



traversing borders

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CHEER FOR VIET NAM 2004

Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program July 26 – August 6, 2004

This report provides a summary and evaluation of **Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program**, held at Hue University on July 26-August 6, 2004 in the beautiful World Heritage City of Hue, in central Viet Nam. This program, following three successful workshops in the summers of 2001 and 2002, and 2003, was a partnership between CHEER for Viet Nam, Hue University, and the Hue University Learning Resource Center.

In the summer of 2001, CHEER for Viet Nam worked with Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies to launch its pilot training program, *Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program* [VTTP]. The program intended to enhance cross-cultural understanding and to develop new ways for teachers of English language from Viet Nam and the United States to work and learn together. Since the first training, 169 Vietnamese teachers of English language have participated in this innovative training.

The 2004 VTTP provided both Vietnamese and U.S. educators/teachers with unique opportunities to interact professionally and to deepen their appreciation and understanding of both cultures. Designed to meet the needs of English language teachers in Viet Nam, the program emphasized observation, skill development and reflection. Participants formed a learning community to share their professional experiences, teaching methodologies, and skills; they exchanged diverse viewpoints; participated in cross-cultural interaction; and became partners in a transformation process.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Based on needs assessment survey administered prior to the training, workshop facilitators gathered the following information:

Demographic Data

- The thirty-seven teacher participants included 16 from high schools and 21 from colleges. The high school teachers were from: Quoc Hoc [1], Hai Ba Trung [2]; Gia Hoi [2], Huong Thuy [2], Nam Dong [2], Phu Bai [2], Phan Dang Luu [2], Binh Dien [2], Vinh Xuan [1]. Sixteen college teachers were from the following colleges in Hue University: College of Sciences [3]; Fine Arts [1]; Agriculture [2], Education [6]; Medicine [1] and Economics [3]. Two were from the Junior College of Education, two from the School of Tourism, and one from Phu Xuan private university.

- Teaching experience ranged from sixteen months to twenty-one years.
- The teachers' ages ranged from early-twenties to early-fifties. The oldest was 52, and the youngest, 23. Four were male, and thirty-three were female.

- All the teachers were graduates with bachelor's degrees from colleges in Viet Nam. Five had master's degrees and one Ph.D.
- Four college teachers studied in Russia and two studied in the Ukraine. They were former teachers of Russian. Two of this group had a master's degree in TESOL.
- One teacher obtained her master's degree in TESOL from Melbourne University in Australia. Two teachers had traveled to France. The rest of the teachers had never been outside of Viet Nam.
- The majority of the teachers expressed a love for teaching. Many became teachers of English because of the perceived status of English as an international language and the demand within Vietnam for more English language instruction. Others enjoyed working with young students.

Instructional Resources

- *Textbooks:* College teachers used a variety of textbooks, mostly published by Oxford University Press [1990-1995] and Cambridge University Press [1998—1999], including: *Headway* [elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate], *Basic English*, *Grammar in Use*, *The Practice of ELT*, *Teach English*, *BBC Beginners' English*, *Streamline English*, and materials for teaching *English for Specific Purposes*. High school teachers used *English 10, 11 and 12* published by The Education Publishing House, Viet Nam Ministry of Education and Training, 1992, 1999 and 2003.
- *Media Resources:* Most teachers had access to media resources for daily to monthly use. Thirty teachers had access to cassette tape players, 27 to overhead projectors, 29 to computers, and 26 to TV/VCR. Twenty-four teachers had access to a language lab at their site, 16 had access to a library of English books [16] and 12 used a multimedia lab.

English Proficiency

- Most teachers rated their English proficiency in a range from "fair" to "very good" in four areas: speaking/pronunciation, listening, reading and writing. The majority of college teachers rated their English proficiency in a range from "good" to "very good." All high school teachers rated their level of English proficiency between "fair" and "good."
- Forty percent of the teachers wanted to improve their listening skills and twenty-two percent their grammar and reading skills.

THE TRAINING

The goals of the training were to refine and expand the Vietnamese teachers' instructional skills and to enhance their English proficiency. Classes were conducted in English five days a week for six hours each day. In addition to the five American teachers, four Vietnamese teachers from the 2003 Program were invited to participate in the training. They were selected for their high level of English proficiency, dedication to teaching, and desire to improve the quality of English-language instruction in Viet Nam. This new expansion enhanced the experience for both Vietnamese and American participants.

The teachers conducted master workshops on English teaching methodology, in the classroom as well as on field trips. Specific skills instruction was offered in five afternoon seminars: Grammar, Reading, Writing Pronunciation and Technology. These seminars were developed as a result of the needs of the teachers in 2003 and the 2004 assessments.

The U.S. team developed a training manual designed specifically for the training program in Hue. The main theme of the training, *The American Tapestry*, provided a glimpse into the history, culture and experiences of a young nation that is still shaping and defining itself. The Vietnamese teachers explored *The American Tapestry* through literature, art and music and experience effective teaching methodologies, while building their own English proficiency. They were introduced to prominent American writers and poets, artists, music composers and orators such as: Langston Hughes, Walt Whitman, John Steinbeck, Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Woody Guthrie.

Innovative English as a Foreign Language [EFL] teaching strategies introduced in the training included: Artifact Analysis, Brainstorming, CATs [Classroom Assessment Techniques], Crossword Puzzles, Demonstration, Games, Group Work [pair-share; triads; numbered heads; and cooperative groups], Graphic Organizers, Field Trips, Journal Writing, KWL [*What I Know; What I Want to Know and What I Learned*] Charts, Poetry Writing, Popcorn Reading, Projects, Oral Presentations, Reader’s Theater, Reports, Role Playing, Songs and Visual Analysis.

Field trip experiences enhanced the instructional program. The teachers visited the *Temple of Literature, Thien Mu Pagoda, Khai Dinh Tomb*, and wrote reflective essays. They attended a performance on the Perfume River of traditional Hue music. On the last two days of the training, the teachers presented a group project which included an eight-minute lesson plan, using one or a combination of strategies learned during the training. Peer feedback was a critical component of the final project. The training culminated with the production of a poetry collection written by the participants.

EVALUATION

The criteria for evaluation included participants’ perceptions of the usefulness of each lesson. Participants evaluated specific teaching content and methods daily and evaluated the curriculum at the end of each week. The majority of participants found all the lessons and activities useful or very useful; a few thought they were somewhat useful. In addition to the weekly evaluation, the participants also filled out a final and comprehensive evaluation on the last day of the training.

Achievement of Course Objectives

All participants felt the stated objectives were met. Seventy percent felt their personal objectives for the workshop were completely met and twenty-two percent partially met. Many thought the training was “extremely useful to all English language teachers” in their city. The training not only brought “new,” “refreshing” and “innovative techniques,” in teaching English, but also “new knowledge about American culture and literature” and “aspects about American life” which they had not known. One teacher commented, “The important thing I learn[ed] from this training is the focus on and caring for the students.” The Vietnamese teachers stated that they “enjoyed exchanging experiences with their colleagues in Viet Nam as well as in the U.S.” They felt motivated in teaching. “The course is the starting point for positive changes in class in the near future,” another teacher commented on the final evaluation.

Transformation of Teaching Based on this Training

The teachers acknowledged that they “learned from the way” the U.S. teachers “worked and cooperated.” They “highly appreciated” the team’s willingness and enthusiasm to share their “wisdom” with the Vietnamese colleagues. The emphasis on how to develop observation skills through field trip assignments, artifact analysis and visual analysis prompted a teacher to comment: “I will introduce real life into the lessons.” Many stated that they will “change” their old habit of teaching “reading comprehension, listening and speaking. “I will let my students listen to music, introduce them to poetry writing and food demonstration and take them to field trips;” wrote one teacher. For many, the training has “unlocked the creativity in us, teachers [of language]” and “has planted a seed of innovation...and you can be assured that very soon, it will bloom.”

Degree of Improvement of English Skills

The teachers felt they improved their English skills a great deal in listening [92%] and speaking [74%]. They felt they improved their English skills moderately in pronunciation [66%]. Fifty-nine percent felt they improved their writing a great deal and forty-one percent felt they improved it moderately. Most participants found the lessons and activities useful or very useful.

“I had good chances to speak in and listen to English; [I] became motivated again, and gained many interesting games and useful teaching techniques.”

Degree to Which Training Is Transferable to their Own Situation

Eighty-one percent (81%) stated they would either try or use the strategies learned in the training. Activities and strategies they believe they will use in their classrooms are field trips, games, songs, KWL Chart, poetry writing, artifact analysis, picture/visual analysis, food demonstration and reader’s theater.

The training has transformed the workshop participants’ ways of teaching. Many stated they will “make school textbooks more flexible” and introduce “KWL in reading analysis” as well as “technology in teaching.” They will focus more on their students. “Students can learn a lot from field trips.” To attract students’ attention, many will let their students listen to music and enjoy poetry reading. Some will apply reader’s theater based on a story and artifact analysis. Others will use food demonstration technique. They will adapt interesting methods to make their teaching more lively and interesting for their students.

Quality of the Instructions, Materials and Services Provided by CHEER for Viet Nam

CHEER instructions, materials, and services the participants rated as excellent or good:

Announcement Excellent: 59% Good: 40%	Duration Excellent: 70% Good: 29%	Syllabus Excellent: 22% Good: 74%	Roundtable discussions Excellent: 22% Good: 70%	Fieldtrips Excellent: 56% Good: 33%
Facilities Excellent: 59% Good: 26%	Instructional Packets Excellent: 41% Good: 52%	Supplemental materials Excellent: 52% Good: 37%	Facilitator presentations Excellent: 74% Good: 26%	Seminars Excellent: 66% Good: 26%

Recommendation for Future Training

Most of the teachers would definitely recommend the workshop to a colleague. The majority would like to attend a similar workshop in the summer of 2005.

Recommendation for Changes to the Workshop

The teachers recommended the following changes for future workshops:

- Focus more on teaching techniques
- Provide fewer activities in the morning and more in the afternoon
- Give more time for daily assessment and respond to teacher's feedback
- Provide more materials on American culture and on "cultural shock"
- Provide more opportunities for speaking and individual presentations
- Focus more on pronunciation, grammar and reading skills
- Grade assignments

COMMENTS

Workshop evaluators found that participants had a broad range of oral proficiency in English. All participants were interested in improving their skills, especially listening, speaking and pronunciation. The English proficiency of college instructors was slightly higher than their colleagues in secondary education. This may be due to college instructors having greater access to current American and British textbooks than their high school counterparts. They have greater access to sophisticated instructional technology (IT) resources, e.g., computers, multimedia lab than their high school counterparts. Teachers at Quoc Hoc and Hai Ba Trung, the two best high schools in Hue, have access to better instructional resources than their counterparts in the neighboring districts. While many teachers have some computers at their high schools, they have neither a multimedia lab nor a library of English books at their sites.

Teachers from the University of Pedagogy and high schools received previous training in English. They attended the annual three-day workshop held by the British Council and the Ministry of Education and Training. Teachers from other colleges never or seldom attended workshops conducted by native speakers. Participants in both groups desired new and up-to-date resources, activities and strategies, especially ways to teach large classes and to motivate their students. They also wanted to attend annual professional development workshop offered by CHEER for Viet Nam.

Obstacles Facing Vietnamese Teachers of English

All participants faced the same obstacles to EFL student success as their colleagues who participated in the 2003 VTTP. They included:

- Classrooms unsuitable for innovative, communicative approaches to language learning
- Too many students per class
- Too many levels of English in a class
- Lack of motivation among students
- Lack of knowledge of how to motivate students
- The need (perceived or real) to cover material and "teach to the test"
- Lack of administrative and colleague support for innovation and change
- Boring, out-of-date textbooks
- Few resources to supplement instruction
- Limited or no access to IT resources and instructional aids
- Long, inflexible teaching schedules

- No opportunities for themselves or their students to interact with native speakers
- Conflict between professional and family responsibilities

New CHEER Proposal

CHEER is writing a grant proposal to develop an English Language Teacher's Resource and Training Center [TRTC] at Hue University to strengthen the capacity of Vietnamese teachers of English and to equip them with adequate resources.

To gather data for this proposal, thirty-three teachers responded to a questionnaire designed by a Vietnamese colleague. The majority of the teachers indicated they would participate in activities that provide them opportunity to exchange experiences with their colleagues as well as to help them practice English, songs and dance and play games. Survey results showed:

- Thirty-one would come to TRTC often.
- Twenty-four thought an English club should be held once a month.
- Sixteen would come on weekends.
- Fourteen would come on both weekdays and weekends.
- Thirty-two will come to an English club ran by Vietnamese teachers.
- One thought that a native speaker should be at the TRTC to give feedback and support on language development.

All participants saw valuable opportunities to have a TRTC in Hue. They included:

- Exchange with teachers in Hue
- Exchange experiences with teachers from different colleges
- Share and exchange teaching materials
- Speak and listen to English speeches
- Obtain new materials for learning and teaching English
- Update information on teaching methodology
- Use the internet
- Become familiar with using technology in teaching
- Discuss and find solutions on daily teaching problems, issues and challenges
- support and motivate each other in their teaching profession

CONCLUSION

We were impressed by the eagerness, dedication, and passion for teaching exhibited by this mixed group of veteran and young teachers. We were deeply moved by their generosity in exchanging experiences and their life stories with us. Sharing our curriculum with the teachers from Viet Nam demonstrated how we could deepen our mutual appreciation, respect and understanding of both cultures.

We also recognize the desire of the Vietnamese teachers to interact with their colleagues in the United States, to develop innovative teaching methods, to master learning and instructional technology, and to have access to better instructional resources.

Professor Nguyen Vien Tho, Hue University President and Dr. Huynh Dinh Chien, director of Hue University Learning Resource Center asserted CHEER's valuable contribution to the professional development of their teachers. They both hoped to strengthen and expand the collaboration with CHEER in the coming years. CHEER looks forward to continued partnership with Hue University and Hue University Learning Resource Center through concrete and mutual projects for the benefit of the Vietnamese teachers.



**Traversing Borders, Transforming Lives:
Plant a Seed of Peace**



Participants

1. Le Thi Thanh Truc	Teacher Training Junior College
2. Nguyen Thi Hong Duyen	University of Sciences
3. Phan Do Quynh Tram	University of Sciences
4. Nguyen Ha Quynh Nhu	University of Sciences
5. Pham Vu Quynh Nga	University of Economics
6. Tran Thi Hoai Thu	University of Economics
7. Truong thi Thu Thuy	University of Fine Arts
8. Le Thi Ngoc Lan	University of Agriculture&Forestry
9. Tran Pham Minh Duc	University of Agriculture&Forestry
10. Ho Dac Phuong Thanh	Phu Xuan University
11. Duong Thi Thu Trang	University of Pedagogy
12. Hoang Thi Hoai Phuong	University of Pedagogy
13. Hoang thi Kim Chi	University of Pedagogy
14. Le Thi Thanh Lam	University of Pedagogy
15. Nguyen Tinh	University of Pedagogy
16. Tran Thi Bich Thuy	University of Pedagogy
17. Doan Thi Kim Oanh	University of Medicine
18. Le Thanh Hoang	University of Medicine
19. La Nhat Anh	School of Tourism
20. Nguyen Thi Ngan Ha	School of Tourism
21. La Thi Xuan Thuy	Gia Hoi High School
22. Nguyen Thi Diem Chi	Gia Hoi High School
23. Tran Thi Ai Thanh	Hai Ba Trung High School
24. Le Thi Thanh Quy	Hai Ba Trung High School
25. Ho Thi Thanh Ha	Huong Thuy High School
26. Truong Thi Mai Huong	Huong Thuy High School
27. Nguyen Thi Nga	Phan Dang Luu High School
28. Huynh Thi Le Hang	Phan Dang Luu High School
29. Le Thuy Ai	Phu Bai High School
30. Nguyen Thi Loc	Phu Bai High School
31. Vo Thi Du Huong	Binh Dien High School
32. Nguyen Thi Quynh Chau	Binh Dien High School
33. Ngo Thi Dieu Trang	Quoc Hoc High School
34. Le Van Nhi	Vinh Xuan High School
35. Nguyen Van Cong	Nam Dong High School
36. Phan Thi Nghi Giang	New High School

Vietnamese Facilitators

Nguyen Thi Diem Thi	University of Medicine
Ho Thi Tan Hoa	Teacher Training Junior College
Do Quy Thu	University of Sciences
Nguyen Kien Tuong	Phu Bai High School

The American Team

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