.7	.7	.7
	Strongly Disagree	3	1.1	1.1	1.8
	Disagree	95	33.9	34.1	35.8
	Neutral	19	6.8	6.8	42.7
	Agree	116	41.4	41.6	84.2
	Strongly Agree	44	15.7	15.8	100.0
	Total	279	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		280	100.0		

**Table II.16. The frequency of “facilitator” Role**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	.7	.7	.7
	Disagree	5	1.8	1.8	2.5
	Neutral	7	2.5	2.5	5.0
	Agree	<b>160</b>	<b>57.1</b>	57.3	62.4
	Strongly Agree	<b>105</b>	<b>37.5</b>	37.6	100.0
	Total	279	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.4		
Total		280	100.0		

### **b. Section B2 - Teachers’ Beliefs on the Targets of First-language Education**

This Section demonstrates teachers’ beliefs of the crucial targets of teaching and learning first-language education through eight statements (S3; S4; S5; S7; S6; S8; S9; and S10) from the questionnaire sheet. The following table shows these eight statements and their numeric results.

This table shows that in general participant teachers strongly believe that the crucial targets of first-language education are (S4) *instructing children the self-study method* (M=4.17, 93.9%, n=260); (S5) *nurturing children the love and interest in learning mother language* (M=4.20, 93.5%,

n=262); (S6) *developing children's language-use competence in daily life* (M=4.24, 94.3%, n=264); and (S8) *developing children's social skills as communications, cooperation, problem solving, critical thinking...* (M=4.28, 92.5%, n=259). Although S10 did not receive strong belief expression, a large number of teachers perceived that the crucial purpose of Vietnamese education is *maintaining democratic and active environment of the children classroom*. These results reveal that the participant teachers expressed their approvals to the targets of first-language education defined by the constructivist approach.

**Table II.17. Teachers' beliefs toward the targets of Vietnamese language education**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
3. guide children to complete all lessons in textbook	279	3.68	.987
4. instruct children self-study method	279	4.17	.795
5. nurture children the love for mother language	279	4.20	.748
6. develop children competence to use language	279	4.24	.716
7. prepare for children to pass examination	278	3.60	1.125
8. develop children social skills	279	4.28	.739
9. keep children in a good order in class	279	3.48	1.109
10. maintain democratic and active in class environment	279	3.99	.974
Valid N (listwise)	278		

However, approximately 74% of the teachers (n=207, M=3.68) claimed that the goal of the first-language education is (S3) *guiding children to learn units of the textbooks*. Similarly, nearly 68% of the participants approved that first-language teaching is aimed to (S7) *prepare for pupils to get over examinations and move to higher-level education* (n=183, M=3.60). Especially, up to 62.5% of the responders thought that the objective of first-language education is (S-B9) *keeping pupil under teacher's control and solving contradiction among/ between pupils* (n=175, M=3.48).

### **c. Section B3 - Teachers' Beliefs on first-language education teaching and learning processes**

The category of teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning process is described through five statements from S11 to S15 in the questionnaire sheet. The following table shows these indicators and their numeric results.

**Table II.18. Teachers' beliefs toward teaching and learning process of Vietnamese language education**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
11. the process of knowledge transmission from teacher/textbook to children	279	3,27	1,110
12. the process to connect with prior experience	279	4,09	,724
13. the process of social interaction, idea sharing and community attachment	279	4,19	,676
14. the process knowledge absorbance and consolidation	279	3,48	1,055
15. the process of exploring new knowledge	279	4,22	,756
Valid N (listwise)	279		

As shown in Table II.18, teachers' responses generally indicate their high-level agreement on the statements. Notably, 91.8% of them (M=4.09, n=257) thought that *teachers helped children make connection to their experience in order to construct new knowledge during the teaching and learning process of first-language education*. A large number of teachers (92.9%, M=4.19, n=260) agreed that *the process of teaching and learning Vietnamese language education is organising social interaction, idea sharing among children and attach their learning to the community*. Similarly, almost the participants (92.5%, M=4.22, n=259) approved that *children have opportunities to explore, discuss, and express their own ideas during the learning process*.

However, the teachers showed some certain divergences in their thought. They seemed to be conflicted in their understanding when a considerable number of teachers (76%, n=185) also agreed that *pupils absorb as much knowledge as possible from teacher and textbooks in their learning*. At the same time, the statement that *the process of transferring the knowledge, skills from teachers and textbooks to children* is also accepted by 53.2% (n=149) of the participant teachers.

### **Summary for Section B (from S1 to S15)**

In short, the numeric results show that the average endorsement of constructivist beliefs is larger significant than that of knowledge transmission beliefs (M=4.195). Most teachers, therefore, believe that their tasks are not simply to present facts and give their pupils the opportunity to practice, but rather that they should support students in their active construction of knowledge. Standard deviations also revealed that the teachers were more

homogenous in believing conceptions of constructivist teaching ( $SD=0.774$ ) than of traditional teaching ( $SD=1.098$ ).

### **II.2.3.3. Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning and their Characteristics**

A one-way ANOVA provided information on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their characteristics. There were no statistically significant differences in the responses of teachers who belong to different groups of gender, years of teaching, educational degrees, school locations, school sizes and teaching resources. There was only statistically significant difference between the teacher groups having different class sizes. Specially, the teachers whose class sizes ranged from 15 pupils to 35 pupils strongly agreed that one of main targets of first-language education is nurturing children the love and interest in learning mother language whereas the group of teachers with more than 35 pupils in class expressed their neutral and disagreed ideas with this statement.

This result is congruent with Tamhane's research, showing that teachers with big-size classes had tendency to support the directly knowledge transmission rather than the constructivist pedagogy. Classes of about 45 pupils are very popular in Vietnam, especially in big City as Can Tho city where this research was conducted. Obviously, big-size classes prevented teachers from fulfilling the constructivist approach of first-language education.

### **II.2.3.4. Teachers' Expressed Beliefs on the Dialectical Constructivist Approach (Section C)**

Alpha reliability was calculated for Section C of the questionnaire: 0.876. This means the scale's reliability is high and correlation between component variables and total variable is sufficient (Hoang-Trong and Chu, 2008). The items and their loadings are shown in Table II.19.

#### **a. Feature 1: Learning is social participation**

This feature is expressed through four indicators (S16; S17; S18; and S19) in the questionnaire sheet. The following table shows these statements and their numeric results.

**Table II.19. Component loadings of teachers' beliefs toward the constructivist approach**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>				
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items			
.876	20			
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>C1. Learning is social participation</b>				
16. learning through organising social interaction	71.38	78.070	.443	.871
17. trying to learn by heart what was taught (!)	71.66	76.544	.434	.872
18. learning through cooperation in peers, groups and among whole class	71.16	78.047	.498	.869
19. learning to understand social values and meaningful learning	71.15	78.692	.551	.869
<b>C2. Learning stresses scaffolding</b>				
20. learning in the individual's proximal development	71.08	78.433	.573	.868
21. directly supported by teacher or by higher-level intellectual children	71.35	78.532	.471	.870
22. the same objectives and expectations for different intellectual-level individuals	72.12	76.702	.406	.874
<b>C3. Knowledge is authentic tasks and experience-based</b>				
23. evoking children's interests, emotion and their personal language experience	71.39	76.616	.633	.865
24. creating children's interested in language learning through calling their experience in culture	71.19	78.165	.574	.868
25. using learning texts and situations from real world	71.25	78.690	.574	.868
26. motivate children by learning tasks requiring to solve realistic problems	71.24	77.706	.573	.868
<b>C4. Knowledge is constructed by learners</b>				
27. pupils rely in active and constructive processes to construct their own knowledge	72.21	74.794	.504	.869
28. respect pupils own paces of knowledge construction	71.22	77.942	.530	.869

**C5. Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable**

29. learning should happen within classroom	71.15	78.781	.491	.870
30. Interactions in class should be equitable rather than hierarchical	72.22	77.156	.372	.875

**Table II.20. Results on teachers' beliefs "Learning is social participation"**

		16. learning through organising social interaction	17. trying to learn by heart what was taught (!)	18. learning through cooperation in peers, groups and among whole class	19. learning to understand social values and meaningful learning
N	Valid	279	279	278	279
	Missing	1	1	2	1
Mean		3.85	3.58	4.09	4.09
Std. Deviation		.867	1.039	.759	.681
Sum		1075	999	1138	1141

A good knowledge of the feature that confirms "*Learning is a social participation*" was seen from the statistical results shown in Table II.20. Referencing to the frequency analysis, 63% of "Agree" (n=177) and 17% (n=48) of "Strongly Agree" answers from participant teachers showed their perception of essential aspects of the social interaction to teaching Vietnamese language. They assumed that knowledge is constructed by pupils through social interaction activities between pupils and teachers, among pupils each other and between pupils and the community (S16). Besides, a large number of the teachers (89%, n=249) accepted that children's language competence is established through cooperation in peers, groups, and whole class (S18). Based on their understandings of social interaction in Vietnamese language learning, most of the teachers approved that thinking to social interaction during learning, children would be aware of the meaningful learning and precious social values such as responsibility, cooperation as well as know how to live together (S-19, 92.2%, n=258).

Nevertheless, the number of teachers who agreed with the statement that argued that good learning is principally learn by heart and practice what was taught by teachers and textbooks

was quite high, around 67.8% (n=189). Although there was 10.7% (n=30) of the teachers expressed their reluctance and 18.9% (n=53) of the teachers disagreed with the statement, there were a such large number of teachers whose beliefs complied with the conception of knowledge transmission. In other word, there was an opposition among the teachers' beliefs within their statements.

### b. Feature 2: Learning Stresses Scaffolding

The feature of “Learning stresses scaffolding” is indicated through three statements (comprise S20; S21; and S22) in the questionnaire sheet. The following table clarifies these statements and their numeric results.

**Table II.21. Results on teachers' beliefs “Learning stresses scaffolding”**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
20. learning in the individual's proximal development	279	0	5	4.16	.687
21. directly supported by teacher or by higher-level intellectual children	279	0	5	3.89	.781
22. the same objectives and expectations for different intellectual-level individuals(!)	279	0	5	3.12	1.068
Valid N (listwise)	279				

As shown in Table II.21, pedagogical beliefs on a constructivist approach were also seen from the results. Referring to the frequency analysis, the majority of the teachers (92.8%, n=260) thought that children' learning needs to be organised in order to suit the individuals' proximal development (Vygotsky, 1987). Nearly 83.9% of the teachers (n=235) appreciated that scaffolding should be conducted through teacher's direct instruction or through the support of higher-level intellectual pupils.

However, regarding the statement that the study aimed to explore how teachers do assessment on pupils' learning, “*Different intellectual-level individuals are required to meet the same objectives and expectations in learning*”, was confirmed by a considerable number of the participant teachers (42.9%, n= 123) although there were also 28.6% (n=80) showing their disagreement with the statement, and 22.2% of them (n=62) who stated their neutral idea

response. It was evident that there is a gap between teachers' beliefs and their practices in the teachers' articulation through the questionnaire responses.

### c. Feature 3: Learning is Authentic Tasks and Experience-based

The survey results are continued to demonstrated with Feature 3 that is expressed through these statements S23; S24; S25; and S26 in the questionnaire sheet.

**Table II.22. Results on teachers' beliefs "Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based"**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
23. evoking children's interests, emotion and their personal language experience	279	0	5	3.84	.771
24. creating children's interested in language learning through calling their experience in culture	279	0	5	4.04	.703
25. using learning texts and situations from real world	278	0	5	3.99	.658
26. motivate children by learning tasks requiring to solve realistic problems	279	0	5	4.00	.742
Valid N (listwise)	278				

"Learning is experience-based" is one of core tenets of the VNEN model that encourages teachers to create direct or indirect links to pupils' knowledge background, or prior knowledge in order to construct new knowledge. As shown in Table II.22, teachers' responses generally indicate their good perception on the important roles of pupils' experience in the learning. 79% of the teachers (n=121) thought that effective language learning must evoke pupils' individual language experience. A large number of teachers (90.4%, n=153) approved that the pupils' personal and cultural experience and interest were the significant initial contribution for their language learning process. In addition, the idea that authentic learning that requires language learning tasks must come from real-world life and aims to solve realistic problems was also endorsed by most of teachers (86.8%, n=243).

### d. Feature 4: Learning is Constructed by Learners

This category is presented through S27 and S28 statements in the questionnaire sheet.



**Table II.23. Results on teachers' beliefs "Learning is constructed by learners"**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
27. pupils rely in active and constructive activities to construct their own knowledge	279	0	5	4.01	.768
28. respect pupils' own paces of knowledge construction	279	1	5	4.08	.738
Valid N (listwise)	279				

Teachers generally agree on the statement that constructivist learning is implemented through pupils' active involvement in learning activities. This style of learning is different from the knowledge transmission where knowledge is available 'cooked', pupils only need to accept through taking notes and learning by heart. At the same time, the teachers agreed that they respected pupils' own pace of knowledge construction. This is in line with the constructivist idea that pupils have different capacities and experience so they are also different in progress of learning. Because of approving this concept, teachers are expected to respect the variety among pupils' cognition through varying learning objectives, teaching methodologies and assessment methods.

#### **e. Feature 5: Learning Communities Should be Inclusive and Equitable**

The last category is expressed through the statements S29 and S30 in the questionnaire sheet.

**Table II.24. Results on teachers' beliefs "Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable"**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
29. learning should happen within classroom	279	0	5	3.02	1.086
30. interactions in class should be equitable rather than hierarchical	279	0	5	4.16	.819
Valid N (listwise)	279				

The community involvement into pupils' learning process is one of core policies of the VNEN model that encourages the community members to make cooperation with school

board and teachers to help pupils learn effectively. In the same line, the learning is not only limited within the space of four walls of the classroom, it is encouraged to bring learning environment to integrate into the social environment. Almost the participant teachers (90.7%, n=255) agreed that types of communities, e.g., families, organisations, institutions, etc., are involved to support students' learning. Furthermore, these teachers respected the democratic and equitable relationships between teachers or other adults and pupils rather than hierarchical relationship (91.4%, n=256).

Nevertheless, 42.5% of them (n=119) thought that teaching and learning should happen within the classroom because of safe requirement and local condition. Although among them, coincidentally 42.5% (n=119) of participants disagreed with this statement. In Vietnam context, it is not popular when teachers invite or allow other people, even pupils' parents to come to the classroom, except the school board. In the unofficial survey taken by the researcher when we had chances work with teachers of Mekong delta, when being asked whether they invite the community members to the class in order to support and cooperate in teaching, the popular answers were "No", even "Never". They are afraid that "community members" will make their pupils be neglect their learning duties, break the class disciplines, make the pupils become reply on their parents, to name but a few. Therefore, the VNEN recommendation of community involvement seems still stay in theory.

### ***Summary for Section C (from 16 to 30) of the Questionnaire***

In conclusion, the numeric results show that the average endorsement of the features of the constructivist beliefs (M=4.054) is stronger than that those of direct transmission beliefs (M=3.7). Standard deviations also revealed that the teachers are more homogenous in believing conceptions of constructivist teaching (SD=0.75) than of traditional teaching (SD=1.26).

### **II.2.3.5. Teachers' Beliefs on the Application of VNEN Model in Vietnam context**

The Section D disclosed the teachers' evaluation toward the current first-language curriculum as well as their responses about the advantages and disadvantages they have met when applying the VNEN model in Vietnamese language teaching at primary school, and

their personal points of view of whether the VNEN model should be continued to be applied in the forthcoming pedagogical reform in Vietnam education.

#### **a. Teachers' Evaluation on the Current Vietnamese language curriculum**

Regarding the teachers' general evaluation of the current Vietnamese language education curriculum, the following table shows the numeric results.

**Table II.25. Teachers' evaluation toward the current curriculum of Vietnamese language education**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Theory-Focused	279	0	5	3.61	.862
Skill-Focused	279	0	5	4.01	.591
Virtue-Focused	278	0	5	3.96	.759
Valid N (listwise)	278				

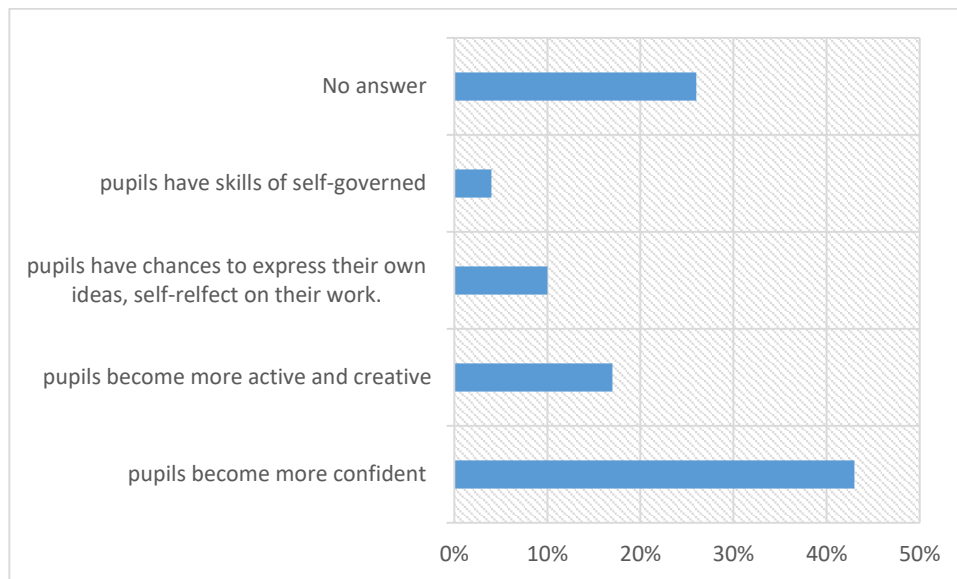
In general, participants agreed that the current first-language education curriculum focused on establishing the learners' language skills ( $M=4.01$ , 89.3%,  $n=250$ ), while a great number of teachers ( $M=3.96$ , 81.8%,  $n=229$ ) also agreed that the current curriculum focuses on building learners' moral virtues. In terms of theory-focused curriculum, 62.9% of the teachers ( $n=176$ ) evaluated that the current curriculum focuses on providing theories of first language learning, only 9.4% of them ( $n=26$ ) disagreed (and 27.1%) expressed their neutral ideas with this statement. The results revealed that the teachers agreed that the current curriculum focuses on training pupils' language skills.

#### **b. Teachers' Beliefs on the Advantages of Applying the VNEN model**

The teachers freely expressed their own ideas in the questionnaire, then we synthesised all answers and counted the frequency of each idea. Both advantages and disadvantages were considered at four facets including 1) pupils' language competences (knowledge, skills and virtues); 2) The constructivist approach (with five features); 3) Teachers' professional development; and 4) Others (institutional resources, teaching materials, pupils' parents and community etc.). The synthesis in terms of advantages of the VNEN application is as follows.

### ***b1. Pupils' Language Competences***

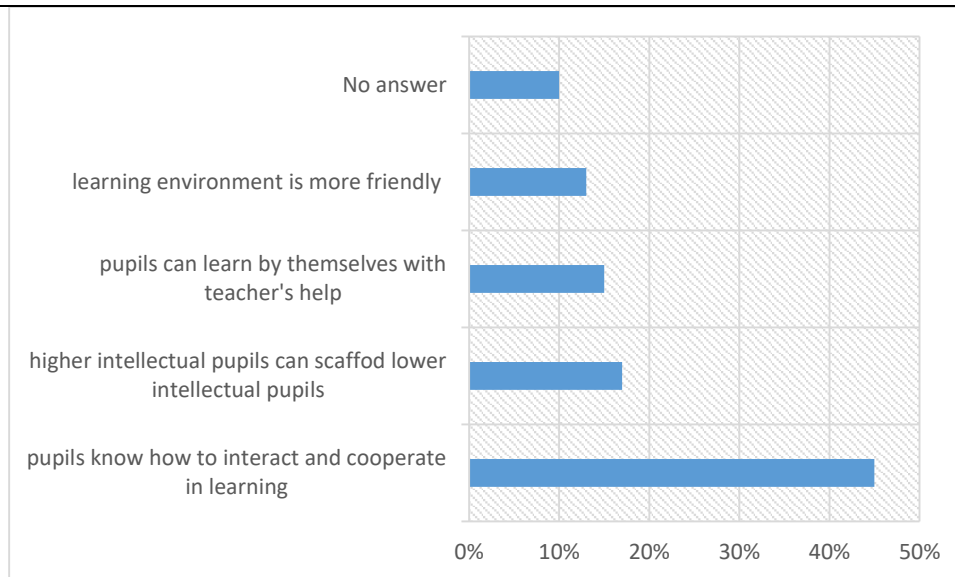
The most notable agreement among participants was that pupils learning in VNEN environment become more confident in communication than pupils learning in the traditional education context (43%). In addition, pupils show their activeness and creation in learning (26%); develop their language competence and virtues (17%); have chances to express their own ideas, know how to self-reflect on their work and self-evaluate each other, have skills on problem solving (10%); and master self-regulation skills (4%).



**Figure II.13. The advantages of VNEN model in developing pupils' competences**

### ***b2. The Constructivist Approach***

Learning in the VNEN classes, pupils are trained to know how to interact, share ideas and cooperate with others (45%); higher intellectual-ability pupils can support lower intellectual-ability pupils (17%); pupils know how to self-study with teachers' helps (15%); and the learning environment is more friendly (13%). The following figure describes these responses.



**Figure II.14. The advantages of VNEN model in implementing the constructivist features**

### ***b3. Teachers' Professional Development***

Participants admitted that within the VNEN model, they were acknowledged by educational administrators about their concerns on the way to train teachers (17%). The teachers who live in city central pinpointed that parents support pupils' learning (20%). Besides, the teacher also said that their teaching workload is slighter than it used to be in a traditional model (15%). Notably, the reasons these teachers gave are that they do not have to compose lesson plans for their teaching because learning contents are meticulously designed in self-study textbooks so they feel less pressure than they used to. About 50% of the participants did not give any answer to this question.

### ***b4. The Advantages of the VNEN Application about other Aspects***

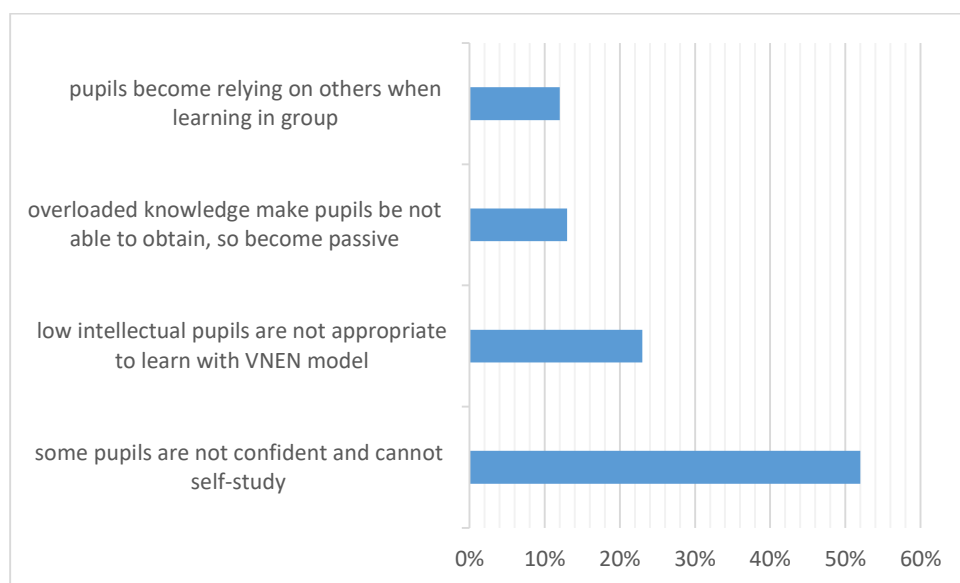
Other aspects on VNEN advantages can be listed as follows: teaching materials and institutional resources are equipped sufficiently; teachers have chances to take care of individual pupils, especially lower-intellectual pupils.

### **c. Teachers' Beliefs on the Disadvantages when applying the VNEN model**

The synthesis of disadvantages of the VNEN application from teachers' answers was described as follows.

### *c1. Pupils' Language Competences*

Most of teachers said that there were some pupils in their classes who were not confident to express their ideas and cannot self-study (52%); they admitted that low-intellect pupils were not appropriate to learn under the VNEN (23%) because of their limited language background, even some could not read fluently. Under VNEN model, pupils are required to self-study to explore new knowledge, however, the teachers claimed that there was much knowledge that pupils could not obtain by self-studying, in this case, pupils became passive in learning (13%). Some teachers argued that pupils became rely on other pupils when learning in groups (12%).

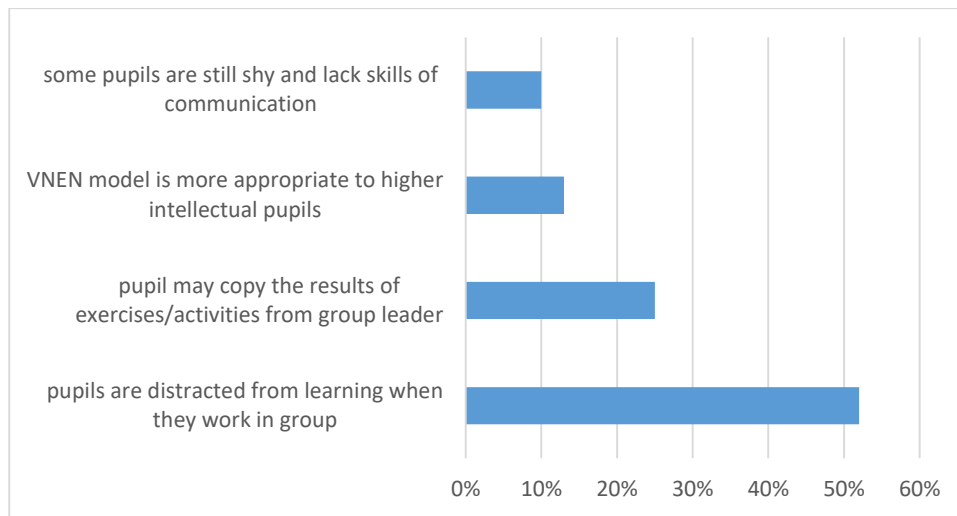


**Figure II.15. The disadvantages of VNEN application toward pupils' learning**

### *c2. The Constructivist Approach*

The notable difficulty most of the teachers agreed was pupils' working in group took much time because teachers had to give feedback in turn to each group; meantime, pupils in groups did not usually focus on their work because group leaders could not govern them (52%). Besides, group members often relied on their group leader, even copied the results of exercises or answers of questions from group leader (25%). 13% of the teachers agreed that the VNEN model was appropriate for high-intellect pupils, not for low-intellect pupils, thus, the formers' learning became more and more better and conversely, the latter's

learning became worse. Some pupils were shy and lacked communicative skills to work in group (10%).



**Figure II.16. The disadvantages of VNEN model in the constructivist application**

### *c3. Teachers' Professional Development*

Under the VNEN policies, teachers were not allowed to give lectures in front of student class, even, they could not write lectures on the class board because these activities would be evaluated by educational administrators as “overly relying on traditional way that does not support student-centred learning”. In practice, they said that if they did not give lectures or write on class board, their pupils could not understand the lessons. In case they have to give the same lecture or the same explanation to each group of pupils that took them much time in a useless way.

### *c4. Other Disadvantages*

The first drawback most of teachers recognised was that pupils' intellectual levels were not equal in a class (32%); pupils' parents, especially in rural regions, did not care about their child's learning (31%). They went far from home town to work and let children live with the relatives, or they were stuck with farming. Furthermore, big-size classes prevented teachers from applying the VNEN model because they had not enough time to instruct and give feedback to each group at the same time with solving issues arising in classes. Notably, as mentioned above, the teachers claimed that the VNEN model was just suitable to high-level intellect pupils. Similarly, the teachers agreed that this model was more

appropriate with pupils living in the city centrals where had well-equipped material facilities and received the concern of pupils' parents. Lastly, schools joined in the VNEN project at the last stages when this project was going to finish in Vietnam were equipped in terms of material facilities and self-study textbooks. In these cases, the Vietnamese MoET and Departments of Education and Training of provinces in the country encouraged these schools to apply the VNEN model as an innovating teaching method. In detail, all policies of the VNEN model including constructivist pedagogy, teacher autonomy, classroom organisation, self-governed committee, classroom decoration, and community involvement were employed in the classroom, self-study textbooks excepted. In these classrooms, teachers and pupils had to use the traditional textbooks that were designed as prescribed and linear textbooks. Both teachers and pupils of such classes met many difficulties in conducting learning activities. The solutions for teachers were that they referenced, even copied the contents of the VNEN self-study textbooks, then made copies for their pupils' use.

### ***Summary for Section D***

Through the open questions of the questionnaire, the synthesis of teachers' evaluation on advantages and disadvantages of the VNEN application in Vietnamese context more and less reflected the practical story of this model application. There is no denying that the VNEN model brings to many advantages for teaching and learning in Vietnamese classrooms. Under the policies of the VNEN model, the pupils are becoming more confident in learning, in expressing their ideas and cooperation, and self-regulation as well. The pupils are considered as active learners when they know what they do in a lesson rather than waiting for teachers' directions. The classroom environment become more friendly, the noise of classroom coming from discussion, game playing, etc., is accepted more easily. However, the divergence and deviation of the VNEN policies in comparison with its original model in Colombia were also revealed through the teachers' answers. First, the EN model of Colombia was developed from and for multi-grade classes and poor rural region in which pupils with diverse intellectual levels, teachers and higher capacity pupils can scaffold and support lower capacity pupils. Regarding the pupils of poor rural regions where the main job is farming, the flexible curriculum of the EN model allows pupils to learn by their own pace in order to finish primary education. It can be said that the EN model is



established, firstly for rural and disadvantaged pupils. Nevertheless, the VNEN teachers recognised these main targets of the EN model as difficulties and drawbacks of the VNEN application in their specific context. Next, in terms of teachers' professional development under the VNEN application, whereas the original model encourages teachers' autonomy in their profession through self-designing and self-adjusting learning contents from the textbooks, in the VNEN model teachers rely on the self-study textbooks with rigid and meticulous design. Even, VNEN teachers consider the available designed lessons as the most striking advantage because it helps teachers get less pressure from teaching workload. In other words, the professional teachers of the EN model are replaced by teaching technicians of the VNEN model.

#### **II.2.3.6. To what Extent Teachers Implement the Constructivist Approach?**

This section is basically a qualitative content analysis of the teaching class records of 18 observed Vietnamese language lessons to find out teaching patterns underlying what is going on in the classroom. In the previous part of the quantitative research, we discovered the teachers in the questionnaire survey appeared to favour the constructivist approach, but also showed some conflict in their responses because in many cases, the participant teachers still agreed with the knowledge teacher-led teaching approach. This section pursues the analysis of teaching practice by looking at that the teachers and students actually did in their classroom.

##### **a. The Observation under the Classroom Running Sheet**

Each of the lessons observed was conducted through a conventional procedure that having been presented in the VNEN Teacher Training Manual. Accordingly, the procedure was confirmed as the most appropriate process with pupils' cognition (MoET, 2012; Dang, 2015, 2016, 2017). As discussed above, the teaching procedure for a Vietnamese language education in general and Reading as follows.

In the first section, "Warm-up activities", pupils attended the performance of whole class singing combining with to warm-up movements (14/18 classes). Other classes started with games that were normally celebrated by the class leader (also called as self-governed president) (4/18). These warm-up activities fostered pupils' engagement.

**Table II.26. The teaching procedure of Reading**

No.	Sections	Note
1	Warm-up activities	Attracting pupils' attention and readiness on new lesson.
2	Previous lesson preview	Review the previous lesson.
3	Introduction	Read aloud the lesson objectives; Teachers introduce new lesson topic.
4	Phase 1. Basic activities	Pupils explore new knowledge through reading texts/ observing visual aids or answering questions of textbook/teacher.
5	Phase 2. Practice activities	Pupils practise the new knowledge through completing exercises that are designed in the textbook.
6	Phase 3. Application activities	Pupils are encouraged to apply the knowledge on real-life situations. Conventionally, teacher ask pupils to share their new knowledge with their family members.
7	Consolidation and Conclusion	Games or Exercises for consolidation; Teachers draw conclusions and give comments on pupils' attitudes toward their learning.

Then, the section of "Previous lesson review" was usually conducted under two forms. First, teachers or the class leader used the questions and tasks that pupils had learned from the textbooks at the previous lesson to ask the whole class, pupils gave extra answers and assessment each other (12/18 classes). The teachers or the class presidents finally provided correct answers and based on this, the teachers assessed their students' learning outcomes. Second, teachers or class leader required pupils to demonstrate the preparation of the exercises that the teachers asked them to do when ending the previous lesson. These exercises were tasks of the Applied Phase of the previous lesson that often required pupils either to write an essay to express their own ideas or experience or to search a story relating to the former learning issue. Some pupils made their presentation (reading or telling) in front of class and based on, teachers assessed the whole class students' learning outcomes (6/18 classes).

In the "Introduction" section, two forms were normally carried out. First, teachers asked pupils to open textbook to observe some pictures on it (16/18); or teachers prepared some pictures that had a bigger size and delivered them to each group. After the pupils' observation, the teachers asked them some questions to explore the 'contents' picture. Some teachers' questions aimed to connect to the pupils' experience (6/18). Based on this,

the teachers introduced new lessons to pupils. In the second form (2/18 classes), teachers began the lesson with a story whose contents related to the forthcoming lesson. After the lesson introduction, pupil group members in turn read lesson objectives that were defined at the top of textbook page. Then teachers asked the pupils or pupils asked each other the question that “How do you do to obtain these objectives?”. This made the observer be surprised that all the pupils’ answers to this question through 18 observed lesson were the same “I will focus on listening to the teachers’ lectures”, “I will be active to discuss with friends”, or “I will keep myself in well-order to concentrate on the lesson”. During the 18 Reading lessons, the procedure comprised the following phases.

*Phase 1 - Basic Activities.* The teacher or pupils read aloud the reading texts in the textbook one or two times; In groups, group leaders ask members in turn to silently read paragraphs of the reading text; Group leaders collect vocabularies that are difficult for them to pronounce or to understand. At the end of this Phase, group leaders, on behalf of their group, report to the teachers the vocabulary list. Teachers, either ask the pupils explain, or provide the correct answers.

*Phase 2 - Practice Activities.* Group leaders in turn ask group member all available questions designed in the textbook. Group leaders decide whether group members’ answers were correct or not. During lesson teaching time, teachers go around groups to observe their learning. If there was any group giving the signal of a smile face (meaning they completed their current tasks), teachers come and test them by asking again all questions in the textbook lesson. In case a group giving a signal of a sad face, that means they need teachers’ help.

*Phase 3 - Applied Activities.* These learning activities in this phase require pupils to apply the new knowledge on various learning situations. Thus, almost tasks of this phase are questions to answer after class, with pupils’ family members. The application activities are considered as homework and their results are presented in the section “Previous lesson review” as mentioned above. All the observed lessons end with “Consolidation and Conclusion”. In this section, the class leader stands in front of student class and ask class members all the questions in the textbook lesson. He (or she) also decides if the answers were right or wrong. Teachers are observing during this time period, sometimes they give some adjustments on pupils’ answers. Another form of Consolidation activities is game

playing. Teachers organise pupil groups with games to encourage a competitive spirit. The pupil groups talk, make noise and debates among groups become more heated. The class environment become excited, the pupils feel confident and relaxed.

It is noteworthy that pupils' answers to the textbooks questions were considerably similar each other. Either they got the citation from textbook's texts, or they repeated their teachers' instructional answers. Another notable point was that there were no considerable modifications in these procedures seen during researcher's observation of 18 lessons. Although according to VNEN policies, school teachers are encouraged to make adjustments or modifications so that the teaching lessons become more appropriate with their specific pupils' cognitive levels and specific local contexts, only a few minor adjustments were found. For example, Teacher Hue<sup>1</sup> (Tra An school) who taught the Reading lesson "*The world of colours*" (Grade 4) divided the question into sub-questions in order to scaffold for pupils' responses. Teacher Hang (Tra An school) who taught the Reading lesson "*The equality between boys and girls*", modifies many stories relating to the famous and talent women of Vietnam and the world. She also required pupils to prepare the similar stories beforehand to tell in front of whole class. The lesson conduction became more interesting with the persuasive confirmation of women roles in Vietnamese society.

#### **b. The Observation with the Constructivist Approach Checklist**

In this section, we used the dialectical constructivist pedagogy checklist whose features was summarised in the relevant literature. To present the findings, the indicators of constructivist features (Table I.9) were used as organising elements that provide themes for the implementation of the constructivist approach in Vietnamese language teaching and learning. We start with summaries as sub-themes for the implementation, then present evidences from the data sources. The findings are subsequently summarised in Table II.27.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants' names were changed for anonymity purposes.

**Table II.27. Comparison between the constructivist features in theory and its implementations**

The constructivist features in theory	Its implementations in practices (through classroom observation)
1. Knowledge is constructed by learners.	1.1. Knowledge is reproduced through the fixed teaching (three phases) and learning procedure (ten steps) and meticulous lesson design. 1.2. Pupils' own pace of knowledge construction are absent.
2. Learning is social participation	2.1. Peer, group working are maintained during class teaching as a feature of VNEN class. 2.2. The one-direction interaction is dominant (group leader → group member; teacher → pupils).
3. Knowledge is authentic tasks and experience-based.	3.1. Teaching and learning is textbook-based with meticulously designed lessons rather than experience-based. 3.2. Texts and learning situations are derived from textbooks rather than pupils' real-life world.
4. Learning stresses scaffolding.	4.1. Textbook available-design absolutely takes the role of scaffolding. 4.2. The supports from teachers and higher intellectual pupils are limited at surface ( <i>façade</i> ).
5. Learning community should be equitable.	5.1. Hierarchical interactions remain in language classroom practices. 5.2. Pupils are allowed to raise questions any time they want.

**Feature 1. Knowledge is Constructed by Learners*****Knowledge is reproduced through fixed teaching (three phases) and learning procedure (ten steps)***

For almost observed classes (16/18), for the whole class activities of each class, students reproduced knowledge through a fixed procedure that was employed by main activities and tasks in the textbook. Three phases of teaching and ten steps of learning of VNEN model dominated the whole teachers' activities and pupils learning process. As a result, VNEN diverged from a model of constructivism-based education in the sense that while the child is encouraged to freely direct their learning process or to self-discover knowledge from experiential activities aligned with their everyday lives, rigid and mechanistic procedures of VNEN-based teaching and learning moulded pupils' cognitive abilities and learning methods into one same shape.

Furthermore, ready-made exercises or “fill-in-the-blank” answers of the VNEN new self-instructional guide is criticised to break pupils’ language and thinking. It is also called as a constructivist *façade*. Within the new textbooks themselves, because exercises must be designed so that pupils can complete them on their own, the VNEN guide helpfully supplies the templates of answers. The remaining work of pupils is filling the numbers (e.g. in Mathematics) or writing very short expressions such as words or phrases (e.g., in Literature or Language) to complete the exercises. Many of the teachers that we interviewed expressed a sense of uncertainty about whether their students were really learning in the VNEN classroom (Source: Teacher interview and questionnaires).

### ***Pupils’ Own Pace of Knowledge Construction was Absent***

Although different learning progresses of each pupil and each group were respected, teachers gave feedback and tested each group when they raised the signal of “Finish”, all members of group, all groups of class had one common destination: giving correct answers toward all questions designed in the textbook. As mentioned above, there were few modifications observed from the teachers. This means that different learning progresses, slow or quick progress of each group, were respected but various cognitive levels were insufficiently concerned because all different individuals were determined the same ‘road’, the same “destination” to obtain new knowledge.

According to our classroom observation, the time amount for all taught lessons ranged from 40 minutes to 70 minutes. In a traditional class, normally, one teaching class time is fixed from 35 minutes to 40 minutes, if teachers cannot control the time amount of teaching within this time assignment (so-called “fired lessons”), their teaching classes will receive under-evaluation by school board members or administrators of Department of Education and Training. The under-evaluation will make bad influence in teachers’ salary and titles at the end of school year. Nevertheless, in VNEN classes, teachers said that they could not control the time amount for a teaching class and they usually spent more than the assigned time amount (Source: Teacher interview and questionnaire). They explained that they fell into the conflict between the VNEN policies and their teaching practice. Under the VNEN policies, teachers are required to respect pupils’ different learning progresses, they accept that different pupils will complete their exercises/tasks at different points of time. As a result, less knowledgeable pupils who spend more time than the others to complete their

exercise/tasks make the teaching time be lengthened. In order to make sure that teaching time is not exceeded, teachers have no alternative to leave these pupils behind, then teachers spend their break time to help them to complete the exercises/tasks (Source: Teacher interview).

Furthermore, as the origin of EN model from Colombia, one of principles of EN model is multi-grade classes where one teacher is responsible for teaching multiple curriculum grades within the same period (Little, 2001). Also according to this original model, teachers are encouraged to design their own curricular trajectory and create instructional guides with self-learning activities for their pupils. These self-instructional guides allow pupils to teach themselves and learn at their own pace which is particularly helpful in a multi-grade context. These principles seem to wear a different appearance and content in Vietnamese context, VNEN model has been applied in a single-level grade, but pupils hold various levels of cognitive ability. The curriculum, as a specific feature of Vietnam education, is composed by a group of educational experts and administrators nominated by Ministry of Education and Training. This nationally mandated curriculum shows that teachers of the same grade all over the country use the same time schedule for each subject (Vietnam-MoET, 2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2013, 2014, 2016).

## **Feature 2. Learning is Social Participation**

### ***Peer, group working were maintained during class teaching as a feature of VNEN class***

In a Vietnamese traditional classroom, arrangement of desks and chairs was in neat rows facing the big board; when entering a VNEN classroom, some fundamental changes can be noticed. The desks were rearranged into round tables so that pupils could be seated in small groups as one of features of the VNEN model. Additionally, many of the exercises/tasks of the VNEN textbooks are designed to be done collaboratively in small group. Starting these exercises/tasks, under the ten-step learning instruction, pupils read questions individually, then they discuss with in peer with their neighbour to find out the solution, finally, they complete the exercise in small group (comprising from 4 to 6 members). Thus, the VNEN is a learning model that motivates the cooperation of peer, group working. Group work was maintained during all observed teaching classes.

***The one-direction interaction was dominant (group leader → group member; teacher → pupils)***

As discussed above, peer and small group working is motivated to evaporate learning cooperation under the VNEN model. However, seating in small groups is not the same meaning as learning cooperation at all times. Mandated by rigid ten-step of learning together with the constraint of time amount for one teaching class, learning cooperation among pupils was conducted on the surface rather than its nature. In detail, when working in small groups, group leader delivered questions to one by one group member and collected the answers from them. Every time one member finished the response, all group members made applause to encourage her/him. The observer was caught by two notable points when closely coming into near groups to listen to their discussion (and made video records). First, the group members answers were commonly cited word for word from the textbook content (account about 85% of pupils' answers) (Source: Classroom observation). They did not even rephrase the questions so the answer format we usually listened to that “the question content” ... is... “the answer content”. After listening to these answers, groups leaders decided whether these answers were right or wrong, then moved to another answer. Some of pupils paraphrased the answer contents and modified their own expression. Second, we noticed a one-direction cooperation among class members. The group leader was the only person, with the teacher, to deliver questions. Occasionally, group members raised questions to group leader or pupils raised questions to their teachers. The main purposes of these questions from pupils were asking how to get the correct answers rather than exploring learning contents (Source: Classroom observation).

In sum, language learning is a developmental process promoting communication and social interaction rather than a product acquired by practicing language items (Breen, 1987; Candlin and Murphy, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Jeon, 2006). In the case of the VNEN model, its policies stimulate social interaction among between pupil and teacher, among pupils each other; in fact, pupils have more chances to interact each other than they used to in traditional classes. On the surface, the VNEN classes are immersed in social interaction to help pupils construct new knowledge, according to the constructivist approach. However, the aspects of learning cooperation among pupils were absent from the teaching practice (Source: Classroom observation).



### **Feature 3. Knowledge is Authentic Tasks and Experience-based**

#### ***Teaching and learning was textbook-based rather than experience-based***

Self-study textbooks of Vietnamese language education were used as a main source for both teachers and students to follow (Source: Classroom Observation). Teaching and learning was implemented by group leaders asking questions in the textbook and group members answering, then being tested by teacher (Source: Observation). Although teachers are encouraged to make necessary adjustments on instructional activities, all of the interviewed teachers confirmed their high dependence on Vietnamese language textbooks (Source: teacher interviews) and explained this dependence by work overload, their limited content knowledge, and institutional constraints (Sources: teacher interviews and questionnaires).

Usually, at the beginning of week or month, a group of teachers of the same grade sit together to discuss and agree on the adjusted contents of self-study textbooks, then, they will apply these adjustments on their pupil classes (Source: Teacher interviews). The normal way teachers carry out is that they integrate or re-design all such common adjustments into the lessons, then print and copy many A4-paper versions delivered to their pupil groups. At that time, their pupil groups, instead of directly doing exercises on the textbook, do the exercises on the A4-paper versions that were handed by their teacher. Teachers said that they took much their own money for print and copy without support from their schools so they feel not be motivated to do this. From our point of view, textbook dependence was transferred from one form to another form.

One of challenges VNEN meet as being applied in local context is traditional pedagogy mediation that has existed for many generations of teachers and students in Vietnam. In particular, traditional Vietnamese teaching and learning is dominated by the centrality of textbooks and the need to fully reproduce the written texts, the consequence of a long history of Confucian-influenced education (Hang, 2015; Pham, 2015; Hoang, 2011; Woodside, 1991). Unfortunately, many teachers and local administrators continued to have a ‘textbook mentality’ when implementing this project in the classroom: the priority was to follow the commands in self-instructional guides rather than making necessary changes to ensure students’ learning outcomes. The over-reliance on predetermined learning activities in the 3-in-1 self-instructional guides meant that students were often completing rote tasks without being challenged in their understanding of the materials. Even, when being asked

to list some advantages of VNEN application in the teaching practice, teachers answered that one of the advantages was that they need not to compose lesson plans for their teaching, as they used to do because the 3-in-1 self-study textbooks comprised meticulous lessons (Source: teacher interviews and questionnaires).

Similar to other education systems in East Asia, the Vietnamese education system has often been described as “exam-centric” and “teacher-centric” (Tran, 2013). In particular, numerous studies on the teacher–student relationship in Vietnam have found entrenched cultural beliefs in the unquestioned authority of the teacher as the master of knowledge (Nguyen T.M.H., 2015). In the case of VNEN, although teachers are encouraged to be autonomous in their professional decisions, in practice, both teachers and pupils are governed by textbooks because, fundamentally, textbooks are still considered as the source of authoritative knowledge in the classroom. The national textbooks are considered as the most significant agent of the pedagogical reform. That is because the essence of constructivist pedagogy was expected by VNEN developers to be clearly identified through learning procedures in the textbooks and therefore transferable to classroom practice. Teachers have never been the ultimate authority; textbooks standing in that role. In Vietnam, all primary schools in the country are compelled by law to use the set of textbooks prescribed by MoET. The right to produce textbooks is taken by MoET, which also nominates the textbooks writers. As such, the centralisation of educational policy in Vietnam authorises not only national-mandated curricula, as do many countries in the world, but also nationally-mandated textbooks. As a result, few teachers in Vietnam would dare to deviate from the materials written in the national set of textbooks, not just in terms of the topics to teach but also the exact words that count as the “correct” answer. Additionally, the Confucian heritage which encourages learning by heart the words of ancestors, in combination with the heavy official curriculum, further incentivises teachers to teach rote memorisation of the textbooks (Duggan 2001; Nguyen et al. 2012).

***Texts and learning situations derived from textbooks rather than pupils’ real-life world***

The EN model is featured by local adaptation into learning contents, curriculum and learning materials that “grass-rooted” from local issues are developed by local school teachers. The walls of the VNEN classrooms are decorated with posters, maps and other

projects that reflected specific local characteristics. Therefore, pupils' learning is encouraged to attach with their real-life world at local community. However, one system of textbooks that is used in over country with the same texts, the same learning situations directly contradict the principles and philosophies of the original model. Teachers admit that they rarely made changes in terms of texts and tasks/exercises in the VNEN textbooks because they do not feel confident on their pedagogical capacities and they do not enough time to do more works (Source: Teacher interview). In accordance with teachers' interview answers, this created many disadvantages for their teaching and pupils' learning. For example, texts designed and language used in VNEN textbooks normally reflect the Northern dialect where the language of capital people is used, whereas Vietnam, basically has three kinds of language dialects (together with Middle and Southern ones). As a result, some of language features described in the textbooks become difficult for Middle and Southern pupils to understand and apply. In this case, teachers are encouraged to make necessary changes. However, through the observed classes, only one change of text was made (Teacher Hue, Tra An school, in the lesson "*The world of flowers and fruits*?", changed the kinds of flowers and fruits of Southern region). Learning situations depend on textbook contents so local factors and pupils' real-life factors seemed absent from the VNEN practice classes.

#### **Feature 4. Learning Stresses Scaffolding**

##### ***Textbook available-design absolutely took the role of scaffolding***

An instructional constructivist approach needs scaffolding that is defined as "face-to-face interaction between a less knowledgeable member of a group and a more knowledgeable other, who scaffolds or support the learning of the less knowledgeable individual (Hogan and Tudge, 1999). The learner and guide jointly establish a zone of proximal development, in which the learner is able to perform at a level that he or she could not achieve (Vygotsky, 1978).

In the case of VNEN model, the classroom desks and chairs were rearranged into roundtables so that students could be seated in small groups that are different from the traditional Vietnamese classroom with desks and chairs in neat rows facing the board. This rearrangement created convenient conditions supporting scaffolding activities. In a traditional classroom, pupils sit in the same direction opposing with teacher and class board,

they just see their friends' backs; therefore, they have few chances of interaction during lesson teaching. In the VNEN classroom, pupils sit in group and fundamentally see each other over time of lesson, that enhances chances for them to discuss, cooperate and certainly support and scaffold their learning. According to teachers' answers (Source: Teacher interviews), they had clear intention to group pupils together, more knowledgeable pupils sit together with less knowledgeable so that the formers can support the latter's learning. In theory, VNEN model creates sufficient conditions for constructivist learning happen through scaffolding.

In practice of the classroom observation, under the VNEN model, traditional textbooks have been reformatted into instructional guides with more activities, questions and practices problems, as well as explicit commands that pupils must follow sequentially in order to progress through their lessons. The meticulous lesson design in the VNEN textbooks is believed by VNEN developers and teachers (MoET, 2012; Ân, 2015, 2016, 2017) to assure pupils to be able to construct knowledge by themselves and pass content knowledge standards. The VNEN policy developers also confirmed that the lesson design in the textbooks is the best cognitive procedure (MoET, 2012). So, neither teacher nor more knowledgeable pupils take the role of scaffolding for less knowledgeable pupils' learning: textbooks take that role.

***The supports from teachers and higher intellectual pupils limited at surface (façade)***

Many of the exercises and tasks in the VNEN textbooks are designed to be done collaboratively in small groups. This often encourages a playfully competitive spirit under learning games or teacher often count-down to encourage pupils to enhance their working speed (Source: Classroom observation). As a result, group leaders tried to hurry group members to complete the exercises or tasks under high pressure. Even, in some cases, group leaders did the exercises by themselves to make sure their own group "win" (Source: Classroom observation). Other group members lose their learning opportunity in these cases. Summarised from teachers' responses, one of disadvantages of VNEN is the deep dependency of group members on group leaders who are as knowledgeable than the others. An issue easily caught in VNEN classrooms, group members just seat and wait for the results from their group leaders to copy on their notebooks although it was not sure that

they understood or not. As a result, pupils become lazy and lose their learning motivation (Source: Teacher interviews and questionnaires).

### **Feature 5. Learning Community should be Equitable**

#### ***Hierarchical interactions remained in language classroom practices***

In a traditional class, teacher is considered as a superior authority. Students hardly showed reactions to improper or inadequate interventions from the teacher. Influenced deeply by Confucian tradition, teachers are considered as a higher position than parents, so the hierarchical interactions remained in classrooms for almost the century in Vietnam. Only teachers have right to deliver questions/learning tasks, decide whether the answers are right or wrong, direct pupils how to learn and punish pupils with misbehaviours. As a result, Vietnamese pupils are educated to become the observers with thinking dependence rather than critical thinkers.

In VNEN classroom, pupils are organised into self-governed committees including class leader, vice-class leaders and group leaders that motivate pupils' independence and activeness. The class leader is considered as a "mini-teacher". Every new school year, school board and teachers spend the first two weeks introducing the pupils to this model and ensure that they transit from the role of the student to that of "mini-teacher". VNEN pupils are now expected to take ownership of their own learning process by following textbooks instructions, direct other members in their group to do the same, and in the end reporting their learning results to the whole class. Thus, the VNEN policies encourage democratic environment in class when allowing pupils to take roles as "mini-teachers". Teachers change from knowledge providers into facilitators or instructors. However, in practice, group leaders and class leader replaced their teacher in the role of person who delivered tasks, questions, and decide right or wrong for the answers. One-direction interaction was still found in the VNEN classroom (Source: Classroom observation). So neutral and equitable interaction between teachers and student, among students each other were less valued.

### **II.2.4. Findings Interpretation**

The research design was aimed at uncovering the teachers' layers of thinking about the constructivist pedagogy that are required to apply on first language primary classes. The

first step started with a questionnaire providing a picture of the teachers' articulated beliefs on instruction in accordance to constructivist features. Next, the observation of the teachers' actual performance in the classroom led us to identify how the VNEN models is being implemented in this context. In addition, the combination between accessing the teachers' talks through in-depth interviews after the observed lessons and synthesising Vietnamese education and culture were used to unfold the reasons and explanations for matches and mismatches between beliefs and practice. Finally, the implications for teacher education and mother language teaching at primary school were defined.

#### **II.2.4.1. Explanations for the Implementation of the Constructivist Approach from Vietnam Perspectives**

The multi-method research employed in this study made reveal mismatches between what the teachers thought about the constructivist approach in Vietnamese language education and the practices. Specifically, through the questionnaire, teachers' answers may be regarded as the approval of the constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language, as being described and required in the VNEN model. However, their thoughts have not been fulfilled faithfully through the teaching practices. The findings on the implementation in our context were related to the factors of education and culture of Vietnam. Through the relation and comparison to a constructivist perspective on language education, the interrelation between contextual factors and the constructivist implementation were explored and characterised.

##### **a. From the Context of Vietnamese Education**

Firstly, the centralisation policy at all aspects of Vietnamese education has deeply and essentially impacted the quality of education, the beliefs of teachers, as well as has organized the pedagogical reform. Specifically, through the educational history of Vietnam, the textbook centralisation policy has tied teachers' understandings towards progressive pedagogies that have been adapted in Vietnam. From our results, for example, teachers believed that their pupils learnt in the constructivist approach step by step in finding the correct answers to the questions or tasks predetermined by self-study textbook authors, or responding to the texts assigned in the textbooks. Together with the confirmation of textbook authors who represented MoET, teachers believe textbook designs are the best way to fulfil the reformed pedagogy. Therefore, both teacher and pupil built up thoughts

and beliefs of over-reliance on the textbooks and adhered closely to the textbooks in their daily teaching practice. The centralisation policy in education lasting many decades in Vietnam has gradually deprived teachers from autonomy, made them lost the confidence in making professional decisions, leading their classroom practices be conflicting with their beliefs. This study results have confirmed again this statement. On the one hand, the teachers articulated their understandings toward the constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language and expressed their tendency to implement this pedagogy in their practice. On the other hand, their teaching practice ‘bound’ teaching and learning activities to adhere the textbooks’ design.

Secondly, stressing the factors of curriculum and materials rather than ‘human factors’ of the pedagogical reform created certain mismatches between that teachers were ‘imposed’ to do and that teachers believed. Through the pedagogical reforms in Vietnam, even VNEN-based, the national textbooks have been treated as the most significant agent of pedagogy, whereas local teachers have taken the role of receivers who accepted the requirements or policies that were available established by a group of educational specialists from the MoET. During teacher training sessions held by the MoET, the focus was instructing teachers how to use new textbooks, how to ‘transfer’ requirements or policies to teaching practices rather than equipping the teachers with strong theoretical background in order to help them be autonomous in their professional decisions.

Finally, for a historical reason, a considerable number of Vietnamese teachers has not met professional standard requirements. Sunk in wars and economic difficulties, Vietnamese education accepted the state of low-satisfied teachers in term of educational degree and pedagogical competences in order to solve high-rate illiteracy after the wars. It has been difficult to require these teachers to be highly autonomous in fulfilling the requirements of the pedagogical reforms.

### **b. From the Context of Vietnamese Culture**

First, influenced by Confucian theories, Vietnamese culture is characterised by a top-down structure and hierarchical relationships in society, schools and classrooms. These characteristics have hindered the successful fulfilment of progressive pedagogical theories as the learner-centred and the dialectical constructivism in Vietnamese classrooms. Immersed in such a structure, the government has imposed almost aspects of the

pedagogical reforms and this way has not changed over the different reforms, VNEN included. Teachers have established deep habits of being ‘passive receivers’ of pedagogical reforms’ policies formulated by the Ministry of Education and Training because they believe that these policies are carefully designed by educational specialists. These habits prevent teachers from thinking critically, as well as making necessary mediations between the policies and their specific context. In classroom context, the hierarchical relationships have hindered the implementation of the dialectical constructivist approach that requires an equal relation between teachers and learners.

Second, the habit of over-reliance on textbooks comes from the respect toward books of Confucian deities. Both teacher and pupils believe on the knowledge of textbooks so teaching and learning process is bound into the textbook contents. Survey results on teachers showed they felt difficult to update and find out more information outside the textbooks to implement their teaching. Relying on textbooks, pupils are also used to learning by heart the textbook contents. This rote learning style has characterised for Vietnamese education for a long time.

#### **II.2.4.2. Position of the Teacher: Professional vs. Technician**

A number of studies suggest that the teachers are central to the effective implementation of new policies. As insiders, they have a significant role to translate the new policies into their everyday teaching practice. In the course of attempts to propose any pedagogical renewal at policy level, teachers’ commitment and cooperation are critical requirements. This study concerned what the teachers’ position was under the VNEN model. This was expected to reveal to what extent the VNEN-based-educational reform concerned to local factors, especially local teachers with long-held beliefs on traditional education.

The VNEN model was applied in the context of the apparent failure of the previous educational reform (the so-called 2000 reform). The reasons of the failure were pointed out by many researches back to the early 2000s. As stated in the literature, although the 2000s reform focused on “active learning” and “student-centred learning” (MoET, 2012; Nguyen, 2006; Hoang, 2011; World Bank, 2015), the revised curriculum continued to emphasise rote memorisation and textbook centralisation that put textbooks as the central agent rather than teachers’ professional capacities. MoET and the textbook developers



believed that “student-centred learning” supported in the textbooks would be transferred to teaching practice through teachers’ adherence.

With the VNEN model, Vietnam’ borrowing of EN is ostensibly driven by a desire to move away from traditional didactic education toward more progressive student-centred pedagogies (MoET, 2012; An, 2015, 2016, 2017). However, the revised curriculum was evaluated as a curriculum and textbook centralisation that led to the contradiction to student-centred approaches and caused constraints for teachers to become professionals (Le; 2018; Tuyet, 2011).

Through teacher interviews and observation of teaching practices, we recognised sufficiently the teachers’ conscience in their profession when they tried to invest in their lessons, prepare materials and support their pupils to assure all the pupils completed their exercises or tasks. However, there was a tendency to be dependent on the available designs and directions that fit more or less to their pupils. Even the teachers who were evaluated as highly experienced and competent felt to be important to their pupils’ learning with the textbooks, rather than by their theoretical knowledge and mediation on the pedagogical approaches themselves. Three reasons can be inferred from this issue.

First, the MoET and the VNEN developers confirmed that the VNEN self-study textbook lessons were designed as the best logical and cognitive procedure fitting with primary pupils’ thinking. The VNEN pedagogical approaches and the textbooks were also built by the highly competent authors, leading major experts. Therefore, teachers held the belief that tasks, questions, assigned and available texts in the textbooks were good enough for them to adhere.

Second, most of teachers spent the 2000s education reform for nearly 15 years before they applied the VNEN model so the deep influences of textbook centralisation policies on them remained in their teaching practices.

Third, some vague understandings of the constructivist pedagogy were found among the teachers’ responses and through their teaching practices. In terms of social interaction, for example, the teachers thought that the process of pupils asking and answering the questions of lessons was the process of social communication. Similarly, completing the exercises or tasks of lessons was understood as a process of knowledge construction. Thus, teachers

had a tendency to “plug” the constructivist features into the contents and procedure of the textbooks. Teachers were not clearly instructed about the new directions of the constructivism although this is a core pedagogy of the VNEN model, they were not also provided with adequate training to deploy this approach in practice.

A notable practice that also contributed to ‘push’ teachers to become technicians was the criteria to evaluate the teachers’ teaching quality mandated by Department of Education and Training. Through teacher interviews and our experience as a teacher education lecturer, in a VNEN classroom, teachers are not encouraged to use the class board and deliver lecture for the whole class. Instead, teacher should give lecture to each group again and again. Even, if there is a common issue that all pupils of the class meet, teachers could not make a lecture in front of the student class. If teachers do that, their teaching will be evaluated as a traditional way or “sticking/depending on the board” [*bam bang*], or “not implementing the VNEN project correctly” (Source: Teacher interview). Therefore, teachers have to contribute lecture separately that took them and their class teaching much time. So, not only the fixed teaching and learning procedures are the features of VNEN model, but also even rigid evaluation toward teachers’ teaching quality.

In a word, the teachers’ beliefs in the textbook quality and their vague understandings of the constructivist features appear to tie the teachers down to the role of technicians. A safe way of the teachers is adhering to the available designs and procedures of the MoET, even though the contents and methods might not support their pupils’ levels and foster their interest.

The present chapter was aimed at unfolding complicated layers of teachers’ beliefs about the constructivist pedagogies in teaching Vietnamese first language that are required to be adopted in the practice of teaching. Through three sources of data, the teachers expressed the inconsistent in what they thought and what they actually do in practice. Whereas the teachers expressed their favour toward the constructivist approach (through the questionnaire) as professionals, their teaching practice appeared the conflict with their expressed beliefs. In practice, the teachers did not escape their long-held cultural beliefs and habits in teaching. Especially, the teachers and pupils still overly relied on self-study VNEN textbooks. The in-depth interview data revealed that the teachers equate the constructivism-based teaching with completing the tasks or exercises designed in the

textbooks. In addition, three phases designed in one textbook lesson and ten-step of learning process are believed by the teachers to be an assurance for the constructivist learning happen. One notable point is that the available textbook design is confirmed by the VNEN developers as well as the MoET as the most suitable for the constructivism-based instruction. As a conventional approach in the pedagogical reforms in Vietnam, the innovative pedagogy is expected to transfer to the teaching practice through the textbooks rather than the teachers' professional capacity and experimental ideas. This approach itself 'pull' the teachers closer to the position of technicians. While VNEN indicates a desire to radically and comprehensively change existing educational beliefs and practices, it appears that policies such as textbook centralisation hinders its effects.

**PART III.**  
**DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM-ALIGNED**  
**INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL: DESIGN AND**  
**EXPERIMENT**



## **Chapter III.1 A Dialectical Constructivist Instructional Model in Primary Vietnamese Language Education**

With the aim to enhance the quality of Vietnamese language instruction at primary education, we designed an instruction model inspired from the dialectical constructivist approach to learning together with essential aspects of Vietnamese education and culture. We did two preparatory studies before we designed the model (*see Part II*). In a first study, we examined the Vietnamese primary school teachers' beliefs on the quality of VNEN textbooks that are believed by the Vietnamese MoET to be an effective mean to 'transfer' the constructivist approach into teaching practice. This examination showed that the teachers believed self-study textbooks' content designs could support their pupils construct knowledge by themselves. Despite this belief, they still adhered and depended on the textbooks as they were doing in the traditional model. Next, the results of Study 1 were also examined through a second study with the aim to explore teachers' beliefs and their practices on the constructivist approach. Study 2 results reflected that the teachers held good understandings of the constructivist pedagogy. However, they met considerable challenges to transfer these understandings into practices because of the constraints of contextual characteristics of Vietnamese education and culture that were long-held by the

local teachers, such as adhering to textbooks centralisation, maintaining hierarchical relationships, applying fixed and rigid process for pupils' different cognition levels, to name a few.

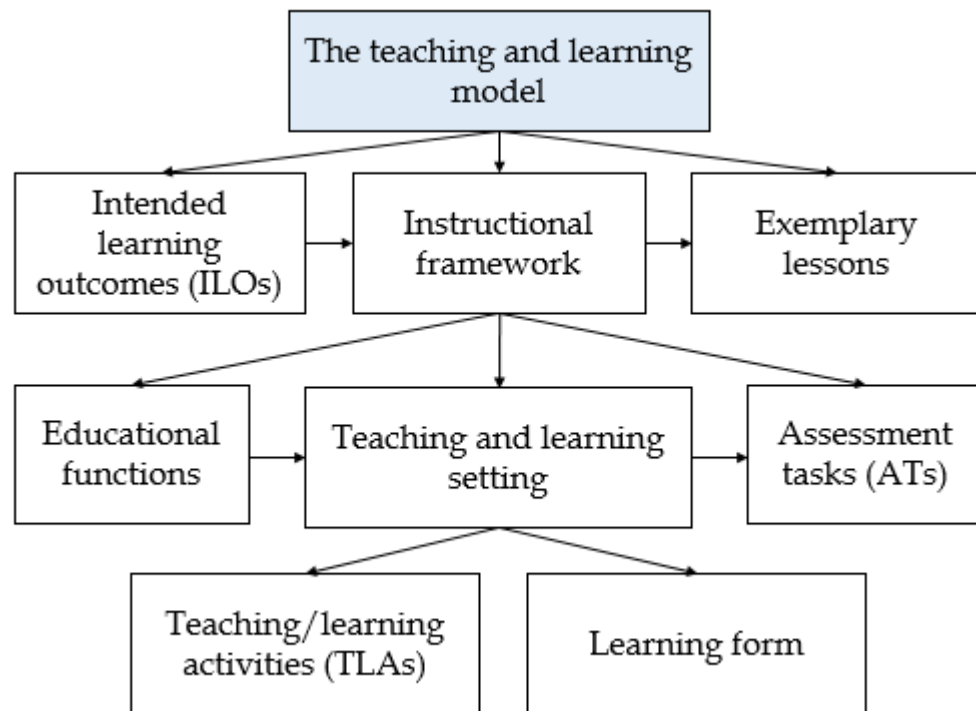
In the present chapter, we use an instructional design model closely referenced to the constructivist alignment theories (Biggs, 2014) to deploy Reading lessons, then tested on Fourth Graders. Accordingly, the components of the model comprise Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); a framework comprising Educational Functions, Teaching/Learning Activities (TLAs), and Assessment Activities (ATs); and the exemplary lesson units of reading subject that are designed for being experimented and deeply-analysed. The model components are deployed through three learning phases within one lesson unit, respectively labelled as Engagement, Discovery and Experience that are equivalent to Pre-reading, Whilst-reading and Post-reading. The designed model carefully considers the harmony between the dialectical constructivist pedagogies in teaching mother language and the contextual features of Vietnamese education and culture. The written instructional model targets to serve as an educational object that addressed previously analysed problems of Vietnamese language education at primary schools in Vietnam context.

### **III.1.1. Design of the Dialectical Constructivism-aligned Model in Primary Vietnamese Language Education**

According to Figure I.6 in Chapter I.5, the whole design-based instructional model consists of four interrelated parts: 1) Intended learning outcomes, 2) Teaching and learning activities, 3) Assessment Tasks, and 4) Grading (*see Section I.5.2*). In the process of designing our model, we made necessary changes and modifications into the constructivism aligned instructional model so that it becomes a clear guidance for the application of constructivist pedagogy on Vietnamese language teaching. More precisely, when Biggs recommended the component “*teaching and learning activities*” to be aligned to the intended learning outcomes in order to create environment stimulating learners to obtain learning outcomes, the teaching and learning activities are still general, which brings about some difficulties for teachers to apply it for designing lesson units.

We organised TLAs into a framework and modified two components as: 1) “*Educational function*” of each teaching/learning activity; 2) “*Teaching and learning setting*” concluding teaching and learning activities and their appropriate learning form, and these components

are aligned to “*Assessment activities*”. At the same time, the framework is deployed through three learning phases, respectively labelled as Engagement, Discovery and Experience (as in Figure II.27). In addition, we composed six lesson plans as exemplary designs of the instructional model that would be employed in the experimental research. Among them, two lesson plans were composed in detailed for deep analysis.



**Figure III.1. The components of the constructively aligned instructional model**

Our model focuses on the initial phase of a design-based research in which the theoretical arguments of constructivist alignment are employed. In addition, Vietnamese primary language instruction includes many sub-subjects such as Reading, Writing, Vocabulary and Grammar, Spelling, Hand-writing training, Story-telling. In this present study, the designed model is applied in Reading lessons. In a subsequent phase, the developed instructional model will be tested in reading education classes with teachers and pupils. Based on the design (Figure II.17), a specific and detailed model based on the dialectical constructivist approach is developed below.

### **III.1.1.1. Intended learning outcomes (ILOs)**

The ILOs are described in the Basic Curriculum ordained by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training in 2018. To meet the requirements of the new labour force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Vietnamese language instruction at primary education aims at educating



citizens who both hold Vietnamese features and are able to integrate into the international community. In the new curriculum of Basic Education of Vietnam, the intended learning outcomes include the following two topics.

*Establishing and developing virtues:* Vietnamese language education at primary schools helps children build main positive qualities, specifically such as loving the nature, family and homeland; being affected by the beauty and honesty; being interested in learning and working; being straightforward and trustful in learning and life; having responsibility to personal, family, society and around environment.

*Establishing and developing competences of language:* Vietnamese language education at primary schools helps children primarily build pupils' language competences at all skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening at basic level: reading correctly and fluently; understanding main contents and information of texts; connecting and comparing out of texts; writing correctly in terms of dictation and grammar; writing fully work-out sentences, paragraphs and short essays (chiefly to relate and describe); speaking clearly and coherently, listening to understand speaker's ideas; developing the literature competence as distinguishing between poet and story; having imaginative competence, being emotional to the beauty and honesty of humane and world that are expressed in literature works.

The above learning outcomes are consistent with the goals of first language education of many developed countries in the world. In spite of different expressions, the core learning outcomes are common in two aspects: *developing pupils' competences of language-literature and nurturing pupils' mind and personality*. Regarding reading instruction at primary education, the ILOs are defined in the Basic Education Curriculum by Vietnamese MoET, as follows.

### **III.1.1.2. Instructional Framework**

#### **a. The Rationale of the Instructional Framework Design**

First, the instructional framework design is based on the review of instructional models that have been validated and tested through decades. The learning phase design in this study is referenced and influenced by other designs such as the 5E constructivist model of Bybee et al. Neuman (2000) consisting in 5 steps (Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration and Evaluation); and the standard-based constructivist model of Flynn (2004) including two steps (Exploratory phase and Discovery phase). The 5E model has a classic constructivist structure that was designed primarily by science educators. Trowbridge et al.

envision a five-phase model in which learners begin to investigate phenomenon and eventually complete the learning cycle by creating conceptions, theories, and generalisations based on their work. However, the 5E Model was designed without description of learning aims, teaching/learning activities, and evaluation criteria for each of the phases so it might be hard for teachers to use this model for designing corresponding units. The two-step model of Flynn (2004) is designed to be consistent with constructivist theory and straightforward to implement for designing lessons. According to Flynn (2004), the model lets more 'space' for teachers' professional autonomy. However, the two phases comprise many components with their own functions that make users more and less be confused to apply. Both of the above models are designed and applied on Western education contexts: the former is designed for application to science education, the latter is applied on multi-disciplines including science, social science and language education. Therefore, this study closely refers to Flynn's model with some modifications and adjustments to make it appropriate with Vietnamese language education.

Second, in order to generate dialectical constructivist environment for learners to obtain the ILOs, the instructional framework employed the Reciprocal Teaching strategies that was firstly developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984), and was analysed and confirmed by O'Donnell (2012) as a representative of the dialectical constructivism. These strategies were originally designed to improve reading comprehension and consists in a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text: "The purpose of these discussions is to achieve joint understanding of the text through the flexible application of four comprehension strategies: *prediction* (making predictions about what will come next), *classification* (clarifying difficulties with the text), *summarisation* (summarising the text), and *question generation* (formulating questions based on the text ) (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Reciprocal teaching is claimed as exemplifying features of dialectical constructivism (O'Donnell, 2012).

#### **b. The Instructional Framework Description**

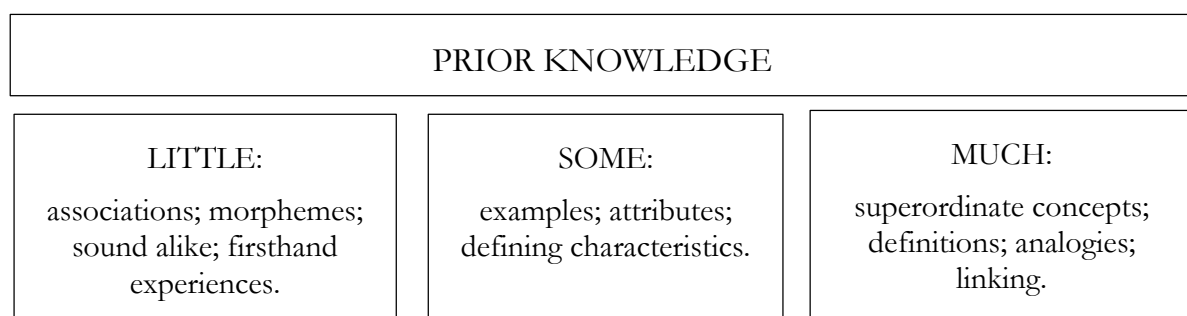
In our curriculum, three learning phases were determined and labelled as *Engagement*, *Discovery*, and *Experience* that are equivalent with three stages of reading as *Pre-reading*, *Whilst-reading* and *Post-reading*. Through the three phases, dialectical constructivist features are integrated with Vietnamese education and cultural features. As a dialectical constructivist-

aligned curriculum, these learning phases are aimed at aligning with *intended learning outcomes*, *teaching/learning activities*, and *assessment tasks*. The designed curriculum is summarised and presented in Table III.1.

### Phase 1: Engagement (Pre-Reading)

This phase is equivalent to Pre-reading. The term “Engagement” is used in this case in order to focus on the active involvement of pupils through *activating pupils’ prior knowledge* and *inspiring their intrinsic motivation* to learn. The word “Engagement” was chosen for this phase from various terms, such as *anticipatory sets*, *launches*, *bell-ringing activities*, or *icebreakers*, “Engagement” being more general. For instance, an *icebreaking activity* can create a positive environment yet not begin to address the main concepts to be taught in the lesson. An *anticipatory set* may prepare the student for what comes next, but may do little to grab the learner’s attention or create a relaxed environment conducive to learning.

Two main *functions* of this phase are activating pupils’ prior knowledge (Function 1) and arousing pupils with *intrinsic motivation* to learn (Function 2, Table III.1). *First*, prior knowledge can be considered as background knowledge and existing experience that pupils already have when that get into lessons. It has been known that prior knowledge influences what is understood from text and it is an integral part of the comprehending process (Johnston, 1981). Christen and Murphy argued that pupils generally fall into three categories: much, some, or little prior knowledge (Christen and Murphy, 1991). In each instance, the teacher will make specific instructional decisions based on what is discovered in the prior knowledge part of the lesson (see Figure III.2).



**Figure III.2. Levels of prior knowledge**

In reading instruction, the background is the entire understanding of readers including understanding of the type of text, text structure, words, and main content presented in the

text. Besides, pupils' prior knowledge is also inclusive with the knowledge of society, culture, and pupils' personal factors such as emotion, interests (O'Donnell, 2012). When the reading process takes places, the reader will use the "background knowledge" through recalling, classifying, modifying, adding, adjusting... to gain new knowledge and at this time, new knowledge becomes the ground knowledge, which is the basis to acquire new knowledge units. In order to activate pupils' prior knowledge, teachers can use visual images such as real objects, images, pictures, videos, diagrams... or teaching methods such as predicting, questioning...

Next, the concept of motivation is defined variously by many researchers, but most of them agree upon the fact that motivation is responsible for determining human behaviour by energising it and giving it direction. Brown (1994) considered motivations as an inner drive or impulse that promote people to do a particular action. According to Cherry (2013), motivation is viewed as the process in which all behaviours are begun, guided and maintained. Motivation in first language learning can stimulate pupils to achieve the learning goals and create an equal environment between teacher and between pupils. Evidences of pupils' motivation and methods to measure learners' motivation need to be defined. Keller (1985) suggested the instrument, namely ARCS, serving for motivation's measurement. The ARCS model (Keller, 1985) was developed and composed of four components (Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction) that need for pupils to be and to remain motivated. In detail, "Attention" concerns pupils' interests in surprises and curiosities about challenges they cope during the learning process; "Relevance" happens when target contents in the lesson must get on well with what learners have already known or at least what is familiar to them; "Confidence" focuses on establishing positive expectation to be successful among learners, which can be motivated through three strategies of performance requirement, success opportunities and personal control-confidence; and "Satisfaction" is where teachers provide reinforcement and reward for learners, which can be enhanced by intrinsic reinforcement, extrinsic rewards and equity.

The "Engagement" Phase, equivalent to Pre-reading, is designed to embed the learning in discussing, arguing, questioning, answering, writing, and so on, rather than in passive listening or answering in order to calling pupils' prior knowledge and intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, two strategies of reciprocal teaching are employed, as follows.

***Predicting (TLA1):*** Predicting is an activity where pupils find comprehensive clues by using their own background knowledge and personal experiences. Its main purpose is to link what the pupil has already experienced about the topic, with the knowledge, concepts, skills and competences the pupils is about to acquire through the lesson. Furthermore, predicting is also one main strategy used during every activity to keep pupils actively thinking on the targets during their learning process.

***Methods to instruct pupils to predict:*** In practising reading strategies, teacher helps pupils with a scaffolding method. First of all, the teacher models how to make predictions toward the topic-related visual aids (pictures, videos, title of the text...) by speaking teacher's thought process on how to observe the visual aids, how to express the predictions. The teacher can use some 'clues' from the text or illustrations that can be used to predict what will happen next, such as: *I think... because... I will bet... because... I suppose... because... I think I will learn... because...*

After that, the teacher instructs pupils to practise until they can make predictions independently. "Predicting" strategy can be used throughout the reading process (pre-while-post reading) and helps pupils constantly connect to their prior knowledge and associate to the previous sections of the reading text in order to help the pupils' understandings cohesion and deeper. Through this, their metacognition would be also trained.

***Questioning (TLA2):*** Questioning requires pupils to be able to identify information existing in the texts. Questions could be constructed to ask about difficult words to understand (e.g., key-words in reading texts or a story, in a title, or in grammar and vocabulary texts), the main ideas (e.g., in reading texts, in a referenced writing, or a folk story), or important information. Pupils make a list of questions at the start of a lesson, during lesson process and after concluding a lesson. This helps teacher and even pupils test whether the latter have already some knowledge about the forthcoming lesson contents; which difficulties they meet during the learning and what they acquire at the end of the lesson. Teaching and learning activities in this phase are described in Table III.1.

***Methods to instruct pupils to make questions:*** Teacher instructs pupils to refer to different characteristics of the genres to make suitable questions. The focus of questions bases on the different genres, as follows.

*What are the focuses of different genres of text to make questions?*

*For poetry: focus on images, words, artistic measures;*

*For stories, plays: focus on factors such as character, context (circumstances), character actions, events, details, plot, words and characteristics of characters;*

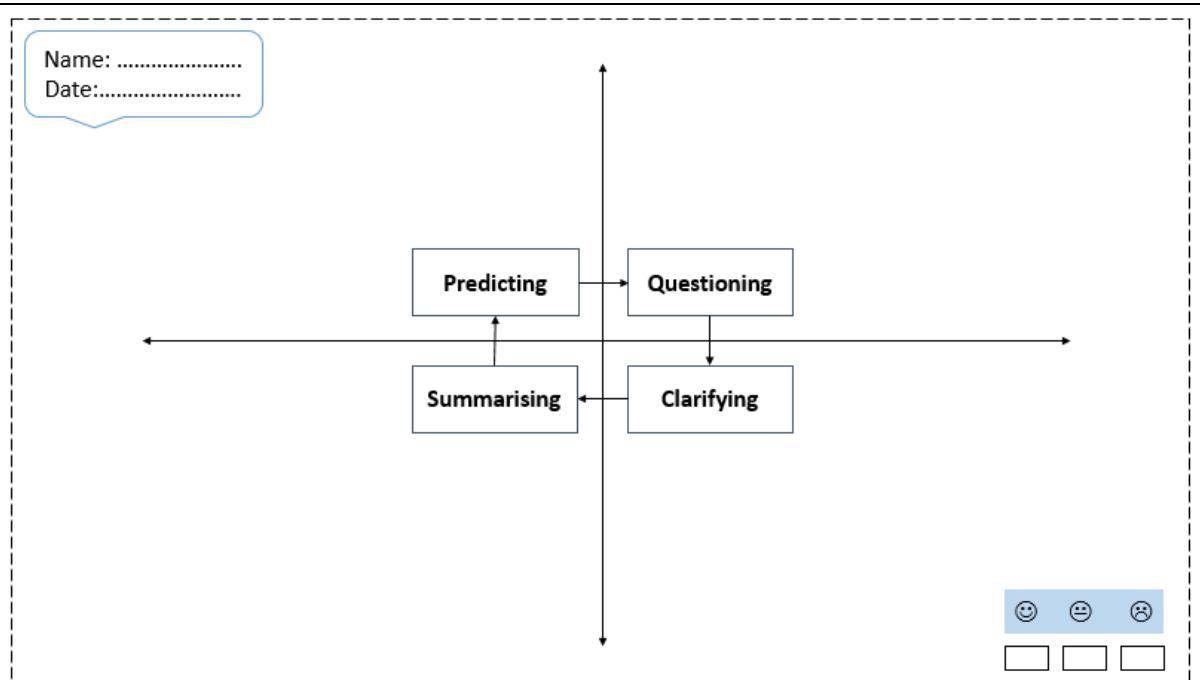
*For explanatory texts, descriptions: things, time, characteristics, structure of things... objects described, objects explant and compose.*

*For discourse text: determine the issue of the discourse, thesis and arguments (reasons, evidence).*

Besides, the teacher can instruct pupils to make simple questions that begin *with who, what, where, when, why, how, and what if.*

In this phase, pupils are instructed and modelled to use the worksheet (Figure III.3) to note their thinking statements of the RT strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising). The worksheet was originally developed for English speaking pupils by Brady (1990) and was developed to be more usable by O'Malley (2017), focusing on developing reading comprehension and higher cognitive processes. The worksheet can be modified during the time period of reading. Based on the pupils' worksheets, the teacher can gather specific evidences for the assessment tasks.

In addition, answering the questions asked by pupils is not only the role of the teacher, pupils are involved in finding answers/ solutions/ explanations by themselves, which enhances dialectical interaction and cooperation in groups and among class members. Besides, pupils have more chances to practice and express their own ideas and understandings. Therefore, toward the TLAs of this phase, we recommend the corresponding learning forms of small group (Form 1), then class as a whole (Form 2). Working in small groups help pupils mobilise their own prior knowledge and language expressions. After that, working in the class as a whole creates opportunities for pupils to reveal and present their experience and express language by their own. Through these activities, dialectical interactions are enhanced.



**Figure III.3. The Pupil’s worksheet**

Regarding the assessment tasks for the instructional activities, the diagram of prior knowledge levels suggested by William and Thomas (1991) is applied to assess pupils’ experience (see Figure III.2) (AT1). The evidences for this task assessment are the pupils’ questions and prediction statements written in the worksheet. Beside the Keller’s ARCS model, we adopt four components (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction) as anchors for observing and assessing pupils’ intrinsic motivation (AT2). This task assessment can be conducted through the class observation evidences of pupils’ willingness to take part in activities organised for them to learn, such as discussing, questioning, answering, predicting, arguing, writing, and so on.

**Phase 2: Discovery (Whilst-reading)**

The discovery phase was equivalent with whilst-reading stage. Pupils are expected to be actively involved in discovering the text to read after being motivated to do so. The term “discovery” was chosen from various terms such as *exploration*, *explicitness* and *interpretation* because pupils build their own orientations through the former learning activities as *predicting* and *questioning* about the topic, their focus is finding out the answers or solutions for their predictions and questions. Through this, pupils train their reading competences as well as the competences of using language and develop thinking.

The function of the *Discovery phase* is determined 1) to help pupils achieve joint understanding of the text through finding out answers and solutions for the pupils' prediction and questions in the first phase (Function 3); and 2) to develop pupils' abilities of high-level and flexible thinking through summarising the text with their own words (Function 4). In detail, about Function 3, pupils are expected to discover the meanings (explicit and implicit meanings) of difficult words or pieces of texts in specific context; they can recognise the main ideas that the author of the text implies; and they can identify the genre and structure of specific texts. Through this process, pupils' reading competences would be improved including the competences of fluent reading and reading comprehension. About Function 4, pupils are required to make summaries of texts by using various forms such as short paragraphs, mind map, graph, and so on. The summarising activity help pupils reinforce the reading comprehension, and develop high level thinking and flexible thinking in using language. The "Clarifying" and "Summarising" strategies of reciprocal teaching are employed and described below as the third and fourth activity (TLA3) of this phase.

***Clarifying (TLA3):*** Clarifying is an activity that pupils use while monitoring their own comprehension. It takes place when the readers are confused and when they attempt to explore or restore meaning, for example, the words, or sentences in the reading text that are unclear and difficult to comprehend. Pupils monitor their own reading comprehension when they try to clarify what they have read. Clarifying process enables readers to identify and question any unfamiliar, unnecessary or ambiguous information in the reading text toward individual pupils. During and after reading process, questioning, discussing and reflecting may continuously emerge and encourage pupils to explore and have more chances to understand and build knowledge. Likewise, the dialectical interaction between the teacher and pupils, and among class members, is also fruitful. Therefore, regarding the learning form in this phase, working in small group is suggested (Form 3). Through the interaction in small group, pupils with different prior knowledge and intellectual capacities, would support each other to find the meaning of difficult words, the answer of the questions which they expect to be answered in the text. After that, social participation in small group would be extended to whole class settings (Form 4). By presenting and discussing the results with other groups, pupils can acquire deeper and broader sources of vocabulary and expressions that would be useful for their discovery to the texts.



Through this phase, pupils are expected to be able to read the text exactly and fluently. At the same time, pupils can grasp the meanings of difficult words, paragraphs, or sentences; from that, they can comprehend the main points and the structure of the text. Furthermore, they establish their own perceptions and responses toward the text. The assessment tasks in this phase focus on pupils' capacities of fluent reading (AT3), reading comprehension and responses toward the text (AT4).

***Method to instruct pupils to make clarifications:*** The teacher can instruct pupils the thinking process as reading the text and making clarifications. First, the teacher can model how to detect difficult words, paragraphs, sentences that need to be explained by speaking aloud to all pupils. Next, the teacher can guide pupils to underline or highlight these pieces of text and write them in the “clarifying” part of the worksheet. Pupils are instructed to use dictionary to look up the meaning of words, discuss to initially explain the difficult words and finally share with group members.

***Summarising (TLA4):*** Summarising is one of the high-level thinking skills that require pupils to identify the main ideas of each paragraph and the whole texts. A good summary does not include details that are not important. Pupils are encouraged to express their summaries under a shorter form of paragraphs, graphs, or mind maps. They may be expressed in words in paragraph with headings, subheadings and main ideas; or in mind maps with main branches, sub-branches so they can reflect the most important information in the text. Depending on the kind of text that may be a literature, information, or drama texts, the requirements for summarising are different. For example, literature work can be summarised with short paragraphs reflecting the stream of time, location or the author's expressed emotion; whereas a story work can better be summarised by a mind map to reflect events, details related to main characters in the story. In short, summarisation is used to help pupils grasp the main idea of a text, in order to comprehend the whole picture and to guide them through further reading. It improves reading skill by focusing the awareness on the important information in a text and ignoring the unimportant information. Besides, this activity also develops pupils' high-level thinking and flexible cognition by using various and creative means to express their own ideas and perceptions.

***Methods to instruct pupils to make summary:*** Depending on different genres of texts, pupils are instructed to make a summary. In detail, toward story, pupils can summarise

basing on the sequence of time or story details; regarding to descriptive essays, the summary can base on sequence of time or places; toward poems, author's emotion or impression can be used as key points for a summary. The process to carry out a summary can be followed by three steps:

- 1) determine the genre of the text;
- 2) make a list of key points of the text (key-points may be details of story, personalities of a character, points of time, or the stream of emotion); and
- 3) select appropriate forms to express the key points.

During this process, the teacher can support pupils with anchor questions, hints, etc. to keep their thinking on track. Pupils are encouraged to be creative in using forms for their summary. According to, pupils can summarise the text with a short writing or a mind map.

### **Phase 3: Experience (Post-reading)**

This phase is equivalent to Post-reading period. For this phase, the term Experience was chosen from a variety of relevant terms such as *reinforcement*, *application*, *reflection*, and *connection* because it indicates that the language competences pupils acquired would be continuous to be used to help pupils experience the current reading topic more profoundly and involve in learning process in their community. This phase has two functions: The performance of authentic tasks helps pupils 1) profoundly experience in the reading topic (Function 5). and 2) foster intrinsic motivation for further learning (Function 6). To acquire the two above functions, pupils are challenged with learning activity requiring pupils' experience in authentic learning tasks (TLA5).

***Experiencing authentic tasks (TLA5):*** Pupils are challenged by authentic learning tasks that requires pupils' performance and create learning products. Teacher designs the authentic tasks need to concern pupils' *zone of proximal development* in order to challenge pupils' thinking. Depending on the characteristic of tasks, pupils can fulfil the tasks in individual, peer or small groups. The authentic learning tasks can be introduced and organised for pupils, including the following.

- *Pupils taking different roles related to the text*, even the author of the text, to give the own points of view by speaking or writing, rewriting or retelling the story, commenting on a detail of the text and etc. Pupils in various roles are created chances to expressed

different perspectives toward issues in the text that help them establish flexible thinking in learning and life.

- *Pupils taking the roles of characters in the story* and the story-teller in order to retell the story. This method trains pupils' capacity of fluent reading with suitable and emotional intonation and expression. At the same time, aloud-reading training supports pupils to understand the text more deeply.
- *Pupils draw pictures related to the text* and introduce them. Individually or in pair, pupils draw pictures that expressed the thinking, emotion and imagination about the text topic; or about the most impressive detail or character. Then, pupils introduce the pictures in front of the teacher and classmates through a picture exhibition in class.
- *Pupils make presentation* or rhetoric arguments about the text topic in front of class. Through this activity, pupils are trained to use their own language and become confident when express their opinions and listening to ideas from other members.
- *Pupils write letters* to send to a character of the text or send to the author to express their own emotion and thought about a specific issue after reading the text.

**Table III. 1. The dialectical constructivism-aligned framework for primary Vietnamese language education**

Phases-Functions	Teaching/Learning activities (TLAs)	Forms	Assessment Tasks (ATs)
<p><b>Phase 1. Engagement (Pre-Reading)</b></p> <p><b>Function 1:</b> Access and assess Ps' <i>prior knowledge</i>;</p> <p><b>Function 2:</b> Inspire Ps' <i>intrinsic motivation</i> to learning</p>	<p><b>TLA1: Attract pupils' attention and involvement</b></p> <p>+ T introduces the theme and shows topic-related visual aids to pupils;</p> <p>+ T connects the visual aids to Ps' background knowledge by asking some questions to the pupils about the visual aids.</p> <p>+ T introduces RT strategies and how to take notes in the worksheet (Figure III.2).</p> <p><b>TLA2: Predicting</b></p> <p>+ Ps observe the title of the text, pictures or other visual aids going together with the text;</p> <p>+ Predicting what is the text about and what will happen in the text;</p> <p>+ Writing the predictions in the "Predicting" part of the worksheet.</p> <p><b>TLA3: Questioning</b></p> <p>+ Ps formulate questions and make a list of questions they expect to be answered from the text;</p> <p>+ T gives time to the pupils to make their questions; Ps write their questions on "questioning" part of the worksheet.</p>	<p><b>Form 1:</b> in individual</p> <p><b>Form 2:</b> in pair</p> <p><b>Form 3:</b> in pair</p>	<p><b>AT1:</b> Ps are willing to take part in activities organised for them to learn (discussing, experimenting, arguing, questioning, answering, writing, and so on).</p> <p><b>Evidences:</b> class observation</p> <p><b>AT2:</b> Ps' prior knowledge is assessed based on three categories suggested by William and Thomas (1991).</p> <p><b>Evidences:</b> Ps' predictions and questions written in the first and second parts of the worksheet.</p>
<p><b>Phase 2: Discovery (Whilst-reading)</b></p> <p><b>Function 3:</b> Improve Ps' reading competences including fluent reading and comprehension, and the capacity of</p>	<p><b>TLA4: Clarifying</b></p> <p>+ Ps read loudly and fluently in groups before reading in silence.</p> <p>+ Ps read in silence deeply the text to look for the meaning of the difficult words, phrases and sentences in dictionary or discuss in pair/small group;</p> <p>+ Ps make clarification to the questions based on their comprehension of the text.</p>	<p><b>Form 4:</b> small groups, then in class as a whole</p>	<p><b>AT3:</b> Ps' competence of reading including 1) read the text exactly, fluently and emotionally; and 2) comprehend the main idea of text.</p> <p><b>AT4:</b> Ps' capacity of summarising the main points of the text.</p>

<p>responses to the text ideas.</p>	<p>+ Ps write the meaning of words, the answers to the questions in the “clarifying” part of the worksheet.</p>	<p><b>Form 5:</b> in small groups</p>	<p><b>Evidences:</b> Ps’ explanations and answers toward predictions and questions in the third part of the worksheet; and summarised paragraphs, mind maps, or pictures presented in the fourth part of the worksheet.</p>
<p><b>Function 4:</b> Build and develop Ps’ high-level cognition and flexible thinking.</p>	<p><b>TLA5: Summarising</b></p> <p>+ Ps analyse and argue about their answers from their points of view;</p> <p>+ Ps summarise the main points or conclusion of the text with their own words;</p> <p>+ Ps illustrate their summary on the “summarising” part of the worksheet;</p> <p>+ Ps are encouraged to introduce the summarised results in front of the class.</p>		
<p><b>Phase 3: Experience (Post-reading)</b></p>	<p><b>TLA6:</b> Ps are organised to experience in the authentic tasks and make presentations in front of class.</p>	<p><b>Form 6:</b> small groups</p>	<p><b>AT5:</b> Ps can fulfil the authentic tasks and make presentation in front of class.</p>
<p><b>Function 5:</b> Help Ps understand the text topic profoundly.</p>			
<p><b>Function 6:</b> Keep Ps’ intrinsic motivation for further learning.</p>			

**c. Aligning Dialectical Constructivism with Vietnamese Culture and Education**

*From the dialectical constructivist pedagogy:* First, the dialectical constructivism-aligned teaching and learning requires pupils to construct knowledge by themselves (“*Knowledge is constructed by learners*”), which is different from passively accepting knowledge from the teacher of textbooks through learning by heart or cramming. If so, pupils’ learning must root from the intrinsic motivation and interest in order to keep their learning to maintain goal-oriented. The framework is aimed at inspiring pupils’ intrinsic motivation to start learning (in Engagement phase) and maintaining their motivation to continue to learn at next lessons (in Experience phase). Second, learning with intrinsic motivation can foster Reciprocal Teaching with four strategies that are applied throughout three phases of the framework to create the equal and dialectical relationship between teacher and pupils. During the RT implementation, the teacher and pupils take the role of a director successively because the teacher is not the only person raising questions and providing the answers. The pupils actively make their predictions, questions and effort to find out the answers or solutions by themselves. The nature of RT method is the dialectical relationship between teacher and pupils where pupils have chances to direct the lesson. Third, the dialectical constructivism-based teaching and learning requires “*Learning is experience-based*”, that is intensively carried out at the first phase “Engagement” of framework with two first strategies of RT teaching, *predicting* and *questioning* and is also conducted throughout the framework. Pupils recall and connect their prior knowledge to new lessons through predicting and questioning. Besides, authentic learning is respected through authentic learning tasks that are designed for pupils to experience at the end of each lesson. Fourth, one feature of the dialectical constructivism is actively supported by the framework application, that is “*Learning stresses scaffolding*”. The teacher models the RT strategies to be used, making his or her thinking visible and inviting pupils to join in. By providing opportunities for pupils to practice each of the strategies under guidance, the teacher coaches pupils in the use of the strategies, providing assistance if the pupils are having difficulty with any of the strategies. For example, if the pupils are encountering difficulty summarising content from a text, the teacher needs to provide continued support and assistance in identifying the key ideas that must be retained in a summary. Lastly, learning form designed in the framework assure social participation as one of feature of the dialectical constructivism. This feature is assured by the presence of working in pair or small group.

*From the point of Vietnamese education and culture:* The Vietnamese culture is characterised by Confucian-influenced in which its features have pros and cons in relation with the dialectical constructivist approach, a pedagogy from Western education. The designed curriculum was aimed at making a harmony with “pros” points and overcoming “cons” points.

On one side, the dialectical constructivism-aligned curriculum has an alignment with Confucian heritage culture at some features as *collectivism, prior knowledge and experience-based learning*. First, the dialectical constructivism gives an emphasis on collective-learning, where the teacher together with peer/group members play their roles to help learners becomes prominent. More precisely, the designed curriculum respects the dialectical interaction between the teacher and pupils, as well as among pupils through organising pair work and small groups where a teacher acts as a facilitator. The value of cooperation in learning and working is appreciated by Vietnamese culture and expressed through many sayings (see Chapter I.1). The cooperative virtue is also defined in the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) as one quality confirmed in the reformed Basic Curriculum, by Vietnam MoET in 2018. Second, the designed curriculum emphasised the important role of pupils’ prior knowledge and experience in constructing their new knowledge. These features are aligned by the Vietnamese culture that appreciates experiences learning and working as in “*Travel broadens the mind*” [*Di mot ngay dang, hoc mot sang khon*]. Third, the designed curriculum considers the intrinsic motivation as one essential factor to push pupils’ learning forward and keep them on-track to the defined targets through authentic learning tasks. This is suitable to the Confucian heritage culture as Vietnamese one. Traditionally, the Vietnamese culture defined the motivation of learning as a method to train a person to become both a knowledgeable and a good-virtue one. However, the traditional culture, to some extent, limits learners’ intrinsic motivation within the benefits for themselves and their family members and relatives. Learning is aimed at becoming a person having high-position and good-property in society, which is a big pride for the parents and relatives. Nowadays, influenced by the process of the global economy and industrialisation, Vietnamese people’s motivation to learn of changes into establishing learners’ practical competences. This concept transaction is also aligned with UNESCO’s stresses: not only *learning to know*, but also *learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be*. To inspire pupils’ intrinsic motivation, the framework defines learning strategies as predicting, questioning that stimulates their curiosity toward the forthcoming lesson. Curiosity along with

questioning-based learning is honoured by the Vietnamese culture, as expressed in the Vietnamese idiom: “*To know, you have to ask questions. To be good, you have to learn*” [Muon biet phai hoi, muon gioi phai hoc]. Finally, the scaffolding method is emphasised in the designed curriculum where the teacher and high-knowledgeable pupils support lower-knowledgeable pupils during the learning process, especially through the RT-strategy instruction of the teacher. Alike, Vietnamese culture respects the role of teachers or mentors in learning and working as in many Vietnamese idiom expressions.

On the other side, the designed model contributed to change inadequate features of the culture heritage that hinder the dialectical constructivist teaching and learning, as *emphasising theoretical knowledge rather than empirical knowledge, stressing hierarchical relationship* in which the teacher is considered as superior and transmitter of knowledge to students, and *respecting stability and harmony* among its human values. First, the cognitive strategies as predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising, along with authentic learning tasks, activate pupils in discovering, discussing, experiencing and expressing that help pupils construct the knowledge, exploring the reading text by themselves. Especially, the authentic tasks attract pupils to involve themselves in learning activities rooted from real-world issues. This is different from the conventional way in many reading classes nowadays where pupils mainly learn by heart the answers towards the questions in the textbooks. Even the pupils must remember mechanically the meanings of new words and cannot use it in communication. The learning focused on pure theories of the Confucian philosophy becomes out of date in the world respecting the practical competences. Next, the reciprocal teaching model characterised by the role exchange between the teacher and pupils who will in turn guide the lesson decreases the hierarchical relationship between them that is stressed by Confucian heritage culture. Finally, pupils’ learning is immersed in dialectical interaction between the teacher and pupils and among pupils where they can discuss and argue in order to clarify the learning issues. This also decreases the respect toward stability and harmony among members in the communities that is emphasised by the Vietnamese culture.

#### **d. How does our Designed Model Differ from other Teaching Models?**

Based on the survey results of Study 1 (Chapter II.1) and Study 2 (Chapter II.2), Table III.2 below is aimed at making an overview comparison among teaching models in practice that includes 1) the dialectical constructivist-based, 2) VNEN model-based, and 3) ‘traditional’



based. The comparison focuses on key characteristics of the whole process of teaching and learning, including:

- *Learning aims* (How are learning aims defined? Content-based or outcome competences-based?).
- *Way to acquire new knowledge* (In which way do pupils acquire new knowledge?).
- *Role of prior knowledge and experience* (Are pupils' prior knowledge and experience concerned in building new knowledge? How are pupils' prior knowledge and experience activated and organised?).
- *Teacher's support to pupils' learning process* (In which way does the teacher support pupils' learning?).
- Learning assessment (How does the teacher make assessment on pupils' learning?)

Through the detailed comparison among teaching models, the features of a dialectical constructivist-based lesson are compared with those of other teaching models (traditional and VNEN). This is a basis for classroom observation in order to define which teaching model is currently employed in a specific class session, as well as recognise how teaching models transform from one to another.

### **III.1.2. Exemplary Lessons in Reading Education**

#### **III.1.2.1. Context of Designing Exemplary Lessons**

The Vietnamese language instruction is a subject of primary education curriculum that comprises many sub-topics such as Reading, Writing, Vocabulary and Grammar, Dictation, Story-Telling and Hand-writing training. All sub-topics are aimed at implementing a competence-based curriculum of primary school pupils. In this study, the design focuses on the lessons of sub-subject Reading. However, reading competence cannot be built separately from other language competences, intended leaning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment activities are designed in an integrated way with other language-based competences.

A school year of the primary education level in Vietnam is organised into 36 weeks, with 18 weeks for each semester. Primary pupils spend four periodic examinations (summative assessments) during the school year. The time to carry out the experimental period was intended from the 19<sup>th</sup> week to the 28<sup>th</sup> week of the second semester. The reading lessons that

were exemplarily designed for our next research were negotiated by the teachers and the researcher. The reading texts can be chosen from the textbooks or out of textbooks. The criteria for the choice of the reading lessons need to be defined and agreed between teacher participants and the researchers. The three main criteria for choosing of reading topic were as follows.

- *Various genres of texts*: The variety in genres of texts (e.g., poetry, stories, plays, information texts, explanatory texts, descriptions, discourse texts, and so on) was concerned for two reasons: 1) Different genres of the chosen texts bring to pupils various experiences of knowledge and skills related to both their Vietnamese language and their own personal lives; and 2) Various genres stimulate pupils' intrinsic motivation to learn because they find interesting and meaningful so they build a desire to discover them.
- *Suitable to pupils' cognition*: Reading texts that are chosen for the experimental research must be considered to be suitable to specific-level pupils' cognition. Accordingly, the length of texts (number of words) and the difficult level of word-use and ideas need to be determined. These criteria ground on the Vygotsky's (1978) theory about the zone of proximal development that argues that the learning for developing pupils' potential should be closely referenced on their zone of proximal development.
- *Appropriate with Vietnamese culture*: The text topic used in the experimental research would easily be accepted and understood if they are appropriate with the local pupils' cultural concepts. This also values the pupils' prior knowledge to comprehend the texts.

**Table III.2. Comparison among a dialectical constructivist-based lesson and the lessons based on VNEN model and traditional**

Components of lesson	Dialectical constructivist	VNEN model	Traditional
<b>1. Intended Learning outcomes</b>			
1.1. Bases for determining	Outcome competences.	Prescribed contents of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.	Prescribed knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
1.2. Mode of expression	Verbs that can be measured.	Verbs difficult to be measured.	Verbs that are difficult to be measured.
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>			
2.1. Knowledge acquisition mode	Through engaging self-regulated learning.	Through completing meticulously ready-made exercises/tasks.	Through listening, reproducing activities, or being imposed from teacher.
2.2. Social participation	Social interactions among pupils.	Social interaction; however, one-way teacher-pupil interaction; group leader-group member interaction is dominant.	Adhere to one-way teacher-pupil interaction.
2.3. Prior knowledge and experience connection	In terms of linguistic, society, culture, individual interest and emotion. Engage in authentic tasks.	In terms of linguistics, society and culture.	Connect to prior knowledge of of the previous lesson.
2.4. Learning support	Scaffolding by making the pupils' learning visible through modelling, providing explanation, coaching.	Enabling pupils to produce correct answers to exercises/ tasks in the textbooks. Form-focused feedback	Disseminating information to pupils, providing correct answers. Form-focused

	Content-focused feedback (i.e. the teacher seeks elaboration of pupils' initial utterances).	(i.e. the teacher responds implicitly and explicitly to the correctness of pupils' utterances).	feedback (i.e. the teacher responds implicitly and explicitly to the correctness of pupils' utterances).
2.5. Learning environment maintenance	Friendly and equitable relationships between the teacher and pupils; among pupils.	Friendly environment; however, hierarchical interaction remains (e.g. teacher and/or group leaders impose the 'correct' answers, even impose personal view and emotion).	Hierarchical interaction; teacher takes superior role.
<b>3. Assessment Activities</b>	Combine summative and formative assessment, especially portfolio-based.	Combine summative and formative assessment.	Summative assessment.

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Notably, Vietnamese primary teachers and pupils are familiar with traditional teaching and learning methods in Reading that overwhelmingly focus on reading aloud skill, rather than comprehension and high-level thinking skills. In order to accommodate the participants to our framework, more than one example lesson is needed. According to the negotiation between the researcher and the participant teachers, six reading lessons were designed. When one lesson is taught by more than one Vietnamese teacher, the teachers can learn from each other; therefore, the designed framework can be assessed for its feasibility.

### **III.1.2.2. Design of Exemplary lessons used in the Experimental Research**

#### **III.1.2.3. Outline of Six Lessons**

We designed six lessons that are intended to be used in the experiment. Table III.3 describes the TLAs of the lessons; below are shown the ILOs of the 1<sup>st</sup> lesson exclusively.

**1<sup>st</sup> lesson: *Durian* (Author: Mai Van Tao) - Grade 4 (9-age pupils)** (See text in Appendix 6)

#### **A. Intended learning outcomes (ILOs)**

**ILO1:** Explain the words and expressions in texts.

**ILO2:** Conclude the main points and general idea of the text to read: *1) Durian tree is described with special features of its flowers, fruits and tree shape; 2) The author shows the love and respect toward this kind of tree.*

**ILO3:** Read fluently and know how to express the suitable emotion when reading.

**ILO4:** Introduce a famous speciality (such as a typical fruit, flower, or food...) of the local.

#### **III.1.2.4. Differences between a Dialectical Constructivist-aligned Reading Lesson and Ordinary Lessons**

Figure III.4 below describes the procedure to carry out a lesson based on the dialectical constructivism, in comparison with those of lessons designed according to the ‘traditional’ model and VNEN model (modified from Figure II.6, Chapter II.1).

Table III.3. The design-based exemplary reading lessons aligned to the dialectical constructivism

1. <i>Durian Tree</i> (Mai Van Tao)	2. <i>Gra-viốt at the stronghold</i> (Victo Hugo)	3. <i>The sparrow</i> (Tuốc-ghe-nhep)	4. <i>Beautiful Sea</i> (Vu Tu Nam)	5. <i>Where does the moon come from?</i> (Tran Dang Khoa)	6. <i>One thousand days went around the world</i> (Collected)
<b>Phase 1. Engagement</b>					
<b>TLA1.</b> Find out the answer to a puzzle about durian fruits;  Answer: Why is this fruit named as “durian” [ <i>sau rieng</i> ] (the sadness of separation)? Why do you think so?	<b>TLA1.</b> Watch the video introducing Victor Hugo and the context of the French Bourgeois Revolution in 1789.	<b>TLA1.</b> Watch a clip about the mother bird feeding the children. Tell their thinking and affection about that images. Does it look like the expression of human-being’s love?	<b>TLA1.</b> Share the impression when seeing the sea for the first time (Ps in the Can Tho city do not have many chances to experience the sea).	<b>TLA1.</b> Talk freely about their experience and knowledge related to the moon.	<b>TLA1.</b> Ps are introduced about Ma-gien-lăng (1480–1521) and the journey around the world to explore the Pacific Ocean.
<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title of the text; observe pictures of durian trees, fruits, and flowers; and make predictions about what the text would talk about. Write these predictions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title of the text and pictures, discuss with peer to give predictions about the story content. Write the predictions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title and pictures, discuss with peer and group to give predictions about the story content. Write the predictions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title and picture, discuss with peer and group to give predictions about the text. Write the predictions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title and picture, discuss with peer and group to give predictions about the poem topic. Write the predictions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA2. Predicting:</b>  Observe the title and picture, discuss with peer and group to give predictions around the cruise journey. Write the predictions in the worksheet.
<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Ps make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.	<b>TLA3. Questioning:</b>  Ps make questions about the text and write the questions in the worksheet.

(How are the shape, stems, leaves of durian trees? How about their flowers (colour, flavour...)? What are special features of durian fruits? Where are the durian tree planted popularly?

(What is the text about? What is the boy in the picture doing at the stronghold? Who is he? Why is the boy not scared because there are many dangers at the stronghold? etc.)

(What is the story about? What happen with the baby sparrow? What does the mother sparrow do to rescue her child? How does the dog react to the mother sparrow's action? etc.)

(What does the text describe? Which time is the picture described the sea? How is the sea described at different points of time? etc.)

(What is the moon compared with? How does the child have a strong attachment with the moon? Which are words and expressions used to describe the moon from the child's eyes?)

(Who is he? How long did his crew travel on the sea? What did he think? What did his crew and he spend difficulties and dangers and how did they cope with them? Why did they name the sea as "Pacific Ocean"? etc.)

-Write these questions in the worksheet.

**Phase 2. Discovery**

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

Read aloud and read in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases to them (*'old' honey, ivory-white, look slightly like [bao bao] ...*).  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers on the predictions and questions.

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

Read aloud and read in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases (*stronghold, immortal, bravery...*).  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers on the predictions and questions.

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

Read aloud and in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases.  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers toward the predictions and questions.

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

Read aloud and in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases.  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers on the predictions and questions.

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

Read aloud and in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases.  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers on the predictions and questions.

**TLA4. Clarifying:**

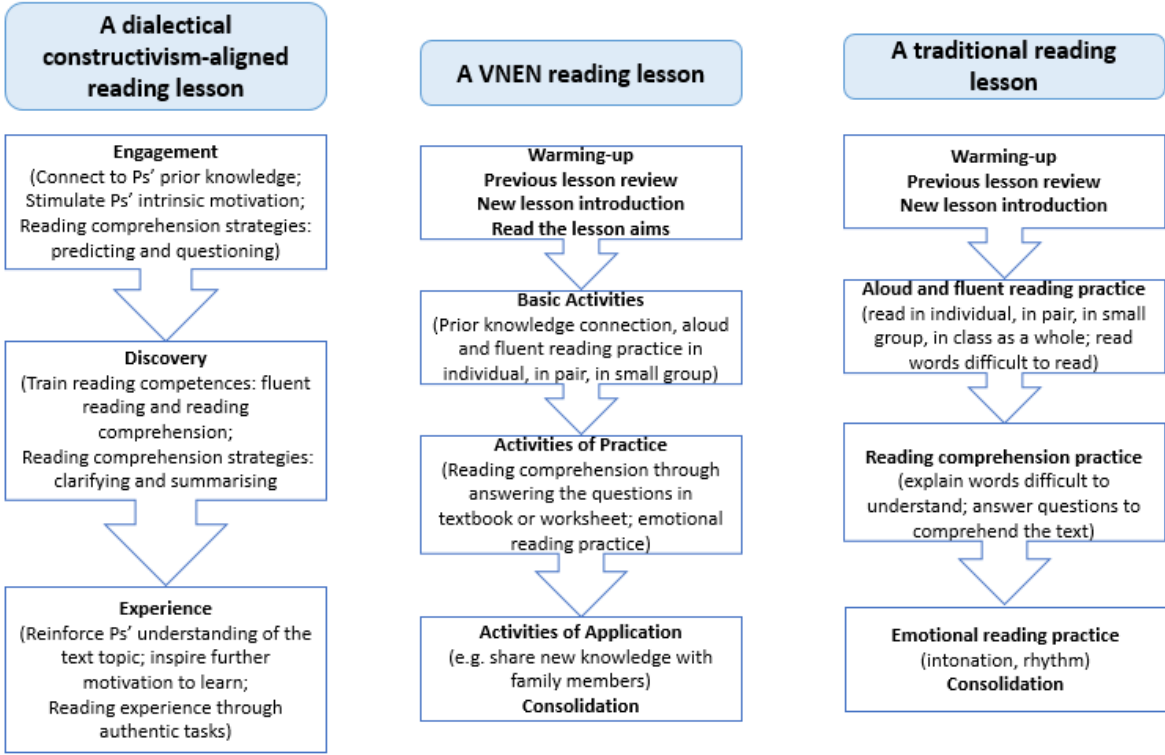
Read aloud and in silence through the texts.  
 Discuss in group to clarify difficult words and phrases.  
 Continue to make predictions and questions during reading comprehension.  
 Find out the answers on the predictions and questions.

<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to the genre of descriptive essay. Present them in group or in front of class.</p> <p>Explore the main idea of the text; Infer the author's emotion.</p>	<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to the genre of story. Present them in group or in front of class.</p> <p>-Explore the main idea of the text; Express individual's thinking and emotion regarding Gra-vrôt.</p>	<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to the genre of story. Present them in groups or in front of class.</p> <p>-Explore the main idea of the text. Express individual's thinking and emotion regarding the story.</p>	<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to the genre of descriptive essay. Present them in group or in front of class.</p> <p>-Infer the authors' emotion and talk about the individual's emotion.</p>	<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to poem genre (the author's emotional stream or observation procedure). Can combine with drawing.</p> <p>Determine the general idea of the poem.</p>	<p><b>TLA5. Summarising:</b> Make summaries according to time points and discoveries of Ma-gien-lãng.</p> <p>-Determine the main idea of the text.</p>
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### Phase 3. Experience

<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Make an introduction of a local speciality (a fruit, flower, a kind of food...) in front of class.</p>	<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Make collection about the information about child/ teenager heroes in the war or in peaceful time of Vietnam and the world who pupils would like to talk about.</p>	<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Take different roles of the characters of the story to tell again the story. For example, a P in turn takes role of the mother sparrow, the child sparrow, the dog to tell the story.</p>	<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Draw pictures about the sea topic (sea sights, activities at the sea, some issues about the sea environment nowadays, etc.) Introduce the pictures in front of class.</p>	<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Draw the picture about the moon with various topics (the moon with the Mid-autumn holiday, the moon with hometown beauty, the moon and farming work, etc.) Introduce the pictures in front of class.</p>	<p><b>TLA6. Authentic task:</b> Take the role of Ma-gien-lãng or the crew to tell about the cruise journey with difficulties they met, discoveries they made.</p>
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**Figure III.4. Reading lesson processes of a dialectical constructivism-aligned, a traditional and a VNEN model-based lesson**

As analysed in Chapter II.1 and Chapter II.2, the conventional lesson over-focuses on instructing pupils to read with many forms as read in individual, in pair, in small group, in class as a whole. Pupils build their understandings and perception toward the text mainly through answering the questions that are designed available in textbooks. Pupils’ prior knowledge and motivation to learn are not almost concerned. Knowledge transmission and hierarchical relationship are characterised for this kind of learning. In the VNEN learning procedure, pupils’ prior knowledge and motivation to learn are taken into account. However, pupils are instructed to comprehend reading texts through answering the questions in the textbooks. Noticeably, these questions are edited from those of ‘traditional’ lessons under ready-made forms (True/False answers; multiple choice; short answers...). In addition, the activities of application are barely fulfilled through teachers’ requirements, as in “Lets’ share the new today knowledge/story with your other family members”, or “write a short essay to express your emotion about the story”.

In the dialectical constructivism-aligned lesson, pupils’ prior knowledge and intrinsic motivation are concerned through specific activities. Pupils construct their comprehension regarding the text topic in being actively involved in reading strategies; moreover, authentic

tasks help pupils deeply understand the text topic, at the same time, they can experience in authentic learning environment to construct their high level thinking and social skills. Pupils have opportunity to learn at their own pace, among equal relationships with the respect toward their own prior knowledge and experience.

### **III.1.3. Conclusion and Discussion**

This chapter has provided a description of a detailed design for an instructional model in which features of dialectical constructivism and Vietnamese education and culture are synthesised. Based on the theories of constructive alignment suggested by Biggs and Tang (2006, 2012) and closely referenced to the theories of design-based research, the construction of the instructional model includes intended learning outcomes, an instructional framework, and outlines of exemplary reading lessons at primary education of Vietnamese context. We provided arguments explaining why the designed instructional model stimulate Vietnamese pupils to learn constructively in their cultural environment, and how the instructional model prepared these pupils with skills of thinking, communicating and collaborating so as to become future members of a work forces in modern life.

Taking seriously into consideration the influences of the Vietnamese education and culture on the design and implementation of dialectical constructivist pedagogy, the designed model is regarded as a response toward the call for appropriate adaptation when ‘importing’ Western education theories to teach mother language in Vietnamese context. With the detailed design with a specific framework, the instructional model is an effort to bond between the dialectical constructivist theory, a pedagogy originating from Western education, and its application in a different context of culture and education. Especially, our instructional model provides lesson units that can be applied and evaluated in the practice of Vietnamese language teaching classrooms of Vietnamese culture. These lessons are different from those of the ‘traditional’ primary Vietnamese language teaching as previously described, and vigorously considered the alignment between the intended learning outcomes and teaching/learning activities, assessment activities in order to provide possibilities to obtain the intended learning outcomes. However, the expectations of the instructional model need to be evaluated through an educational experiment research in Vietnamese context. The results of the experimental research will enlighten the possibilities

to develop a knowledge base for synthesis of elements of the dialectical constructivism and Vietnamese culture and education, and effectively apply the dialectical constructivism-based instructional model for first language education in Vietnam.

To apply this instructional model in the practice of first language teaching in Vietnamese culture and education, the role of teachers is very crucial because they are considered the most significant agent of the pedagogical reform. Teachers' adoption of educational innovations or new practices depends on the degree to which the assumptions inherent in the reform are congruent with their beliefs and understanding (Hoang, 2011; Richardson, 1997). Therefore, it is necessary to have teachers' understandings and commitments through a professional development programme in order to enhance opportunities for applying successfully the instructional design in Vietnamese context. The programme of teachers' professional development should help Vietnamese teachers master the knowledge body of Vietnamese language subject in primary education programme, and pedagogical perspectives that are new to them. Most importantly, the professional programme stimulates the teachers to recognise the problems of current teaching and learning, from this, they need to change, and have commitment to make innovation in their practice.

## **Chapter III.2. Effects of the Dialectical Constructivism-Aligned Instructional Model on the Practices of Primary Teachers in Vietnamese Language Education**

Our aim is to enhance the quality of the Vietnamese language instruction at primary schools through improving the quality of the existing curriculum at Vietnam, and to unfold the feasibility of applying a design-based instructional model in the integration with the contextual characteristics. In Chapter III.1, we designed a constructivism-aligned model that is aimed at conducting a try out on fourth-grade pupils of four primary schools in the South of Vietnam. Through this model, five core features of the dialectical constructivist approach (see Chapter I.3) were synthesised with essential aspects of Vietnamese education and culture context, focusing on stimulating pupils' first language competences. In this chapter, we elaborate on how the designed model is operationalised in the specific context of Vietnamese primary schools in order to create effects on first language education teachers practice.

As aforementioned in the literature review of the dialectical constructivist approaches (see Chapter I.3) and this of constructivism-aligned model (see Chapter I.5), the designed lesson units will be operationalised through a three-step framework (Engagement, Discovery, and Experience) in which the cognitive strategies of reading instruction comprising predicting,

questioning, clarifying and summarising were integrated (O'Donnell, 2012; Palincsar and Brown, 1984). Through the constructivism-aligned instructional model, we seek the effects on the following fields including 1) the changes in practice of the teaching and learning components aligned to the dialectical constructivist pedagogy; 2) the perception of teacher participants regarding the designed model, and 3) the challenges from the teachers' perspectives when the designed model was implemented in the specific context of Vietnamese education and culture.

### **III.2.1. Research Context**

The survey studies described in Chapter II.1. and Chapter II.2 inferred the reasons of ineffective pedagogical reforms, including 1) the lack of a careful examination of the appropriateness of these pedagogies developed in Western practices as 'importing' them into the socio-cultural context of locals; 2) reserving an inadequate concern to school teachers' long-held beliefs of teaching and learning; and 3) providing inadequate training to explain clearly the new directions of "student-centred learning" and "constructivist pedagogies" by MoET to local teachers. Our previous studies indicated considerable mismatches between the teachers' beliefs toward the constructivist pedagogies mandated in the VNEN model and their teaching practices in Vietnamese language instruction. These divergences between teachers' beliefs and practices are necessary to be addressed in any (quasi-)experimental research that aims at deploying innovative pedagogies into teaching practices. The following sections of this chapter will describe the enactment of the dialectical constructivist-aligned lessons in Vietnamese language teaching practice.

### **III.2.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Based on the argument above, the current study aims at answering the following research questions:

1. What changes are there in the teaching and learning practices through the enactment of the dialectical constructivist-aligned instructional model in Vietnamese cultural context?
2. How do the participating teachers perceive the designed model through the experimental period?
3. What are the challenges from the teachers' perspectives when the designed model was implemented in Vietnamese education and culture?

The hypotheses guiding these research questions were as follows.

**Hypothesis 1:** Initially, we designed an instructional model in which the dialectical constructivist features are synthesised with the cultural and educational characteristics of Vietnam and used it in the experimental teaching. We predict that the four classes that employed the instructional design in reading education during the experimental period would change the teaching and learning components aligning to the dialectical constructivism approach. Specifically, changes in the teaching and learning components approaching to the dialectical constructivism are expected to be defined in terms of 1) learning outcomes, 2) teaching and learning activities (comprising knowledge acquirement, social participation, prior knowledge connection, learning support and learning environment maintenance), and 3) Assessment activities (see Table III.2, Chapter III.1).

**Hypothesis 2:** Regarding how teachers perceive the designed instructional model, we expect the dialectical constructivist-aligned model to have positive effect on the teachers' perceptions in terms of a) pupils' competence development; b) teachers' professional development; c) and adjustments on the curriculum to bring pupils the best benefits.

**Hypothesis 3:** Drawing on the previous research about the implementation of a constructivist-aligned instructional model into the context of Vietnamese culture and education, we assume that the participating teachers will cope challenges emerging from their own subjective perspectives. Specifically, the long-held beliefs related to the participants' culture are supposed to be a considerable barrier toward the change in the teachers' practice. Besides, as being summarised in the survey studies in Chapter II.1 and Chapter II.2, the objective elements such as educational polices, material resources, big-size class and so on, have worked as certain disadvantages regarding the changes in teaching and learning process.

### **III.2.3. Research Design**

The study was conducted within a quasi-experimental-based research methodology (Pham, 2013), testing our designed model and its effects on classroom practices as well as exploring teachers' conception on the model.

### III.2.4. Participants

Although we were introduced by the Can Tho Bureau of Education and Training of the city, the schools had no obligation to participate in the study, and the implementation of the constructivist-aligned curriculum was completely voluntary. Six school teachers from the primary schools of Can Tho city who were invited to participate in the research were randomly assessed to two groups: an experimental group with four classes and a control group with two classes. The background information of the participating teachers is described in Table III.4. The involvement of the six teachers was based on two criteria: 1) Their availability and willingness to participate, and 2) their expertise. It should be noted that the six teachers are from six different schools that attended the questionnaire survey of the teachers' beliefs toward the constructivist approaches in teaching and learning Vietnamese language (Chapter II.2), three from central-city schools and three others from environ-schools with various conditions. All pupils of the six classes have learnt with the VNEN model since they were second-graders. These were expected to bring in different perspectives to the team and contributing to a comprehensive insight or adjustments into improving the quality of the instructional model if necessary.

**Table III.4. Characteristics of teacher participants**

Characteristics/Classes <sup>1</sup>	Ex.Cen1	Ex.Cen2	Ex.En1	Ex.En2	Con.Cen3	Con.En3
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Years of teaching	20 years	9 years	5 years	12 years	9 years	5 years
Educational degree	Bachelor (In-service)	Bachelor (Regular)	Bachelor (Regular)	Bachelor (In-service)	Bachelor (Regular)	Bachelor (Regular)
Teaching resources <sup>2</sup>	Good	Good	Average	Average	Good	Average

(<sup>1</sup>) Ex: Experimental; Con: Control; Cen: Central; En: Environ.

(<sup>2</sup>) Teaching resources include all material facilities that support teachers and pupils in teaching and learning such as infrastructure of schools as playground, classroom, library, medical room, rest room...; books for teaching and learning, teaching aids...)

As can be seen from the table, all six teachers are satisfied the requirement of bachelor of education degree. In addition, three teachers of city-central schools argued that the teaching resources of their school support sufficiently for teaching activities whereas their three counterparts in the city environ agreed with an average level of teaching resources. This is

conventionally different between schools in big cities and those in rural region in Vietnam. Finally, the teachers differed in terms of years of experience, ranging from 5 to 20.

In primary schools in Vietnam, teachers are trained to be able to teach many disciplines of the primary curriculum such as Mathematics, Vietnamese language, Natural and Social Science, Moral Education. Even in some rural region schools, the teacher also assumes Physical Education, Craft and Arts and Outside-class activities. Therefore, to encourage the maintenance of the constructivist-aligned curriculum to be continuously used after the experiment finished, we kept the normal conditions of the participating classrooms, including: 1) one teacher teaches one student class as usual during the experimental teaching without the assistance from other teachers; and 2) the timeframe to carry out the experimental teaching was absolutely dependent on the teachers' arrangement so that they still assured their working load and the experimental teaching did not overload them. However, there were two noticeable adjustments that: 1) the teachers were encouraged to deploy the experimental lessons according to the designed model with a flexible duration of time for a class. If in their conventional teaching, they had to control the time duration of a class to not exceed 40 minutes, here they were encouraged to feel a little free to develop the lesson without being over-dependent on the limited amount of instructional time; and 2) pupils with different intellectual level were organised in one group in order to create environment for scaffolding strategy. In the control condition, the teaching procedure of reading of usual classes at Vietnamese primary school is illustrated in Figure III.4 (Chapter III.1). This procedure was referenced from the MoET's manual and was inferred from the survey of the teachers' beliefs toward the teaching procedure of a Vietnamese language lesson designed in VNEN self-study textbooks.

### **III.2.5. Research method**

#### **III.2.5.1. Intervention Condition**

##### ***Phase 1: Preparation for teaching the constructivist-aligned lessons***

This phase had four functions.

1a). Inviting the teachers to share their individual understandings and views of a lesson of Vietnamese language instruction (i.e., Reading lesson) that is based on the constructivist



approach, from this, the participants revealed their opinions on constructivist-based lessons.

1b). Introducing the dialectical constructivist-aligned model and one lesson that was designed basing on this instructional model (a reading lesson “*Sau rieng*” – Mai Van Tao, see Chapter III.1). Let the teachers recognise differences and similarities between their current views toward a constructivist-aligned lesson and the designed lesson introduced to them.

1c). Encouraging the teachers to feel free to contribute with their ideas and make adjustments on the dialectical constructivist-aligned model and the trial lesson according to the way they think it will be more effective with their student class.

1d). Explaining and modelling the instructional strategies integrated into the designed lesson including *predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising*; discussing the *ways to stimulate the group working* (mixed-intellectual levels, in-turn dialogue leader in reading), *strategies to set questions* (distinguish between display questions and inferenced questions), *how to provide kinds of feedback* (form-based feedback and content-based feedback), *methods for scaffolding* (modelling, providing more information, prompts, oriented questioning) and *how to encourage and praise pupils* for their good work (by verbal or physical affection).

Display questions are close questions that the questioners already know the answer;  
Referential questions are open questions that the questioners do not know the answers. The latter requires the answerers to express their thought or emotion in their own words.

1e) In this phase, we also received an agreement on the working plan during the next three months (January, February and March of 2018). The operationalisation of the designed curriculum and teachers’ reflection on it was inspired by the procedure of “Learning through action” (LtA) introduced by Laws (2012). Both the researcher and participating teachers were collaboratively engaged in the iterative cycles [six cycles for six lessons] of “LtA” (Laws, 2012; Le N.H. and Trinh, 2016) as in Figure III.6.



**Figure III.5. Law's praxis five-step procedure of Learning through Action**

After the co-teaching lesson (in Phase 2), the teachers involved employed the LtA circle for their reflection, consisting in: identifying the issue (emerged from the lesson), gathering data, interpreting the data, acting on evidence and evaluating-reflecting on the action. By this method, the designed lessons will be improved thanks to the dialectical constructivist approach and adapted to the local culture.

1f) In the preparatory phase, we conducted pre-tests for four student classes of the experimental condition and two classes of the control condition. The purposes of pre-test were to collect data about:

- pupils' language competences, mainly reading comprehension;
- pupils' acquisition of high-level cognitive strategies, mainly predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising.

In short, through Phase 1, the team of seven people including the researcher and the participating teachers gained common commitment and plans for the next three-month experiment. At the same time, the input competences of two cohorts were also defined.

***Phase 2. Teaching and Observing Vietnamese language classes (e.g., Reading classes)***

2a) This phase started with a co-teaching lesson between the researcher and each of the participating teachers at their regular class. The Reading lesson “*Sau rieng*” (Mai Van Tao) was instructed at this phase. This phase introduced to pupils the designed lesson and learning strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarising) integrated in it.

These learning strategies were instructed and modelled by researcher and teachers in their pupil classes (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

2b) Experimental teaching and classroom observation on Vietnamese language instruction.

This phase had two functions:

- Making positive effects on pupils' language competences and high-level cognitive strategies;
- Providing the teachers with an opportunity to apply knowledge of the designed model to classroom practice, through this, to acquire practical knowledge of the constructivist-based teaching and learning approach.

### ***Phase 3. Reflection on the enactment of Constructivist-aligned Model***

This phase had two functions:

3a). Creating the opportunity for teachers to reflect on their teaching experience, through this, reveal their perception toward the constructivist-aligned model. Based on the teachers' perception toward the implemented model, we made necessary adjustments to have the attained model of Vietnamese language education at primary schools.

3b) At the same time, through the teachers' reflection and discussion, the challenges of the designed-model implementation were also inferred.

#### **III.2.5.2. Control condition**

During the experiment process, control teachers conduct their primary reading lessons in the VNEN-based teaching (Figure III.4 – Chapter III.1).

#### **III.2.6. Training Material**

In the second phase, when a lesson unit was co-taught by the researcher and a teacher participant, pupils were familiarised with the four strategies of reading and the worksheet to illustrate these strategies introduced in Chapter II.3 including *predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising* during the implementation of the designed lesson units.

The experimental process used six reading texts for the enactment of six dialectical constructivist-aligned lessons. Besides, two reading passages were also used in pre-test and post-test. All eight texts comprising topics of age-appropriate literature, science and social studies were selected by four of the teacher participants of the experimental classrooms.

The genres of eight texts and their characteristics are described in Table III.5. Topics and texts were selected from the VNEN textbooks, magazines and the Internet sources. Furthermore, these texts were always considered for their appropriateness with fourth-graders so they consisted in between 120 and 350 words in length ( $M=281$ ;  $SD=69$ ). All passages were divided into paragraphs and have illustrated images above the text. Each of the paragraph is organised according to typical structures such deductive or inductive ones and expressed a complete main idea to ensure that a summary could be made. The poem is clearly divided into separated cantos.

**Table III.5. Characteristics of the texts used in the experiment**

Title	Genre	No. words
1. <i>'Schooling' flowers</i> – Xuan Dieu	Descriptive	~270
2. <i>Gra-vrot at the stronghold</i> – Victor Hugo	Narrative	~300
3. <i>The sparrow</i> – Tuoc-ghe-nhep	Narrative	~320
4. <i>Beautiful sea</i> – Vu Tu Nam	Descriptive	~280
5. <i>Where does the moon come from?</i> – Tran Dang Khoa	Poetry	~120
6. <i>One thousand days went around the world</i> – (Magazine)	Newspaper report	~350
Pre-test: The man, the boy and the donkey	Folktale	~300
Post-test: The farmer's donkey	Folktale	~310

### III.2.7. Data Collection Method

This study used multiple qualitative data collection techniques, including three data sources: (A) classroom observation, (B) teachers' discussion and reflection after every lesson taught and teachers summary reflection through e-mail after the experiment finished. Each of the data collection method is described in detail below.

#### III.2.7.1. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation are considered as visible evidences of the changes in teaching and learning processes, as well as of the effects of teachers' activities and approaches on pupils' learning and attitudes. In order to gauge the changes in teaching and learning practices, we monitored whether the dialectical constructivist features in the teaching Vietnamese

language were operationalised at the classroom level, our classroom observation framework was aimed at documenting the five following features.

(A1). Did pupils self-construct new knowledge through involving in learning activities as reading, discussing, arguing, making presentation, raising questions etc.?

(A2). Were the pupils socially interactive during their learning in the lesson through discuss/work in pair, in small group and in class as a whole?

(A3). Did pupils make connection between prior knowledge and experience to new knowledge through predicting, questioning, recalling, classifying, modifying, adding, adjusting...?

(A4). How were pupils scaffolded by the teacher?

(A5). Did teachers and pupils keep an equitable relationship?

These questions will be answered during the class observation through the checklist of five dialectical constructivist features (based on Table I.9-Chapter I.3) and the consideration of the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching-learning activities, and assessment activities (Chapter I.5).

The five questions focus on the five core features of a dialectical constructivist class that the four teacher participants mastered through the pre-training period. During the classroom observation, the comparison table between core features of the dialectical constructivist teaching and learning and those of the VNEN and traditional models was usually referenced (Chapter I.3).

**Table III.6. Dialectical constructivist features expressed in Reading lessons**

<b>Features</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Their definitions</b>
<b>1. Learning Aims</b>	Prescribed contents of knowledge, skills and attitudes	Based on the lists of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are determined for each lesson; usually expressed in unmeasurable verbs.
	Outcome competences	Based on outcome competences that pupils acquire at the end of lesson; usually expressed in measurable verbs.
<b>2. Teaching and Learning Activities</b>		
2.1. Knowledge acquirement	Self-construction	Ps involve in learning activities as reading, discussing, arguing, making presentation, raising questions etc.
	Being imposed from teacher	T provides new knowledge.
2.2. Social participation	One-way interaction	T (or class leader, group leader) are dominant in discussing, presenting, questioning, expressing personal ideas...
	Multi-way interaction	Class members have opportunities to discuss, present, question, express personal ideas...
2.3. Prior knowledge and experience connection	Being partly connected	Limiting within knowledge of previous lessons, or within knowledge in textbooks.
	Being comprehensively connected	Expanding to pupils' knowledge of society, culture, and pupils' interests, emotions.
2.4. Learning support	'Direct' support; Form-focused feedback	T provides the meaning of words, corrected answers.
	Scaffolding	T models, provides more information, prompts, oriented questioning...
	Content-focused feedback	
2.5. Learning environment maintenance	Hierarchical relationship	T keeps the right to ask, to provide corrected answers; unfriendly says and action.
	Equitable relationship	T keeps friendly and respected for Ps; encourages and praises pupils for good work (by verbal or physical affection).
<b>3. Assessment Activities</b>	Summative assessment	T makes assessment on Ps' learning at the end of a lesson.
	Combine summative and formative assessment	T makes regular assessment during Ps' learning in a lesson.

With the authorization of Department of Education and Training in Can Tho city and the allowance of each primary school board, especially the agreement of the teachers and pupils who attend the experimental classes, all the observed lessons were video-recorded. A camera with a flexible axis was located at a convenient place in each classroom to gain the best overview of the teaching and learning process. The place is usually in the corner of the classroom where is opposite to the teachers' view that allows the camera to get the widest sight of the class. However, there were on average seven groups in every student class so two/three groups were chosen from each classroom for video recording, as Gillies (Tran Q.V., 2006) showed that it is possible to obtain a representative sample of the students' discourse across classes by sampling the discussions of two groups from each class.

### **III.2.7.2. Teachers' Discussion and Reflection after Teaching**

The post-teaching discussion with four teachers of the experimental classrooms aimed at providing the teachers with opportunities to self-assess their teaching compared with the goals of the designed curriculum as well as to self-reflect on the enacted lessons and orient for next lessons. The teachers were encouraged to feel free to share their opinions to co-design the next curriculum units. Some questions to call the teachers' perception are expressed as follows:

(B1). Do you think your pupils construct their knowledge by themselves; involve in social participation; connect to prior knowledge? How did you do to scaffold pupils' learning and create equitable environment in classroom?

(B2). Whether even to a small extent, what should be changed in the design of the lesson? And what should the teacher do in the next lessons to improve the dialectical constructivist features in teaching and learning?

The teachers' reflection was conducted when each lesson ended and the researcher took note all of their ideas (achievements, shortcomings of lesson and their suggestions for re-design) and shared among four teachers on the Zalo group account (a private group of the social network popular in Vietnam) before the next lesson.

### **III.2.8. Results**

The enactment of a constructivist-aligned model in the specific context of primary schools in Vietnam was spent through three basic stages including preparation for teaching,

teaching-observation-discussion with a number of iterations and the teacher's reflection. The results are presented below through the three phases and focus on answering the aforementioned research questions.

### **III.2.8.1. Phase 1: Preparation for Teaching Constructivist-aligned Lessons**

Participants' point of view regarding the dialectical constructivist pedagogy and the dialectical constructivist-aligned instructional model can be overviewed through the transcriptions as follows. The teachers' views regarding the constructivist pedagogy:

The constructivist-based teaching and learning approach, I think, has the same tenet with learner-centred teaching and learning. Accordingly, teaching needs to activate pupils' learning activities. The pupils obtain new knowledge and skills through involving the learning activities (the teacher of Ex.Cen2).

I understand that the constructivism-based Reading classes is step-by-step instruction for pupils to get the knowledge and skills of reading including fluent reading and reading comprehension, like building a new house (the teacher of Ex.Cen1).

Pupils who learn in a constructivism-based reading lesson will interact and cooperate together to find out the meaning of the texts rather than receiving the ideas from the teachers (the teacher of Ex.En1).

The teachers' views about the dialectical constructivist-aligned lesson that was designed as an example:

From my perspective, this lesson design is much different from the conventional lesson plan I compose and conduct at primary school, namely, less time period for fluent reading; new reading strategies... I find it both interesting and challenging (the teacher of Ex.Cen1).

I think it will be difficult to complete the lesson within 40 minutes because there are many learning activities; especially, the four reading strategies and the authentic tasks are considerably strange to pupils (the four teachers agreed this point).

The teachers' contributing ideas to the designed model:

It is difficult to make adjustments at present, I need more time to deeply understand the dialectical constructivism-based lessons (the teacher of Ex.Cen2). However, there is one point I notice that the authentic tasks will take much time, I am afraid that we cannot complete the lesson within the allowed period of time (the four teachers agreed on this point).



I think the time amount for reading aloud and fluent needs to be increased because in the final test of this semester, the reading aloud and fluent accounts for 40% of the total amount of final grade for reading skill (the teacher of Ex.Cen1).

In general, teachers have a good knowledge of the constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language because they argued that pupils construct knowledge through involving in learning activities. This point is in same line with the survey results described in Chapter II.2. However, the application of the constructivist approach in practice is also understood as a step-by-step teaching procedure. The metaphorical images “like building a house” reflects the essence of the constructivist approach. However, teaching according to a meticulous step-by-step procedure will create all houses that are similar each other. This is far different from the target of constructivist-based teaching and learning approach. This point reflects the way the VNEN model deploys the constructivist approach into the self-study textbooks and teaching practices (as analysed in the survey studies in Chapter II.1 and II.2). Furthermore, the teachers foresee constraints as applying the constructivist-aligned lessons in the teaching practice: 1) regarding themselves and the pupils, the designed model with learning activities and strategies are strange, and 2) the time limitation policy and big-size classes are considerable challenges to them.

### **III.2.8.2. Phase 2: Changes in the Instructional Components aligned to Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy: Teaching and Observing Reading Classes**

To answer the first research question – *What changes are there in the teaching and learning components in classroom practices through the enactment of the designed instructional model?* – the dialectical constructivist approach in Vietnamese context was used as an anchor to recognise the changes in teaching and learning practices through the designed model. The characteristics of teaching and learning of the experimental classes were compared to those of a dialectical constructivist features and those of a VNEN classroom and a traditional classroom that were influenced by Confucianism. The results from comparison were triangulated with data from the teachers’ discussion and reflections and pupils’ attitudes (Pupil questionnaire). The changes in teaching and learning practices of the experimental classroom were first documented by participating teachers’ self-reflection and discussion after each experimental class. Combining with the researcher’s notes and judgements, these characteristics of changes were synthesised in Appendix 7. Each item in the table was

discussed by the teachers and the researcher after each class and the 24 synthesised contents of six lessons taught in the experimental period were also sent to them to verify and come to an agreement.

These changes did not always advance equally and consistently among the experimental classes because the changes in teaching practices were influenced by many factors. Overall, however, the orientation toward dialectical constructivist approaches in teaching and learning Vietnamese language did take place. These changes are detailed as follows:

#### **a. The Method to Set Learning Aims**

The intended learning outcomes of the experimental lessons were agreed jointly by the researcher and the teachers. Accordingly, the learning aims are based on the expected competences of pupils, required by the General Curriculum of MoET, and are described by measurable verbs with different levels of thinking (Chapter III.1). As a long-held habit of these teacher participants, they tried to categorise pupils' outcome competences of each lesson into the lists of knowledge, skills and attitude (Source: Teachers' discussion and reflection; all the classes at Lesson 1 and 2). Two lessons later, the teachers changed to define the learning aims based on outcome competences (e.g., Summarising the main contents of the story "*Sparrow*" – Turgenev). However, as also a long-held thinking, learning aims were defined based on the teachers' point of views, for teachers rather than for pupils' learning targets.

Through this lesson, the teacher *helps* pupils *describe* main ideas of a story talking about a mother sparrow who are bravery to protect her child ("*Sparrow*" – Turgenev); or: Teacher aims at *providing* pupils method to *summarise* a story about a hero boy named Gra-vrốt. (Source: Classroom observation; all the classes at Lesson 3 and 4).

The words "help, provide" echoed the knowledge transmission style (Hoang, 2011). According to the constructivist-aligned model, teachers are encouraged to define the learning aims based on the learning outcome competences for pupils and expressed by measurable verbs (Biggs and Tang, 2012).

Pupils can describe the sea journey of Ma-gieng-lãng and his crew, combining with showing the journey with a terrestrial globe (in the classes of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2), or showing the journey with a paper map (in the classes of Ex.En1 and Ex.En2).

The change in the definition of the learning aims was consistent with the way teachers instruct and assess. For example, in the classes of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2, pupils were invited to tell in summary the Ma-gieng-lǎng's sea route and show the journey with the terrestrial globe positions he went by. The assessment for pupils' performance was carried out by both their classmates and teacher.

### **b. The Ways Pupils Acquire New Knowledge**

In the first three experimental lessons, the teachers of the four experimental classes fluctuated between encouraging pupils to self-explore and imposing knowledge (Source: Classroom observation). Though the pupils were interested in the reading strategies such as predicting, questioning in the Engagement phases through raising many interesting questions (the classes of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2), the teachers still imposed the meanings of difficult words the pupils suggested, and asked pupils to repeat these words' meanings so that the pupils can *remember* the words' meanings rather than *understand* them by their own (the classes of Ex.Cen1, Ex.Cen2 and Ex.En2). In the three last experimental lessons, pupils' self-exploration was observed. The teachers let a space for pupils' exchange and discussion.

In the class of Ex.Cen2, exchange about the meanings of word “bravery” in “*Gra-vrốt at stronghold*”. The teacher also raised a real-world situation to help pupils distinguish between “bravery” and “daredevil”. The argument among pupils happened excitingly and finally they full-understand about “bravery”.

Compared with conventional classes, teacher would impose the meaning of words by their definition (e.g., *immortal* – a person such as author or a hero of enduring fame for his/her works or great action). At the sixth lesson, beside encouraging pupils to self-study, the teacher of Ex.Cen1 turned back to impose knowledge. According this teacher's self-reflection, this lesson comprised much information that was new to the pupils so she chose the way to provide knowledge to the pupils (Source: The teacher of Ex.Cen1's discussion and reflection).

### **c. Social Interaction in Classroom**

In the first two experimental lessons, the four teachers kept their teaching habit with one-way interaction, even in VNEN classes where pupils worked in small groups. In the first

two lessons, the teachers and/or groups leaders were dominant on giving questions/asking, whereas pupils took role of recipients and followers (Source: Classroom observation). Starting with the third lesson, the teachers of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.En1 had tendency to stimulate multi-way social interaction through inviting pupils to ask their questions, seeking the explanations from peers and other group members. And since the fourth lesson, the four teachers kept consistent in encouraging pupils to socially interact. However, as can be seen from (Appendix 7, Item 2.2), at sixth lesson, the teacher of Ex.Cen1 partly turn back to a one-way interaction when she was dominant in questioning and providing information (consistent with the ways the pupils acquire knowledge mentioned above).

#### **d. The Use of Prior Knowledge and Experience**

Adhered to the VNEN model and influenced by traditional teaching, pupils' prior knowledge and experience was understood as purely previous lesson knowledge and/or linguistic knowledge, whereas pupils' experience in terms of real-world life, interests and emotion were almost ignored; or partial connection was done, as usually, at starting lessons. From Item 2.3 (see Appendix 7), though the connection with prior knowledge was focused on by the teachers, partial connection was still dominant. In detail, the teachers' questions focused on requiring pupils to recall the knowledge of previous lessons rather than to evoke pupils' comprehensive prior knowledge that includes in-school knowledge, out-school knowledge, personal thoughts, emotion, interests...

In the reading lesson "*Gra-viêng t at stronghold*" (Victor Hugo), the teacher asked pupils to talk about some young heroes of Vietnam that they learnt in previous lessons or previous grades. Pupils easily listed many names as Tran Quoc Toan, Kim Dong, Vo Thi Sau, Le Van Tam... However, the teachers did not require pupils to tell in short the stories of these heroes (Why are they called "heroes"?). Likewise, pupils did not have chances to express their personal thoughts or emotions of their stories.

Up to the fourth lesson, the teachers of Ex.Cen2 and Ex.En1 created comprehensive connection linking to pupils' knowledge and experiences.

The topic about "the sea" always attracted pupils who lived in Mekong delta. The teacher (Ex.En1) created a wide space for pupils to express the understandings they got so far about the sea, their fresh experiences about the sea when they had chances to visit, or the lovely memories about summer at the sea they had with their families. As a result, this experimental

lesson stimulated pupils to ‘draw’ a various beauty of the sea, from the point of view and experience of pupils themselves.

### e. The Ways Teachers Support Pupils’ Learning

Providing pupils with correct answers or asking them to display questions were considered as ways teachers support pupils’ learning that can be seen in the first three lessons. The teachers’ high-reactive responses, on one side, quickly solved the difficulties pupils were meeting and fostered the lesson to go onward; but on the other side, pupils were not encouraged to self-construct knowledge.

In the second lesson of the class Ex.En2, when a group of pupils confused to understand the meaning of words “stronghold” or “military equipment” [pupils have little experience about them], the teachers reactively provide the definitions of these terms (citing in the dictionary combining with illustrating pictures).

In the reading lessons 1, 2, and 3, the display questions were dominant.

- What did Gra-vrố t do at the stronghold?
- Which particular actions showed Gra-vrố t’s bravery?
- Why did the author call Gra-vrố t as angel?
  - a. Because he was bravery, not dare to die.
  - b. Because he picked many bullets.
  - c. Because the insurgent army admired him, a bravery boy.

There is only one referential question: What do you think about Gra-vrố t? Write your answer in your notebook.

(The class of Ex.En2)

In third lesson, the teacher of Ex.Cen1 provided a bit more time and space for self-pacing learning in the Exploration phase, however, her feedback were still form-focused. In Lessons 4, 5 and 6, the four teachers expressed clear intentions to let pupils self-explore. During the learning process, the teachers raised many referenced questions and created back-and-forth exchange to scaffold pupils’ thinking.

In the reading lesson 4, “*Beautiful sea*” (Vu Tu Nam):

- Have you ever been at sea for vacation? What was your impression when you stood in front of the sea for the first time?

- To Vu Tu Nam, the sea is beautiful with its characteristics described in the text. How about your opinion? Why do you think that?
- Write in the worksheet what make you like the best about the sea. Why do you like that for the best? Share your thought with your peer.

(the class of Ex.En1)

In the sixth lesson, pupils were required to list the difficulties Ma-gieng-lǎng and his crew met during the sea journey. Based on the text, pupils listed: “lack of food, fresh water, fighting against aboriginal people”. As usual in a conventional lesson, teachers would invite other pupils to confirm “right or wrong” or suggested other propositions; after that teacher would sum up. However, as observed in the sixth lesson, the teacher of Ex.Cen2 encouraged pupils to elaborate their ideas and experience by “putting their feet in the crew’s shoes” to think more about the possible difficulties and suggest feasible solutions. Pupils felt excited to talk about these contents. Some ideas were such as: serious sickness but lack of medicines and medical take-care; crazy storms; dangerous sharks...

#### **f. Classroom Learning Environment**

All the teachers expressed their pleasure in communicating with pupils, which was required as a professional characteristics. They usually used polite expressions such as “Please! Thank you! Sit down, please!” or “I would like to invite...”. Their friendly posture was also shown through their movement and activities (e.g., rise their open hand to ‘invite’ pupils’ response, make physical proximity by reaching near pupils when they discussed; usually smile and praise). However, hierarchical relationships were found out in almost of the first four classes. For examples: pupils only spoke when teacher invited them; pupils raised their hand for a long time but teacher ignored them because teachers were afraid to run out of time for a class (Ex.Cen1, Ex.Cen2, Ex.En2 classes). Even, teacher let pupils wait for a long time to get teachers’ feedback without any signal from teachers (Ex.En1 class). Noticeably, in the three first lessons, the teachers of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.En2 occasionally used the ruler to tap on the class board in order to keep pupils quiet; or the teacher of Ex.Cen1 also asked a pupil to stand up [about five minutes] as a physical punishment because he was doing too much noise. All four teachers frequently used harsh voice to ask pupils to focus. Two long-held fears of Vietnamese teachers are: noisy classes and exceeding the time allowed for a class so they feel stressful and effortful to keep students under control.

However, in the last two classes, when pupils mastered sufficiently the learning procedure and strategies, the lessons took place smoothly. The pupils felt excited with their own space to explore and had open-minded attitudes towards their teachers. The teachers tolerated some noise during pupils' discussion or felt less stressful when the time was out.

#### **g. Methods of Assessment**

As in conventional classes, the summative assessment was only conducted at the end of a period, with paper test and grading. According to the Act 22/BGDĐT (Vietnam-MoET, 2016), teachers are required to combine summative and formative assessment. Accordingly, the evidences for learning assessment were not only collected at the end of a learning period, but also during the time of learning process. The assessment was not only based on the paper test but also based on pupils learning activities, leaning results, reports. Teacher can use compliments instead of grading. Therefore, assessment took place during the learning process.

The participants have been familiar with this assessment method for three years so now, they met sufficiently the requirements of the designed model in term of assessment. However, collecting evidences for portfolio assessment was new to them so as can be seen from the Appendix 7 (Item 3), portfolio method was introduced and used since the fourth class.

### **III.2.8.3. Phase 3: Teachers' Reflection on the Enactment of Constructivist-aligned Model**

#### **a. Teachers Perceptions regarding the Designed Curriculum**

To answer the third question – *How do the participating teachers perceived the constructivist-aligned curriculum through the experimental period?* – the data source of discussion with the teachers was employed and analysed by the researcher. The teachers' perceptions toward the designed curriculum were aggregated into three themes: a<sub>1</sub>) pupils' competence development; a<sub>2</sub>) effects on the teachers' professional development; a<sub>3</sub>) and any adjustments on the curriculum to bring pupils the most benefits.

##### ***a<sub>1</sub>). The development of pupils' language and thinking competences***

According to the teachers, the designed model contributed to develop the pupils' competences, as detailed in the following quotations:



Pupils had chances to experience and to know how to combine prior knowledge to solve problems raised in learning. The designed model also created opportunities for pupils to train and develop problem solving skill, observing, presenting and expressing own ideas etc. Especially, pupils were encouraged to feel free to express their point of view and were respected to develop individually (Synthesised from the final reflection of the Ex.En1 teacher – Source: Teachers’ discussion and reflection).

With this designed model, the pupils were excited about expressing their own ideas, they escaped from the pressure of “right” or “wrong” answers. As usual, the pupils were afraid to make a “wrong” answer. When learning with this instructional model, I found the pupils became more confident and active in interaction with other pupils and teacher. Especially, the pupils proved their creation with learning task performance (such as drawing pictures, mind map, role playing etc.) that made them be interested in the subject. Finally, the pupils were encouraged to explain some learning issues by their own experience (Synthesised from the final reflection of the Ex.En2 teacher – Source: Teachers’ discussion and reflection).

The teachers affirmed that the pupils learnt with their interest and comfort rather than in the conventional language lessons. Especially, the teachers recognised the pupils became more active in seeking and setting multi-way interaction. As usual, teacher invited pupils with their raising hands to answer the questions, after that, this pupil sat down and teacher continued to invite another pupil to modify or comment. In the experimental lesson, a pupil expressed his/her ideas about a learning issue or answered a question. When finished, this pupil invited other pupils who were eager to express their argumentations. This change and activeness made the teachers feel interested (Source: The teachers’ discussion and reflection).

### ***a2. Effects on the Teachers’ Professional Development***

According to the teachers, the co-teaching with the researcher at the first lesson, and the co-designing of six experimental lessons helped teachers clearly perceive the designed curriculum. The co-designing process was conducted according to the agreement between the researcher and four teachers: first, based on the understandings the teachers acquired about a dialectical constructivism-based lesson after the pre-experimental training and the co-teaching lesson with the researcher, each teacher separately suggested the lesson plan and sent it to the researcher (usually one week before the actual teaching); second, based



on the original lesson plans, the researcher gave ideas about them so that the lesson plans fulfilled the dialectical constructivist pedagogies as much as possible; finally, the lesson plans were sent back to the teachers and shared on the email groups. The lesson plans were delivered separately created opportunities for the teachers' autonomy in their profession and the aim of sharing lesson plans among the experimental group members after the researcher' ideas contribution was to support the teachers to be able to learn from each other. The process might be repeated if the teacher still had ideas to exchange with the researcher. During the co-designing process, teachers were encouraged to feel free to contribute on the forthcoming lesson plans in order to make the most benefits for the pupils' learning. After each lesson, the small discussion between the researcher and the teachers created opportunities for self-reflection and improvement on their profession. This synthesis can be recognised in the quotation below:

The teacher of Ex.Cen2: This designed instructional model helped me know an approach to develop pupils' language competences. At the same time, I could self-reflect on my teaching work and partially overcome my shortcomings in teaching. One point I recognised was valuable to me was that the critical mind of my pupils were improved (Source: The teachers' discussion and reflection).

The teacher of Ex.En2: The experimental lessons brought me flexibility in teaching activities. I improved problem solving skill in classroom. The teaching based on designed instructional model increased pupils' active involvement and limited the one-way lecturing of teacher (Source: The teachers' discussion and reflection).

### ***a3. Adjustments on the Designed Model to Bring Pupils the most Benefits***

Although the teachers acknowledged positive effects of the experimental model on their pupils' competences and their profession, the teacher pointed out some shortcomings and limitations. The common issue they met was the time of a lesson that was usually exceeding over the allowed period for a class. The teachers of class Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2 were afraid that the application of the experimental model would make them "run" after the prescribed curriculum standard (Source: The teachers' discussion and reflection). Besides, teachers of classes Ex.Cen1 and Ex.En2 also suggested that the designed model should design an appropriate period of time to train reading fluency (reading aloud) for pupils because, according to them, reading fluency abilities helped pupils understand the reading contents.

In the case of the Ex.En2 teacher, her pupils were not good at reading aloud and fluently so in reading class, she usually prioritised to train pupils' reading fluency before reading comprehension.

In short, from the teachers' perception, the designed model brought positive effects on pupils' language and thinking competences as well as teachers' professional development. However, they also pointed out some limitations of the model that needed to be adjusted, such as modifying the time for reading fluency and limiting the time for a class. These adjustments will be mentioned in detail in the next section about the challenges of the model application in Vietnam context. Furthermore, the specific designs that were observed and managed in their special arrangement can facilitate to create the effects as expected. In this study, the design-based lesson units were carefully managed from lesson-plan suggestion to actual teaching and reflection after teaching under the learning-through-action process (Laws, 2013). In normal conditions with less management, it might lead to lessen the effects as expected.

### **b. Implementation Challenges in Vietnamese Context**

To answer the fourth question – *What do the teacher perceive as major challenges to the enactment of the constructivist-aligned model in Vietnamese education and culture?* – the perceptions of teachers were also collected through open-ended questions sent to them by e-mail at the end of the experiment. Their answers were synthesised into two categories: b<sub>1</sub>) challenges from the teachers' subjective perspectives (the influences of habits and traditional teaching and learning methods; the deep understanding towards the dialectical constructivist approaches, and the deep understanding of Vietnamese language knowledge); and b<sub>2</sub>) challenges from the teachers' objective perspectives (big-size class, overload works for teachers, and serious pressure about pupils' learning results). The categories of challenges were interpreted for the adjustments on the designed curriculum and suggestions for the study.

#### ***b<sub>1</sub>. Challenges to the teachers: from subjective perspectives***

According to the teachers, the constructivist-aligned instructional model was experimented in the VNEN classes where pupils were organised into mixed groups and basically, pupils had skills to work in group. This was one of the advantages for the teachers to participate

in the experimental group. However, some challenges were admitted from the teachers' points of view, as below:

*Changing mind and habits in teaching*

In a conventional VNEN lesson, after introducing a new lesson, the remaining activities are transferred to class leader and group leaders as “mini-teachers” to instruct their group members to closely stick to the ten steps of learning and three steps of working with self-study textbooks. During this period, the self-study textbooks take the central role in group working, the main responsibility of the group leaders is to read the available designed questions in the textbooks and collect the answers from group members. When the tasks/exercises in the textbooks were finished by groups, the teacher acted as a corrector who confirmed whether the pupils' answers were ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. In Chapter II describing the survey results about the advantages and disadvantages of VNEN model in their specific context, one of the answers concerning the advantages of VNEN model was that VNEN teacher did not need to prepare for a new lesson because the self-study textbooks themselves took the role as the lesson plan.

To apply the experimental model, teachers were required to change their perceptions and habits. They needed to well-prepare and self-prepare for the designed model employment. But they did that in the experimental group. According to the designed instructional model, the textbook took role as one source of the teaching materials. During the experiment, the teachers agreed to choose the texts both in or out of the textbook for their teaching. As aforementioned results answering the research question 1 in this chapter, the teaching and learning processes were changed through six experimental lessons in all terms of: defining the learning aims based on the outcome competences, creating multi-directed interaction for pupils' self-constructing knowledge, stimulating pupils to connect to the comprehensive prior knowledge, creating an equal and democratic environment and reforming in assessment familiarising with portfolios. Although these strategies were not absolutely new to them (the four teachers – Source: Teachers' discussion and reflection), but obtaining deep understandings and applying them in teaching practices made them felt challenged. In addition, the teachers (the teachers of classes Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2) expressed their worries that they cannot complete a lesson within the required time (35–40 minutes per

class) because they had to fulfil the national curriculum standard at the needed time. This made them feel overloaded.

#### *Deep understanding toward Vietnamese language lessons*

Regarding the text designed in the textbooks, the teachers taught many years so they did not need to prepare more about the knowledge contents. However, regarding new passages, they needed to spend much time to make sure they mastered the new contents (the teachers of classes Ex.En1 and Ex.En2 – Source: The pupil questionnaire). For example, the passages “*More than 1000 days around the world*” (Newspapers) was a new text that required the teachers to update their knowledge. This was also a challenge to teachers under time limitation. Furthermore, all teachers affirmed that learning activities and strategies integrated into the designed model were not absolutely new to them, they used to be introduced in the in-service trainings held by Bureau of Education and Training in every summer semester. However, the trainings have not provided them enough with practical competences so they felt challenged in teaching practices.

#### **b2. Challenges to Teachers: from Objective Perspectives**

The four teachers’ reflections met each other at common statement that they were under seriously pressure such as top-down targets that they need to meet periodically (e.g., the percentages of high-qualified pupils per semester); strict time schedule required them to complete the curriculum standard on time as well as to complete each lesson within the allowed time period (from 35 to 40 minutes). If the teachers exceeded the allowed time of a class, they were under-evaluated by the observers (school board as principals or vice-principals, inspectors from Bureau of Education and Training).

Besides, big-size classes were challenging to the teachers, especially the teachers of Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2 whose classes were located in city central. As a common feature of city central classes in Can Tho city and other cities in Vietnam, the pressure from big-sized classes (from 40 to 50 pupils) have significantly impacted the pedagogical approaches they applied in teaching practices. The materials and facilities of city school have still not met the practical requirements. Through the survey on the VNEN model (Chapter II.3), teachers were afraid about class organisation that made pupils feel uncomfortable to be seated in small groups. In the media, the parents also expressed their disagreement when their child

sat in groups as in VNEN model. All issues have been recognised as challenging for the teachers, however, these changes cannot be fulfilled by teachers themselves because these issues are related to finance, educational policies, administrations, and so on.

### **III.2.10. Conclusion and Discussion**

This study presented the application of an instructional model following dialectical constructivist insights; respecting the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities; and made coherence with Vietnamese context of culture and education. The study results showed positive effects of the experimental model on the changes in the instructional components approaching dialectical constructivist features. More precisely, learning aims were first defined based on outcome competences and expressed through measurable verbs rather than based on prescribed contents and through non-measurable verbs. Second, pupils had opportunities to self-construct their knowledge rather than passively receive it from teacher and/or textbooks. Third, multi-way social interactions between pupils and teacher and among pupils rather than one-way interaction in conventional VNEN classes were fostered. Fourth, teachers instructed pupils to connect their comprehensive experience during learning rather than just focusing on their partial experience. Fifth, teachers changed their support for pupils' learning, from providing correct answers or confirmation to creating prompts and content feedbacks. Finally, instead of only summative assessment on pupils' learning, teachers used portfolios to combine summative and formative assessment.

Changes in instructional components showed the appropriateness of our model with specific teaching context in Vietnam. The common features of the constructivist pedagogy and Vietnamese culture were harmonised in the designed model, including the Vietnamese tradition of respecting cooperation and unification that was found through small-group and in-pair learning of the experimental lessons.

During the experimental period, learning through action was employed as a method stimulating teachers to identify issues during and after teaching, to find evidence and act on evidence in order to improve their practice, to evaluate and self-reflect. Through six circles of experimental lessons, the researcher and teachers had several opportunities to enable quality of the teaching and learning practice as well as to establish teachers' understanding of the designed model. During this specific time, co-teaching at the first lesson and co-

designing between the researcher and teachers were used in order to create gradual influences and appropriateness of the model. With these findings, this study strengthens that a pedagogical reform is not purely a process of quantitative expansion and “plugging” new policies into new contexts. Rather, educational reforms need to seriously consider not only the new policy documents but also teachers’ long-held beliefs about what works in education. At the same time, a program for teacher education should be more consistent with what teachers value.

Furthermore, the experimental teachers’ perceptions towards the designed model were also measured in this study. Accordingly, teachers agreed that the experiment improved pupils’ reading comprehension competences and high-level cognitive strategies. Besides, their pupils showed more confidence, activeness and cooperation rather than those in conventional VNEN classes. This experiment was considered as opportunities for the teachers’ professional development in terms of reconceptualising the teaching and learning of primary Vietnamese language, bringing it closer to a dialectical constructivist approach.

Finally, throughout the teachers’ perception collection, the challenges of the designed model implementation were revealed. From the teachers’ point of view, they made an effort to change their beliefs and habits in teaching that were deeply influenced by traditional education and Confucian culture, in order to make their teaching practices appropriate with dialectical constructivist approaches. Likewise, they needed to update themselves with deep-understandings of Vietnamese language lessons. The big challenges also came from the institutional system that brought heavy pressures on teachers such as big-size classes with insufficient material, many achievements needed to be obtained, a strict schedule of national curriculum standards and current evaluation system on teachers’ quality. To a certain extent, findings of this study are consistent with reports in many researches about the influence of local culture and traditional education on the effectiveness of pedagogical reforms based on Western theories. In these cases, teachers belonging to the Asian education characterised by a teacher-centred, book-centred methods and rote memory always cope challenges as being asked to apply a new pedagogical theory that differs from their long-held beliefs. This will take much time and effort for Vietnamese teachers to change their habits of traditional teaching when they interact with a newly designed dialectical constructivism-based Vietnamese language instructional model.



## **Chapter III.3. Effects of the Dialectical Constructivism-Aligned Instructional Model on Pupils' Performance**

In the previous chapter, we described the effects of the dialectical constructivism-aligned instructional model on the teaching practices of primary Vietnamese language education. The teaching and learning components have been improved for approaching the dialectical constructivist-based approach, at the aspects of Learning Outcomes, Teaching and Learning Activities, and Assessment Activities. At the same time, the designed model influenced teachers' perceptions regarding the dialectical constructivism-based instructional model, in terms of pupils' competence development and teachers' professional development. In this chapter, we aim at finding out how the designed instructional model influences pupils' competences of reading comprehension and high-level thinking. At the same time, the pupils' perception regarding the designed model is also explored.

### **III.3.1. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How are the effects of the designed model on primary school pupils' performance in reading comprehension and cognitive strategy acquisition?



2. What are the participating pupils' attitude regarding the designed model through the experimental

The hypotheses guiding these research questions were as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:** Compared to the control-condition classes, the four intervention-condition classes will be more effective in fostering reading comprehension pupils' performances, as well as the acquisition of reading strategies.

**Hypothesis 2:** Compared to the control-condition classes, the designed model will be more effective in terms of creating pupils' attitude and interest in learning.

### III.3.2. Pupil Participants

Pupil participants included 145 fourth-graders of four intervention condition classes and 74 of two control condition classes, from six primary schools of the central and the environs of Can Tho city in the South of Vietnam. The six schools were public full-day schools, with no specific profile, teaching pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Public schools in Vietnam were not stratified at this stage so pupils of all ability levels are instructed. Overall, the first language of the pupils is Vietnamese, some pupils originated from Chinese and Khmer groups who have respectively Chinese and Khmer as first language. However, they use Vietnamese as an official spoken and written language in daily life. So the Vietnamese language lessons they have been learning as well as the requirements of language knowledge and skills for them were not different from the common curriculum.

There was only a noticeable difference about the socioeconomic status among groups of pupils. Accordingly, the pupils of the Can Tho central, as a common characteristic of city-central schools, had better socioeconomic conditions than their counterparts living in the city environs. We did not officially collect data about parents' earnings and education level, as an indicator of socio-economic status, we asked pupils in marginal periods of time about their parents' jobs. Most of the children's parents of city central had stable jobs and had private vehicles to take their children to school. Whereas pupils in the city environs had their parents working as farming labour hirers or workers at factories. Especially, they cannot find a stable job in their hometown because of the low degree of professional knowledge and skills, they left their home and children to big cities in order to find job. Their children had to live with family relatives without careful caring and good learning

conditions. On average, there were no significant differences between conditions in demographic data in terms of age, gender, mother language and ethnic except economical background between the cohorts of city-central and environ pupils (see Table III.7).

**Table III.7. Demographic data of pupil participants**

No.	Classes	Conditions		Schools	School location
		Experimental	Control		
1	Ex.Cen1	40		Le Quy Don	City central
2	Ex.Cen2	42		Ngo Quyen	City central
3	Con.Cen3		36	Mac Dinh Chi	City central
4	Ex.En1	38		An Binh 1	City environ
5	Ex.En2	35		Tay Do	City environ
6	Con.En3		38	Lo Vong Cung	City environ
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 classes</b>	<b>145 pupils</b>	<b>74 pupils</b>	<b>6 schools</b>	<b>2 locations</b>

There were two reasons for choosing fourth-grade pupils as participants, including: 1) *their language competences in general and reading capacities in specific*, and 2) *the aim of this instructional model innovation study*. For the first reason, related to the Vietnamese language instruction characteristics (see chapter I.3), the primary education level in Vietnam is divided into two sub-levels: the first consists grade 1, 2 and 3 and the second includes grade 4 and 5. The former focuses on establishing basic competences of Vietnamese language so that pupils can master Vietnamese language as a crucial tool for their continuous learning. So the purposes of reading instruction is to help recognise the structures of sounds and syllables, components, principles of Vietnamese language, fluent reading and reading comprehension required at basic abilities, fundamental communications and basic thinking skills. Whereas in the later, based on the basic language competences built in the former term, the fourth graders start to concentrate on a deeper understanding of the reading passages and developing meta-cognitive skills, practicing to make response to the reading passages through performance tasks. For the second reason, the aims of the design-based instructional model are to develop and test the effects of the designed model on participants' advanced reading comprehension, high-level thinking and attitudes toward the constructivist-aligned model.

### **III.3.3. Research Method**

#### **III.3.3.1. Intervention Condition**

##### ***Phase 1: Pre-test of pupils' reading comprehension and high-level thinking***

At the start of the experiment, one pre-test was delivered to the pupils of the experimental groups and control groups to determine the starting point of their competences in fluent reading, reading comprehension, and high-level cognitive acquisition (Appendix 8).

##### ***Phase 2: Preparation for learning in the constructivist-aligned lessons***

Pupils of the experimental classes were also introduced and practised to learn in a dialectical constructivism-based lesson (*Durian – Mai Van Tao*); through this lesson, pupils are trained how to employ reading strategies and to use worksheet (see Chapter II.3); methods to interact in pairs and in small groups and how to formulate appropriate comments on classmates' performance. Accordingly, pupils are acquainted with four strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarising.

- Predicting: pupils were familiarised with the idea of determining what might be discussed next by the author in order to help the reader to think about what he or she already knows about a topic in preparation for what might be coming next.
- Questioning: pupils were informed about the types of questions: questions about details, questions about cause and effects, questions that compare and contrast, questions about the main idea and questions that require inference (some prompt questioning words as What, When, Where, Why, How...).
- Clarifying: pupils were instructed to make clarification by identifying either words, concepts, or both, that may be obscure, ambiguous, or hard to understand. Pupils were encouraged to use dictionary, discuss with peer or in small group.
  - Summarising: pupils work with following roles 1) delete minor and unimportant information, 2) combine similar ideas into categories, 3) state the main idea when the author provides it, and 4) invent the main idea when the author does not provide it. Within this strategy, the researcher and the teachers also modelled a tool for summarisation such as short paragraph, graph, mind map...

##### ***Phase 3. The enactment of constructivist-aligned model and its effects on pupils' competence***

This phase had two functions. First, pupils of the four experimental classes worked in six designed lesson units. At the end of the experiment, one post-test was also delivered to the pupils of both groups (the experiment and control) to highlight the changes in their competences of reading comprehension and high-level thinking acquisition. Post-tests for four student classes of the experimental condition and two classes of the condition, functioned to:

- collect pupils' language competences, mainly reading comprehension; pupils' acquisition of high-level cognitive strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising).
- make analysis and comparison between pre-test and post-test results.

In addition, at the end of the experiment, the questionnaires were delivered to the pupil participants to explore how they perceived about learning activities they participated. The questionnaire consisted in the following questions:

(C1). Which approach did you like as learning Vietnamese language? (tick your choice: participate in learning activities/listen to teachers' lecture).

(C2). Which learning forms did you like to participate in? (tick your choice: individual/pair/small group/ whole class).

(C3). Which learning activities were you most interested in? (5 point Likert scale from "Do not like at all" to "Like so much": questioning, idea sharing, emotion sharing, fluent reading, reading comprehension, discussing, presenting in front of whole class/group, drawing, role-playing, listening to lectures, do as step-by-step instruction, learning game...)

(C4). How did you like the learning environment (the way teacher communicate with you and all of you communicate and work together? (open-ended answer)

Based on the pupils' perception of the implemented model, necessary adjustments will be made to get the attained instructional model of Vietnamese language education at primary schools.

### **III.3.3.2. Control Condition**

During the experiment process, control pupils were instructed in reading comprehension by their regular teachers with the VNEN model.

### III.3.4. Pre-test and Post-test Descriptions

For each text, respondents were presented with about six question items (comprising multiple-choice and free-text answers) covering a broad range of comprehension skills, such as defining the meaning of words/phrases, identifying detailed information in the written material, extracting the main ideas from the text, and drawing inferences from what has been read.

— Define the meaning of words/phrases:

*What does the word “red-faced” in the second paragraph mean?*

- a. A tired face*
- b. A face of ashamed feeling*
- c. A healthy face*

(the folktale “*The man, the boy, and the donkey*”)

— Identify detailed information in the text:

*Why did the donkey cried terribly when he realised the farmer began to shovel dirt into the well?*

- a. Because he felt hopeless to know that he is going to be buried*
- b. Because he was pain by the shovels of dirt hitting his back*
- c. Because he was trying to make a cry to be noticed and recused*

*How did the donkey step up over the edge of the well and trotted off?*

- a. The farmer rescued him*
- b. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was shaking it off and taking a step up.*

(the folktale “*The Farmer's Donkey*”).

— Extract the main ideas from the text:

*Do you think which title is appropriate with the story? Choose the most appropriate answer.*

- a. An intelligent donkey*
- b. Never give up*
- c. A farmer and his donkey*

*Suggest another title in order to reflect the lesson learnt from the story? (the folktale “*The man, the boy, and the donkey*”)*

— Draw inference from what pupils have read:

*Write a short paragraph to express your own lesson learnt from this story? (the folktale “The Farmer’s Donkey”).*

*What is the main content of the story? Choose the most appropriate answer.*

- a. Always listen to other people’s ideas*
- b. Should not listen to any idea from other people*
- c. Should reference other people’s ideas and have the own intention*

(the folktale “*The man, the boy, and the donkey*”)

Due to the present study design, in both pre- and post-tests, pupils were presented with two folktale texts about 330 words (the pre-test text about “*The man, the boy and the donkey*” and the post-test text about “*The farmer’s donkey*” – Appendices 8 and 9). The matrices of the pre-test and post-test are defined in the Table III.8.

According to the table, the reading comprehension items of the pre-test and post-test were organised with four multiple-choice questions (coded as follows: 0 – no answer; 1 – wrong and 2 – right) and two questions covering main ideas of the text and evoke longer, complex answers. The latter group was scored for each question as follows: 0 – no answer; 1 – poor idea answer, 2 - acceptable ideas and 3 – fruitful ideas. Thus, the range of responses was 0 – 14.

**Table III.8. Table of pre-test and post-tests**

		Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4		Total
		Remembering		Understanding		Applying		Analysing, Evaluating, Creating		
Reading comprehension	Question type	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	
	Number of questions	1		1		1		1		<b>6</b>
	No. question	5		6		7		8		
	Grade	0-1-2		0-1-2		0-1-2		0-1-2-3		<b>14</b>
		Predicting		Questioning		Clarifying		Summarising		
Cognitive strategy acquisition	Question type	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b	
	Number of questions	1		1		1		1		<b>4</b>
	No. question	1		2		3		4		
	Grade	0-1-2-3		0-1-2-3		0-1-2-3		0-1-2-3		<b>12</b>
<b>Total grades</b>										<b>26</b>

Type of question: a-Multiple choice; b-Free-text answers

### III.3.5. Data Collection Method

#### III.3.5.1. Effects of the Model on Pupils' Performance in Reading Comprehension and High-level Cognitive Strategies Acquisition

To answer the second research question – *How does the designed model effect on pupils' performance in reading comprehension and acquisition of cognitive strategies?* – data sources of pre-test and post-test results were coded and prepared for analysis.

##### a. Reading Comprehension

First, pupil's performance in reading comprehension at pre-test and post-test was measured using the standardised test format which was designed based on the Act 22/BGD-ĐT (*see Appendix 5*) about assessment and evaluation at primary schools. Accordingly, reading test matrices were aimed at examining four cognitive levels: *Level 1-remembering, Level 2-understanding, Level 3-applying, and Level 4-Analysing, Evaluating, and Creating*. In Vietnamese primary school context, standardised reading tests for summative evaluation are usually composed by school teachers after every teaching period, closely referenced on the Act

22/BGD-ĐT, and compliant with the national curriculum. The school vice-principals collect all teachers' suggested tests, they consider to mix, adjust or even change the contents. The final version of standardised tests is delivered to pupils to do at each summative examinations. In the past, school administrators and teachers used to re-use passages available in the textbooks but now, they choose from various sources with different genres of texts such as expository, narrative, poem or play to test pupils' language competences.

### **b. High-level Thinking Strategies Acquisition**

High-level cognitive strategies assessments were built based on the model of Hart and Speece (Spörer et al., 2009), in order to test pupils' cognitive strategy-related task performance that pupils were asked to apply and practice during the experiment. The tests of cognitive strategy performance were integrated and closely followed the standardised test when being delivered to pupils at pre-test and post-test. Accordingly, every cognitive strategy applied in the designed model was assessed based on criteria as follows:

#### *b1. Predictions*

To assess pupils' ability to make prediction in a paper-based test, we arranged one first page having only title, illustrated pictures of the text. Pupils were asked to read the title and observe the images to guess what the text talks about and write down their prediction in the worksheet. In teaching practice with the constructivist-aligned instruction model, the "prediction" strategy was not only used at the beginning of the text, but also applied during the text exploration. For example, when pupils finished reading the first paragraph, they were able to predict how the text might continue at the second paragraph. The criteria assessment for the predicted strategy was described in Figure III.6.

For example, in the lesson "*The Durian Tree*" (Mai Van Tao) the researcher taught in order to make pupils become familiar with cognitive strategies and how an experimental lesson would be conducted, in the strategy "Predicting", pupils made out-loud predictions, then wrote in the worksheet after observing the pictures about the durian trees (see Figure III.7). And answered the following questions:

- The reading text will talk about the development of durian trees.
- The text is aimed at introducing the durian fruit as a speciality of the Southern Vietnam.
- The text will describe how to plant and cultivate durian tree.



- ...

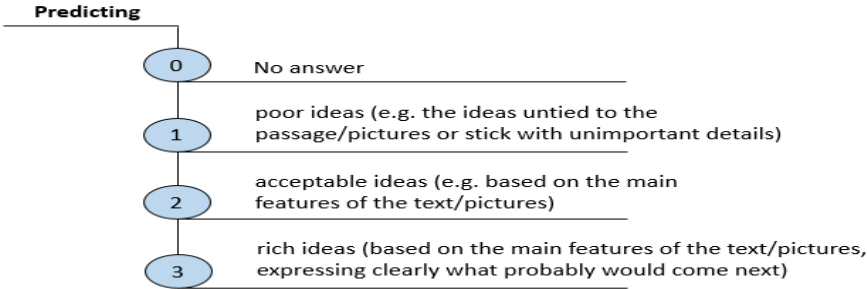


Figure III.6. Assessment criteria for the predicting strategy



Baby durian trees



Durian's flowers



A durian tree with its fruits

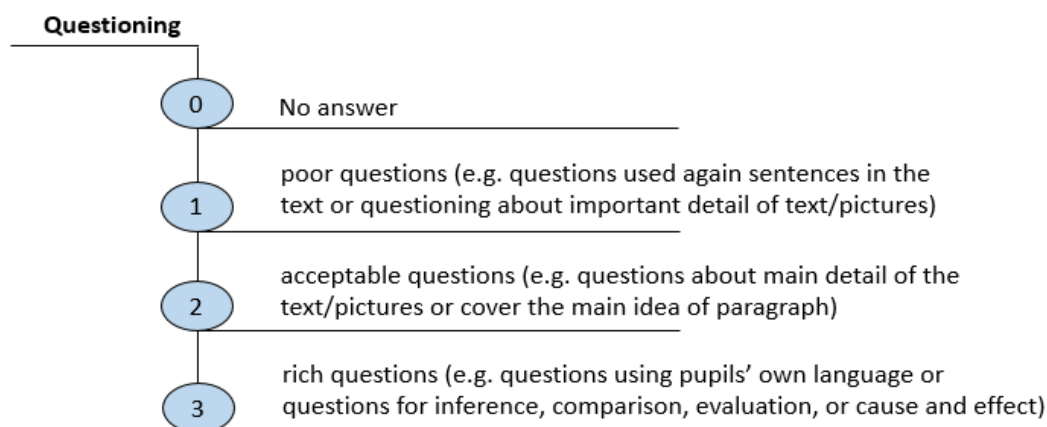


Durian's fruits

Figure III.7. Images of durian trees

*b2. Questions*

Pupils were asked to generate and write down questions they needed to be answered. Like “predicting” strategy, “questioning” was also used frequently during pupils’ learning whatever pupils met issues needed to be answered. The criteria assessment for the questioning strategy was described in Figure III.8.



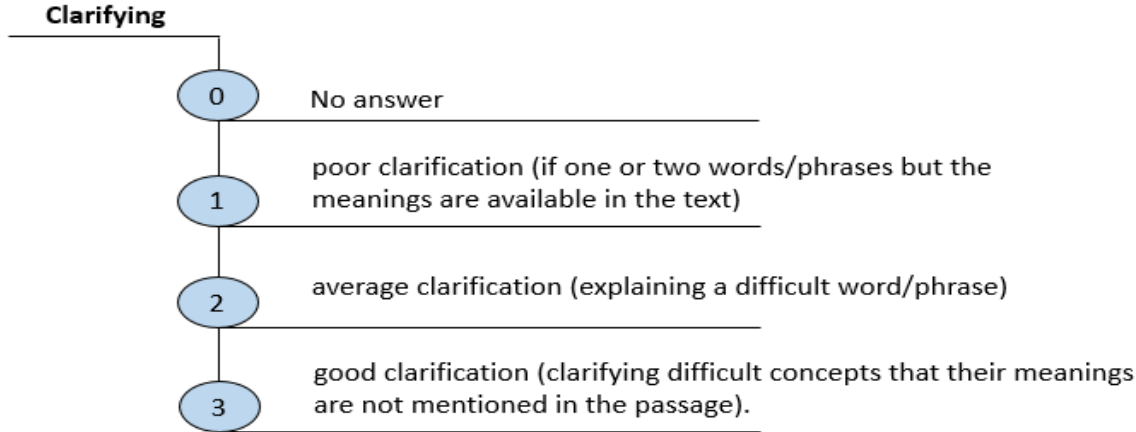
**Figure III.8. Assessment criteria for the questioning strategy**

An example for “Questioning” strategy also belongs to the lesson “The durian trees”, as follows:

- Why do people call this kind of tree as “Durian Tree” (meaning as separateness in Vietnamese language)?
- How are the flowers of durian trees, have I never seen the flowers of durian tree? And how is the flavour of the durian fruit?
- Why does the author regard the durian fruit as a kind of special fruit of the Vietnam Southern region?
- ...

### *b3. Clarification*

After pupils read the passage, they were asked to identify words/phrases or concepts that they felt difficult to understand or not sure for correct meanings. First, the teacher asked pupils to discuss and suggest these words/phrases; next, the teacher synthesised their words/phrases to become a list and asked pupils to explain to each other with the modification, correction and assessment of the teacher; the teacher also suggested difficult words/phrases that he/she pre-determined but pupils did not suggest. The criteria assessment for the clarifying strategy is described in Figure III.9.

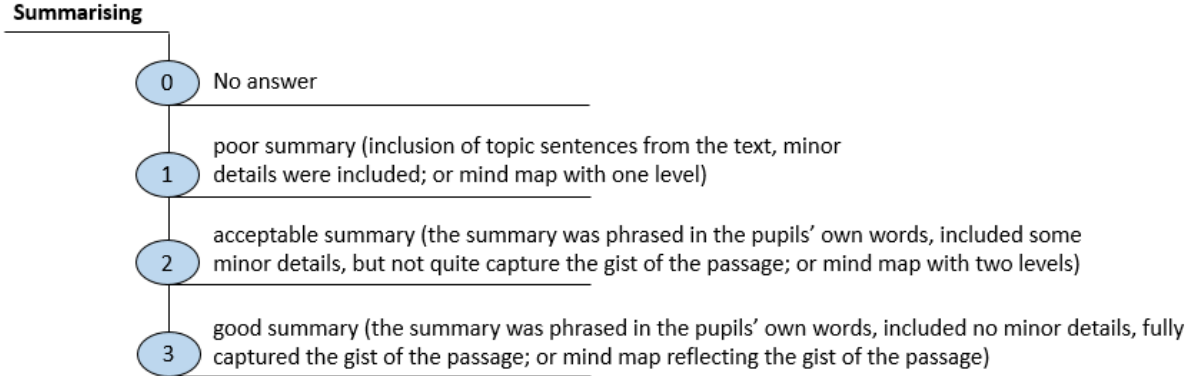


**Figure III.9. Assessment criteria for the clarifying strategy**

In the text of “The Durian Tree”, some difficult words and expressions needed to be clarified, such as: the favour of durian fruit is compared to honey stored for a long time [*mat ong gia ban*]; “the durian fruit” was named after a sad story of a couple who were considered the first people who farmed durian trees in the South of Vietnam and when the wife died of sickness, the husband decided to name for this kind of tree as a symbol of separateness.

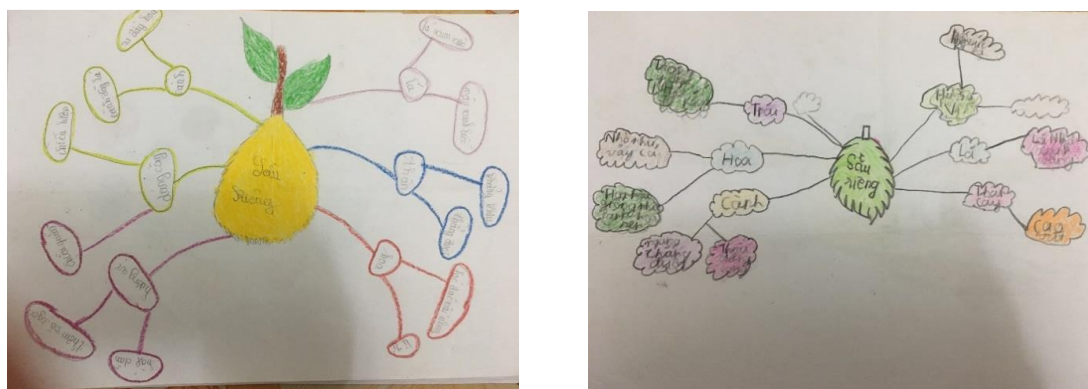
*b4. Summaries*

Finally, pupils were asked to write down a summary of the text. Pupils were encouraged to make the summaries based on their own words or mind map. The criteria assessment for summarising strategy was described in the Figure III.10.



**Figure III.10. Assessment criteria for the summarising strategy**

Some mind maps of “summary” strategy were made by pupils to summarise main ideas of the reading text.



**Figure III.11. Pupils' mind maps used to summarise the text "Durian" [Sau rieng] (Mai Van Tao)**

According to the matrix (Table III.8), the high-level strategy acquisition of the pre-test and post-test were organised with four questions requiring complex answers. The score for each question was described in four above figures, as follows: 0 – no answer; 1 – poor idea answer, 2 – acceptable ideas and 3 – fruitful ideas. Thus, the range of responses for this section was 0 – 12 and the total range of scores for pre-test [or post-test] was 0 – 26.

### III.3.5.2. Pupils' Perception Regarding the Instructional Model

To answer the second question: *What are the participating pupils' perception regarding the designed model through exploring their attitude and interest in learning with this model?*, the results discussion from the pupil questionnaire were gathered and analysed by the researcher. At post-test, pupils were asked questions to explore how they perceived the learning activities they participated during the intervention. Specifically, pupils responded to four items reflecting their interests and involvement in the training as well as their enjoyment of working in designed strategies and activities. The questionnaire consisted in the following questions: *Which approach do you like as learning Vietnamese language? Which learning forms do you like to participate in? Which learning activities are you interested in? What do you like about the classroom environment?* The three first questions are multiple-choice and the last is a question needing free-text answers.

## III.3.6. Results

### III.3.6.1. Effects of the Model on Pupils' Performance in Reading Comprehension and High-level Cognitive Strategies acquisition

We used Independent Samples t-test and ANOVA analysis (SPSS version 22) for the following aims: 1) measuring pre-test scores between groups to determine whether there

were differences between conditions (i.e., experimental and control) prior to the instruction; 2) comparing post-test scores between groups to explore whether there were differences between the conditions after experimental instruction.

### a. Pre-test Results Comparison

The results from one-way ANOVA combining with Levene statistic and Welch correction on the pre-tests, were as follows. Regarding the experimental group, about the variables of high-level cognitive strategies comprising “predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising” (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4), there were no statistically significant differences among the variables “predicting” and “questioning” at pre-test data ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) whereas “clarifying” and “summarising” made considerable differences ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, “summarising” strategy of the second experimental class of city central (Ex.Cen2) obtained the lowest score ( $M=0.93$ ;  $SD=1.068$ ) and “clarifying” strategy acquisition scores of two classes of the environ (Ex.En1, Ex.En2) got lower than the two counterparts in central ( $M=1.48$ ;  $M=1.38$ ;  $M=1.44$  respectively) (Figure III.12). Concerning the control group, there were not statistically different at the variable “predicting” between the two classes, whereas the three remaining variables were statistically different. Accordingly, the control class of the central got the higher scores than the control class of the environs (Figure III.13).

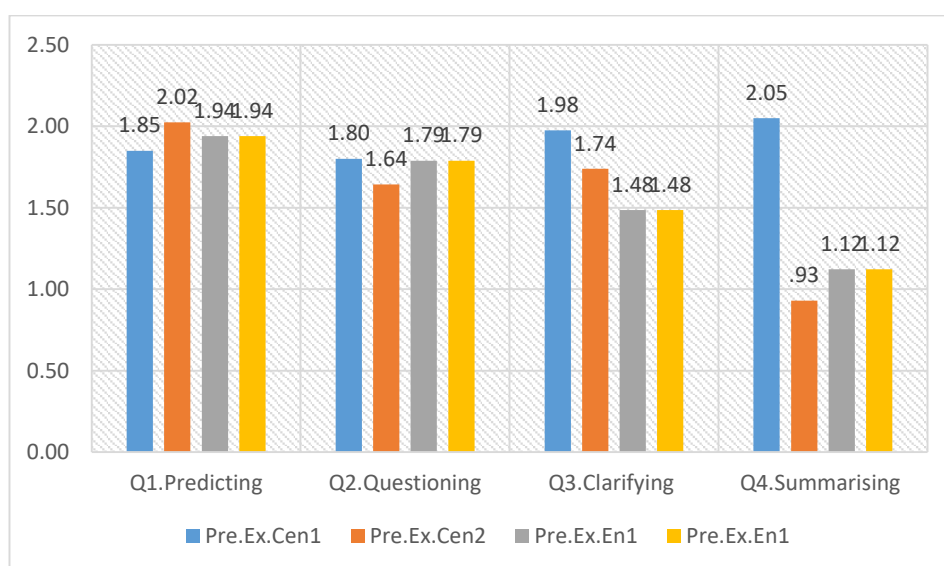
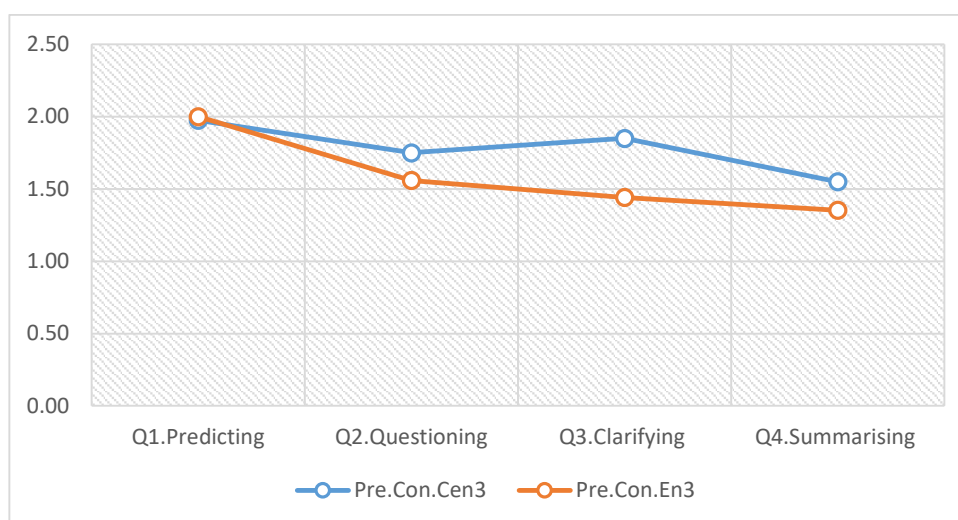


Figure III.12. Pre-test results of high-level cognitive acquisition of the experimental group





**Figure III.13. Pre-test results of high-level cognitive acquisition the control group**

Ex.Cen1: the first experimental class of city central; Ex.Cen2: the second experimental class of city central; Con.Cen3: the control class of city central. Ex.En1: the first class experimental class of city environ; Ex.En2: the second experimental class of city environ; Con.En3: the control class of city environ

Regarding the variables of pupils' reading comprehension competences at the pre-test results of the experimental group, only two variables "Reading" of Q8 and Q10 were statistically different. The question Q8 required pupils' competences of generalisation (i.e., main ideas of the passage or moral lessons learnt from the story etc.) and the question Q10 asked pupils to express their own ideas about the issues raised in the passages. Accordingly, the scores of the second experimental class of city central (Ex.Cen2) obtained at Q8 question and Q10 question were significantly lower than the others ( $M=1.07$ ;  $SD=0.921$  and  $M=0.95$ ;  $SD=1.103$  respectively) (see Figure III.14). There were no statistically significant differences between the variables of reading competences of the two control classes (Figure III.15).

It can be concluded from the pre-test results that the input scores of all cohorts was equal to each other. The two noticeable points were that 1) the scores of the class Ex.Cen2 at "clarifying", "summarising" of reading strategies and at "Q8", "Q10" of reading comprehension were lower than the others (with  $SD>1$ ); and 2) the scores that the three city-environ classes got at "clarifying" and "summarising" strategies were lower than the three counterparts. It can be inferred that pupils of the class Ex.Cen2 made a quite big gap each other toward two mentioned strategies; likewise, pupils of three environ classes also got lower scores at the two reading strategies (clarifying and summarising).

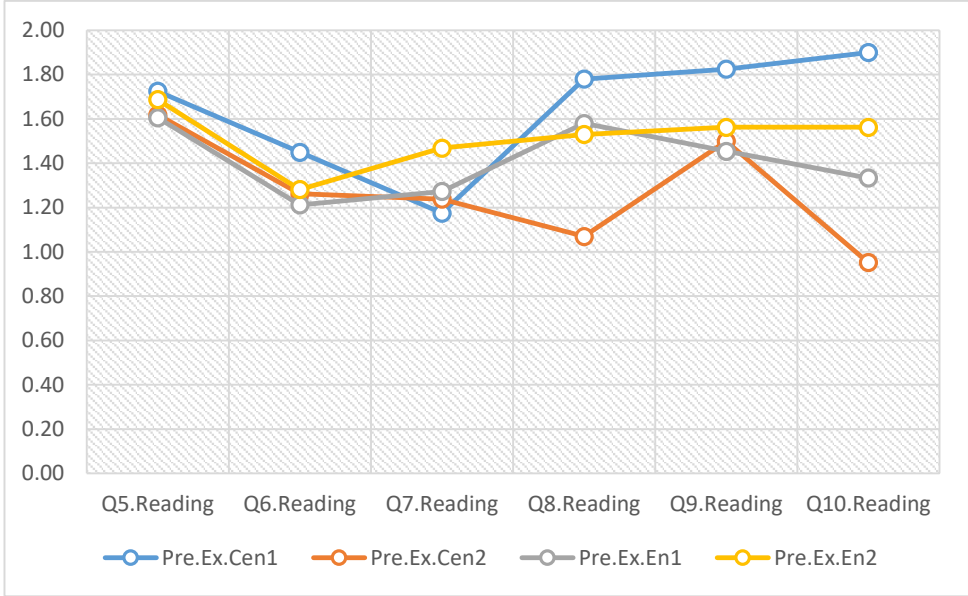


Figure III.14. Pre-test results of reading comprehension competences of the experimental group

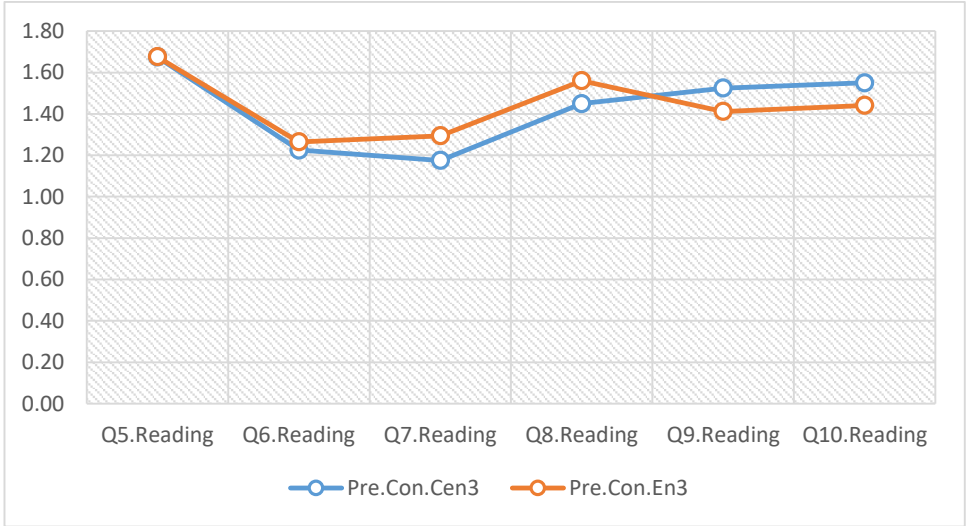


Figure III.15. Pre-test results of reading comprehension competences of the control group

**b. Post-test Results Comparison**

b<sub>1</sub>. Post-test results about high-level cognitive strategy acquisition and reading comprehension competences, respectively analysed by one-way ANOVA combined with Lenene statistics and Welch correction, were described in the following figures (III.16 to III.19).

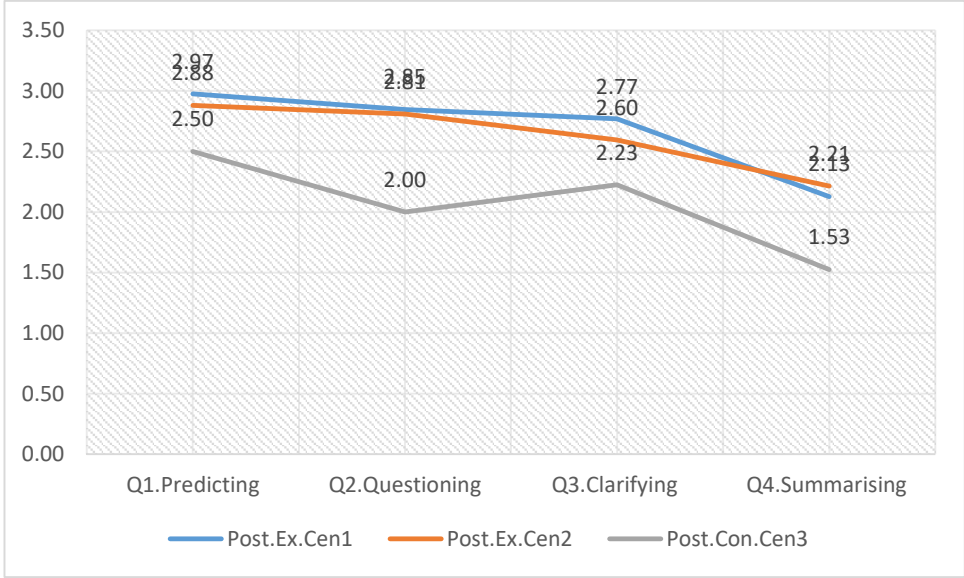


Figure III.16. Post-test results of cognitive strategy acquisition of the central group

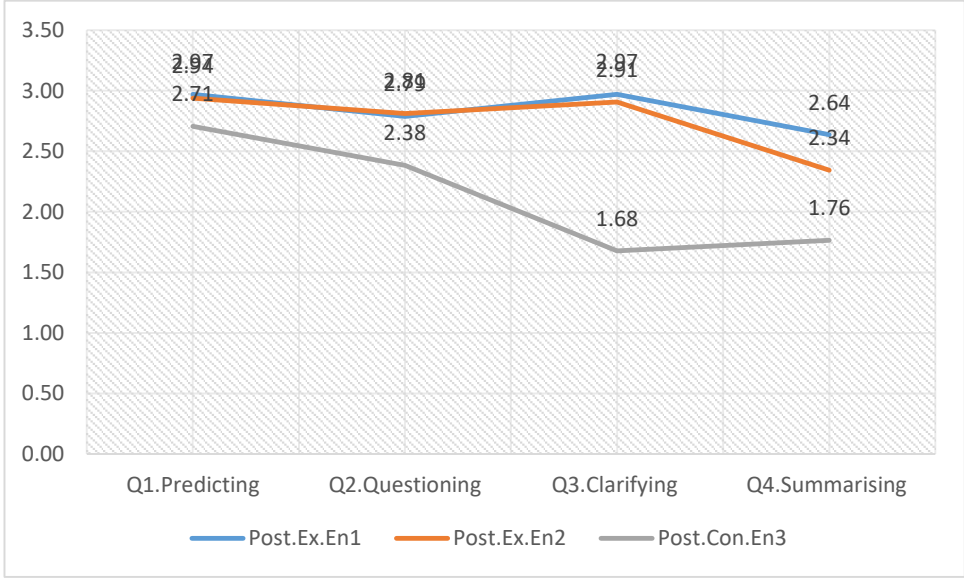
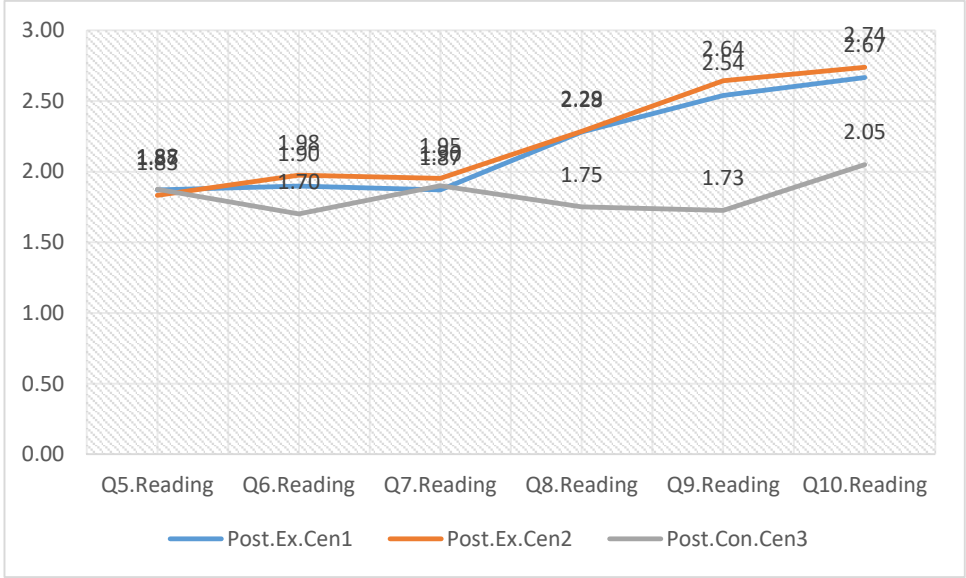
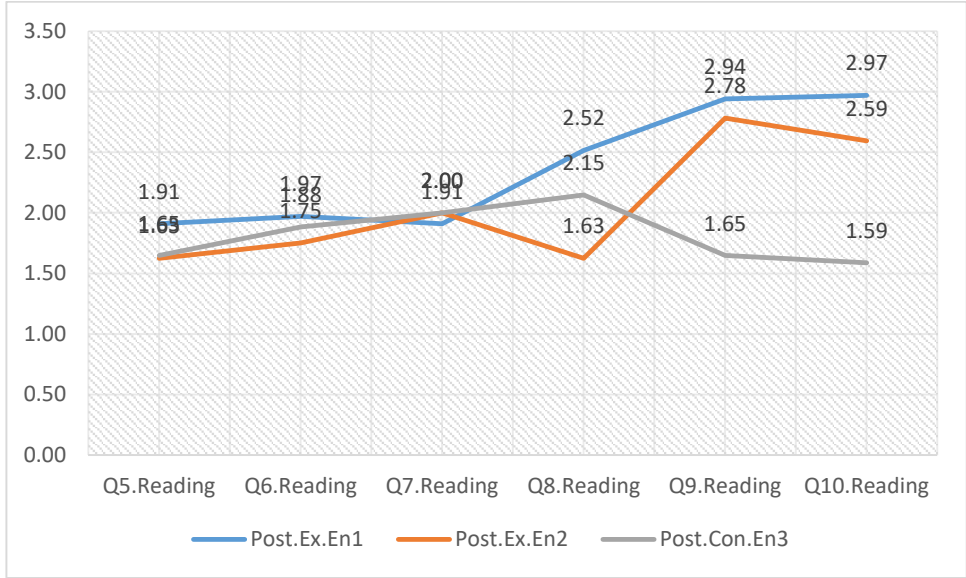


Figure III.17. Post-test results of cognitive strategy acquisition of the environ group





**Figure III.18. Post-test results of reading comprehension competences of the central group**



**Figure III.19. Post-test results of reading comprehension competences of the environ group**

It can be seen from the Figures that the scores the experimental classes of the city central and environ at four cognitive strategies acquisition (Figure III.16, Figure 17) and reading comprehension competences (Figure 18, Figure 19) were higher than those of control classes. However, these results needed to be cross-tested by Independent Samples t-test for each pair of pre- and post- experimental classes.

b<sub>2</sub>. Independent Samples *t*-test results on the first and the second experimental class of city central (Ex.Cen1 and Ex.Cen2)

Regarding the first class (Ex.Cen1), with Leneve’s test for equally of variances ( $p < 0.05$ ) and t-test values for equally of means ( $p < 0.05$ ), it can be concluded that there were statistically significant differences between prior and after the intervention of the variables as Q1 (predicting), Q2 (questioning) and Q6 (Reading comprehension). Continuing to make deep analysis for the cases of Levene’s test has values equal or bigger than 0.05, results showed that Q3 (clarifying), Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10 (reading comprehension) variables also were different before and after the lessons. The Q4 (summarising) and Q5 (reading comprehension) had  $p < 0.05$  but  $t$ -test values were bigger than 0.05 so their difference was not significant.

With the same analysis procedure for the second experimental class of the city central (Ex.Cen2), the results showed that all variables were statistically different at pre- and post-test, excepting Q5 (reading comprehension). Noticeably, the scores of “Q4. Summarising” as well as “Q8 and Q10” that the second experimental class of the city central (Ex.Cen2) obtained at pre-test were considerably improved in post-test (M=0.93; M=1.07; M= 0.95 at pre-test and M=2.21; M=2.29; M=2.74 respectively). However, the gap between score range of pupils in this class still remained ( $SD > 1$ ). The analysis results of pre- and post-tests of two experimental classes in city central are described in Figure III.20.

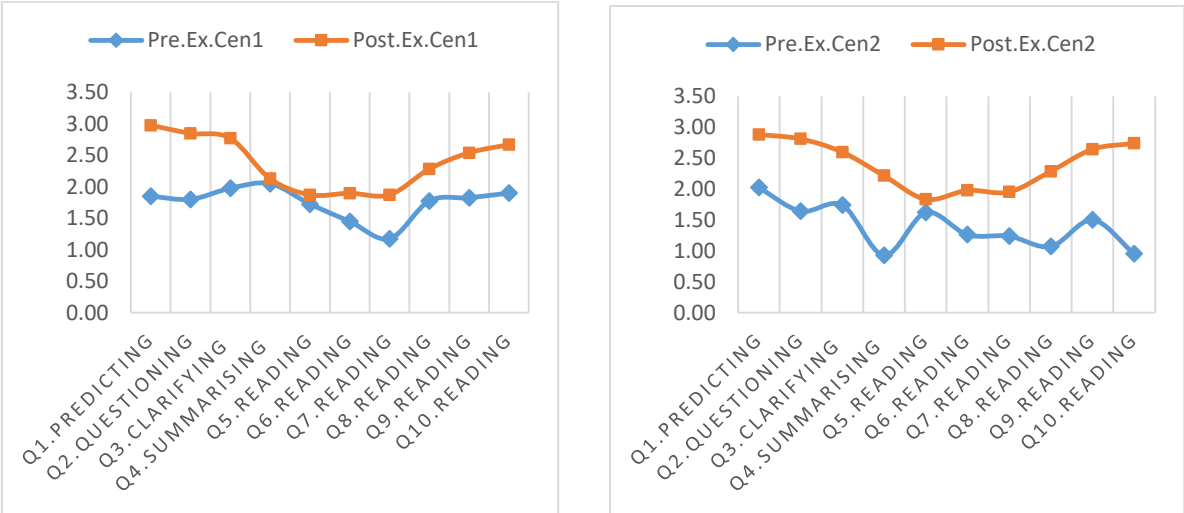
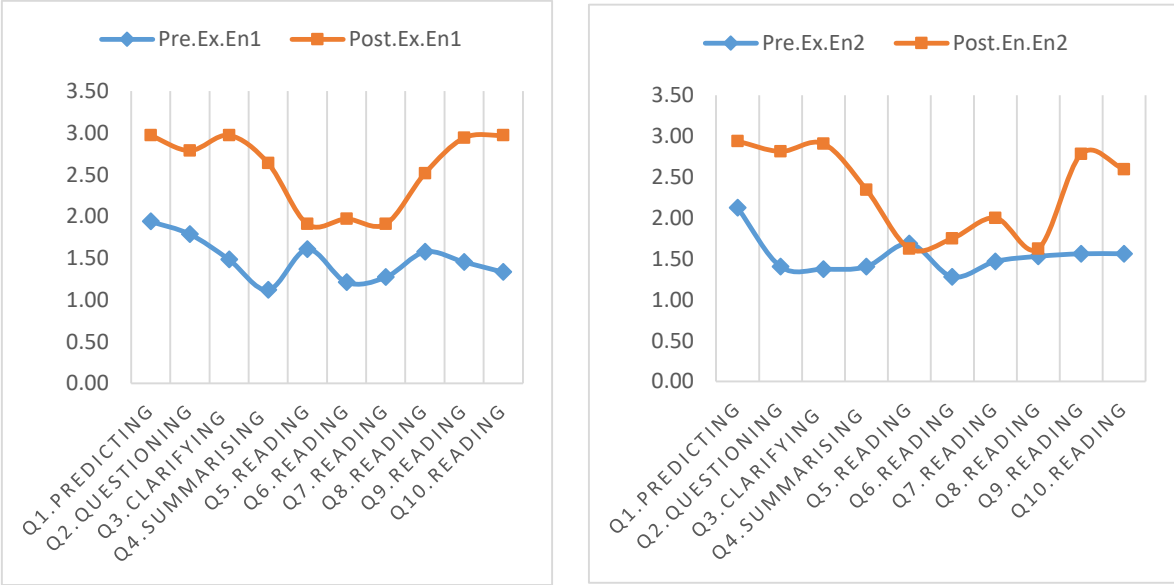


Figure III.20. Comparison between pre- and post-test of the experimental classes in the city central

b2. Independent samples  $t$ -test results on the first and the second experimental classes of city environ (Ex.En1 and Ex.En2)

In the same way, the use of independent samples *t*-tests to explore the differences between pre- and post-test results of the experimental classes and of city environs (Pre.Ex.En1 and Pre.Ex.En2; Post.Ex.En1 and Post.Ex.En2) indicated that the post-test results of the first experimental class in city environs were statistically different compared with those of pre-test; whereas the post-test results of the second class in city environ also were statistically different at all variables, excepting Q5 and Q8 (reading comprehension) (see Figure III.21). Notably, the low scores of “Q3.Clarifying” and “Q4.Summarising” that two experimental classes of city environ got at pre-test were also improved at post-test (M=1.43; M=1.26 at pre-test and M=2.94; 2.49 at post-test).



**Figure III.21. Comparison between pre- and post-test of the experimental classes in city environ**

b3. Independent Samples *t*-test results on the control classes of city central and environs (Con.Cen3 and Con.En3).

The use of Independent Samples *t*-test was aimed to check if there was any difference between the control classes of both locations of central and environ. The results are shown in Figure III.22.

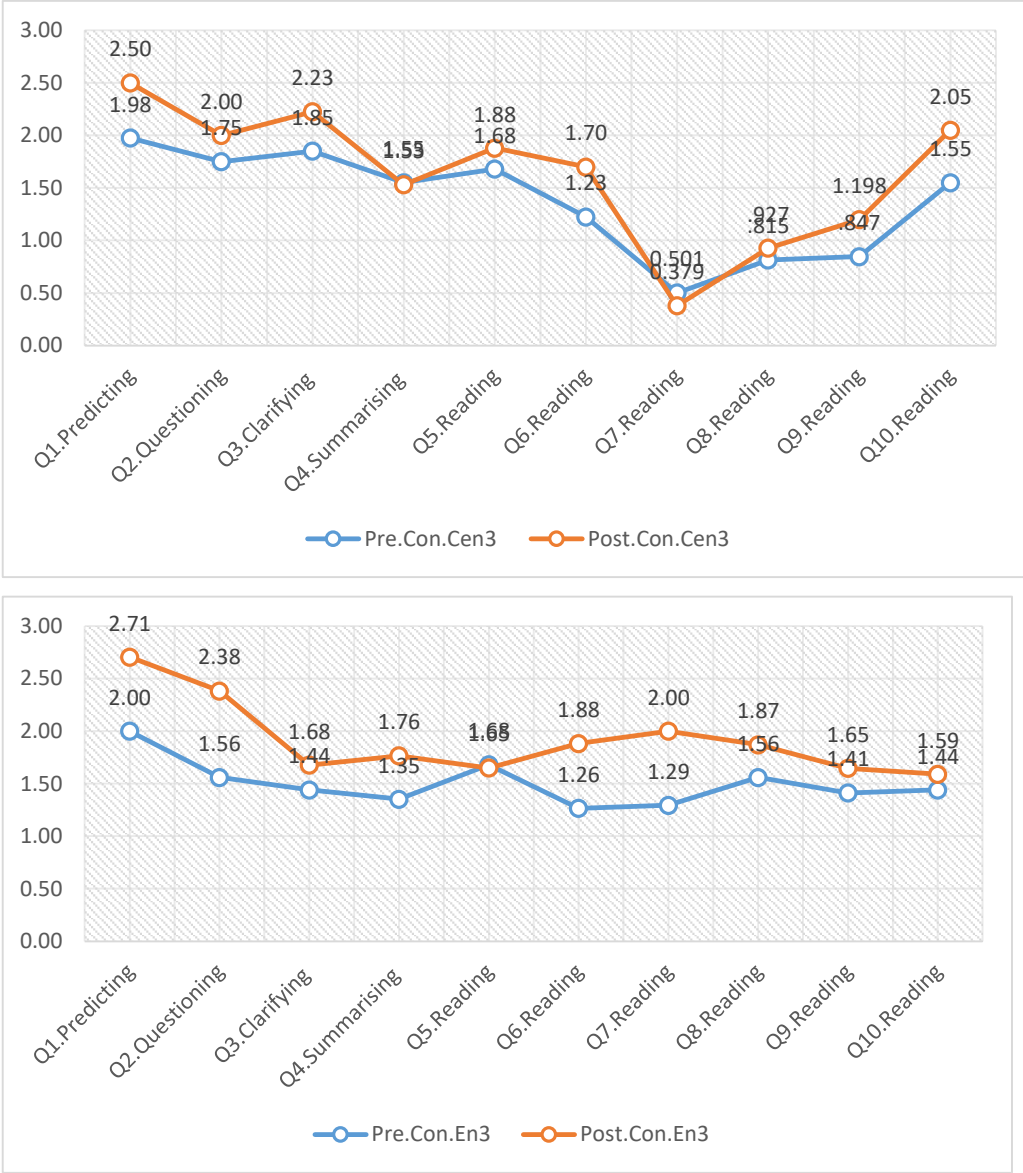


Figure III.22. Comparison between pre- and post-test of the control classes in central and environ

Accordingly, statistically significant differences were found at Q1 (predicting); Q6 and Q7 (multiple-choices reading comprehension) ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the first control class and Q1, Q2 (questioning) and Q6, Q7 for the second control class. However, there was no difference between other cognitive strategy acquisition for “Q3-Clarifying and Q4-Summarising”; and high-level thinking questions requiring pupils to generate complex answers for Q8, Q9 and Q10 ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**III.3.6.2. Pupils’ Perception Regarding the Designed Model**

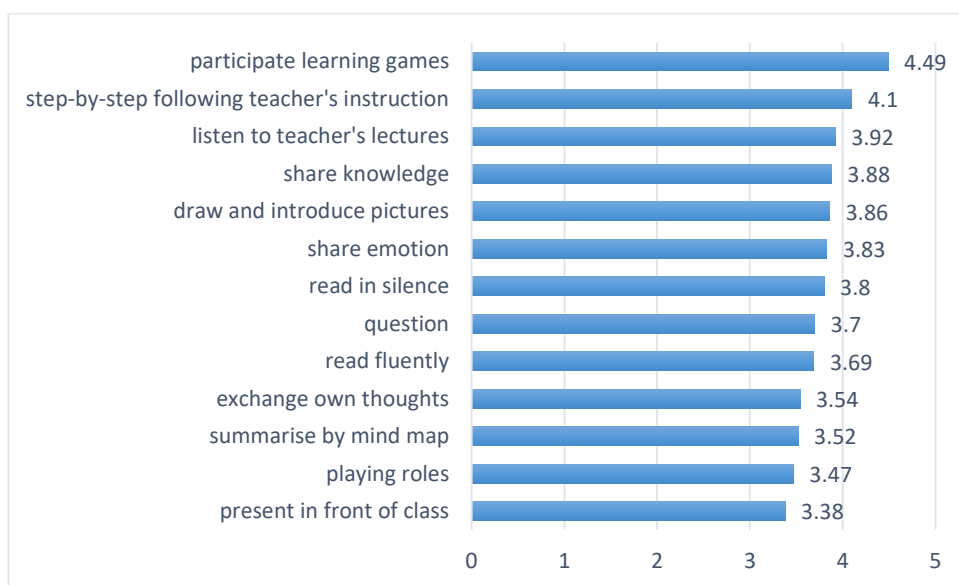
The results from the pupil questionnaire were employed and analysed to explore their perceptions on the experimental lessons they participated in. Pupils responded to four items

reflecting their interests and involvement in the training as well as their enjoyment of working in designed strategies and activities. The questionnaire consisted in the following questions: *Which approach do you like when learning Vietnamese language? Which learning forms do you like to participate in? Which learning activities are you interested in? What do you like about the classroom environment?* The three first questions are multiple choices and the last is an open-ended question (Appendix 10).

First, about the question asking pupils which approach in Vietnamese language lesson they like to learn with, 61.1% (N=134) of responders agreed with the approach “participating in learning activities, fulfilling learning tasks, doing exercises and reading materials to self-construct new knowledge” whereas 36.9% of pupils (N=87) liked “listening to teacher’s lecturing, taking notes and remembering new knowledge”.

Second, concerning the question on which learning forms pupils like to participate in, 47.1% (N=104) of the responders said that they liked to learn in small groups; 28.5% (N=63) of them preferred to learn in whole class; only 15.4% (N=34) were in favour of learning with peers and 9% (N=20) liked to learn individually.

Third, pupils were required to tick on the learning activities they desired to participate in. The magnitude of the means reflecting how much pupils liked the learning activities designed in the experimental lessons.



**Figure III.23. Pupils' perception toward the experimental lesson units**

Finally, pupils were asked to answer to the open-ended questions “What do you like about the classroom environment?”. There were a total of 148 pupils of four experimental classes who answered this question. Most of them (52%) said that they liked a “happy and free” classroom environment where the teacher and pupils shared their own ideas to each other in an equal manner; (16.1%) pupils had the opportunity to make questions about the lessons; played learning games combining (9%). The pupils also referred to work in group when all group members exchanged ideas, discussed and unified their point of view (12%). Besides, the pupils also expressed many personal ideas about their preference related to classroom environment and relationships with teacher/other pupils. For example, they preferred a lesson with various illustrated pictures; participating in role playing the characters of a story; summarising by mind map; learning with interesting and meaningful texts. Some pupils suggested learning Vietnamese language on tablets. Some of them expressed their disfavour with listening and taking too much in a class; they disliked to learn under heavy pressure. However, about 10% of pupils said that they liked to learn in a well-ordered class where teacher made lecture and pupils listened. It can be inferred that the learning habits influenced by Confucian theories has still an influence in the pupils’ thoughts and habits.

### **III.3.7. Conclusion and Discussion**

The main goals of this study were 1) to investigate the effects of a dialectical constructivism-aligned instructional model on fourth graders’ reading comprehension achievement and strategy acquisition; concurrently, to study the differential impact of practicing the designed model in the experimental group as compared to the control group, and 2) to determine pupils’ perception regarding to the designed model in practice. The following major results emerged from this study.

The results indicate that the dialectical constructivist-aligned model including five key features combining with high-level cognitive strategies can be successfully implemented in ordinary classrooms. Compared to conventional language lessons (the control classes without treatment) the intervention of a design-based model enhanced pupils’ mastery of reading comprehension competences at various types of genres comprising narrative, descriptive, poem and newspaper texts, and especially strengthened their high-level cognitive strategy acquisition for reading such as predicting, questioning, clarifying and

summarising. Furthermore, the tasks that were designed to generate pupils' complex responses were outperformed by the experimental groups at post-test. Hence, together with prior evidence reported in the intervention literature the above findings qualify the dialectical constructivist-based teaching as an instructional curriculum producing positive effects on the language and cognitive competences of fourth-grade primary school pupils.

The effects of the dialectical constructivist-aligned model on pupils' reading comprehension competences and high-level cognitive strategy acquisition are as follows. First, the intervention had definite effects on the reading comprehension competences of pupils in four experimental classes. Considering post-test results, the experimental pupils of four classes made considerable improvement at all reading levels designed in the post-tests including reading comprehension at basic levels (Q5, Q6, Q7) and even at high level (Q8, Q9, Q10). The experimental pupils were better able to give responses on high-level thinking questions that required complex answers such as give their own ideas for a controversial issue, taking the role of a character in story to give his/her decision, or writing their own emotion and perception for a story etc.

Second, regarding control classes, pupils in the experimental groups scored higher on the questions of high-level cognitive strategies (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4) of predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising when reading a text at post-test. Third, although control class pupils also improved their scores at post-test, the improvement focused more on reading comprehension at basic levels (Q5, Q6, Q7 of the test), rather than on reading comprehension at high levels. Besides, they got lower scores at four cognitive strategies rather than their counterparts.

In addition, the designed model was experimented at two locations: city central and city environs that entailed differences concerning the socioeconomic condition of pupils' families and learning materials of schools. The advantages of the experimental classes in the city environ were the small number of pupils of one class (from 32 to 34 pupils) whereas there were usually from 40 to 45 pupils in a city classes. After the experiment, however, the two cohorts of the city central and environs did not differ from each other with respect to the reading comprehension and cognitive strategy acquisition. The data output also showed that the different ranges of the two experimental classes in the environ before and after the experiment was higher than those of the two experimental classes of the city central.



Especially, the tasks belonging to Experience phase of the designed model were performed frequently and fully by the experimental classes from environs rather than central classes. These experiential tasks were aimed at training pupils with integrated language skills (such as communicative skills through making presenting in front of class, role-playing, drawing and introducing the pictures etc.). The big-size classes of the city central partially constrained the teachers for fulfilling sufficiently these experiential tasks as in the designed model. Under the VNEN model, the teachers must divide the class time period to work and instruct each group, the large number of groups certainly took them more time. Besides, the schools, classes and teachers of the city central were put under heavy pressures from standard curriculum allotment and time limitation for each class that require them to “control” the lesson units in the right time demanded. So the teachers had to try finish their class on time and it was difficult for them to complete the experiential tasks.

To summarise, pupils who participated in the experimental conditions showed high performances in reading comprehension competences at all levels of standardised tests and high-level cognitive strategy acquisition. These results, on one side, add to the extent knowledge of constructivist-aligned design (Biggs and Tang, 2012; Flynn, 2004) in the sense that the relative advantages of teaching and learning activities and high-level cognitive strategies were integrated into the designed model. The designed model takes the role of an instructional guideline specific enough for teachers to know with certainty what they should do when teaching the lessons. The lack of a clear description of strategies and activities for each designed phase may confuse the teachers. On the other side, these results from the experimental research modified the reading intervention literature (Hattie, 2009; Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Rosenshine and Meister, 1994) in terms of how a dialectical constructivism-based model can be combined in comprehension instruction to achieve specific outcome reading competences that were described in the outcome competence standard. In addition, under VNEN model in Vietnam context, working in small groups characterised with one-way interaction revealed to be ineffective. The application of the designed model combining specific cognitive strategies in small heterogeneous groups with taking in-turns to be the dialogue leader were identified as effective elements of reading instruction.





## **PART IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**



## **IV.1. A summary of the Research Program**

This section will describe the conclusions we have reached about the research questions posed in the Introduction section of the thesis. The first two research questions were about exploring VNEN teachers' beliefs: 1) about the self-study textbooks in supporting the teachers to implement the constructivist approach, and 2) regarding the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in teaching mother language. The discussions of these two research questions will then point towards recommendations in the two next studies on the last three questions: 3) about the appropriate designed-model to enacting the dialectical constructivist approach in primary Vietnamese language education within the cultural and educational context of Vietnam; 4) regarding changes in the teaching and learning process of primary Vietnamese language education through the enactment of the dialectical constructivism-based instructional model in the cultural and educational context of Vietnam, and 5) concerning the effects of this pattern on primary school pupils' performance in reading comprehension, and the cognitive strategy acquisition.

### **Teachers' Beliefs Regarding VNEN Textbooks**

The first study (Chapter II.1) was undertaken to find out to what extent the VNEN teachers thought that the self-study textbooks support them to implement the VNEN constructivist pedagogy which was launched in 2012 at primary education in Vietnam. The VNEN textbooks are considered as a design of self-study materials that are declared by the VNEN developers as the preeminent tools to support teachers in implementing the constructivist approach. VNEN teachers are encouraged to use the textbooks in flexible and autonomous ways; however, under the policy of centralised control of curriculum and textbooks maintained for more than five decades in Vietnam, the first study concerns about the teachers' thoughts and beliefs of the textbooks they have used in practice to implement the constructivist approach.

The way of exploring theories for the research work started with looking into the policies of the Escuela Nueva (EN), an educational model coming from Colombia, especially about its self-study textbooks and seeing what the relevant intellectual work of the Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN) developers was. In this exploration, we identified mismatches 1) between the original policies/background theories of the EN and the interpretation of these

policies/theories in the Vietnamese government texts; and 2) between the requirements in theory and their implementations in practices.

For the first divergence, in the EN context, the curriculum and textbooks are characterised as “grass-rooted” materials that are built by local teachers so that the educational contents are both meeting the national standard of knowledge and skills, and being the most appropriate materials for their local pupils. Accordingly, the educational contents of EN model are tightly related to pupils’ daily lives, as such, the teachers are autonomous in developing the teaching materials that are mainly created by their “idea inputs” based on the pupils’ practical needs. Meanwhile, in the VNEN context, the curriculum and textbooks of VNEN are featured by centralised control under top-down mechanisms that were maintained as a Vietnamese education historical feature. The educational contents were defined and described meticulously by the self-study textbook composers. The teachers’ remaining works are observing, supporting, and evaluating how the educational contents to be conducted as being described in these textbooks.

For the second deviation, the textbooks are considered as a tool to support the teachers to implement the constructivist approach. To fulfil this support, the textbooks are designed so as to help pupils to self-construct their knowledge with the instruction of the teacher and the pupils’ own pace should be respected. In VNEN-based teaching and learning, activity/task-based learning is claimed as a basic theory to design the textbooks. In practice, the VNEN textbooks are designed as ready-made exercises, meticulous procedure of learning activities, or True-False, multiple choice questions that pupils only need to fill in the available template, rather than to express their own understandings, language-use capacity, and high-level thinking.

Besides, the first study results showed that the self-study textbooks are believed by the teachers as the foremost and unique material for their teaching, they have tendency to follow the commands in the textbook rather than giving their own decisions of teaching and learning contents in their classroom. We may conclude that although the VNEN developers expected to decrease the over-reliance on the textbooks of the teachers, the VNEN policies in general and the policy of the self-instructional textbooks in particular, seemed not to be implemented in practice.

## **Teachers' Beliefs Regarding the Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language**

The second study (Chapter II.2) was targeted to unfold complicated layers of the VNEN teachers' beliefs and understandings about the constructivist approach that is described as core pedagogy of VNEN model. We identified a tendency towards an over-simplified interpretation of the constructivist approach in VNEN official documents, compared with the sophisticated concepts advanced in the international context. Some key features of the constructivist pedagogy that are approved in the international literature were observed to be missing or simplified, or even sometimes differently understood within the VNEN reform. In detail, first, the feature of “self-construct new knowledge” and “respect pupils' own pace to explore new knowledge” are believed to fulfil through three-phase lessons designed in the textbooks and ten-step learning applied for all pupils in each lesson. Second, scaffolding strategy to support pupils' cognition is also believed to conduct through complete tasks/exercises/questions in the textbooks, especially through the ready-made format that helps pupils complete the exercises by themselves.

Besides, from the survey results of the VNEN teachers' beliefs regarding the constructivist pedagogy, mismatches between the articulated beliefs and actual practices were found. On one side, the teachers expressed their understandings and approvals regarding the constructivist approach in teaching primary Vietnamese language, as well as showed the position of the constructivism-approved teachers. On the other side, in practice, they appeared to over-rely on the available designs of the textbooks and VNEN's policies as technicians rather than professionals. The teachers' fulfilment in practice was in line with their long-held beliefs that having been established through the contexts of culture and education of Vietnam. In addition, the contextual factors such as workload, teaching to tests, big classes, and time considerations and so were found as reasons hindering the teachers' autonomy.

## **The Design of a Dialectical Constructivism-aligned Pattern in Teaching Primary Vietnamese Language**

With the aim to enhance the quality of teaching Vietnamese language at primary schools, a design-based instructional model was built in order to enact the dialectical constructivist

approach in the cultural and educational context of Vietnam. The design is aimed at closely referencing the constructivist alignment theory suggested by Biggs (2014). The components of the instructional model comprised Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); a framework including components Educational Functions, Teaching/Learning Activities (TLAs) and Assessment Activities (ATs), and the Exemplary lessons. The model components were deployed through three learning phases: Engagement, Discovery, and Experience. The designed framework was targeted to apply initially in Reading subject of primary education programme, for Fourth Graders. The model aimed at rigorously harmonising between the dialectical constructivist pedagogy and the Vietnamese context of culture and education. The model was aimed at overcoming the barriers of the local cultural and educational features regarding the constructivism-based teaching and learning.

### **Effects of the dialectical Constructivist-aligned Learning Pattern in Teaching Vietnamese Language at Primary Schools**

The dialectical constructivism-aligned pattern was employed in an experimental research, initially applied in Reading lessons for fourth graders of primary schools. The research procedure was organised into three phases with the corresponding aims as follows:

- 1) The first was preparation phase had four functions, including inviting the participant teachers to share their prior knowledge of the constructivist approach in teaching Vietnamese language (e.g., Reading lessons); introducing the dialectical constructivist-aligned pattern and the lesson that was intensively based on the designed pattern; providing more explanations on the instructional strategies; inviting the teachers to contribute with their ideas on the exemplary lesson; and going to an agreement on the method to collaboratively work during the experimental period, so that to generate cooperation, self-regulation, and self-reflection among participants.

- 2) The second phase was teaching and observing the reading classes in which the designed pattern was applied. The phase started with co-teaching classes between the researcher and teachers in order to train the latter to employ the model in practice, along with calling the teachers to share pedagogical ideas based on the model. Besides, this phase was also aimed at introducing pupils with the learning strategies to work within the experimental lessons. The experimental results that were expected included positive effects on pupils' language

competences and high-level cognitive strategies; and opportunities for the teachers to apply the knowledge of the designed pattern to classroom practice and acquire the practical knowledge of the dialectical constructivist-aligned model.

3) The third phase created opportunities for the teachers to make reflections on their teaching process in practice in order to unfold their perceptions regarding to the constructivist-aligned model and challenges of the pattern implementation in specific context of culture and education. Besides, this phase was targeted to explore the pupils' attitudes about the constructivist-based learning activities they participated during the experiment.

From the experimental results, an improvement was observed at the components of teaching and learning process that was based on the dialectical constructivist approach. In detail, the dialectical constructivism-based teaching and learning was implemented by the teacher participants, including 1) defining the learning aims based on measurable outcome competences rather than based on unmeasurable prescribed objectives; 2) creating opportunities for pupils to express their own ideas and understandings to construct new knowledge by themselves, rather than receiving passively from teachers and/or textbooks; 3) respecting equal and friendly interaction between pupils and teachers, among pupils; 4) aiming at connecting pupils' comprehensive prior knowledge to new knowledge, especially concerning pupils' experience in practice; 5) changing from the role of correct-answer provider to scaffolders through creating prompts and content feedbacks; 6) and employing portfolio-based assessment instead of only summative assessment.

Besides, the study results reflected the positive effects of model on pupils' performance in reading comprehension competences and cognitive strategy acquisition such as predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarising. The pupils of the experimental group outperformed the pupils of the control group at all measured competences, especially at high-level reading comprehension requiring pupils' own expression and ideas. At the same time, the pupils of experimental classes at the city environs showed their wider range of improvement than their counterparts at city central. One point can be inferred from this result is that the heavy pressures central city teachers borne in big-sized classes and time limitation partially created constraints to the effectiveness of the experiment.



Furthermore, the experimental teachers and pupils' perceptions toward the designed model were also measured. Accordingly, the teachers agreed that the experiment improved the pupils' reading comprehension competences and high-level cognitive strategies. Besides, their pupils showed the confidence, activeness and cooperation each other rather than the conventional VNEN classes.

Finally, throughout the teachers' perception collection, the challenges of the designed curriculum implementation were revealed. From the teachers' point of view, they must effort to change their beliefs and habits in teaching that were deeply influenced by Confucian theories, on order to make their teaching practices appropriate with dialectical constructivist approaches. Likewise, they needed to update themselves with deep understandings of Vietnamese language lessons. The big challenges also came from institutional system that brought heavy pressures on the teachers such as big-sized classes with insufficient material equips, many achievements needed to be obtained, strict schedule of national curriculum standard and current evaluation system on teachers' quality.

## **IV.2. Lessons from the Research**

In terms of the theoretical framework, in the scope of this research, we focused on synthesising and developing the theories of constructivist approach in teaching and learning, especially about dialectical constructivism what comprises the mediation among different concepts. Accordingly, we defined five core features of the dialectical constructivist approach in teaching and learning, consisting 1) Knowledge is self-constructed by learners, 2) Learning is social participation, 3) Knowledge is experience-based and authentic tasks, 4) Learning stresses scaffolding, and 5) Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable. The five features took role as anchors for surveying teachers' beliefs regarding the constructivist approach through integrating them into the questionnaires; for observing classroom meetings to gauge the teachers' beliefs to be implemented in practices; and for designing and experimenting a designed framework based on the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in teaching mother language in Vietnamese context.

In addition, the theoretical framework of teachers' beliefs and their relationships with teaching practices, and methods used to explore teachers' beliefs were studied and chosen so as to be appropriate to the research context. Accordingly, two methods that are

employed to explore teachers' beliefs in this research were *scenarios* (e.g., video form as subjects' own classroom teaching and spoken form as part of an interview) and *metaphors* (i.e., mapping the terrain and analysing discourse). Since each method has its strengths and weaknesses in disclosing teachers' beliefs, a mixed-method methodology with triangulating data sources in studying beliefs was suggested and used. The research employed multi-layers of research methodologies including 1) survey questionnaire, classroom observation, in-depth interviews and content analysis to collect both qualitative and quantitative data of teachers' beliefs and practices; 2) pedagogically experimented method followed with classroom observation, survey and open-questions to pupils, teachers' self-reflection after every class meeting to gather the data of changes in teaching practice, the improvements of pupils' language competence and high-level thinking skills, the teachers' conceptions and pupils' attitudes regarding the dialectical constructivist-aligned pattern in reading education.

Furthermore, theory frameworks of the design-based research and constructivist alignment were combined and employed in order to design a dialectical constructivist-aligned pattern and to build exemplary lessons based on this pattern. On one side, a design-based research is a methodology that seeks to increase the impact, transfer, and translation of the dialectical constructivist approach into the practice of teaching Vietnamese language. In our empirical research, the design-based research was an important methodology for gauging the deep understandings of how, when, and why pedagogical innovations work in practice. Especially, constructivist alignment took role as lightening and supportive theory for design-based learning pattern when it keeps an agreement between teaching-learning activities, assessment with intended learning outcomes. The matching between the design-based literature and constructivist alignment theory stimulated the assurance of integrating and synthesising the dialectical constructivist features into Vietnamese context of education and culture.

Finally, in order to create gradual changes in teaching and learning practice, as well as in teachers' beliefs about the constructivism-based learning pattern, the process of Learning through action was operated during the experimental period. Through the process of identifying issues emerging from the classes, gathering data about them, interpreting the data, acting on evidence, and evaluating-reflecting on action. The Learning through action

process created gradual changes in teachers' awareness regarding to the constructivism-based teaching and learning.

### **IV.3. Recommendations for Educational Improvements**

The Basic Education Programme published at the end of 2018 has been used as basis for building textbooks from Grade 1 to Grade 12 and for making innovations in terms of educational mission and goals, teaching and learning methodologies and assessment, professional development and the educational policy. The school year 2020–2021 is aimed at launching the new textbooks for First Graders. Therefore, groups of textbooks composers are intensively completing their works in composing Grade-1 textbooks. The process of textbook assessment will be carried out by the committee of educators and teachers invited by Vietnamese MoET. A number of findings from the research evoked to us recommendations for textbooks improvements in the context of Vietnamese education.

One cannot deny textbooks have pervasive influences on education around the world and the tradition of bookish learning model is applied in a great number of nations, especially in developing countries with a shortage of educational investment and with low-qualification teachers. The teachers' beliefs regarding the textbook roles gauged in this study imply that the quality of textbooks should shape the teachers' pedagogical competence to some degree. The recommendations for textbook change in this research is like an attempt for the mediation of possible conflict between the use of textbooks and the teachers' autonomy. Accordingly, the future textbooks in general and specifically language teaching textbook at primary schools that should be composed in the light of the constructivist approach should be flexible in structure. Furthermore, they should be as broad as possible in topics and contents of learning, methods to learn so that there are a free range for teachers' involvement.

In order to acquire these requirements regarding the future textbooks, we advance some details for orientations to the textbooks changes that could be implemented in Vietnam, including: 1) the content load of textbooks needs to be carefully gauged about the amount of topics, contents, tasks, exercises, questions... so that it does not overload teachers and pupils. To fulfil this, the prescribed textbooks should be replaced by an outcome competence-based design with the description of criteria for teachers and pupils to assess and self-assess learning outcomes; 2) the future textbooks should be designed in a flexible

way that can be readily altered and remixed in order to create opportunities for teachers to promote their autonomy in teaching and professional developments through applying the textbooks in practices; 3) The lessons of the language textbooks should be organised into authentic tasks that require pupils to use their prior knowledge with their own methods and capacities, at the same time, pupils can self-construct new knowledge; 4) concerning learning assessment, traditional tests should be combined with alternatives such as projects, practical assignments, oral work, and portfolio-based assessment. This would be a significant way to reduce the pressure on teachers and pupils to cope with the examination.

According to the current directions of the Vietnamese MoET, local schools and teachers have autonomy in choosing textbooks for their educational and teaching activities among many sets of textbooks appraised by the MoET committee. In order to fulfil the above recommendation, groups of textbook editors need to have proper awareness of the constructivist pedagogical theory and the constructivism-based textbooks, so that future textbooks own relevant features supporting teachers to implement the constructivist approach. If not, under the top-down mechanism, teachers' right to choose textbooks for their teaching practice is decided by the committee of Department of Education and Training at locals, and adhered by local school boards.

In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning Vietnamese language at primary schools in Vietnamese context, this research designed a learning pattern aligned with the dialectical constructivist approach, and experimented this pattern in teaching practice through the exemplary lessons designed in Reading education. Within this research, there are six lessons that were designed to illustrate the pattern ideas. This number of lessons is too small compared with total amount of lessons in the primary school reading curriculum. In order to apply and develop the dialectical constructivist-based teaching and learning in local context, there is a need to enhance the number of lessons that are designed to aligned with the dialectical constructivism to meet the whole curriculum from Grade 1 to Grade 5. We suggest the deep involvement of local teachers in designing dialectical constructivist-based reading lessons specifically, and the Vietnamese language curriculum in general. The model of co-designing and co-teaching between the researchers and teacher participants need to be considered as an effective method to enhance the possibility of gradually applying the designed pattern on teaching practice, because the teachers will initiatively

appropriate their long-held beliefs with the pedagogical approach of dialectical constructivism.

The application of the dialectical constructivism-based learning pattern on practice meets challenges from the teachers themselves and from the institutions. From the standpoint of the teachers, they admitted that they need to be equipped with deep knowledge and skills to apply the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in order to become more autonomous and confident in their practice. At the same time, the teachers stressed that they needed to carefully prepare Vietnamese language lessons that are outside the textbooks, especially using authentic and local knowledge. Noticeably, the teachers thought that the most challenging task to them is the changes in habits relying on long-held beliefs. Besides, the application of the constructivist-aligned learning pattern also met the challenges coming from the institution, including: the teachers suffer serious pressures top-down mechanism that make them over-loaded, big-size classes, time pressure, and so on.

Teachers are important factors bringing the most influence in pedagogical reforms. They need help to be agents of change. Therefore, the prerequisite tasks rigorously construct an effective model of teachers' professional development to meet the shift from knowledge transmission pedagogy into knowledge self-construction at the classroom level in Vietnamese context of education and culture. The model of co-designing and co-teaching organised in an action through non-stop circle learning is considered as an effective tool to support the teachers' professional development. Based on this model, each individual teacher has to mediate, interpret then accommodate and reflect on what is represented in the training documents from their personal contexts, schools and community. Each teacher of Vietnamese culture and education that inherited from Confucian theories need to have her own experience and reflection when she interacts with the dialectical constructivist-aligned learning pattern.

### **IV.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

First, in the experimental study, there were six participant teachers (four of experimental classes and two of control classes) and six classes of pupils (approximately 210 pupils). This number of teachers cannot be representative of the population. Therefore, the research results of the experimental research cannot provide firm evidence to develop assertions or generalisations. In future research, a sufficiently large number of teachers should be invited

to participate in similar research. Accordingly, the variously specific context of locals along with local teachers will provide fruitful information about the feasibility of applying the dialectical constructivist pedagogy in primary Vietnamese language education.

Second, under the pressure of time limitation for each class meeting, the teachers, especially the teachers in city, showed a limited investment in the authentic tasks of each lesson that mainly required pupils to solve simple language tasks. Therefore, the pupils had a few chances to be trained to integrate knowledge and skills through the authentic tasks.

Third, concerning the experimental results, the “summarising” strategy has not been mastered by the experimental pupils. From our observation during the experiment, this strategy challenged pupils for the following reasons: 1) depending on different genres of texts, there were appropriate forms of summary but primary pupils had not been acquainted sufficiently with such genres and corresponding forms of summary; 2) reading education at primary schools in Vietnam has not focused on training “summary” skills for pupils. Rather, teachers usually help pupils to practise how to read aloud emotionally and appropriately with the genre of texts. As a result, pupils felt confused to make a summary for the texts.

Fourth, regarding the pupils’ attitudes towards the experimental instructional model, we only set the target to collect data from the experimental class pupils. Therefore, the conclusion of the pupils’ attitudes just focused on analysing the pupils of the experimental classes. We did not gather data from control class pupils’ attitudes on the VNEN model-based reading lessons so the comparative analysis between two cohorts could not be done.

Fifth, in Vietnam, it is not normal to make research bringing to results that may be different, even contrary to the research conclusions made by the government. At the same time with this research, the government declared the VNEN model is a “scaling up” of educational innovations with a success exceeding the expectation. The evidences are provided that there are many schools over the country that have volunteered to join the VNEN model without the economic supports from the government. There is few objective research about the VNEN application inside the country although heavy controversies about the VNEN application on Vietnamese education happen daily in media (newspapers). Therefore, the data collected, analysed and interpreted in this research partly reflected the researchers’ understandings which may involve some bias.

Sixth, the research covered a big amount of descriptive data; besides, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in this research is not new but is always complicated in application. Meshing numerical and narrative data to understand the phenomenon and experimental result caused us some difficulty, sometime led us to get lost in the research results being analysed.

Concerning future research stemming from this research, the directions for future textbooks created a need for research on the quality of the current textbook against the principles of the dialectical constructivist approach. From this, the research to discuss about how to compose textbooks to meet the requirements of the future textbooks as mentioned above should be conducted. Furthermore, the research focusing on the model of developing teachers' profession need to be carried out in order to help local teachers be equipped with deep understandings regarding the dialectical constructivist pedagogy so that they can make appropriate pedagogical decisions following a constructivism-based approach.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 : Teacher Questionnaire 1 (Chapter II.1)

#### TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

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Dear,

I am undertaking this survey as a part of my research on a PhD Educational Science at The University of Grenoble Alpes in France. The aim's study is to examine teachers' beliefs and understandings toward constructivist approach, a core pedagogy of the Vietnam Escuela Nueva (VNEN) project, in the Vietnamese language education at primary schools.

Questions in this survey are aimed to collect research data. I would be extremely grateful if you would answer the following checklist. Or you can refuse to take part in responding the checklist if you feel uncomfortable.

The checklist should take about 30 minutes to complete and is anonymous and confidential, so please do not write your name on the paper.

The information you provide will be used for data analysis only. Once the checklist is returned, the responses will be aggregated with all the other returns. The data will be analysed using appropriate computer software.

The findings of the research will be available at the end of December 2016. If you would like to receive a summary of my findings, please send me your address details separately.

If you have ANY queries, do not hesitate to contact the researcher, The Department of Primary and Pre-School Education, School of Education, Can Tho University. Office phone: (84) 07103 872 355; Mobile phone: (84) 939 021 878, Email: [lnhoa@ctu.edu.vn](mailto:lnhoa@ctu.edu.vn).

Thank you very much for your support.

Le Ngoc Hoa

### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

*Please give the following to help in the analysis of this questionnaire by tick X mark into the blank squares that described the most suitable with your opinion.*

+ Age: ...

+ The location characteristics:  Urban       Rural

+ Total number of years in teaching

1 – 5 years       6 – 10 years       11 – 20 years       over 20 years

+ Highest level of qualification

Higher school graduated + pedagogical training    College    University

+ Briefly describe its teaching and learning materials:

Poorly equipped       Average equipped       Quite well equipped

### B. BELIEFS ABOUT THE SELF-STUDY TEXTBOOKS OF VIETNAMESE LANGAUGE TEACHING AT PRIMARY EDUCATION

*Pleased state your thought with each indicator/ statement below according to five-point Likert Scale form the lowest agreement extreme (Strongly disagree) to the highest extreme (Strongly agree):*

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>Which description is the most suitable with the self-study textbooks?</b>					
--	--	--	--	--	--

1. A meticulous and fixed learning procedure of activities for teacher and pupils to adhere	①	②	③	④	⑤
---	---	---	---	---	---

2. A flexible procedure of learning activities prompting for teachers' instruction	①	②	③	④	⑤
--	---	---	---	---	---



**C. BELIEFS ABOUT TO WHAT EXTENT THE SELF-STUDY TEXTBOOK SUPPORT TEACHER TO IMPLEMENT THE DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM**

<b>C1. Knowledge is constructed by learners</b>					
3. Pupils' involvement in learning activities by their own pace and progress	①	②	③	④	⑤
4. Pupils have a say in deciding what activities they do, how long they take and how they are assessed					

<b>C2. Learning is social participation</b>					
5. How often do you use the following learning forms when using the self-study textbooks?					
* Social interaction in pair					
<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always					
* Social interaction in small group					
<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always					
* Social interaction in class as a whole					
<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always					
* Social interaction in community					
<input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always					
<b>C3. Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based</b>					
6. At the start of a lesson, textbooks have tasks requiring pupils to connect their prior knowledge and experience.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Which are prior knowledge and experience instructed to connect?					
<input type="checkbox"/> knowledge and skills of Vietnamese language of sharply previous lesson;					
<input type="checkbox"/> knowledge and skills of Vietnamese language of previous grades;					
<input type="checkbox"/> experience of Vietnamese language in daily life in pupils' familiar environments;					

<input type="checkbox"/> experience of Vietnamese language about culture and society of where pupils are living; <input type="checkbox"/> pupils' needs and interest.					
8. Texts/situations coming from real-world life are integrated into the textbooks.	①	②	③	④	⑤
* The frequency of authentic texts/situations designed in the textbooks <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Several lessons <input type="checkbox"/> Some lessons <input type="checkbox"/> Almost lessons <input type="checkbox"/> All lessons					
9. Learning activities/tasks create environment for pupils to express personal attitudes, emotion and develop values.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C4. Learning stresses scaffolding</b>					
10. Learning activities/tasks in the textbooks are characterised by deductive process: partial knowledge/skills to overall ones; simple to complex levels.	①	②	③	④	⑤
11. Learning activities/tasks in the textbooks respect pupils' proximal development zone.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. A learning activity/task begin with observing language models, analysing, practising and reflecting.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. Sub-questions or prompts are designed to accompany with learning activities/tasks to support pupils' cognition.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C5. Learning communities should be inclusive and equitable</b>					
14. Various types of learning environment are involved to support pupils' learning (family, organisation, institution, etc.)	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. Lessons in the textbooks create multi-directed interaction with the principles of respecting each other.	①	②	③	④	⑤
16. The activities of self-assessment and mutual assessment are designed in the textbooks.	①	②	③	④	⑤

## D. PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGIES OF TEACHING READING

17. Which the procedure of teaching reading are you applying?



□ **Procedure 1:** Warming up ⇒ Previous lesson preview ⇒ New lesson introduction ⇒ Aloud and fluent reading ⇒ Explaining difficult words/phrases ⇒ Reading comprehension ⇒ Emotional reading ⇒ Consolidation

□ **Procedure 2:** Warming up ⇒ Previous lesson preview ⇒ Introducing new lesson and reading lesson aims ⇒ Basic Activities (prior knowledge connection, aloud and fluent reading practice in individual, pair, small group) ⇒ Practical Activities (reading comprehension – answer questions in textbooks; practising emotional reading) ⇒ Applied Activities (e.g. share lesson knowledge with other family members) ⇒ Consolidation

**18. How often are teaching methods/techniques used in reading lessons?**

*Tick on (x) an appropriate choice*

	①	②	③	④	⑤	
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Teaching methods/techniques		Scale				
a. lecturing	①	②	③	④	⑤	
b. mind map	①	②	③	④	⑤	
c. open conversation	①	②	③	④	⑤	
d. modelling	①	②	③	④	⑤	
e. brainstorming	①	②	③	④	⑤	
f. scaffolding	①	②	③	④	⑤	
g. problem-solving	①	②	③	④	⑤	
h. project-based	①	②	③	④	⑤	
i. practise	①	②	③	④	⑤	
j. role playing	①	②	③	④	⑤	
k. learning games	①	②	③	④	⑤	
l. group discussion	①	②	③	④	⑤	

m. other methods.....	①	②	③	④	⑤
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**E. GENERAL EVALUATION**

**19.** The appropriateness of the self-study textbooks in helping pupils study with the dialectical constructivist approach

Absolutely inappropriate  Inappropriate  Appropriate  Absolutely appropriate

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**20. The strengths and weaknesses of the self-study textbooks of Vietnamese language teaching**

Strengths:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Weaknesses:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**21. The idea contributions to the forthcoming textbooks:**

.....

.....

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.....

*Thank you very much*

## Appendix 2: Teacher Questionnaire 2 (Chapter II.2)

### TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

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Dear,

I am undertaking this survey as a part of my research on a PhD Educational Science at The University of Grenoble Alpes in France. The study is to examine teachers' beliefs and understandings toward constructivist approach, a core pedagogy of the VNEN teaching model, in the Vietnamese language education curriculum at primary schools.

These questions in this questionnaire are aimed to collect data for my research. I would be extremely grateful if you would answer the following checklist. Or you can refuse to take part in responding the checklist if you feel uncomfortable.

The checklist should take about 30 minutes to complete and is anonymous and confidential, so please do not write your name on the paper.

The information you provide will be used for data analysis only. Once the checklist is returned, the responses will be aggregated with all the other returns. The data will be analyzed using appropriate computer software.

The findings of the research will be available at the end of December 2017. If you would like to receive a summary of my findings, please send me your address details separately.

If you have ANY queries, do not hesitate to contact the researcher, The Department of Primary and Pre-School Education, School of Education, Can Tho University. Office phone: (84) 07103 872 355; Mobile phone: (84) 939 021 878, Email: lnhoa@ctu.edu.vn.

Thank you very much for your support.

Le Ngoc Hoa

## A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Please give the following to help in the analysis of this questionnaire by tick  $\times$  mark into the blank squares that described the most suitable with your opinion.

1. Gender:  Male  Female 2. Age: ...
3. The location characteristics:  Urban  Rural
4. School size:  Under-standard;  Standard 1;  Standard 2 (the highest level).
5. Number of children in your class  
 Less than or equal to 15  16 – 35  36 – 45  Over 45
6. Chances for the professional development per year: .....
7. Total number of years in teaching  
 1 – 5 years  6 – 10 years  11 – 20 years  over 20 years
8. Highest level of qualification  
 Higher school graduated plus a pedagogical training  College  University
9. Briefly describe its teaching and learning materials:  
 Poor equipped  Average equipped  Quite well equipped

## B. TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

Plensed state your thought with each indicator/ statement below according to five-point Likert Scale form the lowest agreement extreme (Strongly disagree) to the highest extreme (Strongly agree):

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral/	Agree	Strongly agree
①	②	③	④	⑤

<b>B1. The main roles of teachers in teaching Vietnamese language for children.</b>					
1. Teachers take the roles of knowledge transmission, presenting, and explaining the subject matter.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2. Teachers is helping children construct knowledge, taking the roles of instructors and facilitators for children's learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>B2. The crucial targets of teaching and learning Vietnamese language at primary schools.</b>					
3. Guiding children learn all lesson units designed in the textbook.	①	②	③	④	⑤

4. Instruct children the method of self-study.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5. Nurture children the love and interest in learning first language.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6. Develop children the competence to use Vietnamese language in daily life.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7. Prepare for children to get over examinations and move to higher-level education.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8. Develop children social skills as communications, cooperation, problem solving, critical thinking...	①	②	③	④	⑤
9. Keep children class in order and solve contradiction among/between children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
10. Maintain democratic and active environment of the children classroom.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>B3. The teachers' beliefs of teaching and learning process of Vietnamese language education.</b>					
11. The process of transferring the knowledge, skills from teachers and textbooks to children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12. The process that teachers help children make connection to their experience to construct new knowledge.	①	②	③	④	⑤
13. The process that teachers organise social interaction, share ideas among children, and attach them to the community.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14. The process that children absorb as much knowledge as possible from the teachers and textbooks, practice and fortify in order to remember it.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15. The process that children have opportunities to explore, discuss, and express their ideas to construct new knowledge.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C. Teachers' beliefs toward the pedagogical features of teaching and learning Vietnamese language</b>					
<b>C1. Learning is social participation</b>					

16. Knowledge is constructed by learners through connecting to the experience and social interaction.	①	②	③	④	⑤
17. Good learning is principally learning by heart what was taught by teachers and textbooks.	①	②	③	④	⑤
18. Children's language competence is built through cooperation in peers, groups and among whole class.	①	②	③	④	⑤
19. Children understand the meaningful learning and social values such as responsibility and cooperation.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C2. Learning stresses scaffolding</b>					
20. Children's learning needs to be organised in order to suit the individuals' proximal development.	①	②	③	④	⑤
21. In class, children need to be directly supported by the teacher or by higher-level intellectual children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
22. Different intellectual-level individuals are required to meet the same objectives and expectations in learning.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C3. Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based</b>					
23. Effective teaching evokes children's interests, emotion and their personal language experience.	①	②	③	④	⑤
24. Creating children's interest in learning through evoking children's cultural experience.	①	②	③	④	⑤
25. Texts used in language teaching and learning come from real world.	①	②	③	④	⑤
26. Learning tasks that are aimed to solve realistic learning problems attract children's learning motivation.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C4. Knowledge is constructed by learner</b>					
27. Pupils rely in active and constructive activities to construct their own knowledge	①	②	③	④	⑤
28. Pupils' own paces of knowledge construction are respected.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>C5. Learning communities should be inclusive and equal</b>					

29. Teaching and learning should happen within the classroom because of safe requirement and local condition.	①	②	③	④	⑤
30. Interactions of teacher-student and student-student should be equitable rather than hierarchical.	①	②	③	④	⑤
<b>D. General evaluation</b>					
31. Teachers' evaluation on the current curriculum of Vietnamese language instruction at primary education					
- Focus on providing knowledge to children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
- Focus on establish language skills for children.	①	②	③	④	⑤
- Attach special importance to build children's moral virtues.	①	②	③	④	⑤
32. Advantages and disadvantages the teacher perceives when deploying constructivist approach in Vietnamese language education at primary school.					
<b>Advantages:</b> ..... ..... .....					
<b>Disadvantages:</b> ..... ..... .....					
33. From your own point of view, do you want the VNEN project to be continued in Vietnam? <input type="checkbox"/> Continue <input type="checkbox"/> Stop;    Please explain your point: ..... .....					

*Thank you so much!*

Grade:

Lesson:

Teacher:

Date:

Time	Phase	Section	Teacher's activities	Pupils' activities	Comments
					Warm-up
					Previous lesson review
					Introduction of new lesson
					Sharing the lesson objectives
	Basic Activity	Prior knowledge connection			
					Aloud reading; practice difficult-pronunciation words
					Defining meanings of words/phrases Reading comprehension
	Practice Activity	More reading aloud and emotional-reading practice			
	Applied Activity				

Some directive questions for each phase:

Which teaching and learning methods are applied and how?

Which learning forms and learning tasks are applied and how?

Which assessment methods are applied and how?



**Appendix 4: Checklist of Dialectical Constructivist Features Expressed in the Reading Lessons**

**CHECKLIST OF DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FEATURES**

*(P means pupils; T means teacher)*

Features	Descriptions	Definitions
<b>1. Learning Aims</b>	Prescribed contents of knowledge, skills and attitudes	Based on the lists of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are determined for each lesson; usually expressed in unmeasurable verbs.
	Outcome competences	Based on outcome competences that pupils acquire at the end of lesson; usually expressed in measurable verbs.
<b>2. Teaching and Learning Activities</b>		
2.1. Knowledge acquirement	Self-construction	Ps involve in learning activities as reading, discussing, arguing, making presentation, raising questions etc.
	Being imposed from teacher	T provides new knowledge.
2.2. Social participation	One-way interaction	T (or class leader, group leader) are dominant in discussing, presenting, questioning, expressing personal ideas...
	Multi-way interaction	Class members have opportunities to discuss, present, question, express personal ideas...
2.3. Prior knowledge and experience connection	Being partly connected	Limiting within knowledge of previous lessons, or within knowledge in textbooks.
	Being comprehensively connected	Expanding to pupils' knowledge of society, culture, and pupils' interests, emotions.
2.4. Learning support	'Direct' support Form-focused feedback	T provides the meaning of words, corrected answers.

	Scaffolding Content-focused feedback	T model, provide more information, prompts, oriented questioning...
2.5. Learning environment maintenance	Hierarchical relationship	T keeps the right to ask, to provide corrected answers; unfriendly says and action.
	Equitable relationship	T keeps friendly and respected for Ps; encourages and praises pupils for good work (by verbal or physical affection).
<b>3. Assessment Activities</b>	Summative assessment	T makes assessment on Ps' learning at the end of a lesson.
	Combine summative and formative assessment	T makes regular assessment during Ps' learning in a lesson.

### THE FIVE DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FEATURES

Feature	Little/Not clear observation	On average	Much/Clear observation
<b>1. Knowledge is constructed by learners</b>			
Pupils rely in active and constructive processes to construct their own knowledge.			
Pupils' own pace of knowledge construction is respected.			
<b>2. Learning is social participation</b>			
Pupils work in peers, small group, or communities.			
Pupils actively share ideas.			
<b>3. Learning is authentic tasks and experience-based</b>			
Pupils' experience is provoked.			

Pupils are immersed in realistic learning situations.

#### **4. Learning stresses scaffolding**

Pupils are logically laddered by their instructors in the cognitive process.

Learning contents are designed to be appropriate with pupils' proximal development.

#### **5. Learning environment should be inclusive and equal**

Types of communities, e.g., families, organizations, institutions, etc., are involved to support pupils' learning.

Interactions of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil should be equitable rather than hierarchical.

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## **Appendix 5: The Act 22/BGD-ĐT about testing and evaluating primary school pupils' learning**

[...]

### **Item 3. The goals of learning evaluation**

- 3.1. Helps teachers adjust and reform teaching methods, learning forms; find out pupils' progression to encourage them timely;
- 3.2. Helps pupils be able to self-assess and assess each other; self-adjust learning method;
- 3.3. Helps pupils' parents involve in assessing pupils' learning;
- 3.4. Helps educational administrators manage the quality of education.

### **Item 4. Principles of learning evaluation**

- 4.1. Evaluation focuses on the progression of pupils; on encouraging pupils' attempts; develop as much as possible pupils' capacity;
- 4.2. Evaluating comprehensively pupils' capacity in terms of knowledge, skills, and virtues;
- 4.3. Frequent evaluation (through comments) combines with periodic evaluation (through marks); cooperate teachers' evaluation with pupils' self-evaluation and parents' evaluation.

### **Item 5. Contents of learning evaluation**

#### **Item 6. Frequent evaluation**

**Item 7. Frequent evaluation regarding learning activities, progression, and learning results according to standard of knowledge and skills of each subject**

**Item 8. Frequent evaluation regarding the formation and development of pupils' competence**

**Item 9. Frequent evaluation regarding the formation and development of pupils' virtue**

#### **Item 10. Periodic evaluation**

10.1. There are three levels of evaluation

Well-satisfied: do well required learning tasks

Satisfied: do satisfactorily required learning tasks

Not satisfied: not complete or do required learning tasks unsatisfactorily

10.3. The periodic tests are appropriate with the standard of knowledge and skill, and directive competences, including four levels:

Level 1: Knowing, remembering, and describing learnt knowledge;

Level 2: Understanding, presenting and explaining learnt knowledge;

Level 3: Applying learnt knowledge and skills on familiar situations in learning and in life;

Level 4: Applying learnt and skills on solving new problems or giving appropriate responses regarding learning and life.

**Item 11. Summative evaluation**

**Item 12. Evaluation regarding disable pupils**

**Item 13. Portfolio for evaluation**

...

### Appendix 6: *Durian* (Mai Van Tao) [Sau rieng] – Grade 4

The Durian Tree Durian is a specialized kind of fruit in the Southern part of Vietnam. It produces a very unique smell, a strong taste, spreading in a wide area, and lingers for in a while in the air. Although there were dozens of meters away to reach durian, the sweet aroma can rush right into one's nose.

The taste of durian resemblances the sweet taste of ripe jackfruit with grapefruit, the custard taste of egg, and the taste of fine-aged honey. How appealing that flavour is! The durian flower blooms at the end of the year. The wind carries the fragrance pleasant as areca nut and grapefruit throughout the garden. The flower blooms in clusters with ivory white colour. The petals are small as the fish fin, quite like the little lotus petals, with several micro pistils in the heart of the flower. Each flower will produce one durian fruit.

When looking at the durian fruit dangling on the tree, one may think of an ant hive. The season of durian prospers in April or May in the lunar calendar. Observing the durian tree, I keep thinking about its weird stem. It is slender, very far above the ground, with long straight branches, unlike the elegant, sloping, twisted, and curvy form of the mango and the longan tree. The leaves are dull green and slightly folded, which may look dried-like. Despite that, when the durian is ripe, it will evoke such an intense and mouth-watering taste.

MAI VAN TAO

**Appendix 7: Changes in teaching practices of Vietnamese language lessons through the enactment of the constructivist-aligned model**

Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>1. Intended Learning Outcomes</b>						
1.1. Bases for determining	Ex.C1. Prescribed contents	Ex.C1. Prescribed contents	Ex.C1. Outcome competences <sup>(1)</sup>	Ex.C1. Outcome competences	Ex.C1. Outcome competences	Ex.C1. Outcome competences
	Ex.C2. Prescribed contents	Ex.C2. Prescribed contents	Ex.C2. Outcome competences <sup>(1)</sup>	Ex.C2. Outcome competences	Ex.C2. Outcome competences	Ex.C2. Outcome competences
	Ex.E1. Prescribed content + integrated contents	Ex.E1. Prescribed content + integrated contents	Ex.E1. Outcome competences	Ex.E1. Outcome competences	Ex.E1. Outcome competences	Ex.E1. Outcome competences
	Ex.E2. Prescribed contents	Ex.E2. Prescribed contents + integrated contents	Ex.E2. Outcome competences	Ex.E2. Outcome competences	Ex.E2. Outcome competences	Ex.E2. Outcome competences
1.2. How to be expressed	Difficult to be measured	Difficult to be measured	Difficult to be measured	Difficult to be measured	Measurable	Measurable

(\*) the learning outcomes are expressed from the teacher's perspective, e.g. help Ps, support Ps...



The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>						
2.1. Knowledge acquisition	Ex.C1. engage in self-construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C1. engaging in self-construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C1. engage in self-construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C1. engage in self-construction	Ex.C1. engage in self-construction	Ex.C1. engage in self-construction
	Ex.C2. engage in self-construction/ complete ready-made exercises/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C2. complete ready-made exercises/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C2. engage in self-construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.C2. engage in self-construction/ complete ready-made exercises	Ex.C2. engage in self-construction	Ex.C2. Outcome competences
	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction/ complete ready-made exercises	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction/ complete ready-made exercises	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction	Ex.E1. engage in self-construction
	Ex.E2. engaging in construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.E2. engaging in construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.E2. engaging in construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.E2. engaging in construction/ be imposed from the teacher	Ex.E2. engaging in construction	Ex.E2. engaging in construction

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>						
2.2. Social participant	Ex.C1. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.C1. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.C1. adhere one-way interaction/ promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.C1. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.C1. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.C1. adhere one-way interaction/ promote multi-way social interaction
	Ex.C2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.C2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.C2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.C2. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.C2. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.C2. promote multi-way social interaction
	Ex.E1. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.E1. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.E1. adhere one-way interaction/ promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.E1. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.E1. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.E1. promote multi-way social interaction
	Ex.E2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.E2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.E2. adhere one-way interaction	Ex.E2. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.E2. promote multi-way social interaction	Ex.E2. promote multi-way social interaction

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>						
2.3. Prior knowledge and experience connection	Ex.C1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge (mainly linguistic knowledge)	Ex.C1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.C1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.C1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.C1. comprehensively connect	Ex.C1. comprehensively connect
	Ex.C2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge (mainly linguistic knowledge)	Ex.C2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge (mainly linguistic knowledge)	Ex.C2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge (mainly linguistic knowledge)	Ex.C2. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.C2. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.C2. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge
	Ex.E1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E1. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E1. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E1. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E1. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E1. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge
	Ex.E2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E2. partly connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E2. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge	Ex.E2. comprehensively connect to Ps' prior knowledge

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>						
2.4. Learning support	Ex.C1. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.C1. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.C1. Scaffolding; form-focused feedbacks	Ex.C1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.C1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.C1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks
	Ex.C2. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.C2. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.C2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.C2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.C2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.C2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks
	Ex.E1. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.E1. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form-focus feedbacks	Ex.E1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.E1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.E1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.E1. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

	Ex.E2. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form- focus feedbacks	Ex.E2. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form- focus feedbacks	Ex.E2. Enable Ps produce correct answers; provide correct answers; form- focus feedbacks	Ex.E2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.E2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks	Ex.E2. Scaffolding; content-focused feedbacks
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Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>2. Teaching and learning activities</b>						
2.5. Learning environment maintenance	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.C1. Hierarchical relationship
	Ex.C2. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.C2. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.C2. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.C2. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.C2. Equitable relationship	Ex.C2. Equitable relationship
	Ex.E1. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.E1. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.E1. Equitable relationship	Ex.E1. Equitable relationship	Ex.E1. Equitable relationship	Ex.E1. Equitable relationship
	Ex.E2. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.E2. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.E2. Hierarchical relationship	Ex.E2. Hierarchical relationship/Equitable relationship	Ex.E2. Equitable relationship	Ex.E2. Equitable relationship

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

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Components	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6
<b>3. Assessment Activities</b>						
	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.C1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection
	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.C2. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection
	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Ex.E1. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection

The Implementation of a Dialectical Constructivist Pedagogy in Primary Vietnamese Language Education

	Ex.E2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.E2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.E2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.E2. Combine summative and formative assessment	Ex.E2. Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection	Combine summative and formative assessment; portfolio collection
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**Appendix 8: Pre-test (Chapter III.3)**

School: **READING PRE-TEST**

Class: Time duration: 45 minutes

Full name:

**Observe the following pictures of a story and answer the questions below:**

Five pictures illustrate the story.

*The man, the boy, and the donkey*

**Question 1:** Can you guess what the story tells about? (Prompts: Where were the man and the boy travelling? Why do they always change their action?)

**Question 2:** Do you have any questions to explore the story content?

(intentionally blank)



Once, a man and his son were going to the market with their donkey. As they walked a group of men passed them and said, “How silly. You are walking that donkey when you could be riding it instead. What is a donkey for but to ride on?”

Hearing this, the man put his boy on the donkey’s back and they went on their way. But soon they passed a group of women, one of whom said: “You should be ashamed of yourself young man. Your father who is older than you should be riding and you should be walking.” **Red-faced** and embarrassed the boy jumped down to have his father get up on the donkey.

They hadn’t gone far when they passed a man and a woman, one of whom said to the other: “Doesn’t he know they can both fit on that donkey? His boy doesn’t have to walk this dusty road.”

Well, the man didn’t know what to do, but at last he took his son up and sat him down in front of him on the donkey. They reached the town and people began to jeer and point at them. “You’re overloading that poor donkey -- you and your son both sitting there. You both look strong! You’d be better off carrying the donkey yourselves.”

They got off the donkey and tried to think what to do. At last they cut down a pole and tied the donkey’s feet to it. With it tied to the pole like this they raised the pole to their shoulders and carried the donkey towards the bridge that lead to the market. This was difficult to do.

The townspeople laughed and heckled them so much that the donkey was frightened by everything going on. Its feet slipped loose from the ropes and it fell. Once it got to its feet again it ran away kicking and bucking.

Question 3: What happened after when man and a woman passed?

Question 5: What does the word “red-faced” in the second paragraph mean?

- a. A tired face

- b. A face of ashamed feeling
- c. A healthy face

Question 6: Why do the man and boy change their action?

- a. Because the passers' ideas are value to adhere
- b. Because the man and boy do not have their own intention
- c. Because they are afraid the Donkey will be tired

Question 7: After the man and boy got off and walked and let the Donkey follow, if passers continue to comment on their action, can you guess whether they change again their action?

- a. They would not adhere because they felt tired to listen to all comments
- b. They would continue to adhere because they do not have their own intention

Question 8: What is the main content of the story? Choose the most appropriate answer.

- a. Always listen to other people's ideas
- b. You should not listen to any idea from other people
- c. You should reference other people's ideas and have your own intention

Question 9: If you are the Man in this story, what would you do when passers-by gave you their comments? Why are the reasons for your decision?

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Question 10. Suggest another title in order to reflect the lesson learnt from the story?

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Question 4: Summarise the main content of this story.

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*Thank you so much!*



**Appendix 9: Post-test (Chapter III.3)**

School: **READING POST-TEST**

Class: Time duration: 45 minutes

Full name:

Observe the following pictures of a story and answer the questions below:

The pictures illustrate the story

***The Farmer's donkey***

Question 1: Can you guess what the story tells about? (Prompts: What are the farmer and the donkey doing? Can you guess the story would talk about?)

Question 2: Do you have any questions to explore the story content?

(blank intentionally)

One day a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out a way to get him out. Finally, he decided it was probably impossible and the animal was old and the well was dry anyway, so it just wasn't worth it to try and retrieve the donkey. So the farmer asked his neighbours to come over and help him cover up the well. They all grabbed shovels and began to shovel dirt into the well.

At first, when the donkey realized what was happening he cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down and let out some happy brays. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the well to see what was happening and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was shaking it off and taking a step up.

As the farmer's neighbours continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he continued to shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, to everyone's amazement, the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

Question 3: What did the farmer finally decide to do when the donkey fell down into the well?

Question 4: What does the word “*sảy chân*” [fell down] in the first paragraph mean?

- a. The donkey's leg was broken
- b. The donkey slipped his leg by mistake
- c. The donkey's leg was allergic with many red dots [this phenomenon is called as “*sảy*” in Vietnamese, looking like “*sảy*”].

Question 5: Why did the donkey cried terribly when he realised the farmer began to shovel dirt into the well?

- d. Because he felt hopeless to know that he is going to be buried
- e. Because he was pain by the shovels of dirt hitting his back
- f. Because he was trying to make a cry to be noticed and recused

Question 7: How did the donkey step up over the edge of the well and trotted off?

- a. The farmer rescued him
- b. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was shaking it off and taking a step up.

Question 6: Do you think which title is appropriate with the story? Choose the most appropriate answer.

- a. An intelligent donkey
- b. Never give up
- c. A farmer and his donkey

Question 7: Put yourself in the role of the donkey in this story, talk about ‘your’ thinking when ‘you’ decided to stop crying terribly, instead, shake the dirt off and stepped up.

Question 8. Write a short paragraph to express your own lesson learnt from this story?

Question 9: Summarise the main content of this story.

.....

.....

.....

.....

***Thank you very much!***





**Appendix 10: Pupil Questionnaire (Chapter III.3)**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**A. Personal information**

A1. **Full name:** .....

A2. **Class:** ..... A3. **School:** .....

B. Circle the letter that is put in front of the appropriate answers; or write your ideas in the blanks

B1. Which learning method do you like to learn Vietnamese language lessons?

- a. Involve in learning activities, solve tasks, and read documents in order to self-explore new knowledge.
- b. Listen teacher’s lecture, take notes and remember new knowledge.

B2. Which learning form do you like to learn Vietnamese language lessons?

- a. By individual
- b. In pair
- c. In small group
- d. In class as a whole

C. Which learning activities attract you to involve in? (Tick in the blanks that are appropriate with your idea)

No.	Learning activities	Absolutely do not like	Do not like	Neutral	Like	Like so much
a.	Questioning					
b.	Sharing knowledge					
c.	Share emotion					
d.	Reading aloud					
e.	Read in silence to understand texts					
f.	Exchange own thoughts					
g.	Present in front pupils class					
h.	Summarise texts in mind map					
i.	Draw and introduce pictures					

- j. Attend on roles playing

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- k. Sit and listen to teacher's lectures

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- l. Step-by-step follow teacher's instruction

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- n. Attend on learning games

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- o. Other learning activities

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D. Share your expectations regarding the way a Vietnamese language lesson happen (the expectations concerning teacher, other pupils, learning environment, etc.)

*Thank you so much!*

