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MEETING THE NEED FOR
BUSINESS ENGLISH
IN THE NEW VIETNAM

By

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the New Economic Reform in Vietnam, the need for more business people proficient in the English language is constantly growing. This need requires the Hanoi Foreign Trade College, which is officially charged with the training of business people for the whole country, to devise relevant curricula for short courses in Business English.

The purpose of this report is to examine some major theoretical and practical issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and in syllabus design that can provide course designers at the Hanoi Foreign Trade College with a deeper insight into the problems essential to the development of their work.

The report consists of five chapters:

- (i) Chapter One is the Introduction. It gives the background to the study, pointing to changes in Vietnam and the role of the HFTC in adapting to meet the new need created by these changes.
- (ii) Chapter Two deals with the methodology employed in the data collection and discusses its findings.
- (iii) Chapter Three looks at some major theoretical issues in English for Specific Purposes with a view to applying this theory to the practical needs for Business English in Vietnam.

- (iv) Chapter Four is directly concerned with the planning of the short courses in Business English for Vietnam which are the central focus of this study.

- (v) Chapter Five is the Summary and contains recommendations for future development of the proposed short courses.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HFTC	Hanoi Foreign Trade College
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UC	University of Canberra

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's economic situation and trade relationships have shown marked and rapid changes in the last few years, to the point where it is now being widely described as "the fifth tiger". As Klintworth (1992:11) says, "the country is emerging as a viable, resource-rich member of Asia". In reality, Vietnam is developing trade, economic and financial relations with all countries and organizations irrespective of their political affiliations. The changes that have occurred have led to a very significant growth in the need for people proficient in Business English.

All these new developments in foreign trade in Vietnam have demanded that the Hanoi Foreign Trade College (henceforth referred to as the HFTC, or the College) make changes to its existing teaching program. Alongside its five-year long courses, it is now required to provide much shorter courses to train students in Business English in a fast and efficient way. Devising syllabuses for those new courses, therefore, is an urgent task for the College to fulfil. This situation has provided the impetus for this Field Study Report.

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- (i) to outline the past and present means of provision of English language teaching for interpreters and others who work in the broad areas of business and trade;
- (ii) to consider how the growing need for people proficient in Business English may best be met; and
- (iii) to make recommendations for future development, in particular for short courses in Business English.

1.2 THE HANOI FOREIGN TRADE COLLEGE

The Hanoi Foreign Trade College is a tertiary institution under the Ministry of Higher Education and Training. Since its foundation in 1960, the College has been the only institution in Vietnam responsible for the teaching of Business English to meet the demand for trained business people for the whole country.

1.2.1 An overview of the College:

The HFTC has a broader role than just teaching languages. It consists of two main Departments: Economics, and Foreign Languages. Each of these has various sections responsible for the teaching of different units covered by the overall teaching program of the College.

The Economics Department provides instruction in Commercial subjects such as Foreign Trade Organization and Management, International Market Research (now called Marketing), International Finance, Shipping and Insurance, and so on.

The Foreign Languages Department, which is a central focus of this study, is responsible for the teaching of five different languages: English, Russian, French, Japanese, and Chinese. At present, the English section is by far the most important one in the Department in terms of the number of teaching staff, and the number of students who want to learn English either as their main or second foreign language.

As far as the teaching and learning at the College is concerned, the HFTC is generally thought to have been effective in meeting its aim of producing graduates with a reasonably high level of competence in the subjects that they have studied.

Since its establishment, in general the College's overall curriculum has covered five academic years. In recognition of the new economic situation, changes have already occurred to the overall curricula of almost all institutions in Vietnam, the HFTC being just one of them. In 1989, an office was set up under the Ministry of Higher Education and Training to devise curriculum models for foreign languages institutions in general, and for colleges such as the HFTC, the College of National Economics, and the Medical Institute that teach foreign languages alongside their specialized units. The pilot models were put into use in 1990 but

these are considered too general for specific institutions. It is hoped that modifications will be made to the curricula which will lead to even further efficiency at the HFTC.

1.2.2 The teaching of English at the HFTC:

As mentioned in 1.2.1, 1990 was the time the HFTC began to make changes to its teaching program. Therefore, this section will describe briefly the teaching of English at the College at two different periods of time: pre-1990 and post-1990. This is to illustrate more fully the need to devise syllabuses for more varied types of Business English courses.

A - From 1960 to 1990:

From the HFTC's foundation in 1960 until 1990, the five-year syllabus applied to two different types of students: full-time and part-time. For full-time students, the syllabus varied according to their particular focus. Students in interpreter classes spent 54% of their learning time studying English while those in import-export classes spent only 30% of overall learning time on English.

The part-time students who attended import-export classes were, for the most part, people who had had some experience in foreign trade but wanted to attend the course in order to learn English from complete beginner level; those who had studied some English before enrolled in the course to improve their general as well as their Commercial English. Like the full-time students in

import-export classes, these students' main purpose in learning English was to be able to use the language as a tool for successful performance in their jobs. By contrast, students in Interpreter classes took English as their major and the results they achieved in their English units could be the decisive factor in their future positions after the course.

As described in the theses written by Hoat (1985), Dung (1989), Dan (1990), the English language syllabus at the HFTC until 1990 consisted of phase 1 and phase 2. In general, phase 1 (years 1 to 3) was devoted to teaching General English. The four macro-skills were mainly taught in an integrated way. The materials used in this phase were mostly imported commercial series such as *New Concept English* by Alexander, and *Streamline English* by Harley and Viney. These course materials were often accompanied by supplementary listening and speaking practice.

In phase 2 (years 4 and 5) Commercial English formed the main teaching content, with the four skills taught separately. Students were trained in separate areas: Reading Comprehension, Commercial Correspondence, Translation, Listening and Speaking. Teaching materials used in these last two years were mostly adapted from a range of different sources, both commercial course books and reference books. Other materials used in this phase were compiled by the College teaching staff.

In addition to their study at the College, the students were also required to do practical work during their course-time. They were to spend a total of 16 weeks (six weeks in the second semester of Year 4; ten weeks in the second semester of Year 5) familiarizing themselves with work at various import and export organizations and commercial services where they were likely to work after their graduation.

In summary, from its foundation to 1990, five-year-long courses were the norm at the HFTC with their two main types of students. In addition the materials and methodology used in those courses did not change much in all those years.

B - From 1990 to 1992:

Since 1990, changes have taken place but, in the opinion of the writer, have done little to address the real issues - for example, the need to update the curriculum to accommodate the demands of the new situation in Vietnam. Curriculum renovation is essential but the teachers at the HFTC are not entirely confident to undertake such a task. Moreover, the changes that have already been made to the curricula have not, in any way, addressed the need to train people more rapidly as trade between Vietnam and other countries around the world increases. It is, therefore, necessary for the English section to develop different types of courses, particularly short courses, in Business English. This is an urgent task for the section to do both for now and for the future.

C - The future:

Not only because of the changes occurring in the Vietnamese economy, but also because of practical problems at the HFTC, there will need to be changes to the programs offered. In making decisions about future directions there are three very important issues to be taken into account.

The following lists the three most important issues:

- (i) A different clientele is emerging. First of all, there are those who require only a limited level of proficiency in English (e.g. secretaries, clerks) in order to handle routine work in a company. Then there are those who wish to know the language well enough to deal with business transactions from beginning to end without the need for interpreters (e.g. managers).

For the latter group who have in the past done business through interpreters, it is now clear to them that having to rely on interpreters very often proves a big disadvantage and causes a number of problems. Firstly, Vietnamese business people nowadays are encouraged to work independently, especially on business trips abroad, in order to cut down expenses. Secondly, relying on an interpreter is seen to have resulted in unsatisfactory results for both parties in both written and spoken business transactions. This is often due to the interpreter's lack of first-hand knowledge/information, or lack of an understanding of

technical matters - subjects with which they were not equipped at the College.

- (ii) The levels of English language proficiency of students who now enrol in the College's courses have changed. Owing to their study at high schools or at foreign languages centres, the majority of first-year students who are placed in English classes have already reached pre-intermediate or intermediate levels of English. Therefore, continuing to run the five-year courses, that were designed mostly for complete beginners, as before has proved recently to be impractical and a waste of time.
- (iii) Owing to the fast growing demand on the part of a great number of people for courses in Business English, the HFTC is now facing a serious shortage of qualified teaching staff who can teach both General and Business English to the more advanced students.

The HFTC, and the English section in particular, is well-placed to make the changes needed. The English section is at present considered one of the most important bodies of the HFTC. It has constantly received special attention and assistance from not only the Board of Directors and other sections in the College, but also from people who understand the importance of Business English in the new situation.

At the moment, the HFTC, like many other institutions in Vietnam, greatly needs assistance with curriculum and syllabus development to reflect current language usage and current trends in methodology. It also needs help in constructing a curriculum that meets its students' special needs for Business English. With the assistance that the HFTC, in particular its English section, has already received from a number of foreign organizations such as the TESOL Centre (University of Canberra, Australia), and the Buffalo University in the United States of America, the English teaching staff at the College have tried to make good use of the materials already received to update their teaching.

1.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has attempted to describe the current situation with regard to the teaching of Business English in Vietnam and to point out how changes occurring in Vietnamese society will necessitate changes also in the courses designed to produce, as rapidly as possible, speakers of English who can meet the new challenges.

Much of the information supplied and observations made in this chapter have been based on the personal experience and insights of the writer, a senior teacher since 1980 at the HFTC. In the following chapter, data will be gathered from a number of other sources in order to confirm and build on the information already given.

Chapter 2

DATA COLLECTION: METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

2. INTRODUCTION

In order to confirm the need for provision of new and shorter courses in Business English, the following means of data collection were employed:

- an interview with Nguyen Xuan Hoa, the current Vietnamese Commercial Attache to Australia.
- a two-phase interview with Dr Jeremy Jones and Mr John Peak (henceforth referred to as the UC staff) of the TESOL Centre, University of Canberra, Australia. These were organizers and teachers of a successful workshop in English for Commerce in Vietnam in June/July 1991.
- a questionnaire which was sent to twenty Australian business people who have recently had dealings with Vietnam. These business people were selected on the advice of Nguyen Xuan Hoa.

2.1 AIMS OF THE DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for this Field Study Report aimed to:

- (i) obtain information that could give clear evidence of the need for the HFTC to develop different kinds of Business English courses; and
- (ii) elicit suggestions as to the most appropriate content, methodology and organization for those courses.

To achieve these goals, the questionnaires and the two interviews were each assigned a somewhat different set of objectives in recognition of the particular knowledge and experience each respondent (or group of respondents) could bring to the study.

2.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The three components of the data collection and their specific objectives will be dealt with separately in this section:

2.2.1 Discussions with the Vietnamese Commercial Attache to Australia:

As a former lecturer at the HFTC, Nguyen Xuan Hoa took a great interest in the problems this Field Study Report is investigating. A series of discussions with Hoa provided background information for this Report on:

- a) changes in the trade patterns between Vietnam and other countries around the world (which determine the languages most needed for business transactions);

- b) the means of communication most used nowadays between Australia and Vietnam;
- c) The difficulties Vietnamese and Australian business people frequently experience when doing business with each other (e.g. in language, culture, concepts); and
- d) his perceptions of what students of Business English at the HFTC should be equipped with at the College in order to help them work effectively in the new situation.

2.2.2 The two-phase semi-structured interview with the UC staff:

A lengthy interview in two sections, each of approximately ninety minutes' duration, was conducted with Dr Jeremy Jones and Mr John Peak of the TESOL Centre at the University of Canberra (UC). The interview sought information on the Business Workshop held in Haiphong in June/July 1991 in which the interviewees had been teachers and also workshop organizers. Both interviewees had been involved in several similar workshops in Vietnam and were thus well placed to comment on the particular needs of participants. Questions were asked that elicited information about:

- a) the types of students who attended the workshop and their levels of English;
- b) what they wanted to learn from the workshop;
- c) the organization of the workshop (length of time, levels of classes, materials, activities and equipment used);
- d) suggestions on what could be done to improve the teaching of Business English to Vietnamese business people.

A copy of the interview schedule may be found in Appendix 1.

2.2.3 The Questionnaire:

In order to obtain information from people who have had business ties with Vietnam, a questionnaire was developed, and sent to twenty Australian business people who have recently been actively involved in trading with their Vietnamese counterparts. This questionnaire consisted of ten closed questions, each followed by a space in which respondents were invited to make any comments they thought were relevant.

Out of the total of twenty questionnaires sent, eighteen were completed and returned. Moreover, a number of the respondents not only carefully completed the questions, but also provided useful comments on the problems on which this Field Study Report is focusing.

The questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information on the following points:

- a) levels of seniority of personnel that Australian business people usually do business with (directors/high level managers; middle-level managers; and/or clerical/ secretarial staff);
- b) means of communication that are most used nowadays in trade between Australia and Vietnam;
- c) how often they work with official Vietnamese interpreters and the interpreters' levels of English;
- d) how often the Australian business people carry out business without official Vietnamese interpreters; and the proficiency in English of the people who act as unofficial interpreters for them;

- e) what areas of written correspondence Vietnamese business people using English should pay more attention to in order to facilitate understanding;
- f) the main products Australian business people are interested in trading with Vietnam at present and in the future.

A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

Though the two interviews and the questionnaire had different sets of objectives, they have all given relevant and useful results which are discussed in the following section.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The information obtained through the various means of data collection was broadranging. Because of the limitations of this study, however, subsequent discussion will focus principally on:

- a) the urgent need for trained business people of English at all levels;
- b) the need for curriculum development for short Business English courses with relevant teaching materials and skills to produce business people competent in English;
- c) the importance of familiarizing students of Business English with modern means of communication such as fax and computers to enhance the effectiveness of their work, and the need to keep them informed of up-to-date changes in international business practices.

2.3.1 The urgent need for Business English training at all levels:

Foreseeing the future needs and prospects of English language teaching in Vietnam, Mullock observed:

There is an urgent need to train government officials at all levels in English in order to assist with the assimilation of the vast quantities of development assistance expected to reach Vietnam in the near future. (Mullock, 1992:83)

Mullock's views were strongly supported by all of the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees.

To answer Question 1 in the questionnaire which asked about the types of Vietnamese business people they have usually worked with, all eighteen respondents indicated that they had had business contacts with high-level managers. This compares with thirteen who had dealt with middle-level managers, and twelve with clerical and secretarial staff.

Discussions with the Vietnamese Commercial Attache confirmed this and stressed the increase in dealings with the lower levels of staff. This also provides an indication of the greater number of people who now need, and who will in the future most certainly need, English as an instrumental language in doing their jobs. In addition, as one of the respondents commented, with the development of trade, tourism, and a variety of other services open to foreign organizations, there is now a great number of people in Vietnam who want to do business in English without the need for an interpreter (e.g. directors of some companies in Vietnam, who used to speak Russian or other East European languages before, but are now learning English and who try to use the language as much as they can during business transactions conducted in English).

The UC staff also mentioned the number of business people who wanted to enrol in their workshop in Haiphong, but were unable to do so because of the limited number of participants the workshop could accept.

In short, the data collected through the means discussed in this chapter have once again confirmed the need for the College in general and its English section in particular to organize more numerous and more varied courses in Business English.

2.3.2 Curriculum development:

Mullock, a highly experienced teacher of English in Vietnam has stressed that a need exists for curriculum rejuvenation. She points out the irrelevance of certain aspects of current curriculum:

Pavlov and Jack London and Russian texts written in the 1960s on English culture are not necessarily the most appropriate sources on which to base English for the emerging market economy. (Mullock, 1992:84)

In fact, this rejuvenation is needed throughout the entire education system of the country. In the business field, the need for adaptations or changes in curriculum has long been a headache for people in authority at the Ministry of Trade where most of the HFTC's former students are employed after graduation.

Evidence from the data also supported Mullock's assertion that:

Current technical assistance efforts are often severely hampered by the poor English language skills of both interpreters and government officials. Hotels in Hanoi reverberate with the complaints of United Nations consultants whose messages and advice do not get through to their Vietnamese counterparts because of an interpreter's lack of technical vocabulary or, worse, basic listening and speaking skills. (Mullock, 1992:83)

Asked how well their interpreters understood and expressed their meaning in Business English, six out of the eighteen Australian business respondents ticked the boxes indicating "not very well", or "quite inadequately". This figure was significantly higher (eleven out of eighteen) when the respondents did not have access to official interpreters, and so had to work with business people with insufficient knowledge of the language.

The implications of the above responses, particularly when considered together with data supplied in the interviews, are that the HFTC course designers must include in their teaching program materials that help familiarize their students with technical problems related to such subjects as Accounting, Finance, or legal issues in the broad field of business.

In some questionnaires, respondents also emphasised the need to teach students of Business English international business practice or conventions, since these are areas that very often create problems in business transactions. The main reason is that the old materials students at the HFTC are using mostly deal with the business practice and conventions used in the former socialist business system. Therefore, according to the data analysis, it is necessary for the HFTC course designers to develop courses that cover adequate up-to-date information on common topics and practices in international business.

The wide range of products that Vietnamese and Australian business people are interested in trading with each other (e.g. Australia exports to Vietnam wheat and wheat flour, telecommunications equipment; Vietnam exports to Australia sea products, crude oil, shoes, garments, etc.) requires students of Business English to be equipped with the business terms used in these areas of trade.

Furthermore, all respondents emphasised the importance of an awareness of cultural differences between countries in order to lessen the tensions that can very easily occur just because of the lack of this knowledge. The necessity to familiarize students of Business English with cross-cultural differences is emphasised by John (1986:9).

... the lack of knowledge of the language and culture of a partner often results in ineffective negotiations and, in the worst case, results in abandoning further negotiation.

The data also show the need for the HFTC to place more emphasis on developing courses which focus on separate skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing. Alternatively, courses may combine two skills: listening and speaking, or reading and writing. This view was put forward by the UC staff, and was based on their experience in the Business English Workshop in Haiphong. The UC staff offered a number of reasons why courses needed to be short and why it was, therefore, more realistic to limit the number of skills to be taught in any course. In Vietnam at the present time, they argued, there is an acute shortage of teachers (especially native-English-speaking-background teachers), a shortage of

materials and a problem with the amount of time that participants can spare from their other commitments.

The UC interviewees also suggested that Business English should ideally not be taught below an intermediate level, by which they meant before students have mastered the basic structure and vocabulary. Given the wide background experience of the UC staff, this suggestion should be given serious consideration by the course designers at the HFTC. The teachers are now having difficulties explaining the business content of "Enterprise 1" and "Enterprise 2" (Business English text-books by Moore and West (1989)) to Year 1 students whose English proficiency and knowledge of business is still limited. These text-books would appear not to be entirely suitable for the HFTC students with whom they are being used. In Chapter 4 a number of other text-books will be considered with a view to identifying those that are most appropriate.

With reference to the activities that proved to be successful in the Workshop, the UC staff recommended the use of simulations as well as pair/group work to solve problems similar to real life ones. The reason for this is that most of the students who wish to study Business English in Vietnam now have already been involved in doing business of some kind or another; therefore they find these activities practical and useful.

This finding helps us understand more clearly why the case study method has been so widely used in business schools throughout the world, especially in the United States of America. Sawyer and Lauçanno (1987) stress some of the values of the case study

approach. They argue that this method gives students real practice in presenting and defending their ideas in English; also that the learning situation is a dynamic one likely to produce a high level of motivation.

2.3.3 Familiarization with business practice:

When asked about means of communication most used between Australian and Vietnamese companies, all of the respondents said they had taken part in face-to-face meetings which, in trading with Vietnam, are considered the most desired means of communication as they are the quickest way to bring about real progress.

Other commonly used means of communication are facsimile and the telephone. Such written correspondence as the forms of business letter, enquiries, offers, orders and claims have, according to Nguyen Xuan Hoa, become outdated for two main reasons. Firstly, they have been replaced by facsimile and telephone; secondly, they are considered to be too formal, and very time-consuming. All of the respondents concurred that the least used form of communication was telex. This information is helpful for the HFTC's course designers as the current focus on formal correspondence in their courses appears to be somewhat out-of-date and therefore inappropriate.

Due to the shift in the country's economy from the Soviet style centralised system to a market economy, major differences in

commercial and business concepts have appeared between Vietnamese and their trade partners who are accustomed to Western business conventions. Information supplied by a partner of a leading Australian legal firm stressed that Western companies had to cope with the different concepts prevailing in Vietnam, and gaps in Corporate Law are aggravated by the shortage of officials experienced in dealing with private sector companies.

Other respondents also called for the students of Business English to be given more information about international business practice. The HFTC can overcome this problem as it has access to books or other sources of literature in this field through the Ministry of Trade or other foreign organizations.

Moreover, Hoa and the UC staff suggested the possibility of inviting guests from the Ministry of Trade, business companies, commercial attaches from foreign embassies in Vietnam or travelling business people to the school. This would be a good opportunity not only for the students to get more information on current business issues, but also for the guest-speakers to know about the training of business people in Vietnam. This suggested procedure would thus offer two-way benefits.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The information collected by means of the interviews and the questionnaire have further confirmed the need for the HFTC to adapt quickly by creating a range of courses. Now that a need for these new courses has been established, it is necessary to consider a number of

theoretical issues which are relevant to course design. This will ensure that the proposed courses, although highly practical in orientation, have a sound basis in theory. The following chapter will, therefore, discuss relevant questions of a theoretical nature.

Chapter 3

SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)

3. INTRODUCTION

Discussion in this chapter focuses principally on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), of which Business English is a sub-category. The purpose of the chapter is to outline some theoretical and related practical issues in ESP that are considered by many as key issues.

The chapter begins by looking at a number of definitions of ESP and at the characteristics that comprise it.

3.1 DEFINITIONS OF ESP

In the last two decades, a great number of books have been written on ESP. Accordingly, there have been a number of ESP definitions which place different emphases on the variety of elements that characterize ESP.

According to Mackay (1975:6) ESP is the term “generally used to refer to the teaching/learning of a foreign language for a clearly utilitarian purpose of which there is no doubt.”

This utilitarian purpose is generally regarded as successful performance in work where English is used as an instrument to achieve its aim. Thus,

by ESP is meant the “teaching of English not as an end in itself but as an essential means to a clearly identifiable goal” (Mackay. 1978:6).

A further definition of ESP is that given by Munby who sees identification of the learners’ needs as the crucial factor in an ESP course: “ESP courses are those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner.” (Munby. 1978:2)

Stevens (1988) mentions these same key characteristics of ESP as part of a more expanded definition. He notes six characteristics of ESP, four of them being “absolute” characteristics and two of them “variable”. The absolute characteristics, according to Stevens, are that ESP:

- (i) is focussed on meeting the learner’s specific needs;
- (ii) has content that has direct relevance to particular occupations and/or subject areas;
- (iii) has a syllabus in which the grammar, vocabulary, discourse structure, etc. reflect those normally used in the particular occupation or subject area; and finally, he notes,
- (iv) should be seen in contrast with General English.

The variable characteristics to which Stevens draws our attention are:

- (i) the particular skills to be taught/learnt; and
- (ii) the methodology to be used.

ESP courses may, or may not, be restricted to certain of the language macro-skills. Depending on the needs of the ESP group, a course may give attention to all four skills. It may, on the other hand, be reading only. While the methodology is likely to be communicative, there is no

prescribed methodology. Much depends on the “specific purpose” of a given course.

In the following chapter, which will relate the theory of ESP to the reality of devising appropriate Business English courses for the emerging Vietnam of the 1990s, it will be important to consider what Strevens (1988) describes as variable characteristics.

Although there are different definitions of ESP, they all stress certain key characteristics, the most crucial being that it is the teaching of English as a means to a clearly pre-determined goal.

3.2 ESP: BROADER PERSPECTIVES

As Strevens (1988) notes, ESP is far from being an isolated development, to be viewed solely in the context of English language teaching. In order to be fully understood, ESP has to be seen in relation to three major trends that have been taking place over the past two or three decades. These are:

3.2.1 World-wide trend towards learner-centred education

Commenting on this trend, Strevens points out that in many countries:

.... there has been an increasing shift of the centre of gravity in education towards the learner, his needs, his modes of learning and his perceptions of the learning process.” (Strevens. 1988:3)

This trend, he further argues, has also led to the concept of needs-analysis which, as will be discussed later, is fundamental to ESP.

3.2.2 The spread of English

Another main impetus to the development of ESP has come from the enormous growth of English. Recent estimates of the number of people around the world who use English for a variety of purposes vary between 750 million and 1500 million. By comparison, before 1940, the total number was only about 500 million. It is significant to note that of those who use English today, only 300 million or so are native speakers of the language (Stevens. 1988).

Accordingly, Stevens states:

... major changes have taken place in the status and position of English within education ... the role of English has become steadily less cultural and more instrumental, more a tool, whereby the citizen can open a window to the modern world, especially the world of science, technology, the media, trade and industry, and international aid and administration. (Stevens. 1988:3).

All these new developments have given rise to great changes in the philosophy of the teaching of English, especially in ESP teaching in the fields of designing syllabuses, methodology, materials and teacher training.

3.2.3 Developments in foreign language syllabus design

The third relevant perspective is the changes that have occurred in the design of courses. From the earliest principles of foreign language courses which mostly focussed on linguistic and structural elements, such courses now have added the concepts of notions and functions to their syllabus design. These changes have most frequently been associated with a communicative

methodology. The question of appropriate methodology for ESP courses will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (see 3.4.3).

3.3 THE PARTICIPANTS

As Hutchinson and Waters argue, English has now become "subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers" (1987:7). These participants, or stake-holders, may include business people who are prepared to fund English language courses for their employees. They may also include governments and aid agencies who are aware of the importance of appropriate ESP courses. Nonetheless, the two groups of stake-holders most directly the concern of this Report are the learners and the teachers. This section of the chapter will, therefore, consider the characteristics and the roles and needs of these two categories.

3.3.1 The learners

Learners of ESP may come under one of two broad categories or dimensions: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

In EOP, English is seen as operational, i.e. the learners want to use it as a means of performing their work or profession (e.g. business people who need English to talk to or correspond with their English-speaking counterparts). It is this variety of ESP which is, of course, the principal focus of this study.

Because ESP prepares learners for either their jobs or further studies, it is usually assumed that the learners are either adults or near adults. These students tend to be post beginner level. That is, they have done a General English course at school, and then wish to extend or adapt this competence to their particular fields of work or study. Therefore, their motivation is mostly instrumental.

In addition, these students usually come to the ESP courses with high expectations of achieving outcomes which will be useful for them in their jobs. However, one obvious constraint that these learners usually experience is the limit of time they can spend on their study as most of them still have other commitments when doing the course.

3.3.2 The teachers

In many ways, ESP teachers have much in common with any language teachers. What distinguishes the ESP teacher from many colleagues in the language teaching world, as McDonough argues:

... is the additional, crucial need to understand and be willing to accommodate the requirements of other professionals, be they in academic, or occupational spheres." (McDonough, 1984:127)

To the ESP teachers, the profession is more demanding in the sense that they not only require more back-up research and preparation for a very specific course for a very limited group of learners, but they also need to meet a broad range of learners' expectations. These can be academic, occupational, cultural, educational and/or individual. It is likely that learners' expectations will relate to a number of these areas concurrently.

Stevens (1988) mentions another difficulty the ESP teachers may have to face. He says:

One of the difficulties the teachers unaccustomed to ESP have to face lies in the gap between the learner's knowledge of the special subject and the teacher's ignorance of it." (Stevens, 1988:8)

It is acknowledged that an ideal ESP teacher would be either a content specialist with a command of the language, or a language teacher who is prepared to make the effort needed to acquire knowledge of a discipline. More often than not, these two kinds of knowledge do not exist in one ESP teacher.

To overcome this situation, Stevens (1988:9) gives three pieces of advice to ESP teachers:

(i) "Become familiar with the ESP course materials."

By this the author means that the ESP teachers need to understand exactly the intention of each text and exercise. The main points of difficulty with which the teacher is likely to be unfamiliar in these texts and exercises are often dealt with in the accompanying teacher's notes.

(ii) "Become familiar with the language of the subject."

The ESP teacher should accept and become familiar with the language of a subject without pretending or seeking to become a specialist in the subject itself. While this is the advice that Stevens gives, one could, in fact, argue that the closer a teacher comes to developing an expertise in the

subject area concerned, the better s/he will be able to teach the specific variety of English needed by the students. Time is, however, a factor to be considered and, in reality, it is likely that most ESP teachers will acquire only a superficial knowledge of business, engineering or whatever the "specific" area of the ESP course may be.

(iii) "Allow students to put you right."

ESP teachers should not be reluctant to allow their students to correct any error they may make in the subject matter. The teachers will then be in a strong position to help students with their mistakes in the language. Both groups, teachers and students will have their particular areas of expertise which they can share with each other.

Also according to Strevens, ideally ESP flourishes on the concept of a team of teachers, and with a collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists.

3.4 MAIN ISSUES IN COURSE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following section will discuss a number of issues that are fundamental to the design and implementation of ESP courses. Though these issues will be discussed under a number of separate headings, it is stressed that there is considerable overlap between them.

3.4.1 Needs analysis

The importance of needs analysis in any language teaching program is indicated in Tickoo's statement: "The learner's reason for learning is or ought to be the basis of every curriculum and any planned educational programme." (Tickoo, 1988:V).

In ESP, needs analysis is considered as "the most characteristic feature" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:63). This is to say that a crucial element in any ESP course is the attention to the needs of the learners, and "the purposes for which learners need English, purposes which are usually expressed in functional terms". (Brumfit, 1977:11).

Since the main emphasis of ESP teaching is on the communicative purposes of the learner, writers such as Munby (1978) argue that the learner's communicative needs should be carefully and systematically analysed before deciding on the syllabus content and teaching methodology.

In ESP courses, an identification of learners' needs should take into account the following:

- (i) the purposes for which they are learning the language;
- (ii) the functions which they will need in order to achieve their purposes; and
- (iii) the language forms required to carry out these functions.

However, as Nunan (1988) points out, it is necessary for ESP course designers not to look at needs analysis only in terms of learners' needs. He suggests that in syllabus design:

Information will need to be collected not only on why learners want to learn the target language, but also about such things as societal expectations and constraints and the resources available for implementing the syllabus. (Nunan, 1988:14).

In order to understand fully the importance of needs analysis in the broad sense suggested by Nunan, the basic distinction between "target needs" (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation), and "learning needs" (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn) made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54) should be examined.

With regard to "target needs" these authors state that we should study them in terms of "necessities", "lacks" and "wants" - three terms to which they ascribe the meanings below.

- (i) **Necessities:** are "the type of need determined by the demands of the target situation" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:55). For example, business people may need to speak English in meetings and telephone conversations with English-speaking counterparts, and to understand and write business correspondence. The students may also need to know the linguistic features which are commonly used in each particular context (e.g. at a negotiating table, in an informal business dinner party).

- (ii) **Lacks:** refer to what the students still need to learn. Information on students' lacks will help course designers decide which skills or knowledge they should pay more attention to so as to fill in the gap. For example, if students are found to be weak in listening, then the course should assign more time for the students to practise this skill.
- (iii) **Wants:** the first two points, necessities and lacks, are, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), essentially, objective requirements where the actual learners play no active roles. But as Richterich comments, students should also have a view to what their needs are. He says:

... a need does not exist independent of a person. It is people who build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment. (Richterich, 1984:29)

This particular type of needs, i.e. "wants" is "what the students themselves want or feel they need" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:57). These perceptions held by the students may sometimes conflict with those of other interested parties such as course designers, sponsors and teachers. It is nonetheless important to take into consideration the learners' own perceptions of their wants/needs, since this may have a strong influence on the learners' motivation in the learning process.

Awareness of the three aspects of the target situation needs will help course designers to make suitable judgements according to the

particular circumstances, especially in regard to their choice of materials and methodology.

With regard to "learning needs", these assist course designers to determine how the **process** of learning will be carried out. In other words, analysis of learning needs will tell course designers what is needed and useful to help students learn.

To summarise this section, in order to carry out a sufficient analysis of needs, it is essential for course designers to consider both target situation needs and learning needs. These two aspects of needs analysis will provide information on what students "do with language" and how they "learn to do what they do with language" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:63).

3.4.2 Syllabuses

This section will first briefly mention the main types of syllabuses used in language teaching before moving on to the discussion of the syllabuses regarded as more suitable for the teaching of Business English.

A - Commonly used syllabuses in language teaching:

According to Dubin and Olshtain (1986:37), there are four major syllabus types:

- the structural-grammatical syllabus
- the semantico - notional syllabus
- the functional syllabus
- the situational syllabus.

But, as Krahnke (1987) points out, in addition to these four syllabus types, we can name three more which place greater emphasis on language use than on form. They are: skill-based syllabuses, task-based syllabuses and content-based syllabuses. These syllabuses, in fact, should be considered as a derivation from the four major types.

A further consideration that should be borne in mind is that these types of syllabuses rarely occur completely independently of each other. Krahnke says:

Almost all actual language teaching syllabi are combinations of two or more of the types defined here. On the other hand, for a given course, text, or curriculum, one type of syllabus usually dominates; that is, while other types of content may be combined with the dominant type, the majority of the content reflects one or another type of syllabus. (Krahnke, 1987:9)

To train business students who can communicate well in the target language, it is likely to be necessary to develop a syllabus which is a combination of some of the above syllabuses. This should be done in an eclectic manner so as to bring about positive results. These types of syllabuses will be discussed in the following section.

B - Syllabuses suitable for short Business English courses:

The major aim of short Business English courses is to train students who wish to possess or develop sufficient English proficiency to effectively fulfil their work responsibilities. These students may want to speak English in meetings and telephone conversations with English-speaking clients and firm personnel. They may also need to attend technical training conducted in

English, read reference materials and correspondence, write memos, fax, or reports in English (if they work for foreign firms). They may also be required to present business proposals in English. Therefore, to achieve this aim, it is essential for Business English course designers to identify types of syllabuses that would enable students to make steady progress in improving their language skills in these work-related tasks.

To meet this requirement, the task-based syllabus would seem in many ways to be the most appropriate, for it focuses on the communicative skills that students will be able to display as a result of instruction.

Key characteristics of the task-based syllabus as identified by Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) are:

- (i) the syllabus is organized around particular tasks; e.g. using the telephone to obtain a particular piece of information;
- (ii) grammar and vocabulary have a secondary role and do not become the focus of the organization.

Richards, Platt and Weber observe of the task-based syllabus:

It has been argued that this is a more effective way of learning a language since it provides a purpose for the use and learning of a language other than simply learning items for their own sake. (1985:289)

For business people who come to an ESP course with professional expertise and some competence in English, the task-based syllabus is regarded as relevant. Drawing on the students' professional expertise, it can help them develop the language skills needed to

understand and convey information, and to perform tasks related to their professional roles.

However, with the desirability of integrating different types of syllabuses in a training program, as mentioned above, it is necessary to stress that short Business English courses at the HFTC should not employ a task-based syllabus to the exclusion of all others. This type of syllabus should only be regarded as a dominant one while other types such as skill-based and content-based ones may be used to complement the former. This will be considered further in Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Methodology

The importance that methodology plays in achieving the outcomes of an ESP course is clearly expressed by Crocker when he says:

... if the focus of interest in the LSP (language for specific purposes) is on outcomes, then one might expect more attention to be paid to training LSP teachers in ways of helping guarantee the achievement of those outcomes, that is to methodology in its broadest sense. (Crocker, 1981:11)

The question "What kind of methods should be used in ESP?" has no direct answer. Since one of the main features of ESP is to focus on language use rather than language forms, or on making our language learners into language users, we should pay attention to what Widdowson suggests:

We have to devise ways, therefore, of engaging them in procedural work which will convert these items of knowledge into actualised communicative behaviour. We need a

methodology to activate these inert categories. (Widdowson, 1983:87)

In general, ESP methodology is seen to be quite similar to that of any other form of language teaching. The similarity, as Stevens (1988:10) points out, relates to the following important aspects:

- shaping the input
- encouraging the learner's intention to learn
- managing the learning strategies
- promoting practice and use.

To many people, there seems to be a general feeling that the methodology of ESP instruction both in the classroom and in the textbook should be somewhat different from those used in General English courses. Hesketh (1974) also stresses the need for an ESP teacher to be flexible and adaptable. Drobnic (1978) and Ewer (1976) similarly emphasise the importance of flexibility in an ESP course, especially regarding books and materials.

Other possible features of an ESP methodology, as Robinson (1980) points out, derive from its association with communicative and functional approaches to language teaching. Webb (1977), while suggesting that teaching methods for ESP are not fundamentally different from those of ELT, at the same time refers to new or different uses of games, projects and role play. Robinson (1980) further indicates that some of the exercise types associated with ESP are in fact entirely appropriate to general ELT but have arisen with ESP because of its greater attention to relevant language practice, to students' motivation and needs, and to the requirement that there

should be greater efficiency of teaching and learning, given the tendency for ESP courses to be of short duration.

Examining the problem of choosing suitable methodology for ESP courses in a more practical way, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) show us some features and techniques which can make the ESP classroom a livelier, more enjoyable, and thus more effective environment for both learner and teacher. The suggested features and techniques include those that any teacher should ensure exist in his/her classroom: variety, enjoyment, coherence, atmosphere, and integrated skills activities. In addition, gap filling and prediction exercises should be exploited so as to obtain students' interest and involvement.

To summarize the issues that relate to the methodology applicable to ESP, it is necessary to stress again that there is not much fundamental difference between ESP methodology and that of General English teaching. The skills and techniques that can be employed usefully in the latter can also be used in the former successfully. However, to meet the specific needs of learners in each particular ESP course, it is essential for the ESP practitioners to be flexible in their teaching activities, and also in their use of the teaching materials available so as to bring about better results.

3.4.4 Materials

The place of textbooks in ESP teaching has for a number of years been a much discussed issue within the profession. Robinson (1980) argues:

After all, one of the obvious differences between ESP and general ELT is that the ESP teacher will not expect to use a general coursebook organized around general human interest topics, situations, functions, etc. but will expect at least that the topics and situations that the language is linked to will relate to the students' subject specialism. (Robinson, 1980:34)

A point that needs to be borne in mind in selecting materials is that people working as ESP teachers come with a variety of talents and with different levels of knowledge in the subject matter they are expected to teach. This fact very often leads to the situation where textbooks in ESP are dealt with differently. It also affects the extent to which teachers use commercially produced materials. Jones (1990) divides ESP teachers into three categories:

- (i) those who often write their own materials
- (ii) those at the other extreme who rely entirely on published texts; and
- (iii) those who make up the middle ground, writing their own materials when necessary to supplement published ESP texts.

In ESP today, authentic materials are increasingly being used as a reaction against the more traditional use of simplified and adapted ESP texts. Adapted texts, widely used in the past, are now considered artificial because they were concerned mainly with exemplifying language structures rather than with identifying real meaning and the intention of the author.

Morrow (1977:76) gives a definition of what is meant by the term, "authentic text":

An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort. In other words, it is not a made-up text.

McDonough provides further explanation to Morrow's statement by listing those aspects to which authenticity must apply. "Thus 'authentic' is measured according to topic, function, channel (spoken/written), intended audience." (McDonough, 1984:77)

Another important point is that it is necessary for language teachers not to confuse authenticity with relevance. Very often texts in commercial text-books are selected on the basis of topics only, so that while being authentic, they may not be relevant to a particular type of student or their level in the target language. Authentic materials, therefore, should not only be seen as a question of text choice, but also as a question of the level of language skills required and the appropriateness of tasks the learners are asked to carry out.

In his article entitled "Authenticity Revisited. How Real is Real?", Arnold points to another issue, arguing that in terms of the classroom activities these materials generate, there is no guarantee at all that authentic materials mean authentic interaction or authentic communication. In this context the author points out: "One of the keys to success is the degree of involvement the learners have when they are performing the task" (Arnold, 1991:241).

Arnold also highlights some of the problems of "getting it right" (1991:241) if the classroom is to be used to rehearse behaviour that occurs in the outside world. His suggestions place emphasis on:

- (i) the close relationship that should exist between the authentic materials and the students' specific purposes.
- (ii) the relationship between authentic materials and authentic interactions. Arnold (1988) stresses that it is what trainees or students do that counts. Appropriate realia and authentic materials do not in themselves guarantee the authenticity of a task.
- (iii) the need for authentic responses. These require learners to know what their expected roles are, to be able to adopt those roles, and to behave in them in a convincing manner.
- (iv) authentic settings and equipment which also contribute to the overall authenticity of a task, and finally
- (v) linking of tasks, rather than treatment of them in isolation. This, he argues, more closely replicates what happens in the real world.

In short, in order to make use of authentic materials successfully, it is necessary for ESP teachers to take into consideration not only the problem of choosing materials that are relevant in terms of topics, functions, channel and audience, but also the problem of knowing how to use them by creating authentic interaction or authentic communication. Only by paying attention to all these points can teachers match what is happening in the classroom with what happens in the real world outside the classroom.

3.4.5 Evaluation and assessment

While the main emphasis of the current study is on developing courses rather than on evaluation and assessment, it is, nonetheless, important that course designers and teachers are aware of the need for evaluation so that they may make on-going improvements to the ESP courses they offer. In any course, testing is an essential component, but this is particularly so with ESP courses where the participants need to be assessed in terms of their competence in performing work-related activities and where their employers also need to be able to rely on this assessment so that they can assign tasks confidently to those who have completed the course.

This section will focus on two areas that are seen to be key issues in ESP evaluation:

- (i) the role of evaluation and assessment within ESP, and
- (ii) aspects of test design for ESP courses.

A - The role of evaluation and assessment within ESP:

Any language teaching course has certain evaluation requirements, but in ESP these requirements are brought more sharply into focus because of their specific objectives. Firstly, both ESP learners and their sponsors or funding agencies are interested in obtaining a return for the time or money they spend on the course. Secondly, the organizers of ESP courses (i.e. institutions, teachers) also want to evaluate their work to make improvements for their future programs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) point out

that this involves two different kinds of evaluation: learner assessment and course evaluation.

Here, we should take a look at the difference between assessment and evaluation. According to Nunan, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, even though they mean different things. In language teaching, assessment refers to the processes that are used to determine a particular learner's proficiency at a given point. Evaluation, on the other hand, is a wider term that refers to the process of collecting and interpreting information about an educational program. The purpose of assessment is to identify **what** particular learners know or can do in English. Evaluation of a course, by contrast, helps to determine **why** learners have either succeeded or failed. It also looks at ways in which a course may be adapted to improve the speed and efficiency of student learning (Nunan, 1990).

As far as the ESP course is concerned, it is essential for the course organizers to carry out an evaluation. This kind of evaluation helps the organizers to assess whether a course achieves its aims and objectives. This type of evaluation can be carried out at different points of time. In practice, the first evaluation is often the one that takes place at the end of the course. However, some evaluation can take place as soon as possible after the beginning of the course (e.g. after Week 1 or Week 2). Information from this process can alert course organizers to the need for adaptations to their programs as they go along.

With regard to assessment of learners, this can be carried out at different times in the course. In ESP, assessment of students is crucially important, since ESP is concerned with the ability to perform particular communicative tasks. Therefore, assessment plays an important role in measuring abilities and knowledge relevant to the student's current academic study or to his/her employment. It indicates to the student's current or potential employer whether s/he will be able to perform in English those tasks that are important within the company or the organization.

In addition, any assessment should provide constructive feedback to inform both teachers and learners about the learners' areas of weakness.

B - Aspects of ESP test design:

Though there is often no significant difference in the kinds of tests currently being employed in ESP and those used in General English testing, Strevens (1988) and many testing experts argue that this is far from ideal, that conventional General English tests are largely unsuitable for ESP use. This is due to the fact that ESP tests, because of the nature of the ESP course, should be authentic and operational. They should also reflect particular contexts. For example, it would be inappropriate for the end-of-course test for a special ESP course in English for hotel employees in Saigon to be used also for an ESP course in English for office workers in Tokyo, even though the overall level of proficiency at which both courses aimed might be similar. Therefore, it is desirable for ESP practitioners to devise their own tests. There are, however, certain

problems associated with this which will be discussed in Chapter 4 with particular reference to the situation in Vietnam.

Alderson (1988) suggests that it is important to consider three aspects to ESP test design. These aspects are test validation, test method, and test content.

By test validation, Alderson means the requirement to ensure that the test is valid. In other words, the test should measure "what it is supposed to measure and nothing else" (Heaton, 1988:159).

The second and third aspects Alderson mentions are test method and test content. He suggests that there should be little difference in design between a test exercise and an in-class exercise. If, for example, students in an English for Business course have practised, in one of their lessons, writing a letter to enquire about the availability of a certain product, then a valid test exercise would also be to write a business letter making a similar kind of enquiry. The author points out:

Language testing is beginning to show an increased use not only of authentic or realistic texts, but also, crucially, of authentic purposes for language use. In other words, the tasks that students have to carry out in tests increasingly reflect the sorts of things they might have to do with language in the real world. (Alderson, 1988:90)

As a result of the new developments in testing, new testing formats have appeared, requiring students to put language into use by, for example, filling in forms/applications, taking notes, or successfully carrying out a role play in which they make a telephone call to arrange hotel accommodation for a client.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

A wide range of issues have been discussed in this chapter. These have included the importance of needs analysis, appropriate syllabuses and methodology, the choice of suitable teaching materials, and the importance of appropriate methods of student assessment and course evaluation. It is intended that this discussion will provide a theoretical perspective to the chapter that follows.

Chapter 4

**PLANNING SHORT COURSES IN BUSINESS ENGLISH
FOR VIETNAM****4. INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter considered the theoretical aspects of the design and implementation of courses in ESP. It did so with a view to the development of particular ESP courses, namely short courses in Business English for Vietnam, which would operate within a background of relevant theory.

This chapter will bring together the insights gained through a study of the relevant theory with the information collected through the data gathering processes described in Chapter 2. It will combine the theoretical insights with the more practical observations in order to plan courses that will begin to meet the emerging needs in Vietnam.

4.1 THE PARTICIPANTS**(i) *The students***

Chapters 1 and 2 gave some indication of the students who are currently studying English at the HFTC, and also some ideas as to who the likely participants would be in short courses in Business English in future years. The question of what is meant by short courses will be discussed in 4.2.2.

It emerged clearly that there will, almost certainly, be very large numbers of company and government employees who will need to have an increased level of proficiency in English., This point has been made by Mullock (2.3.1) as well as by many of those interviewed, or whose views were sought by questionnaire as part of this study.

Given that almost all of the course participants are likely to have studied English at school, they will not be beginners. The precise levels of proficiency attained by these people as a result of their English language studies at school will vary according to a number of factors, for example how long it is since they last studied English, the quality of teaching they received, and the contact they have had with English speakers since then. Most potential students in the short courses will, however, be in the pre-intermediate to intermediate range.

It is also reasonable to anticipate that most of the participants will already be working in import-export companies. The data obtained through the questionnaire sent to Australian business people indicated quite clearly that there is an increasing tendency for overseas firms to deal with lower levels of staff from Vietnamese companies, no longer only with staff in higher management positions. This is another important point to be considered in course planning.

The motivation of the participants of the proposed courses will almost certainly be instrumental. They will be learning English

with a specific purpose in mind, namely to carry out the requirements of their work. Their level of instrumental motivation is likely to be high because they will see enhanced proficiency in English as being a stepping-stone to promotion and, accordingly, to economic advancement.

While the participants will be highly motivated, they are likely to have limited time available because they will have to continue with their work at the same time as undertaking their course in Business English. It is quite possible that some of the participants will be given time release to undertake a course, perhaps funded by their firm or by some other agency. However, in the opinion of the writer, these participants will be very much in the minority.

A picture emerges of the students most likely to be undertaking the Business English courses. They will predominantly be highly-motivated adult learners who have already studied General English at school and who have attained a pre-intermediate to intermediate level of proficiency in General English. They will have limited time available to them and are likely, therefore, to be impatient of any activities or subject matter which they do not see as directly relevant to their purposes.

It can be seen very clearly that the five-year courses at the HFTC, while valuable for a limited number of participants, are totally irrelevant to this rapidly growing group of Vietnamese business people. The problem of meeting the needs of the latter group must be addressed through the provision of shorter courses.

ii) The teachers

The question must now be asked as to who will plan and teach the proposed courses and how well they are equipped to do so.

Hanoi FTC has, in its English language section, a small number of teachers who are highly proficient in English and who have higher degrees from countries such as Australia and Britain. These teachers are aware of the most recent developments in methodology and in course design. They are, therefore, well equipped, at a theoretical level, to design English language courses. Most of them are not, however, aware of the latest developments that are occurring in business in the countries with which Vietnam is dealing.

An additional problem, as Vietnam's trade with other countries is increasing at a rapid pace, is that it is likely that a number of the HFTC's English language staff will be attracted by the much higher salaries offered by private companies and will leave the teaching profession to work as interpreters/business executives instead. This is, according to information supplied to the writer by the Vietnamese Commercial Attache to Australia, already occurring to a very significant degree, particularly in Ho Chi Minh City. There is no reason to suppose that, in the longer term, Hanoi will be exempt from this problem. This will compound the difficulties, referred to in Chapter 1, of a shortage of suitable teachers.

Solutions will need to be found to the two problems discussed above. The first, namely that staff in HFTC's English language section have insufficient knowledge of up-to-date business practice, is one that can be addressed in several ways:

- through greater collaboration with the HFTC's business experts/staff in the Department of Economics, although problems may arise where these staff are not familiar with Western models;
- through short-term placements of staff in import-export firms, ideally in English-speaking countries such as Australia; and
- through having teachers of Business English from English-speaking countries on short-term assignments to the HFTC to assist with curriculum planning and materials development.

There are, of course, funding implications to these suggestions. While these implications would need to be carefully assessed, they are beyond the scope of the current study and so are not discussed further here.

The second problem, namely the probable loss of some of the most highly qualified and most able English language teachers from the profession, is also a serious one which has implications for a number of aspects of the course, particularly for methodology and materials (see 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). A partial solution to this problem would be to attract more trained native English-speaking teachers to positions in Vietnamese institutions. In addition, in order to minimize the loss of highly qualified teachers of Business English, the HFTC should provide them with favourable conditions such as:

- offering them more competitive salaries; and
- seeking opportunities for them to attend national and international seminars and conferences dealing with recent business developments and practices; or refresher courses in

language teaching methodology in general, or in ESP teaching in particular.

4.2 MAJOR ISSUES IN COURSE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH IN VIETNAM

4.2.1 Needs analysis:

The importance of conducting an appropriate form of needs analysis was discussed from a theoretical perspective in Chapter 3. This chapter will now consider the question of needs analysis in relation to the particular need for short Business English courses in Vietnam.

This field study can, in itself, be seen as a form of needs analysis in that it is focussing directly on "meeting the need for Business English in the new Vietnam". It has considered not only the needs of the learners, but also those of the country as a whole - of all those involved in the provision of the courses. It has, in other words, considered all the stakeholders, although paying greatest attention to the two groups most directly involved (see 3.3): the learners and the teachers. It has, at a general level, taken into account not only learner needs but also learning needs (see 3.4.1).

On the basis of this preliminary analysis, it can be stated categorically that a need exists for short courses in Business English to cater for the increased trade that is taking place between Vietnam and other countries around the world.

The courses that are now being proposed, and which will be discussed in greater detail in 4.2.2, are intended to have a fairly

general applicability for people with a level of English language proficiency within the pre-intermediate - intermediate range. These courses will enable company employees to carry out simple business dealings and transactions through the medium of English. They will not attempt at this stage to meet the more particular needs of individual companies, or of groups of companies engaged in the trade of a particular product.

In the interests of efficiency, however, it is desirable that in the future, there should be a greater degree of specificity. It has already been said that most participants in short Business English courses will be following these courses at the same time as continuing with their work. Therefore, it is of great importance that everything they do should not only be relevant, but also be perceived by the participants as relevant.

Data obtained in the interview with Hoa, the Commercial Attache, as well as from the questionnaires sent to Australian business people show quite clearly that there are certain products that will be exported from Vietnam by many companies. An example of one such product is seafood. It could well be that very highly focussed courses in Business English (e.g. English for the Fishing Industry) could be developed. Such courses would require careful needs analysis in order to assess the most appropriate content.

The ultimate in specificity would be a custom-designed course for a particular firm. Major international companies have already set up in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi) which are employing thousands of Vietnamese workers. For example:

Telecom, Shell, Samsung. The greatest efficiency could be created through collaboration between English language teaching experts/course designers and representatives of the company who have a strong awareness of their company's needs and current areas of inadequacy in terms of communication through the medium of English.

With regard to the present situation in Vietnam where time and resources are still limited, the question of collecting adequate and necessary information concerning the needs of learners and their sponsors plays a vital role in the success of the course. This process of information gathering can be done in a number of ways, e.g. through informal pre-course consultations with learners and their sponsors; or through observations and data collection (e.g. analysing test results from previous courses). In view of the complexity of needs, it may be necessary for course designers to use more than one of these methods. As needs analysis is not a once and for all activity, this process should be carried out regularly and the information gathered should constantly be checked and reassessed so as to permit appropriate adaptations to future courses.

4.2.2 Curriculum:

In this chapter, syllabus, methodology and materials are combined under the broader heading of Curriculum. This is because of the interrelationships that exist between them, particularly so in the case of commercially produced materials where the choice of texts determines not only the content taught, but also the organization

of the syllabus to be followed and the activities through which teaching and learning occur.

(i) Proposed duration of courses:

An important issue to be resolved, even before the curriculum is planned, is the duration of the proposed courses. This should, in the opinion of the writer, be a variable length which takes into account the time available. For the purpose of this study, however, the writer proposes a course of 160 hours as a minimum. In the writer's opinion, anything less than this would not permit adequate coverage of material. One hundred and sixty hours should allow for the completion of a core textbook (see 4.3) and for the inclusion of a variety of appropriate supplementary materials.

The exact configuration of the course could vary according to the working patterns and to the availability of particular groups for whom courses are designed. It is suggested, however, that the one hundred and sixty hours could be made up of ten hours per week over a period of sixteen weeks, or perhaps six hours a week over a correspondingly longer period.

(ii) Course content and materials:

This will also vary according to needs. For a fairly typical group of pre-intermediate learners, however, needing to improve all their language macroskills, certain topics can be identified as being highly relevant. For example:

- meeting a business client
- company description
- product description

- describing job responsibilities
- using the telephone
- describing a process.

Results obtained from the data analysis (Chapter 2) also indicate the need for attention to be given to the following:

- (a) commonly used technical and business terminology. Nine out of the eighteen questionnaire respondents found that Vietnamese people's lack of familiarity with those terms often resulted in misunderstanding or unnecessarily lengthy discussions. Therefore, reading texts from relevant textbooks or extracts from magazines and newspapers may help the course participants to overcome this problem.
- (b) remedial work with grammatical structures and pronunciation. Choosing materials which also cover this type of activity is one way to achieve this purpose.
- (c) familiarising students with different varieties of English. Using tape recorded voices of different people is considered beneficial for students in the proposed courses.
- (d) writing business letters and other correspondence (including the use of the fax).

The above discussion gives examples of what **may** make up the content of the proposed courses. It is necessary to reiterate that this content may vary somewhat for each course as a result of the course needs analysis.

Given the undoubted shortage of highly qualified teachers as the demand for courses increases, the writer argues for the need to use a commercially produced Business English textbook as a core text. This will help ensure the necessary quality control in circumstances where the teachers lack the expertise or the confidence to develop materials of their own. In section 4.3, the writer reviews a number of Business English texts which may be suitable for use in the proposed courses in Vietnam. Supplementary materials will, however, be needed which take into account perceived gaps in the core materials. Moreover, these can also help make the course more specific to the current situation in Vietnam. The textbook itself will teach the students about Western business practice.

Authentic materials are valuable provided these are of a level of difficulty with which course participants can cope. These may include radio-broadcasts, business journals (e.g. *The Economist*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*) and local business papers. These materials can, of course, only be used in courses where the participants' receptive skills are reasonably advanced.

Guest speakers from local or foreign business organizations can provide students and teachers with up-to-date information on business trends and practices. Again, course participants will need to have reasonably advanced listening skills if they are to benefit significantly from these speakers.

(iii) Methodology:

The question of methodology in ESP has been mentioned in 3.4.3. To some extent, the methodology employed is determined by the core text. As noted earlier, the writer believes that a core text is essential in courses where teachers are non-native speakers and, in many cases, relatively inexperienced.

Most Business English textbooks follow a communicative methodology, which implies the use of simulations, pair and group work. These activities are seen as appropriate for the proposed courses, for they provide company employees with practice in language situations comparable to those they confront at work, and allow them the opportunity to make errors and engage in realistic interaction in English.

Simulations, while regarded as suitable for business-oriented courses, are demanding activities for students at lower levels of proficiency and are, therefore, likely to be inappropriate in the early stages of most courses run in the near future in Vietnam.

Pair and small group work, on the other hand, should be seen as a useful technique with all levels of students to increase student-talk. This can be carried out through a variety of information gap activities (see 3.4.3) to create real business working situations such as small talk with clients, explaining things to business partners, introducing oneself, and making arrangements.

(iv) Resources:

In the current situation in Vietnam, course organizers are unlikely to have access to video recorders, or overhead projectors (OHPs). Besides the essential equipment for any class, namely chalk and a blackboard, the only available resources at the moment are radio-cassette recorders. This situation may change in the near future. However, at this stage we must assume a limited range of resources and plan our courses accordingly. The availability of a cassette-recorder is of great importance because this enables teachers to familiarize students with the authentic spoken language of the business world. Some teachers use tapes of people speaking different types of English (e.g. British, American, Australian English, Japanese English) to help students get used to various kinds of English. This technique is seen as beneficial as, in Chapter 3 (3.2.2), it was stated that a considerable number of people who use English for communication (the figure varies between 750 million and 1500 million) are not native-speakers of English. It is not uncommon now to find a Norwegian and a Spaniard, or a Japanese and a Vietnamese using English as the medium through which to conduct business transactions. Therefore, it is important to familiarize students with non-native varieties of the language by using recorded tapes of different types of English.

Another useful way of using these machines is for listening to and discussing recorded radio broadcasts in class. This technique encourages students to listen more to radio programs, e.g. news, business programs, in their non-class time. Because of the limited time available in class, students on the proposed courses will need

to take advantage of other resources available in their everyday lives.

4.3 REVIEW OF TEN BUSINESS ENGLISH TEXTS

It is necessary for the designers of the proposed courses to look for relevant materials which not only reflect a business focus with up-to-date information, but also employ a variety of typical business activities. The following section introduces some of the most recently published business-oriented materials. These are regarded as appropriate, since they meet most of the following criteria in selection of business-oriented materials:

- (i) level of English: lower -intermediate and above;
- (ii) practicality: containing material that is practical and useful for adult learners who are business professionals;
- (iii) relevant business topics: job-related, and covering a range of business fields;
- (iv) focussing on integrated skills: (i.e. listening + speaking + reading + writing); and
- (v) useful content in terms of authentic texts and situations, sufficient and appropriate vocabulary, and frequently used language in typical business communicative activities.

Some of the materials reviewed here are accompanied by teachers' books or teachers' notes. For non-native teachers of Business English in general and for those teachers at the HFTC in particular whose knowledge of the subject matter may be somewhat lacking, textbooks which are accompanied by teachers' books/notes constitute one of the most important criteria in choosing materials for their courses. To the English

teachers at the HFTC, books of this kind help them in a number of ways: by facilitating their understanding of typical business terms/concepts, and by offering guidance on how to use suggested activities. Appropriate and attractive illustrations, printing quality and appearance are also criteria to be considered in choosing books for the proposed courses.

Taking into consideration the general levels of proficiency in English and the interests of students who wish to enrol in this type of course, the first three texts mentioned below are suggested as core textbooks. Features of each of the ten textbooks are shown below:

1. Hollet, V., *Business Objectives*, Oxford University Press, 1991.

This claims to be a course for both managers and students of business who have reached a pre-intermediate level of English. It has a grammatical syllabus, but the sixteen units also tackle the key functional areas of business interaction such as telephoning, participating in meetings, socializing, and giving presentations and project briefings.

While offering students opportunities to practise all four language skills, the exercises in the book focus particularly on listening and speaking skills. Therefore, this book is recommended for courses that aim to improve the students' skills in these two particular areas.

The text is accompanied by a cassette tape and a teacher's book which consists of classroom notes for each unit, an answer key to all exercises, and tapescripts for listening activities.

2. Vaughan, A. and Heyen, N., *Ready for Business*, Longman, 1990.

This book is for pre-intermediate students who need to obtain a knowledge of basic Business English.

Each of the nine units of the book focuses on performance in a different business situation such as meeting a visitor at the airport, talking about sales, market shares and customers. Though the units are based on the visit of an American executive to a Japanese company, the situations and language claim to be of relevance to business people of all nationalities.

In just the same way as *Business Objectives*, this book places a strong emphasis on listening and speaking. It is therefore a suitable core text for courses focussing on those areas. The exercises are set to encourage students to bring their own business experience and knowledge to the situations they are working on. One could argue, therefore, that it may be a more suitable text to use with students who have already had experience in the world of business than with those proposing to enter the field.

3. White, G. and Drake, S., *Business Initiatives*, Longman, 1989.

This text claims to be designed for business and professional people at a pre-intermediate level of English who need to use English effectively and fluently at work.

The book has twenty units which cover "survival" English used in different business and social contexts. All four macro-skills are dealt with through simulations, problem-solving tasks and discussions to activate

language. The book also has grammar reference sections in its main units. These sections will, it is anticipated, provide valuable assistance to teachers in Vietnam who find their students need remedial work in this area.

Together with a teacher's guide, two cassette-tapes which feature both native and non-native speakers of English, the book is recommended to be used as the core textbook for courses that cover all four skills.

The following books, in the opinion of the writer, are those from which the proposed courses can seek supplementary materials.

4. Brieger, N., Comfort, J., Hughes, S. and West, C., *Business Contacts*, Prentice Hall International English Language Teaching, 1987.

The book is for adult learners of intermediate and upper-intermediate levels of English, and therefore may be rather too difficult for most students in the proposed courses.

Through thirty units, the book contains practical language activities that are relevant to the needs of business people. Each unit provides opportunities for the development of productive oral skills through role plays, problem-solving activities or discussion topics.

Business Contacts has an accompanying cassette which covers key language items through a variety of listening passages. There are also related information transfer exercises.

5. Stanton, A.J. and Wood, L.R., *Longman Commercial Communication*, Longman, 1988.

This book is for an intermediate level English course. It has two particular strengths - a modern communicative methodology, and a systematic coverage of the main types of business letters.

The text contains twelve units which provide practice in a number of commercial contexts. The letters are graded according to their functional language development. The units also cover important commercial documents and modern office technology.

Accompanied by a teacher's guide and a cassette tape, *Longman Commercial Communication* can be used as supplementary material for courses that place an emphasis on training students in business letter writing. Its focus is therefore too narrow for it to be a main course text unless the particular course is one designed specifically to train people in writing skills.

6. Greenall, S., *Business Targets*, Heineman English Language Teaching, 1986.

Business Targets is a task-based course for business and management students at upper-intermediate level.

The student's book covers a wide variety of business topics. These include company organization, advertising, distribution of products and accounting. These may not be of relevance to all course participants, particularly to those who work in lower-level clerical positions.

The text is nonetheless useful. All four language skills are practised equally, with special attention paid to accuracy in written work and fluency in discussion. A useful structure 'review section provides students with a summary of grammar points with exercises.

The book is accompanied by a teacher's book and a cassette tape containing recordings of realistic business discussions. Some authentic dialogues are also included.

7. Kerridge, D., *Presenting Facts and Figures*, Longman, 1988.

Presenting Facts and Figures is designed for students at upper-intermediate level and above. It is intended to be used by people either studying in class or on their own. This latter point is relevant in that it enables students whose needs may be somewhat different from the majority of students in a course, to do additional work independently in their spare time.

The book consists of seven units and aims to bring together all the language needed to communicate clearly and accurately about numerical data. The book claims also to help students build accuracy, fluency and confidence in handling typical business situations.

Though the main skills covered are listening, speaking and reading, some short writing tasks can be found in the book.

Other components include a cassette tape and a key to the exercises in the units, as well as the tapescripts of all the materials on the cassette.

8. Cheung, A.C.M. and Munroe, E.P., *Writing Business Letters*, Baulkhamville Press, 1991.

This book is for those who wish to master the techniques of writing modern business letters. It is suitable for those whose English is at intermediate and more advanced levels. The book includes a brief discussion of the role of business letters and a description of the various components of business letters. Models for the styles, format and layout of some business letters are also included, in addition to the detailed study of six major types of business letters such as: letters of enquiry, letters responding to enquiry, letters of application, letters of confirmation, letters of complaint and letters of adjustment.

A strong point of this text is that it includes a variety of exercise types, as well as a range of model letters. In addition, the book contains a useful description of fax operation for students of business. As noted in Chapter 2, fax is becoming one of the most used means of communication between Vietnam and other countries.

9. Lees, G., *Negotiate in English*, Harrap London, 1983.

This book is also intended for students who have reached intermediate or more advanced levels of English.

The ten units in the book cover a specific and important aspect of Business English: the skill of negotiation. The exercises in each unit provide an input of relevant vocabulary and negotiating functions, and also give practice in various communicative skills. An important aspect

of this text is that students engage in problem-solving activities, thus obtaining practice in what will be required of them in their workplace.

The teacher's book contains helpful notes on negotiation and classroom organization. It also provides solutions to the exercises and the tapescript of the material recorded on the cassette-tape.

10. Sawyer, C. and Lauçanno, *Case Studies in International Management*, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1987.

The final book described in this section is intended for both upper-intermediate and advanced students of English. It will thus not be appropriate for most of the courses likely to be run in the near future. It is, nonetheless, included in this list because its case study approach is one that is considered highly relevant to the training of business people.

Ten cases are covered in the book. These claim to help students to become more fluent in all four macro-skills while learning about the world of business through such content areas as international sales/marketing; management/personnel/cultural conflicts; and international trade/joint ventures.

The text is accompanied by an instructor's manual which gives teachers detailed lesson-by-lesson guidance.

Table 1: REVIEW OF SOME BUSINESS-ORIENTED BOOKS FOR THE PROPOSED COURSES

Book Title	Level	Components				Design			Skills				Relevant Business Topics	Variety of Activities	Overall Rating	
		SB	TB	TN	Audio Cass	Attractive Illustration	Clear Print	Clear Index	L	S	R	W				
1 Business Objectives	PI	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	++++	++++	++++	
2 Ready for Business	PI	X			X	X	X	X	X	X			+++	++	++	
3 Business Initiatives	PI	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	++	+++	+++	
4 Business Contacts	PI I	X		X	X		X	X	X	X			+++	+++	++	
5 Longman Commercial Communication	I	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	+++	+++	+++	
6 Business Targets	UI	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	++	+++	+++	
7 Presenting Facts and Figures	I UI	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	++	+++	++	
8 Writing Business Letters	I A	X					X	X				X	+++	+++	+++	
9 Negotiate in English	I A	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	++	+++	++	
10 Case studies in International Management	UI A	X	X				X	X			X	X	X	+	++	++

Key: Level: I = Intermediate Components: SB = Student's Book Skills: L = Listening Rating: Very good = ++++
 PI = Pre-intermediate TB = Teacher's Book S = Spcaking Good = +++
 UI = Upper-intermediate TN = Teacher's Notes R = Reading Fair = ++
 A = Advanced W = Writing Poor = +

4.4 STUDENT ASSESSMENT

As stated in Chapter 3, assessment is not a main emphasis of this study and so will be touched upon only briefly here.

The writer (in 3.4.5) observed that conventional General English tests are essentially unsuitable for ESP courses. In ESP courses, test items should be operational and authentic. They should also reflect the context of particular courses rather than being used for a range of different purposes in different situations.

In the proposed Business English courses, writing a letter of enquiry would be a suitable, operational test item. As Alderson (1988) pointed out, there should be no real difference between an in-class exercise and a test exercise. Writing a letter, whether of enquiry, request or complaint, is an appropriate task, either in a regular lesson or in a test. Making a telephone call for a similar purpose would be equally appropriate.

The task, writing a business letter, also fulfils the requirement of authenticity of purpose in that the students will certainly have to perform tasks such as this in their regular employment in Vietnam, even though introduction of the fax has made letter-writing rather less necessary than before.

With regard to the desirability of test items reflecting particular contexts, it is important to recognize the limitations imposed by the fact that many of the teachers of the short Business English courses are likely to lack confidence and, therefore, be reluctant to produce their own test items. This will tend to make them fall back upon exercises that are found in the

textbooks that they are using. It is unlikely that most of the teachers will be prepared to modify materials substantially to make them fit more exactly the particular context in which they are teaching.

4.5 COURSE EVALUATION

In the short courses in Business English, as in any new programs, course evaluation is of great importance as it gives planners and teachers data on the basis of which they may adapt their programs and, thereby, improve the efficiency of student learning.

An important question to be considered is when the evaluation should be carried out. The writer suggests that, in the proposed courses, some evaluation should take place early in the semester (perhaps week 2) to obtain feedback from students as to whether the course appears to be moving in a direction appropriate to their needs. There are, of course, limitations on what teachers with a core textbook can do. The teachers can, however, supplement the course with appropriate materials where obvious lacks exist. They can also, for example, modify the emphasis on particular macro-skills if it becomes clear that the needs of the learners warrant this. End of course evaluation should also take place because of the insights this may provide for future courses.

The writer suggests that the most appropriate way of evaluating the courses is through informal discussions with students because this means of evaluation is one with which they are familiar. Semi-structured interviews with the participants' employers after the students have gone back to work can also be employed. Another alternative could be through carefully constructed questionnaires.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has related the theoretical issues discussed in Chapter 3 to the designing of short business-oriented courses for Vietnam. It has offered guidelines for course planning and implementation, bearing in mind the constraints that exist and which must be taken into account by the staff at the HFTC who are likely to be responsible for the new courses.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted in Chapter 1, the aims of this Field Study Report were, with reference to Vietnam:

- (i) to outline the past and present means of provision of English language teaching for interpreters and others who work in the broad areas of business and trade.
- (ii) to consider how the growing need for people proficient in Business English may best be met; and
- (iii) to make recommendations for future developments, in particular for short courses in Business English.

This brief chapter summarizes the findings in relation to those aims and makes recommendations accordingly.

The five-year courses that the HFTC has been running since its foundation have, in general, been regarded as successful. The College's former students have been able to interpret at a high level for government departments and agencies, or to work as managers or higher-level clerical employees in a number of business and commercial establishments throughout the country.

However, as the demand for people competent in Business English is growing at a rapid pace, there is a need for much shorter courses to meet

this demand. In proposing shorter courses, the writer recommends a minimum of 160 hours. Anything less would not permit adequate coverage of the required components. Such courses could be cumulative, with students, for example, taking one course in 1992 and then returning to take another course at a somewhat higher level when time permitted, perhaps immediately after the first, perhaps after a period had elapsed.

The students emerging from these shorter courses cannot be expected to have the same level of fluency in English or the same background knowledge in subjects such as Marketing, Finance, Shipping and Insurance as students who have completed five-year programs. There is, nonetheless, a very significant role for these students in the Vietnam of today and tomorrow.

When the need for many more people proficient in Business English became apparent, the next important task was to ascertain how best to meet the need. In endeavouring to address this issue, the writer used both questionnaires and interviews to gather data from a number of people with personal experience in relevant areas - either in teaching Business English in Vietnam, or in doing business with Vietnamese companies. The data collected from these sources not only confirmed the great need for shorter courses, but also provided a number of suggestions that are relevant to the format, content and methodology for those courses. An investigation of the relevant theory provided the writer with further insights into key issues underpinning course design.

The question of needs analysis was seen as fundamental to the curriculum design of ESP courses. In considering needs, this study has looked not only at those of the students who will be enrolling in the

proposed courses. It has taken into account also the needs of the teachers, the employers, and Vietnamese society as a whole.

It is clear that the majority of students enrolling in the shorter Business English programs are likely to be in the pre-intermediate/intermediate range of proficiency in English. They will be mostly, but not exclusively, clerical workers in private companies and government agencies. They will wish to improve their proficiency in Business English rather than General English, because they will recognize the benefits both to themselves and to their employers. They will not have a great deal of time to spend learning English and will, therefore, be anxious that all material they are taught be highly relevant.

The teachers are another important factor in the equation. As discussed earlier, many of them will tend to lack appropriate levels of knowledge of business practice. They may also be less proficient than desirable in English language and largely unaware of recent trends in teaching methodology.

Because of these limitations that exist, the writer recommends that each course be based around a core ESP textbook but that there should also be widespread use of supplementary materials. Syllabus and methodology will be largely determined by the choice of core textbooks. It is, however, assumed that a communicative methodology will be adopted and that the students will practise using English to carry out tasks that are relevant to their occupations.

The writer acknowledges that commercially produced textbooks are not entirely suitable for any group of students. The reason for

recommending their use was simply because, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, they ensure a measure of quality control and provide teachers whose English, or whose knowledge of business, is weak with materials that give them a sense of confidence. Earlier in this thesis (see 4.3), the writer has discussed a number of ESP textbooks in terms of their appropriateness for use in the current situation.

It is desirable, however, in the longer term that action be taken to try to overcome the problem of insufficient and inadequately trained teachers. One reason for there being insufficient teachers of Business English is that growing numbers of them are being attracted away from teaching and into companies. In order to avert this problem, the writer recommends that the teachers be offered more competitive salaries, and also that they be given opportunities to attend conferences dealing with matters relevant to their responsibilities. As a way of making the teachers more knowledgeable about business practice, the writer recommends three possible courses of action:

- (i) greater co-operation with teaching staff of the Department of Economics at HFTC;
- (ii) regular short-term placement in HFTC of teachers from business organizations to update the teaching program with current business practices; and
- (iii) native-speaking English teachers being on assignment to HFTC to assist with curriculum design and Business English.

It is to be hoped that these recommended courses of action might overcome some of the difficulties currently being experienced with and by teachers of English at the HFTC.

Ultimately, as there come to be more well-trained and well-qualified teachers, it is to be hoped that the dependence on commercially produced books written for a mass, international market will become less and that more materials may be developed that reflect the particular situations in Vietnam.

The fastest and most efficient way to develop appropriate curricula and materials would appear to be through cooperation between Vietnamese teachers of English and visiting experts from English-speaking countries. Such experts are to be found in Australia, at the University of Canberra, for instance, where a number of lecturers in the TESOL Centre have already run workshops in Business English or related subjects in Vietnam. The availability of foreign experts such as these in Vietnam would facilitate the development of more specifically targeted courses such as English for the Fishing Industry, or even Business English courses for a particular company.

The study also addressed the question of evaluation and assessment. As with any new programs, evaluation of the courses proposed here must play an important role. This will enable course designers to make adaptations as and when needed. With regard to student assessment, the Report stressed the need to design and use tests that require students to show that they can put language into use.

Throughout this study, the writer has assumed that the HFTC is the obvious institution to take the lead in the development of the new shorter Business English courses. This is because of its role in the past as the chief provider of Business English. While the provision of the new

short courses will place a strain on the limited resources of the HFTC, this is nonetheless the institution best equipped to meet the demand. Additional resources, both human and material, will, therefore need to be directed towards the HFTC to enable it to respond rapidly and effectively to the new demands.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this Field Study Report should be regarded as an attempt to address the issue of meeting the need for people proficient in Business English in the new Vietnam. It can, by no means, cover all the theoretical and practical problems involved in such large and important issues as ESP syllabus design. Therefore, the discussion and suggestions in this Field Study Report are tentative, and would benefit from further consideration and substantiation. However, it is hoped that this Report will make a worthwhile contribution to the future direction of the HFTC and to other organizations which may become involved in the design and delivery of Business English in Vietnam.

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INTERVIEW WITH UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA STAFF

Checklist of topics to be covered:

1. Level(s) of the workshop participants.
2. The participants' needs, i.e. what they wished to learn from the workshop.
3. Organization of the workshop:
 - (i) Length of the course
 - (ii) Class size
 - (iii) How the participants were classified for the classes.
4. Contents of the course:
 - (i) syllabus(es)
 - (ii) methodology
 - (iii) materials
 - (iv) evaluation.
5. Suggestions for future courses:
 - (i) duration
 - (ii) skills to be covered
 - (iii) methodology
 - (iv) materials/content
 - (v) evaluation.

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS PEOPLE
ENGAGED IN TRADING WITH VIETNAM**

QUESTIONNAIRE

CONFIDENTIAL

In the questions that follow, you are asked to tick, or to put a number in, the appropriate box. At the end of each question, however, you will see that a space is left for comments. This is so that, where you consider appropriate, you may qualify or expand your answer.

1. **Number the boxes in order of frequency, 1 - 3**

In your business contacts with Vietnamese companies/ministries, what level of personnel have you most often done business with?

directors or high-level managers

middle-level managers

clerical or secretarial staff

Comments: _____

2. **You may tick as many boxes as you wish.**

Which of the following means of communication are/have been used between your company and companies or other organisations in Vietnam?

face to face meetings

telephone

written correspondence

facsimile

telex

Comments: _____

N.B. Questions 3 to 7 refer to spoken communication, face-to-face or on the telephone.

3 Tick the appropriate box

To what extent have your business dealings with Vietnamese companies/ministries been conducted through an official Vietnamese interpreter?

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| always | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| usually | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments: _____

If your answer to Question 3 was "never", go directly to Question 6.
 Otherwise answer from Question 4 onwards.

4. Tick the appropriate box in each section.

In general, how well did the interpreter:

- a) appear to understand you when you spoke about everyday, social matters, e.g. food, transport arrangements?

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| very well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| quite well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| not very well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| quite inadequately | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- b) express him/herself on everyday, social matters?

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| very well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| quite well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| not very well | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| quite inadequately | <input type="checkbox"/> |

c) appear to understand the specific language of business?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

d) express him/herself using the specific language of business?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

Comments: _____

5 **You may tick as many boxes as you wish.**

When using an official Vietnamese interpreter, which of the following aspects of his/her English or background knowledge created problems for you?

pronunciation

poor grammar

inadequate general vocabulary

inadequate business vocabulary

lack of understanding of Australian business practice

lack of awareness of Australian social etiquette

other (clarify below)

Comments: _____

6. Answer this question only if applicable to you.

Tick the appropriate box in each section.

When dealing directly with employees of Vietnamese companies, not using an official interpreter, in general how well did they:

a) appear to understand you when you spoke about everyday, social matters, e.g. food, transport arrangements?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

b) express themselves on everyday, social matters?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

c) appear to understand the specific language of business?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

d) express themselves using the specific language of business?

very well

quite well

not very well

quite inadequately

Comments: _____

7. **Answer this question only if applicable to you.**
You may tick as many boxes as you wish.

When dealing directly with employees of Vietnamese companies, not using an official interpreter, which of the following aspects of their English or background knowledge created problems for you?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| pronunciation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| poor grammar | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| inadequate general vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| inadequate business vocabulary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| lack of understanding of Australian business practice | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| lack of awareness of Australian social etiquette | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other (clarify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments: _____

8. **Answer this question only if applicable to you**
Tick the appropriate box.

When you receive written correspondence from Vietnamese companies, is it generally:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| written in perfect, or near perfect English? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| easy to understand although awkward in expression? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| understandable, but requiring effort on your part? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| very difficult to understand? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comments: _____

**Answer this question only if applicable to you.
You may tick as many boxes as you wish.**

9. On the basis of written correspondence you have received from Vietnam, which of the following do you think would need to be given significant attention in a course in Written English for Business?

basic grammar (e.g. correct verb forms)

general vocabulary

business terminology

appropriate business expression

organisation of ideas

other (clarify below)

Comments: _____

10. What are the main products/services in which your company is/will be engaged in trade with Vietnam?
