

## Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program

CHEER launched its pilot program, **Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program**, in the summer of 2001 in collaboration with Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies (HUFs). The workshop was designed to meet the needs of the Vietnamese English teachers at HUFs and its satellite centers throughout Viet Nam. Its objectives were to improve the quality of English language instruction; provide participants with “hands-on” experiences and opportunities to apply methods learned in the program to their unique classroom situation; improve their language skills, and strengthen cultural understanding between the Vietnamese and American peoples.

The success of the pilot led to another productive program the following summer, and we began to envision a permanent program that would provide both Vietnamese and American educators with unique opportunities to interact professionally and to deepen their appreciation and understanding of both cultures.

In the summer of 2001 thirty-five Vietnamese English-language teachers participated in the three-week pilot program at the HUFs campus. In the summer of 2002 thirty-two teachers attended the two-week intensive training in Nha Trang, at Nha Trang Preparatory College for Ethnic Students. In 2003 thirty-four teachers attended the two-week session in Hue, at Hue University.

In 2004, in addition to thirty-seven participants, four Vietnamese teachers of English joined the team as facilitators at Hue University Learning Resource Center. These four teachers from the 2003 group were invited for their high level of English proficiency, dedication to teaching, and desire to improve the quality of English-language instruction in Viet Nam. This exciting expansion of CHEER’s Viet Nam Teacher Training Program had not only enhanced the program but also enriched the experience for Vietnamese and American participants.

The American educators come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. The program director, a native of Viet Nam and educated in both Viet Nam and the U.S., brings to the program her professional skills, sensibility, cross-cultural understanding and a profound commitment to mutual respect. All the members have volunteered their time and paid their own travel expenses to share their professional and personal experiences with their Hue colleagues.

## **Traversing Borders: Viet Nam Teacher Training Program Summer 2001**

The Viet Nam Teacher Training Program (VTTP) was designed to meet the needs of the Vietnamese English teachers at Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies (HUFS). The pilot training program provided participants an overview of the latest language teaching methodology in the U.S.; "hands-on" experience and application of methods learned in the program to their unique classroom situation; and tools/materials needed to integrate lesson plans appropriate for students/classrooms in Viet Nam. In addition the training aimed at enhancing the Vietnamese teacher's language skills and building their confidence in using English. It also provided participants with an overview of American life and the U.S. educational system and opportunities to study in the U.S.

Thirty-four Vietnamese English language teachers from five provinces participated in the VTTP three-week full time program at the HUFS campus. The majority of the teachers work at HUFS or at the university satellite centers in the provinces of Quang Ninh, Phu Tho, Nghe An, and Nha Trang.

Five U.S. educators were selected through a careful application process that included a group interview, an articulation of interests and the design of a syllabus for the pilot program. The U.S. visiting teachers emphasized reflection, observation and skill development.

For three weeks educators from both countries engaged in teaching and learning in the classrooms, on the streets, during the field trips and on a trip to Ha Long Bay. In the mornings, the U.S. team conducted master workshops, a blend of songs, poetry writing, pronunciation and basic English teaching methodology. In the afternoons, they explored new ways to improve the Vietnamese teacher's techniques and their English skills. In the evenings and on weekends, they went on field trips to the vibrant arts, cultural and historic scenes in Ha Noi and its environs. The Vietnamese and the U.S. team formed a learning community where they shared experiences, diverse viewpoints, fostered an awareness of cross-cultural interaction, and became partners in a transformation process. For most of the Vietnamese teachers from the provinces, this was their first workshop and their first opportunity to come to Ha Noi. They expressed eagerness to learn American English and joy in the company of their new friends. Everyone appreciated Vietnamese culture through the field trips, cultural performances, and the value of the programs.

## CHEER-y MOMENTS

"I feel thankful to Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies and CHEER for organizing this workshop that brings meaningful lectures and sweet memories to me. It's impossible to forget the enthusiasm of teachers in CHEER to make the lessons effective. It's impossible to erase the memories of many excursions to some areas around Ha Noi. Our teachers are not used to the hot and humid weather in Ha Noi so sometimes we know they must have been very tired but they keep smiling and teaching. The friendship between all the members in the class and teachers seems deeper and deeper as the time goes by so fast. Hopefully our teachers can come back here with us next year to share knowledge and feelings with us."

▪ *Le Thi Chung, Phu Tho Province*

"For ages I haven't taken part in an English course like this. During the course I have a chance to meet with and to learn a lot of things from American teachers and Vietnamese high-qualified teachers. It is also very nice for me to make friends with all other teachers from different places in Viet Nam. I'll never forget the teachers who worked really hard to teach me many useful things. This course will be in my mind forever."

▪ *Mai Vinh, Nghe An Province*

"Sharing the time with CHEER was so cheerful and fantastic. We had chances to be ourselves, to speak what we wanted and to learn what we hadn't known. CHEER seemed to be the candle to light up the dark—the dark in teaching that we hadn't been able to find a way out, to some extends—I myself enjoyed every moment, the moments I could learn and laugh with my beloved teachers. All that I learn is the knowledge, the way of teaching but also the very enthusiasm my teachers gave to me. I wonder how could I be like them? I know CHEER will come to help everyone in the world and CHEER is so busy. I don't know whether CHEER (my teachers) can remember me or not but with all my love & respect, I remember them all my life till the last breath of mine. I love you, my teachers."

▪ *Dang Thi Luong, Ha Noi*

"This is the first teacher training program I've ever attended. I didn't miss the boat when I participated in this program. It's worth coming to CHEER. Thanks to CHEER we have improved our English language, mastered teaching methodology and skills. We have broadened our horizons by forming a learning community. I will give it my best shot to train my students to be good English speakers. Thank you for coming to Viet Nam. 'The sky's the limit' so I hope I'll stand a good chance of learning from you more and more.

"My dream is that CHEER will come to my Ha Long City in the long run. It's rather difficult for my dream to come true but I will have to keep my fingers crossed that you come to us."

▪ *Nguyen Hai Yen, Quang Ninh Province*

"It was a pleasure for me last summer to have the honor to teach such a joyful, cheerful and eager young teachers ...For me it was not just a teaching experience, but a chance to bond friendship with these wonderful people. I was struck not only by their individuality and senses of humor, but their overwhelming sincerity and professionalism. The teachers conveyed a deep sense of appreciation for us having come so far. Our relationship grew through the intense heat and torrential rain of that summer, and continues now that we are worlds apart through e-mail. I will always have friends in Vietnam."

▪ *Joan Anglin, Los Angeles*

"The VTTP proved to be a true exchange in that participants from both countries contributed to and benefited from the time, lessons and activities we shared. Those of us from LA enjoyed a truly unique cultural experience as well as the chance to share our expertise as long-time teachers of English as a Second Language with others in a way that gave us the chance to refine and newly articulate our own pedagogy. Working collaboratively to construct our lessons and share our best practices was an education in itself, and I returned to my LA classroom with new ideas and activities to add to my repertoire. The gratitude of the Vietnamese participants was overwhelming. Whether looking to improve their teaching techniques or their proficiency in English, they met their assignments with as much energy as the heat and humidity would allow. The Vietnamese teachers were a charming mix

of experienced and new teachers and hailed from many parts of Vietnam. All were as eager to share their country and their experiences as teachers of English as we were to listen... or sing along... or taste

▪ *Randy Grant*

“The outpouring of gratitude and appreciation was so overwhelming. I was fortunate to experience those sentiments having taught immigrant students for many years in this country, but this time I felt a stronger connection to these EFL teachers. I’m one of them. I could see myself during the first few years of my teaching career, fresh out of college with a degree in your hands, eager to practice what you were trained for, yet you felt so insecure because you realized you needed to learn so much more. Learning another language is exciting. Teaching it is a challenge. It requires constant effort on your part as a teacher to improve yourself continuously, and to convince yourself that you are doing a good job.”

▪ *Giang Hoang*

“It was a thrilling experience to connect with teachers in Vietnam. We all quickly became a learning community where the lines between teachers and learners became blurred. We thought we went to teach English and ESL methods—we left learning about the lovely lilt of languages, about the beauty of the people and land, about friendship, and about bright hopes for the future.”

▪ *Lillian Utsumi*

“When we launched the pilot program “Traversing Borders” in the summer of 2001 we envisioned a program that provided both the Vietnamese and U.S. educators a unique opportunity to interact professionally and to nourish and deepen their appreciation and understanding of both cultures. It was indeed a remarkable event. Our team crossed the Pacific Ocean to join the Vietnamese educators who came from many parts of the country. We learned much from the Vietnamese as they embraced our experiences. Despite the heat and the flood, their dedication to learning infused in all of us a new kind of spirit. I am grateful to have been able to work with a team of highly qualified and dedicated educators from Los Angeles and enthusiastic teachers from Viet Nam.”

▪ *Doan Thi Nam-Hau*

## Opening Ceremony



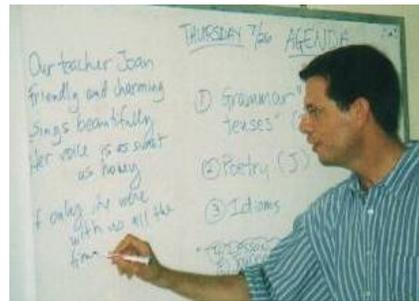
## Preparation for class



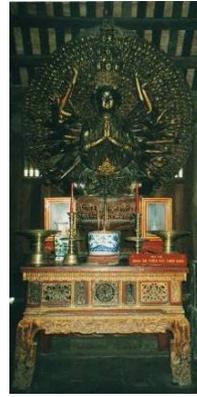
On the way to class



Class in session



Field trips to But Thap Pagoda, Ha Long Bay



Closing Ceremony





Teachers from Quang Ninh



Teachers from Ha Noi



Teachers from Nha Trang



Teachers from Vinh

