Understanding college English learners' task management in the Vietnamese context: an investigation from the perspective of activity theory

Nguyen Thi Khanh Doan

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UNDERSTANDING COLLEGE ENGLISH LEARNERS’ TASK ENGAGEMENT IN THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT: AN INVESTIGATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ACTIVITY THEORY

Supervisors:
Barbra McKenzie
Steven Pickford

This thesis is presented as part of the requirement for the conferral of the degree:
Doctor of education

The University of Wollongong
School of Education

Oct 2019
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Nguyễn Thị Khánh Doan (named in Australian style as Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen), declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education in TESOL at the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong, Australia, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

NGUYỄN THỊ KHÁNH DOAN

10th October 2019
ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to explore the ways college learners engage and respond to English language tasks, regarding the notion of mediating tools and learner agency, in the Vietnamese context through the lens of activity theory.

In relation to English teaching and learning circumstances in Vietnam, there has been considerable concern centred around teaching and learning quality. In response to this concern, a few studies have been conducted, but with the adoption of psycholinguistic views. In order to redress this, the present study was conducted as an attempt to examine English classroom tasks from a sociocultural perspective - using activity theory.

In recent years, studies focusing on language learners’ task engagement have shifted from mainly psycholinguistic approaches towards the incorporation of sociocultural perspectives. The psycholinguistic approach views tasks as a construct that determines the types of language use and information process that learners will engage in, so learners’ learning outcomes are controllable and predictable due to the teacher controlled task features implemented during the task selection. As a result, many of the questions that remain unresolved in the second language acquisition (SLA) field are unlikely to be answered if studies continue to take little account of context and social factors. For these reasons, sociocultural researchers emphasise the need for classroom research that takes account of the construct of language task in real classroom practice (Skehan, 2007).

The study adopted a multiple case study approach, with the data collected in two classes at a community college in South Vietnam. The participants were second-year college students majoring in English and their class teachers. Multiple data collecting methods utilised in the study were: class observations (field notes, video and audio records),
semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall and informal conversations. Firstly, class observations were conducted over a semester in the two classes. After that, a total of 7 tasks were selected for analysing talk-in-interaction, which served as a major data source for examining the focus concept of the study: agency and mediating tools. Both students and class teachers were invited to stimulated recall sessions or informal conversations immediately after the class observations, to gain additional understandings of learners’ actions during the task. Semi-structured interviews with class teachers and students occurred at the end of the course. The data were analysed through the utilisation of a thematic approach.

Under the framework of activity theory, the present study reveals substantial findings related to mediation and learner agency. Initially, the study identified the large number of tools employed by the students in order to mediate their thoughts during the completion of a task. The sources of mediation involved material tools, semiotic tools and human tools. With respect to learner agency, the study demonstrates how learners are agentive from the collective level and from the individual level. The former refers to the examination of learner agency when students worked in pairs or in groups. In this sense, learner agency resulted in the emergence of various activities between different groups of learners. The latter considered learner agency through the examination of factors affecting individual learners’ task performance (e.g. active or resistant participation). From this perspective, both social and personal factors had an impact upon the level of task participation of a learner.

The study has gained increased understanding of learner task engagement in relation to their agency and mediation in the teaching and learning context of Vietnam from a sociocultural viewpoint. This makes both theoretical and practical contributions to
language teaching and learning in the field of TESOL in Vietnam and in similar contexts in Asia.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Barbra McKenzie and Dr Steven Pickford, without whom I might not have completed my candidature. Thanks to them, I’ve learned about and done research in a quite interesting field, of sociocultural theory. I’ve learned from them not only in terms of specialized knowledge but also in the way they treat and work with a research student. They have guided me to get over challenges at different stages of my study.

Thanks go to Steven Howard, my teacher for the Methodology class in my first semester. I really enjoyed the class from which I gained valuable knowledge on methods to do research. His class has made me love UOW and enjoy to do my research with curiosity and full of interest. I am sure that this knowledge is also useful for me to do further research after my candidature, not just in my profession but also in other aspects of my life.

I’d like to say thanks to Dr Wendy Nielsen, who gave a lot of encouragement so I could get through my first days in the Uni. Wendy has shown herself as a friend of me, who cares and helps me. Near the end of my candidature, Wendy has tried to find additional support so that I could finish the course on time.

I express my thanks to UOW which provides me with superior conditions of which I have made use to pursue my research topic of interest. The Uni library has friendly and helpful staff who are always there to help. This is the first time in my study life that I could get any books, even those which the library did not possess, since the staff could help me to hold or require them from other institutions. I love the Uni security staff, who have been always trying their best to keep students safe. I remember a security lady walked over to ask me whether I was fine since my face looked worried when I was walking to the bus stop, and I really appreciated this. All make me feel comfortable and not alone though I’ve lived here for more than 4 years by myself. I also acknowledge the professional editorial assistance of Dr Bradley Smith in preparation of the thesis. I’d like to thank him for his quick and careful feedback so that the thesis could be completed on time. I especially appreciate his feedback on in-text citations which I had done inappropriately for a long time.
I’d like to thank my school, where I have been working as a teacher. They have accepted me to be away from work for such a long time, so I could get a chance to do research in a foreign country. Then, they have approved my extension (approximately 2 years) so that I could have more time to complete my research. My thanks also go for the two classes with teachers and students participating in my research. Without their participation, my research would have been challenged to collect the data. Also, I’d like to thank my colleagues here, who were willing to share my workload during my absence at the school. In particular, I’d like to thank my sponsor, the Program 165, which provided financial support in order to ensure my life in Australia.

During the time I was away from home, my life would have not been easy without my friends, who were research students. First, I’d like to thank Diep, Quan and Ngo, who treated me as their younger sister and with whom I could share ups and downs in life. Also, my gratitude is for Nasim, Saichon and Nurul, who were my first international classmates in the first semester; especially to Nasim and Saichon, these two friends are like the shoulders for to me cry on as well as to share laughter with throughout my candidature.

Lastly, I’d like to thank my family at home. My husband has helped me deal with my family’s affairs during the time I have been in Australia. My little daughter, who has come to my life nearly the end of my candidature, makes my study a bit more challenged but more motivated.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents the background information of the study. Firstly, it will describe the origin of sociocultural theory in relation to the focus topic of the study, task engagement. The section then discusses activity theory, a substantial component of sociocultural theory, which is adopted as the theoretical framework of the study to view learning tasks in interaction. The section will also introduce the current situation of English teaching and learning in Vietnam, leading to an introduction to the issues of English teaching and learning in this context. Therefore, the significance of this study from a sociocultural view in Vietnam is then introduced. Then, the purpose of the study will be stated. Next is the presentation of the research questions of the study. Lastly, the organisation of the thesis is outlined.

1.1. Background of the study

The study has been conducted due to the theoretical need in the field and practical need in the context of teaching and learning English in Vietnam. The section will first present the demand for the change in a more socio-cultural perspective of research in the field (section 1.1.1). Follow is the introduction of the current issues regarding English teaching and learning in Vietnam (section 1.1.2).”

1.1.1. The call for a sociocultural turn in SLA research

Since the mid-1990s, there have been intensified discussions on theoretical issues within the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Long (1990) argues for the need for theory culling, from the perception of there being too many theories in the field. In responding to Long’s (1990) argument, Firth and Wagner (1997) argue that theory culling is not necessary but that what is needed is a more critical discussion of SLA’s own presuppositions, methods, and concepts. The argument derives from what Firth and Wagner perceive to be a lack of attention to social context in SLA research, which has predominantly been underpinned by psycholinguistic theories and methodologies. Firth and Wagner (1997) challenge such theories which position individual cognition and information processing as central concerns of SLA theory and research. They instead argue that learning should be seen as a social process. Firth and Wagner (1997) call for a reconceptualisation of SLA research that involves three major changes: (1) more attention to the contextual and interactional aspects of language use; (2) a more emic
(i.e. participant-relevant) perspective towards fundamental concepts in SLA; and (3) a broadening of the SLA database. By doing so, they believe that the field of SLA would become richer theoretically and methodologically and could better explicate the processes of SLA. This view of second language learning is to draw upon sociocultural theory, proposed by Vygotsky (1978). Following the debate in this field, a sociocultural view has been suggested on language classroom discourse instead of a psycholinguistic one by Gebhard (1999). Therefore, sociocultural theory could be useful for the present study to throw light on to English learning under the lens of a sociocultural perspective.

Sociocultural theory was originally developed by Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1987). The underlying driving force of Vygotsky’s work was an aspiration to develop a theory of human cognitive and higher mental development (O’Rourke, 2002). What makes Vygotskian sociocultural theory distinctive from other theories is that it is a theory of mind which connects internal and external processes (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). The theory argues that human mental development is a fundamentally mediated process undergone through two planes: the social plane and personal plane (Aimin, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In this sense, cognitive development first occurs on the social or interpersonal plane, where humans interact with each other through participation in social activities. They, then internalise what they acquire from the first plane. In this perspective, interpersonal processes become intrapersonal through a process of internalisation, which leads to a deep understanding of what people learn through person-to-person interactions (Forgaty, 1999; Vygotsky, 1981). Internalisation is an “essential element in the formation of a higher mental activity” (Kozulin, 1990, p. 116). As explained by Leontiev (1978), it is a process which fundamentally transforms rather than replicates what people have learnt from the interpersonal plane. From this perspective, imitation is a bridge for internalisation (Vygotsky, 1986). The notions of internalisation and imitation will be discussed in-depth in chapter 2.

The theory was not originally intended as a theory of language learning (Swain et al., 2011). However, several tenets of the theory have recently had great impact upon EFL/ESL language learning (Zhang & Du, 2013). A thorough discussion of the sociocultural tenets is beyond the scope of this section, and instead, with reference to the purpose of the present study, the two concepts of mediation and learner agency will be described in Chapter 2 in the literature review.
In terms of language development, researchers (e.g., Jabeen & Akhta, 2015; Lee, 2015) have suggested that learners’ language skills could be enhanced if learner instruction is informed by sociocultural theory (SCT) and practice. It is argued that the implementation of SCT may maximize the interactions and negotiation of meaning among language learners, which are of great importance for language learning. In fact, van Lier (1991) states that SCT implementations appear to be ideal since they can enhance the effectiveness of classroom language teaching and learning, and in addition create more learning opportunities through interaction, participation, and negotiation. Also in this sense, Amed (2004) identifies that SCT second language (L2) teaching can provide learners with a learning environment that facilitates the development of communicative competence and fluency among learners. Of particular interest, a study conducted by Jabeen and Akhta (2015) demonstrated that the speaking skills of learners improved significantly when English was taught using sociocultural approaches to assist learners to reach their maximum potential through learning and developing collaboratively.

Regarding the field of language research, Swain, Kinnear and Steinman (2011) argue that the use of the Vygotskian sociocultural theory could offer a richer and deeper understanding of many second language learning phenomena. In agreement with this view, as Chan (2010) earlier states, sociocultural theory orients researchers to the actual process of learning and development. In this sense, a sociocultural research orientation encourages a focus on activities that learners actually engage in when undertaking tasks during second language learning. This orientation suggests a differentiation between task and activity: terms which are often used interchangeably (Seedhouse, 2005). These terms will be differentiated in the literature review chapter.

The focus on learning tasks has attracted the attention of second language acquisition (SLA) theorists, and is dealt with differently by cognitive and sociocultural theorists and practitioners. Task engagement in cognitive studies (e.g., Dornyei & Kormos, 2000) has focused on the amount of speech produced as an indicator of language acquisition. As a result, quantitative analysis is performed in terms of variables concerning the number of words and turns. However, a critique by sociocultural theorists is that task engagement is more than numerical performance and needs a focus on interactions across tasks and so that elements of the language learning process are not missed (Platt & Brooks, 2002, p. 368). Accordingly, the research on task engagement should include a qualitative
approach and tasks analysed through transcripts of task performance (Ohta, 2000). In this perspective, sociocultural theorists are more likely to view tasks as processes while psycholinguistic researchers have traditionally viewed of tasks in terms of workplans or designs (Seedhouse, 2005).

A sociocultural view of tasks has been advocated by a range of researchers. For example, Ellis (2003), despite his psycholinguistic orientation to second language acquisition (SLA), stresses that sociocultural theory helps researchers redress the current psycholinguistic imbalance in SLA by emphasising the social and cultural nature of task performance. In agreement with Ellis, Chan (2010) shows the drawback of psycholinguistic research on tasks, that learners are perceived as homogeneous subjects, whose histories, motives and agencies are totally overlooked. According to sociocultural advocates, examining learners’ task engagement is essential for the improvement of teaching and learning practices. As Platt and Brooks (2002) emphasise, examining task engagement could help in fully understanding what learners are trying to accomplish during a task, to enhance language teaching and learning. In the same vein, Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) make the point that task engagement helps to reveal social and personal elements that can be attributed to language learning.

Operating from a sociocultural perspective, language learning is not a fixed code, so the language learning process is not construed as “a process of receiving and processing pieces of this fixed code” (van Lier, 2004, p. 90). Instead, language learning is considered as a process where learners engage in an activity of mind, so language is not only seen as a conveyer of meaning but a cognitive tool helping the learners to make meanings (Swain, 2006). In this sense, learning is perceived as a social event taking place as a result of interaction between learners, teachers and the teaching environment: that is, learning is a socially mediated process (Amin, 2013; Lantolf, 2000b). In this view, the language learning process is mediated by ‘tools’ in the learning context, hence the perception that mediation is a dominant principle (Donato & MacCormick, 1994; Turuk, 2008). Thus, language learners make use of various tools to mediate their thinking process during the language learning process. Regarding the use of mediating tools in the language learning context, mediation is argued to occur by three means: material tools (e.g. books, computers, etc.), semiotic tools (e.g. language) and through other people, such as teachers or classmates (Hammami & Esmail, 2014). Each type of mediating tool will be further expanded upon in the Literature Review chapter.
In addition to the notion of language learning as a meditated process, learners are considered as actively engaged in the learning process, under the sociocultural view. As such, learners are active agents, who give specific direction to activities according to their objectives, goals, and different times and conditions (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Both personal factors from learners, including an individual’s external social environment and history in their development (Fahim & Haghani, 2012), and factors from the learning context will have an impact on the learning process (Norton, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Seen from this perspective, learning activity can be viewed from the standpoint of activity theory, a critical component of sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Activity theory has become an increasingly important aspect of sociocultural theory, which depicts humans’ actions in relation to their sociocultural setting through the six components: Subjects, Tools, Objects, Rules, Division of labour, and Community (Haught, 2006). Activity theory is derived from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, and shares the basic tenets of sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000a) while focusing on goal-directed activities (Fagerlund, 2012). Therefore, the key concepts mentioned in the present study, which adopts activity theory as a theoretical framework, are synonymous with the concepts of sociocultural theory.

From an activity theory perspective, the sociohistorical setting, individuals’ goals and sociocultural history all determine the properties of any given activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Hence, although students in the same class engage in the same task, they may not engage in the same activity, despite the intentions of the teacher and the task design. In general, from the view of activity theory, many individual and social factors contribute to the way in which a task is performed and learning outcomes achieved. In this sense, the focus on activities in learners’ task performances leads to thinking of learners as agents who take various task activity pathways or perhaps resist what the teacher or task design expects them to do (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Yashima, 2013).

As mentioned above, learner agency must be taken into account in the learning process. In fact, agency has become an important theoretical concept in SLA (Duff, 2012; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). As argued by Spence-Brown (2007), the examination of the concept of learner agency may lead to a change in teachers’ perspectives on the way learners perform in the second language classroom. For example, learner resistance,
which has been considered as a problematic issue, or failure in language learning, may need broader interpretations. To this point, there is still a lack of sociocultural research on learner task engagement, and the notion of learner agency is still undertheorised in SLA research (Pitt, 2005; Sirisatit, 2010). Sociocultural theorists indicate that learner agency may be spoken of from “We” (i.e. the collective level) or “I” perspectives (e.g. the individual level) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2008). In the present study, the former refers to the agency of a group of learners, while the latter focuses on the agency of individual learners. That is, the “We” perspective of learner agency may explain why different groups conduct the same task in different ways. As to the “I” perspective, this may define various individual task performances in the English classroom. The concept of learner agency will be further discussed in the literature review chapter.

1.1.2. An overview of English teaching and learning in Vietnam

This section will provide a brief overview of English teaching and learning (ETL) in Vietnam. Firstly, the history of English teaching in this context will be presented, followed by the situations and issues related to English teaching and learning being discussed.

1.1.2.1. A historical review of ETL in Vietnam

The language education policy in a country is shaped by the political economic and social forces. Thus, the history of English teaching in Vietnam can be described with reference to two historical periods: before the economic reform or Đổi Mới in 1986, and after the economic reform.

English teaching in Vietnam before 1986

Researchers have divided the use and teaching of English before 1986 into 3 periods: (1) the beginning of French invasion up to 1954; (2) from 1954 to 1975; and (3) from 1975 to 1986 (Do, 2006; Hoang, 2008).

Before 1954, English was taught but was not a widely learned foreign language due to the dominance of French (Hoang, 2008). There are no clear indications as to how English was taught at that time. However, the driving teaching method seemed to be the grammar-translation method, based on some textbooks still in existence today (Hoang, 2008). During the period from 1954-1975, the country was separated into two parts.
(North and South) with different political regimes. South Vietnam was allied with the United States of America (USA) while North Vietnam was associated with the former Soviet Union. As a result, the status of English was totally different in the two parts of the country. English became the primary foreign language in South Vietnam for the sake of direct interactions with the USA, while Russian, Chinese, French and English were taught in the North. Among the four foreign languages in North Vietnam, Russian was the leading one, so that English became secondary. English was taught in high school in big cities or towns as a pilot subject (Hoang, 2008). At the tertiary level, very few institutions offered English teaching and then just for understanding the USA and fighting against the USA on the diplomatic front (Hoang, 2008). From 1975-1986, English was dominated by other foreign languages. After 1975, the two parts of Vietnam were united and the Vietnamese Communist Party took over the country. Thus, the dominance of Russian was further expanded in the country. During this period, a few Vietnamese teachers and learners were sent annually to the former Soviet Union for further education, such as undergraduate or graduate studies. By contrast, there were only a small number of classes teaching English (Hoang, 2008). The prevailing English teaching method during this period followed a structural approach focusing on vocabulary, grammar, reading and translation skills. Sentence structure was first introduced to students using substitution and transformation techniques to drill the sentence structure. After that students applied the structure to make up new sentences, and the teacher had students translate the made-up statements into Vietnamese as a form of consolidation.

**English teaching in Vietnam from 1986 to the present**

This period has seen the remarkable growth and expansion of English teaching and learning, as well as a turning point in teaching methodology in the country. In 1986, the country initiated the economic reform, known as Đổi mới (renovation) policy, which opened the door to the outside world (Do, 2006; Goh & Nguyen, 2004). With this new policy, English has become the priority foreign language to be taught in Vietnam. As a result, English has topped the list of foreign languages (Viet, 2008), over Russian, French, and Chinese, because the Vietnamese Party and State realised its significance for economic development (p. 169). English has also served as a main tool for academic
and professional purposes. English is now widely taught in schools, higher educational institutions and foreign language centres.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) introduced English to the primary education curriculum, starting from grade 3. Le (2013) states this as the greatest change in English education in Vietnam. Also in this year, the MOET launched the a project of English language teaching and learning in the national system for the period 2008-2020. Along with this decision, the MOET issued the Common Framework of Levels of Foreign Language Proficiency based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In terms of English teaching methodology, there has been a shift from the traditional way of teaching to more contemporary ways. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced after the Đổi mới (i.e. renovation) (Viet, 2008) due to the need for communication with foreign countries for economic purposes in this period. CLT has been introduced in order to improve English learners’ communicative skills. In fact, the principle goal of CLT is to develop language learners’ communicative competence (Hymes, 1971). Therefore, classroom teaching and learning practice have been altered in line with CTL methodology. Accordingly, task-based instruction, referring to the construction of lessons as sequences of tasks, has been widely applied in English classes (Tran, 2015). While follow-up research has been conducted to explore internal and external factors related to the classroom implementation of CLT, these factors have been considered in isolation from each other and lack a SCT perspective. As a consequence, the present study aims to explore processes of learner interaction and task engagement through the lens of activity theory. Observing actions using activity theory provides a means of describing learning processes as they occur in the classroom and can lead to an improved understanding of how students achieve what they do (or do not) as language learners.

1.1.2.2. The current situation of English teaching and learning in the Vietnamese education system

English at general education level

The Vietnamese general education system consists of three levels: primary (grade 1-5), lower secondary (grade 6-9), and upper secondary/high school (grade 10-12). Before
1986, English was only taught at upper secondary school, called the three-year-program. After that, the language has been taught in lower secondary schools, known as the seven-year program. However, as a result of shortages of facilities and teachers, the three-year program has remained (Le, 2013). Thus, students following this English program have an English proficiency less advanced than those in the seven-year program. Since 2009, the MOET has focused on two programs across the country: the seven-year program and the ten-year program, and with the introduction of English from grade 3 in some schools in big cities English has become a compulsory subject at the general education level with the teaching content and texts assigned for each program imposed by the MOET.

**English at the tertiary level**

In colleges or universities, English has been taught as a discipline or as a subject. As a discipline, learners study English to get a BA, MA or doctoral degree in English. They can work as teachers, translators, researchers in English linguistics or in English teaching methodology. These students are also called English majors, and English is the language of instruction in their course. English accounts for a high percentage of the total credit hours and students at colleges will obtain a three-year degree in English compared with a four-year degree at university.

As a subject, English becomes a compulsory subject for English non-major students. Completing the subject is a prerequisite for their graduation. The number of English classes depends on the level of education. Ungraduated learners must study 14/140 credit hours (amounted to 10% of the total credit hours), while English of a graduate program accounts for 12% of the total credit hours. English in the doctoral program accounts for 3 credit hours.

Unlike the general education level, the content of English teaching is left for each institution to decide at the tertiary level. Each university or college is in charge of their own teaching content based on the general timeframe for all institutions provided by the MOET. Therefore, the teaching and learning syllabi vary across institutions (Hoang, 2008; Tran, 2013b). While English at tertiary institutions are so important as learners of English need equipping language skills to work after their graduation, research has shown that most of graduates fail to use English at work (Tran, 2018). Thus, the present study is conducted in a tertiary institution under the view of sociocultural view.
1.1.2.3. Current problems of English teaching in relation to the use of CLT in Vietnam

As mentioned above, after Đổi mới, the adoption of CLT has been emphasised in the English classroom in order to enhance learner’s communicative skills. Unlike the grammar translation method, the communicative teaching approach switches from teacher-centred to student-centred to allow more opportunities for students to talk (Yang, 2016). Thus, there is more group work and pair work, since CLT promotes English teaching and learning through interaction. CLT practices have come to be guided by the notion that a task is an organisational principle, leading to the emergence of task-based teaching methods (Brandl, 2008).

In spite of the emergence of English as the main foreign language and the adoption of CLT approach, the quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam is still a concern for many educators (Le, 2007; Phan, 2015). In particular, the marginal quality of English learning and teaching at tertiary level in Vietnam is a matter of great concern to some researchers (Nunan, 2003; Stevens, 2005; Tran, 2013b). One of the big complaints concerning English quality relates to learners’ passiveness in the classroom and their failure in communicating in English after years at school (Tran, 2007; Tran, 2013a; Tran & Richard, 2007). For example, Mai and Noriko (2012) note a practical issue that “…after a long period of learning English, most Vietnamese learners still cannot use it effectively as a means of communication” (p. 27) with this situation occurring even among English major students. In this context, Pham (2004) highlights that fewer than ten out of fifty graduate English major learners were qualified to work as interpreters, translators, tour guides or teachers of English. In response to such problems, researchers have pointed out possible reasons for the unsatisfactory quality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam and categorized these as internal and external factors.

Internal factors relate to personal characteristics of learners, such as low motivation, low foundational proficiency in English, lack of collaborative skills, and a preference for traditional rote learning methods. In a recent study (Nguyen, Fehring, & Warren, 2015), the authors indicated that it was the low motivation towards learning English that lead to challenges in English teaching at universities and colleges, where learners did not perceive the significance of English in their current study or their future and did not make positive contributions in class. Another internal factor relates to the lack of skills
needed for group and pair work among learners (Nguyen, Dekker, & Goedhart, 2008). While the CLT teaching practice requires learners to interact with peers more in the English class, it is argued that such classroom communication skills are lacking among Vietnamese learners. Thus, this contributes to the challenges of using CLT in Vietnam, which leads to the lower quality of English learning and teaching. In addition, researchers blame learners’ preference for the grammar translation method as a cause of difficulties in teaching English. Phan (2015) has recently indicated that Vietnamese learners of English have been used to traditional methods and rely too much on learning grammar rules and get confused if teachers fail to explain the grammar. This is a view shared in (Pham, 2000), which shows that learners show their desire for grammar rules in speaking and writing class, since they feel it is impossible to complete tasks without being informed of the required grammar rules.

External factors centre on the teacher and the context of teaching and learning. In terms of factors related to teachers, some authors have identified the low quality of teaching and the constant use of traditional teaching methods and indicate that this affects the quality of learning outcomes in the country (Anh, 2013; Ha, 2016). Besides this, low English proficiency among learners is blamed on the limited proficiency of English language teachers who have poor foundational teaching skills (Nguyen, 2007). As to contextual factors, these involve the shortage of facilities and materials, and large size of classes (Hoang, 2008). In fact, Dang (2010) and Pham (2011) show that the insufficient provision of teaching and learning materials in particular (e.g. books, magazines, etc.) is a challenge to the improvement of English teaching and learning. The lack of authentic materials in English classes also leads to problems in English teaching and learning (To, 2010). In addition, some researchers attribute this current issue to the low quality of English language entrance exam requirements for students (Hoang, 2008b).

In summary, researchers have identified both internal factors within learners, and external elements from the learning context as issues that impact upon English teaching and learning at tertiary level in Vietnam. It appears that, internal and external elements have been treated in isolation from one another in some studies. However, it is argued in this study, that language learning involves the negotiation of the personal factors of a
learner, in addition to the social and material circumstances in the learning context (Vygotsky, 1987). That is, these factors are interrelated with each other. It is argued here that researching English language learning in Vietnam needs to adopt a framework that explores both internal and external factors in an integrated way. Examining English learning activity from a sociocultural perspective potentially offers this multidimensional view, since it construes learning activity as social interaction with others in a given context (Duff, 2012; Yashima, 2012). From a sociocultural perspective, second and foreign language learning emerges in social interaction with others: that is, language learning is an activity (Aimin, 2013). From this perspective, learning a second or foreign language is described as a meaning-making process arising through individual’s participation in social activities, and is not solely reliant on a learner’s internal mental processes (Block, 2003; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Yang, 2016). Through social interaction, both personal factors and social elements of the context have influence on the learning process. Thus, there is an argument to use a sociocultural approach to examine how social factors in a learning context have an impact on learners’ classroom activity and task engagement (Yang, 2016).

Activity theory is a useful tool to address issues of classroom teaching and learning (Razmjoo & Barabadi, 2015; Sirisatit, 2010; Williams, Wake, & Boreham, 2001). As explained by Bernat (2013), activity theory helps to transform practices in a way that may improve the conditions and outcomes of teaching and learning. For example, teachers may provide additional mediation, offer different rules of engagement, or gather together individuals with different previous histories. However, Wells (2002) claims that activity theory has not been used to any great extent to deal with educational issues. As a result of these considerations, the present research has been conducted using activity theory as a framework to investigate learner agency and mediation related to task engagement in the English teaching and learning context of Vietnam.

In the Vietnamese context chosen for study, the learners’ communication skills have been rated as very low, especially their English speaking skills (Nguyen, 2015). A related issue is that students fail to communicate adequately in English classes. Do (2018) attributes this to a lack of ability related to internal factors contributing to a failure in speaking skills among learners. Regarding reading related tasks, it is observed that most students poorly perform reading tasks due to their unfamiliarity with English reading strategies (Pham, 2018). Additionally, learners have shown poor levels of class
participation and self-regulation. In this sense, learners fail to set goals and adopt appropriate strategies when conducting a given language task (Mahjoob, 2015). In addition, there is a lack of authenticity in classroom interactions among learners. As stated by Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera and Lovejoy (2014), some of the interactions that take place in the classroom seem unlikely to generate meaningful opportunities for the development of communication. It is argued here that all of the above have contributed to a low quality of English learning results in this context.

Through the lens of a sociocultural view, this study draws data from both speaking and reading classes. It is argued that a lack of communication is not entirely a matter of learner ability, but includes consideration of the kinds of communicative interactions available to learners in English language lessons in terms of learner agency and mediation. In the context of task-based lessons, it is argued that a better understanding of learner agency and mediation generated during different types of activity (i.e., productive and receptive task activity) may provide useful insights into problems related to the low quality of learner language learning. With regard to learner agency, for example, task design may be a factor that prevents learners from task engagement. In this study, learner agency and mediation deal with concerns about the quality of EFL language teaching and learning in both the larger context of Vietnam, and the local institutional context chosen for the research.

In general, the researcher’s motivation for conducting the present study derives from both the need for a theoretical orientation that explores the role of social interaction in language learning, and the practicality of English teaching and learning in Vietnam. Theoretically, recent SLA research has called for a “social turn” (Block, 2003) that views language learning within the classroom from a social perspective. In terms of practice, there is a lack of understanding of learners’ English language task engagement drawing upon notions of mediation and learner agency in the Vietnamese context. Where traditional teacher dominated approaches are still common, task driven lessons have arguably not facilitated learner agency through building self-regulation; supporting the management of the social environment in the classroom; or building learner responsibility for their own learning (Deters, Gao, Miller, & Vitanova, 2015). English as a foreign language (EFL) learning has been limited by a lack of learner agency and a poor understanding of the role mediation plays in different kinds of “activity” interactions generated during tasks, and the different learner understandings of the task
that emerge in language classrooms. For this reason, learner agency and mediation are a major focus of the research in this study.

1.2. Purpose of the study

The present study aims to examine learners’ processes of engagement in their language tasks, focusing on mediation and learner agency in an English language teaching and learning context in a college in Vietnam. Initially, the study seeks to discover the mediating tools employed by learners to deal with the given tasks owing to the fact that learning is a mediated process. Furthermore, it explores the concept of learner agency: that is, how Vietnamese college learners of English exercise their agency in the context of task engagement. As discussed earlier, in terms of activity theory, learners may respond to the same task differently. Thus, this study aims to gain insights into how the same task is associated with different activities when conducted by different groups of learners. In other words, this aims to examine learner agency when they are working on collaborative tasks (at the collaborative level). In addition, the study also aims to gain a better understanding of learner agency at the individual level. In this respect, the study explores individual students’ specific task performance of learners who were active, passive or disconforming to the classroom norms in the English classes.

In general, by adopting a sociocultural perspective, the purpose of this study is to gain insights into English language tasks as a social and cultural practice in the Vietnamese context of English language teaching and learning with research participants who are college students and teachers of English in two classes at a college in Vietnam. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative multiple case study approach with the use of data collection methods involving interviews, stimulated recall, and observation. In order to achieve the aforementioned purposes, the study attempts to find answers to the following research questions.

1.3. Research questions

This study attempts to find answers to the following research question and its sub-questions:

How do Vietnamese college students engage in English tasks?

i.1. What sources of mediation do learners use to deal with tasks?

i.2. How do learner activity variations emerge from particular tasks?
1.3. What influences the participants’ task performance?

1.4. Significance of the study

This study is an attempt to make contributions to language teaching and learning practice and related theory in the context of Vietnam. This section first presents the practical contributions of the study; then the theoretical contributions are described.

As stated by Pica (2010), using activity theory to understand task-in-process may offer an approach to transforming teaching practice so as to improve language teaching outcomes. Accordingly, the results of the present study aim to provide useful information for task designers and teachers. Researchers such as Breen (1987) and Spence-Brown (2007) claim that instructors are often unaware of the behind-the-scenes aspects of task enactment, in which students may show their attempts to adapt or subvert the instructors’ guidelines, in various ways, based on their own sense of agency and mediation.

First of all, the study throws light on what resources appeared to mediate learners’ thinking and communicating processes during task engagement and completion: that is, the types of mediating tools that learners used to accomplish a given task. In addition, it offers insights into how the mediation of teachers and peers can facilitate learners’ task engagement. In this regard, teachers of English could raise their awareness of the value of providing certain types of mediating resources to facilitate learners’ task engagement. With regard to practical contributions, the results drawn from the present study are useful for English teaching in Vietnam as well as in other settings of Asia, as classroom practices in these contexts still lack research conducted from a sociocultural view (Nguyen, 2011).

Secondly, based on the exploration of the causes of different activities between groups of students for the same task, the study may improve teachers’ awareness of why a given task is responded to in a certain way, and prompt a reconsideration of task design. Thirdly, the understanding of factors affecting learners’ task performance may draw teachers’ attention to personal and external social factors in the context that may have an impact on learners’ task performance in English classes. From this perspective, this research aims to gain a greater understanding of the significance of learner agency in relation to learner resistance in the Vietnamese educational context, with regard given to
wider social and cultural factors. While it is true that learner resistance has been considered harmful in language learning, this study aspires to offer additional perspectives on the way teachers interpret, evaluate and accommodate those learners who tend to be silent or appear resistant in a second language classroom. As such, task designers should look beyond their preconceptions of how a task is to be performed, to take into account the mediating influences of social and cultural aspects, as well as learners’ agency.

In addition, by conducting the present study through the lens of activity theory, the study aims to pave the way for other research in the context of Vietnam. While Zhang and Du (2013) point out that the application of sociocultural theory is still new in the English teaching context of China, the researcher also considers that this same issue exists in the Vietnamese context. Thus, the present study hopes to make contributions to the theory of EFL/ESL education in the Vietnamese context. The present study is also of significance in that it has the potential to enhance classroom practice by filling theoretical gaps in the current SLA research from a sociocultural view, and especially from the perspective of activity theory in relation to task engagement. Furthermore, the study may offer a contribution to the study of English learning at other levels, such as high school or secondary school levels, with the adoption of a sociocultural view.

1.5. The scope of the study
This study aims to examine learners’ of English task engagement regarding learner agency and mediation at a college in Vietnam. The data collection was conducted through class observations, semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall and informal conversations over a semester in two English language classes. The data were analysed qualitatively through the utilisation of a thematic approach. An assessment of learner’s language development is not the aim of the present study nor the development of their macro language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing), rather the nature of the kinds of mediated interaction that occurred during particular Reading and Speaking lessons is the primary focus.

1.6. The outline of the thesis
In addition to this introduction chapter, this thesis consists of six further chapters that set out to explore and answer the questions that motivate this study. Chapter 1 provides
the background information of the study involving the theoretical and practical need of the study. It then presents the research questions, the purposes and the scope of the present study. Chapter 2 presents a literature review where substantial concepts related to the study (i.e., mediation and learner agency) are discussed. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical framework of the study: Activity theory. In this chapter, two generations of Activity theory and how they have been used as the framework of the study are introduced. Chapter 4 presents the methodology used in this study. Firstly, it introduces the research setting, and the participants of the study, then the data collection methods and analysis are described. Next, Chapters 5 and 6 present the major findings of the study. Findings centered on mediation and learner agency in Case 1 are introduced in Chapter 5 while those in case 2 are presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the findings, and also includes the implications, and indications of limitations and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will first expand upon the discussion of language tasks and review related SLA research. It will differentiate tasks and activities from a sociocultural perspective and explore sociocultural concepts related to mediation and learner agency. Mediation is referred as the presentation of tools used by learners to solve a problem, and the tools could be things or people in the learning context. Therefore, this chapter presents 3 types of tools useful for the mediation of learners’ thinking processes: material tools, semiotic tools and human tools/people tools. In the sense of human tools, the concept of scaffolding is discussed. In terms of learner agency, its definition will be presented; and learner resistance, which is a focus form of learner agency of the present study, will also be considered. Lastly, the chapter includes previous research on language tasks under the framework of activity theory.

2.1. The notion of task from a sociocultural perspective

This section presents how tasks are defined from psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives and discusses the role of tasks in SLA research, distinguishing between tasks and activities.

2.1.1. The definition of task

In SLA practice and research, tasks have been distinguished from more traditional classroom activities. Ellis (2015) distinguishes a task from an exercise where an exercise requires learners to produce messages by simply substituting items in model sentences given to them. Learners minimally use their own linguistic resources as model sentences and much of the vocabulary they need are given to them. In these exercises there is often no outcome other than the display of correct language. By contrast, in task related learning, learners have to create their own messages to complete a task. For example, students may be provided with key vocabulary, but they are not provided with language models to imitate. In this sense, the way they formulate messages is left to them providing for a clear outcome other than practising language. In the present study, tasks are considered as activities related to language learning where learners have to create their own responses through discussion with peers (e.g., asking and answering questions), with a definite purposeful outcome. For example, in this study learners are
required to develop a conversation in a restaurant (in the Speaking class), or to discuss whether some given statements about a topic are true or false (in the Reading class). The teacher may introduce new words related to the topic, but the learners make decision on the way to conduct the task.

Psycholinguistic perspectives on tasks draw upon the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1984), the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) and cognitive perspective (Skehan, 1996). These perspectives view task as a device that stimulates learners’ communication, where learners will acquire language through the negotiation of meaning and interactive modifications during interaction on tasks. Thus, tasks are expected to determine the learners’ language performance through various task types and task features.

The interaction hypothesis draws on Krashen’s (1985) Input hypothesis, which highlights the role of learners’ exposure to input during learning a language. According to the Input hypothesis, if language learners are exposed to input that is comprehensible, language acquisition will arguably occur (Ellis, 2003). Viewing language learning from this sense, while working on tasks, learners may acquire language because negotiated modifications and interactive modifications of conversation among interlocutors make the language input more comprehensible (Shehadeh, 2005). From this perspective on research on task, the identification of how task types, variables and dimensions may affect the learner negotiation of meaning and interactive modifications has been emphasised.

Swain (1985) posited the output hypothesis, which states that the activity of producing the target language may push learners to become aware of gaps and problems in their current L2 system. Under the output hypothesis, the language that learners produce in writing or speaking will provide them with opportunities to reflect on, discuss and analyse language gaps or problems explicitly, and to experiment with new language. Shehadeh (2005) identified that the examination of how different task-types and dimensions impact on the opportunities for learners’ production is the main focus of research on tasks conducted within the output hypothesis. For example, a picture-description task arguably provides greater opportunities for modified output than an opinion-exchange task.

Although there is some divergence between the two hypotheses, the output hypothesis is sometimes placed together with the Input-interaction hypothesis when explaining task-based research (Ellis, 2003; van den Branden, 2006). Hence, they have attracted the
same criticism regarding the negotiation of meaning. For instance, confirmation checks and requests for clarification during communication, which refers to communication breakdown from these perspectives, can be realized as different functions, such as an expression of interest or encouraging a speaker to say more (Aston, 1986). In addition, there are increasing doubts as to whether comprehensible input may result in language acquisition. Ellis (2003), for instance, criticised top-down processing, which refers to the use of background knowledge and inference from context, which he argues may lead to comprehension but not language acquisition, as language acquisition, in his view, relates to bottom-up processing requiring linguistic forms. Furthermore, some criticisms concern the methodology used in these studies. For example, Sirisatit (2010) points out that the studies conducted within these perspectives examine the amount of negotiation that happens in a conversation during students’ working on a task (p.26). Similarly, as earlier criticized by van Lier (1996), quantifying of isolated language features may obscure the understanding of how interaction contributes to acquisition. Thus, this may lead to serious threat to the validity of the study (Seedhouse, 2005).

In addition, the cognitive approach to research seeks out how task features may influence different aspects of language acquisition. In this approach, the provision of opportunities for learners to respond to different task types and features may lead to altered language performance in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity (Sirisatit, 2010). However, Ellis (2003) argued that, as task features interact in complex ways, it is hard to be certain about what features are responsible for the effects observed. That is, research within these mainstream SLA perspectives considers task as an indirect device that provides language learners with what they need for second language learning, and task engagement is seen as the amount of speech produced by learners.

Generally speaking, under a psycholinguistic perspective, task has been conceptualized predominantly in terms of task-as-workplan (Pike, 1967). Task-as-workplan refers to the intended pedagogy, that is, the plan made before the implementation of what teachers and students will actually do (Breen, 1989). Task-as-workplan is materially like a lesson plan, a course book unit or instructions conducted by the teacher before the task is actually performed by learners. This view of task is only specified etically, or from outside of a particular system. As a result, this construct of task is currently conceived of as having weak construct validity, because research data is not usually gathered from the perspective of task-in-process but of task-as-workplan (Seedhouse,
Moreover, it is impossible to specify in advance how learners will interpret a task-as-workplan (Lantolf, 2005). Lantolf (2000b) claims the perspective of tasks as behavior eliciting devices, privileges language acquisition over learner agency. He points out that, if learners do not exhibit the behaviors predicted by the tasks, one could mistakenly jump to the conclusion that there is a problem with the learner and not the task. Therefore, Seedhouse (2005) suggests that there should be a shift in focus to task-in-process.

Moreover, Seedhouse (2005) argues that task-in-process has a sound empirical basis, since learners learn from actual interactional events. In addition, an emic methodology is required to identify what the learners’ focus is on during the task-in-process (Roebuck, 2000). Accordingly, the present study focuses on an observed process, and the emic perspectives of the participants during task-in-process, to provide an internal view of learners of the processes that they engaged in during L2 language tasks.

From the view of sociocultural theory, learners are agents of the learning process and will respond to a task in accordance with their socio-historical background, previous knowledge and learning experiences, and their own determined goals (Donato, 2000; Lantolf, 2005). Hence, task-as-workplan is seen as a blueprint, while learners’ actual performance on task-as-process is referred to as activity (Coughlan & Duff, 1994). Accordingly, the original design of a task could result in alternative emerging activities and various outcomes. In fact, as argued by Seedhouse (2005), task-as-workplan results in different and unexpected tasks-in-process. This is opposed to psycholinguistic perspectives, which argue that learning outcomes gained from a task can be predictable. For example, Ellis’ (2004) definition of task states that tasks are work plans which involve some steps designed by the teacher. Also, Ellis (2004) notes that tasks must require interactions and authentic language use among learners, thus the author assumes that fill-in-the blanks exercises, for example, are not perceived as tasks. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, the present study considers tasks as classroom activities related to English learning conducted by students, and data were collected from the real process they displayed while engaging in tasks-in-process.

2.1.2. The role of task in SLA research

In terms of SLA research, learning tasks have long been a major focus for SLA research, language course design and assessment. Spence-Brown (2007) explained that
tasks are a major means by which teachers can elicit language use by learners in order for them to acquire, practice or display for assessment the target language use. However, much of the research on tasks attempts to tease out the cognitive dimensions of tasks. For example, some studies have shown the effects of task familiarity and task types on learning opportunities, engaging in task and displaying competence (e.g. Plough & Gass, 1993; Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997). This assumption has been criticised by assessment experts and language educators. For instance, Duff (2007) argued that we can no longer assume that tasks are transparent, stable and uniform. Similarly, Breen (1987), in an earlier study, emphasised that it is vital to distinguish between task-as-work plan (i.e. designed by the teacher), and the task-in-process (i.e. the one enacted by students). It has also been argued that learning outcomes would be determined by the unpredictable interaction between the learners, the task and the task situation (Breen, 1987; Chan, 2010; Slimani-Rolls, 2005). Therefore, the outcomes of the task should be elucidated within a broader sociocultural context (Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Parks, 2000). As a result, from the view of sociocultural theory, researchers attempt to distinguish between task and activity.

2.1.3. Task and activity

The notions of task and activity are often used interchangeably both in vernacular use and in second language acquisition research; however, sociocultural researchers attempt to differentiate between them. According to Coughlan and Duff (1994), a task is a kind of behavioural blueprint provided to subjects to elicit linguistic data and is motivated by a set of objectives, while an activity refers to the process or the outcome that is actually produced when learners perform a task (p.147). In later agreement with Coughlan and Duff (1994), Roebuck (2000) proposed that a task represents what teachers would like learners to do, while an activity is what the learners actually do. Noticeably, an activity does not have objectives in and of itself (Coughlan & Duff, 1994). It is reasoned that the properties of any given activity are determined by the socio-historical setting and by the goals and sociocultural history of the participants (Vygotsky, 1978). As a result, learners involved in the same task are in fact engaged in different activities. In short, sociocultural theory presents a contrasting view on tasks. In this view, it is reasoned that learners are an agent of the learning process and will respond to tasks in accordance with their socio-history and their own determined goals (Donato &
MacCormick, 1994). Accordingly, they may shape the task, rather than tasks being viewed as shaping learners. Hence, task is seen as a plan or intention from teachers or task designers, while learners’ actual performance on task is activity (Ellis, 2003). As a result, the original design of a task can result in an alternative process of emerging activities and various outcomes (Breen, 1989). This is evidently opposed to the psycholinguistic perspective, which considers that learning outcomes gained from a task can be predictable, as mentioned above. In general, sociocultural theory examines the ways that learners approach and perform tasks, instead of the inherent properties of tasks themselves. The present study adopts the view of task-in-process from a sociocultural perspective. The adoption of the view of task-in-process aims to provide an internal view of learners in the process of engaging in second language tasks (Norton & Toohey, 2001). Thus, from the perspective of task-in-process, this study explores the degree to which learners respond to the learning conditions and requirements the context offers them. In this sense, language learning tasks are woven into the physical environment and social interactions of the second language learning context (Hogan & Tudge, 2009). As a result, activity theory, derived from sociocultural theory, is an appropriate lens through which language tasks can be viewed (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). A discussion of activity theory is provided in the following theoretical framework chapter.

The sociocultural perspective adopted here positions the learning process in relation to social and cultural factors of the context where learning takes place, not as an isolated process (Donato, 2000; Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995). Thus, mediation is central to the learning process because classroom learners do not exist in isolation but often in interaction with one another (Turuk, 2008). This was also confirmed by Lantolf (2001), who argued that sociocultural theory incorporates mediation as a core construct in its theorising about learning. From a sociocultural view, language is a fundamental mediating tool that learners use to construct knowledge during classroom learning tasks and activities. Mercer (1995) earlier proposed that “language is a communicative tool, but also a mediating tool of thought, ultimately allowing individuals in a social context to construct knowledge together” (p.4). The following section begins with an introduction of the concept of mediation, which is one of the focuses in this study.
2.2. Mediation
Mediation is defined as the use of available instruments to accomplish some actions (Boblett, 2012; Eun, 2016; Eun & Lim, 2009; Fahim & Haghani, 2012; Nieto, 2007). This notion is first introduced by Vygotsky (1987), who depicts mediation through the basic mediation triangle. The triangle represents relationship among subject, tool and object. The subject is the individual or individuals engaged in the activity while the object is the goal of the activity (More detail will be given in the chapter of theoretical framework). According to sociocultural advocates, individuals do not establish a direct relationship with the world, but rather this relationship is mediated through the use of tools (Bruner, 1996; Rieber, 1987; Rogoff, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 2007). As an illustration of this, Lantolf (2011) points out that people may use viable tools in the environment, such as shovels to dig a hole. Therefore, the concept of mediation emphasises the critical role of tools in the development of human minds and human learning. As Appel and Lantolf (1994) affirmed, it is not possible for an individual to improve his or her ability without the presence of mediating tools. Seeing language learning from the perspective of mediation construes it as a process of social interaction mediated by tools in a given context (Jamali & Gheisari, 2014; Lantolf, 2000b). Researchers have indicated that the term tools is at times substituted with terms such as artefacts or instruments (Lonchamp, 2012; Ritella & Hakkarainen, 2012). However, with respect to this study, the term tools will be used more frequently than the other two terms.

In elaborating upon the concept of mediating tools, it is argued that the learning process can be mediated by three major categories of tools: material tools, semiotic tools and human tools (Kozulin, 2003; Lantolf, 2000b, 2003). Scholars refer to material tools as hammers, compasses, pencils, or rulers (Eun & Lim, 2009; Kozulin, 2003; Saljo, 2011; Wertsch, 1998); while semiotic tools are languages, numbers, arithmetic systems, etc. (Eun, 2016; Kozulin, 1998; Lantolf, 2011). Human tools are described as people who assist learners in their learning process, such as teachers or classmates (Behroozizad, Namhbiar, & Amir, 2014; Lantolf, 2000b; Thompson, 2013). Thus, mediation in language learning involves material mediation, semiotic mediation and human mediation. The present study will shed light on these types of mediation. Among these forms of mediation, semiotic mediation plays a central part in all aspects of knowledge construction (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996), while language plays a crucial role in
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semiotic mediation (Engin, 2014; Hammami & Esmail, 2014; Wertsch, 2007). The following section provides additional distinctions among the three types of mediating tools.

2.2.1. Material tools

Material tools are distinguished from semiotic ones in the nature of their orientation when mediating human activities (Vygotsky, 1978). The definition of material tools provided by Vygotsky (1978) distinguishes them as the auxiliary instruments providing external mediation which enhances humans’ power to shape the environment. In this sense, material tools externally mediated and serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of the activity (Vygotsky, 1978, p.55). As an example of this type of tool, parents and teachers may use picture cards to help children and students remember words (Kozul in, 2003), or students may use pencils and paper to carry out multiple arithmetic operations (Lantolf, 2000b, p. 79). More recently researchers such as, Wells (2007) and Aimin (2013) have provided further insight and elaboration upon Vygotsky’s initial view.

Wells (2007) argues that material tools orientate externally to and lead to changes in the outside world. Similarly, Aimin (2013) recently claims that material tools are a means to foster the ability to outwardly control or change the physical world, while semiotic tools aim to inwardly direct learners’ thought and behaviour. Thus, material tools are also referred to as physical tools (Edmiston, 2008; Nieto, 2007). In relation to the present study, the term material tool is used, and the study aims to explore the material tools used to physically mediate learners’ minds and behaviour during learning activities.

2.2.2. Semiotic tools

What are semiotic tools?

Initially, based on the meaning of the term itself, semiotics refers to the science of signs, and to symbolic behaviour in a communication system (Lyons, 2004). From a sociocultural perspective, semiotic tools are seen as texts or meaning-making artefacts through which learners reach their goal and mediate new knowledge (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014). Earlier, Engeström (1999) earlier defined semiotic tools as appropriate
available cultural resources which learners employ to counter difficulties emerging from collaborative tasks; which after solving such difficulties, learning may occur.

With respect to the function of semiotic tools, Vygotsky (1986) indicates that they are internally oriented a person when he or she is dealing with problems. In this sense, these tools assist humans to psychologically handle given problems (Wells, 2007). Viewed from this perspective, Kozulin (1998) earlier demonstrated that semiotic tools assist interlocutors to master psychological functions such as memory, perception, and attention in ways appropriate to their cultures. This view is shared by Hasan (2002), who identified that semiotic mediation refers to mental dispositions to “respond to situations in a certain ways and beliefs about what things are worth doing in one’s community (p.113)”. Therefore, semiotic tools are identified synonymously with psychological tools and symbolic tools (Edmiston, 2008; Eun, 2016; Fernyhough, 2008). In the present study, the term “semiotic tools” is adopted. It is argued that semiotic tools do not have any effects on the actual environment but influence how an individual thinks and acts. In this respect, semiotic tools direct the individual’s mind and behaviour (Kozulin, 2003; Turuk, 2008; Wells, 2007). It is the notion of influence in terms of thoughts and behaviours that have currency in terms of this present study.

It is further argued that semiotic mediation is significant to knowledge co-construction, and is perceived as providing for a higher intellectual process (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Semiotic mediation, it is argued, internally directs the individual while also being appropriated during the learning activity (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). According to Boblett (2012), the goal of semiotic mediation is the appropriation of psychological tools during interactive collaboration; and earlier, Wells (1999a) highlighted the role of appropriation in the learning process. Accordingly, the appropriation of semiotic tools has been attributed to the tools’ significance in learning. From this perspective, learning is taking over and mastering mediational tools and practices through joint activities, where the functional significance of these artefacts and practices is modelled and the learners receive assistance in their use (Wells, 1999b; Wertsch, 2002).
The role of language in semiotic mediation

During semiotic mediation, language plays a key role (Fernyhough, 2008; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Mercer, 1995; Walqui, 2006). For example, Mercer (1995) claimed that “language is not only a communicative tool, but also a mediating tool of thought, ultimately allowing individuals in a social context to construct knowledge together” (p.4). In this perspective, it is reasoned that learners could be semiotically mediated through communication with other learners or teachers in the learning context, or through dialogue with themselves (Coffin & Donohue, 2014; Heine, 2010; Walqui, 2006; Ziglari, 2008). In terms of language use during communication in English as foreign language (EFL) contexts, the first language (L1) may be a major source of language upon which the learners rely to communicate with each other during learning interactions.

Language is in fact the most pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans learn and possess in order to mediate their connection to the world (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Many researcher have argued that the use of language during communication serves as a tool supporting learners’ cognitive and social processes in undertaking language tasks (Harun, Massari, & Behak, 2014). From the perspective of undertaking language tasks, a learners’ first language (L1) has been recognised as playing a fundamental role in promoting and supporting L2 or foreign language learning. Indeed, researchers argue that a learners’ first language serves as a facilitating tool in second language learning (Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015; Cook, 2001a; Cook, 2001b; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009; Miles, 2004; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

From a sociocultural perspective, L1 not only provides psychological or cognitive support but also serves social functions in L2 in foreign language classes (Harun et al., 2014; Lee, 2008; Wells, 1999b). Cognitively, L1 assists when learners encounter cognitive challenges during task completion, such as grammatical or lexical problems (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009; Lantolf, 2000b). In this regard, L1 serves as a valuable psychological tool for ESL/EFL learners to assist their understanding of the concepts presented in a L2 learning environment (De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Lin, 2013). The 2014 research conducted by Harun et al. (2014) revealed that L2 learners used us gaining a deeper understanding of English grammatical concepts. Regarding its social function, L1 may support learners’ task completion by enabling them to establish a
shared understanding or view of the task. In this sense, researchers have demonstrated that L1 may be deployed as a tool to move a task along, through developing strategies for making challenging tasks more manageable, setting the focus of a task, or maintaining focus on a task goal (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

Role of L1 in providing psychological or social support

Sociocultural researchers have defined L1 use, in the context of second language (L2) learning, as having language-related and task-related functions, where L1 is used to psychologically or socially support learners during the completion of an L2 task (Bao & Du, 2015; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009; Ohta, 2001). Current research notes that in contexts where English is taught and learned as a foreign language learners are likely to utilise their native language to support their English learning (Bao & Du, 2015). Task-related functions refer to L1 talk about processes that involve planning, organising or developing strategies to deal with a task, or establishing goals and maintaining joint understanding about a task. In these circumstances, the use of L1 aims to manage or to control the task at hand so that task engagement can move forwards. Regarding its language learning functions, L1 may be used to help learners to address an issue in relation to the target language. It may provide support to search for the meaning of a new word, translate an L2 word back into L1, or identify the correct form of a word.

In general, L1 is a central means of semiotic mediation of learners’ thoughts during the L2 or foreign language task engagement. That is, learners may communicate with each other in collaborative tasks in L1. It is argued that, through social interactions with others, language learning is developed (Aimin, 2013; Behroozizad et al., 2014). The role of L1 in L2 task completion may be associated with the Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1991). According to this hypothesis, the use of a language may be effective in promoting the proficiency of another language. In this sense, there is a relationship between L1 and L2. Viewing the mutual relations of learning of languages from this perspective, it may be argued that each of the languages (L1 and L2) mediates each other in the accomplishment of tasks.

Language and Private speech

In the light of language as a fundamental tool of semiotic mediation through communication with others, a learner may also use language to talk to him or herself
(Ohta, 2001). In this regard, mediation may occur through dialoguing with oneself as a form of private speech, as explored in what follows.

Descriptions of private speech are often related to children, but it also serves as a semiotic tool in language learning among adult learners. The term private speech was first coined by Flavell (1966) in response to the term “egocentric speech” by (Piaget, 1959). Private speech is described as the self-talk produced by children/adults while engaging in tasks (Johnson, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). In reference to the context of language learning, most definitions define private speech as utterances produced but not addressed to any listeners, other than the self (Ohta, 2001). Montazeri, Hamidi and Hamidi (2015) construe private speech as talk intended for the speaker, not for any listeners. Similarly, Ohta (2001) earlier specified that a speaker creates private talk merely for him or herself, and does not address it to any audience.

The focus of private speech

However, adopting these definitions may lead to the issue of addressivity, as Ohta (2001) claims that it is challenging for researchers to determine whether private speech is oriented to another or not without “multi-camera video recordings to capture the eye gaze of all parties (p.14)”. Thus, sociocultural researchers define private speech by its function. In this way, private speech is equated to being a tool for thought, which is utilised to aid speakers’ comprehension (DiCamilla & Antón, 2004; Khorshidi & Abaihkah, 2013). In this respect, private speech is considered as speaking to understand. In addition, Wells (1999b) defines private speech as self-oriented talk, which is often spoken more softly, with a different intonation. Self-addressed speech can be performed in first or in foreign languages (Montazeri et al., 2015). In connection with the present study, private speech is identified as English or Vietnamese talk produced with a different volume (i.e. it may be in a louder or a softer voice) and self-oriented (i.e. not directed to any other listeners) with the purpose of mediating thinking about a problem that has emerged at a given moment during engagement in a given task.

Private speech and internalisation

In terms of its functions, private speech may be a means of internalisation and self-regulation (Centeno-Cortes, 2003). With regard to internalisation, this refers to the learners’ appropriation of regulating tools at the stage between internal and external
activities (Rogoff, 1995). According to Vygotsky (1997), it is a process involving the transformation of higher mental functions. Therefore, the process of internalisation results in the development of human capacity to perform more complex mental processes with less reliance on external mediation (Leontiev, 1978). Viewed from this perspective, learners internalise the knowledge that they have first learned through social interactions with others. It is a process involving the transformation of the higher cognitive functions representing the objectification of an activity, which is from activity-with-others to activity-for-self (Chappell, 2015). Chappell (2015) further points out that this process is marked by the change in the structure of an individual’s cognitive makeup. Therefore, in relation to language learning, language emerging in social interactions during language learning tasks transforms into language for oneself—the language which extends the communicative potential for the learner. Internalisation, thus, signifies the occurrence of development in the learning process, as claimed by Vygotsky (1978) and is often manifest in exploratory talk where individuals explore new knowledge in the context of what they already know in an attempt to assimilate it.

Internalisation and imitation

Central to internalisation is the notion of imitation (Lantolf, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Imitation plays a central role as it represents cooperative interactions being reconstructed by learners and made their own (Feryok, 2009). Both Wertsch (1985) and Vygotsky (1981) conceived of imitation as a process of appropriation of the external world on the part of the individual which is not simply a process of copying, but of transforming structures and functions. In terms of the forms of imitation, Vygotsky (1986) distinguished drill imitation and conscious imitation. Drill imitation is the copy of an action while conscious imitation requires the understanding of different elements and their relationships to each other in the action being imitated. Drill imitation and conscious imitation are similar to those introduced by Baldwin (1906): simple imitation and persistent imitation, respectively. Simple imitation is reproductive rather than productive since it involves attempts at copying models without producing any improved or different versions. Persistent imitation involves voluntary attention to better approximate an action. Simple imitation and drill imitation do not lead to development of higher mental function. In contrast, persistent imitation and conscious imitation is relevant to internalisation, and it often revealed in private speech (Chappell,
Therefore, this type of imitation leaves room for creativity and transformation, which may result in change and evolution of new knowledge (Centeno-Cortes, 2003; Valsiner, 2000).

Private speech and self-regulation

As a function of self-regulation, self-directed talk or private speech often emerges when learners encounter challenging tasks. From this perspective, private speech is used as a thinking and focussing tool to support learners’ task understanding and completion (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Frawley, 1997; Ohta, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). For instance, learners may use self-directed questions to guide their attention to problems at hand, as indicated in studies conducted by Anani Sarab and Gordani (2014), and Dicamilla and Antón (2004).

Apart from internalisation and self-regulation, private speech may function as a form of affect (Centeno-Cortes, 2003), which refers to the affective manifestation of self-talk, such as sighs, laughter or exclamation. Referring to the purpose of the present study in its focus on self-addressed talk, it is argued that this form of talk serves as a semiotic tool for learners in promoting self-regulation during task engagement.

This section has so far introduced some concepts related to semiotic tools considered as central in the learning process. As Kozulin (2003) has indicated, aside from the use of material and symbolic tools, learners may also resort to human tools (i.e. people tools) to solve tasks. The next section will discuss human tools.

2.2.3. Human tools

According to Vygotsky (1978), humans learn to use language and make sense of the world via constant interactions with other people. With reference to the context of language learning, sociocultural scholars consider that people surround a learner as his or her mediators (Cheng, 2011). Seng, Pou and Tan (2003) concur that human mediators may be parents, facilitators, teachers, or individuals, who could provide explanations, emphasises, interpretation, or extension of the language environment, in order that learners can build up “a meaningful internal model of the context or the world experienced” (p. 11). In agreement with these authors, Eun (2016), in a recent study, has pointed to teachers as the best example of human mediators in a language teaching
setting. Eun further argues that learners’ formal learning processes are obviously mediated by teachers.

This form of mediation had been called “other mediation” by Lantolf (2000b). In this sense, Lantolf showed that learner language learning was mediated by other people in the learning context (i.e. teachers or classmates), and confirmed that peer mediation was as effective for language learning as teacher mediation. From this perspective, learners are mediated through scaffolded behaviour from teachers or peers (Riazi & Rezaii, 2011). This perspective leads to various notions of scaffolding that emerge when learners interact with their teachers or classmates.

The concept of scaffolding, originally coined by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), refers to the assistance provided by an expert or adult to a child or novice engaging in a task above their current ability. This support ensures that the child/ novice can perform the task or construct knowledge with the provided assistance. Scaffolding was not initially linked to Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of learning, but subsequent research explicitly tied the two (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Ohta, 1995). These researchers have identified a connection between scaffolding and Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is equated to the distance between a learner’s actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the level of potential problem-solving ability as determined by Vygotsky (1978). Seeing the learning process from the view of the ZPD, Vygotsky contends that learning occurs in sociohistorical contexts where learners interact with peers and more experienced individuals (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). If the ZPD is seen as a gap, between what an individual can accomplish with the support from others and what the person can do without such support, then scaffolding will arguably bridge the gap (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Alternatively, both ZPD and scaffolding relate to the ability to perform a task through assisted performance (Stone, 1993). In fact, Bruner (1986) adopted the metaphor of scaffolding to conceptualise how adults can support children’s learning through graduated, strategic steps that create ZPDs. Bruner believed that when children start to learn new concepts, they need help from teachers and other adults in the form of active support. To begin with, they are dependent on their adult support, but as they become more independent in their thinking and acquire new skills and knowledge, the support can be gradually reduced.
Therefore, the Vygotskyian idea of the ZPD and Wood et al.’s (1976) concept of scaffolding appear to parallel each other (Samana, 2013; Wilson & Devereux, 2014). Accordingly, scaffolding has been adopted and used with Vygotsky’s work.

In the ESL/EFL context, scaffolding is often employed to be a kind of supportive dialogue or assisted performance (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Ohta, 2001). Hammond and Gibbons (2005) state that scaffolding refers to task-specific support for learners so that they can independently deal with the same or similar tasks in a new context. As noted above, in a language classroom, scaffolding may come from the teacher, students, texts and other material resources (Nguyen, 2013a; Riazi & Rezaii, 2011; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2007).

The connection between scaffolding and sociocultural theory becomes clearer as the notion of mediation is defined and examined (Boblett, 2012). Accordingly, in the present study it is argued that the exploration of human mediating tools can be conducted through the examination of teacher and peer scaffolding that supports language learners’ task completion.

### 2.2.3.1. Teacher scaffolding

In teacher scaffolding terms, there are designed-in and contingent forms of scaffolding (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The type of designed-in scaffolding occurs largely through the planned selection and sequencing of tasks (Wilson & Devereux, 2014, p. 94). This form of scaffolding can be distinguished in the ways in which classroom goals are identified (e.g. how classrooms are organised), and in the selection and sequencing of tasks or sub-tasks in a lesson or a major task. Designed-in scaffolding takes place at the pre-task stage. Unlike designed-in scaffolding, contingent scaffolding, or point-of-need scaffolding, involves teachers’ moment-by-moment interaction with students. This type of scaffolding may be provided in the interactional talk between teacher and students (Wilson & Devereux, 2014). In particular, contingent scaffolding may be provided through feedback on assessment (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). In this sense, feedback from the teacher must engage learners in dialogue, not as one-way communication dispensed from the teacher to the learner. The present study examines teacher’s mediation at the pre-task stage and during the administration of the task. Thus, it focuses on the teacher’s scaffolding behaviour in both these stages, that is, designed-
in scaffolding provided prior to the task and contingent scaffolding during the task engagement.

Arguably it is a teachers’ responsibility is to provide learners with new concepts and then help them walk through this new knowledge until the learners appropriate it (Nieto, 2007). Thus, teachers act as the mediator between learners and the knowledge to be acquired. In this role, teachers are considered as experts scaffolding their learners, who are seen as novices. However, learners can also be scaffolded through interaction with other students in the classroom, in the form of peer scaffolding.

2.2.3.2. Peer scaffolding

In addition to teacher scaffolding, practitioners and researchers suggest broadening the practice of scaffolding by adding the element of collaboration between peers (i.e. collective scaffolding or peer scaffolding), when learners work in pairs or in groups (Boblett, 2012; Riazi & Rezaai, 2011; Storch, 2002). This is aligned with Donato (1994), who earlier argued that “scaffolding was not necessarily unidirectional, from expert to novice, but was bidirectional and present in collaborative peer interaction” (p.6). Recently, Davin and Donato (2013) make a point that a peer as a mediator may play a complementary role with that of the teacher mediator. As a result, learners may provide scaffolding to each other during task engagement. From this perspective, Ohta (2001) earlier defined various forms of assistance in peer interactive tasks, such as waiting, prompting, co-construction, recast and explaining. In this sense, the present study draws attention to the scaffolding behaviour from peers in order to support learner task completion.

In particular, during students’ social interaction with each other in the classroom, there is the emergence of patterns of group assistance contributing to the extent of scaffolding (Storch, 2002, 2007).

The patterns of group dynamics in relation to peer scaffolding

In a study by Storch (2002), the author defined four dynamic patterns within four pairs of EFL learners, based on variations between two criteria: equality of contribution, and mutuality. Equality of contribution is described as the degree of control over the direction of the task; while mutuality is construed as the level of contribution of each
group member to the task completion. Accordingly, four patterns of group work power relations are defined: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. A collaborative pattern is described as a high level of equality and high level of mutuality; while a dominant/dominant pattern is a high level of equality but low level of mutuality. A dominant/passive pattern means one participant appropriates the task and the contribution of the other is fairly limited, resulting in low levels of both equality and mutuality. Finally, an expert/novice pattern is equated to low levels of equality but high levels of mutuality.

In the four dynamic pattern contexts, learners have different kinds of learning opportunities due to different amounts of scaffolding. Storch (2002) argued that peer assistance may occur when students cooperate with each other in the expert/novice or collaborative patterns. It is reasoned that learners are scaffolded by both less capable and more capable peers during interactions in groups or pairs. In fact, working with less advanced partners, learners have the opportunity to teach partners to verbalise, clarify and organise their thoughts and actions, while extending their own knowledge of the subject matter (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Fahim & Sabah, 2012; Walqui, 2006). In this regard, Walqui (2006) stresses that learners could learn by teaching others. By contrast, when being guided by more knowledgeable partners, learners might experience models of successful learning so that they can further join in more advanced learning activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Walqui, 2006) or participate in more complex social activities, as suggested in Vygotsky’s original ZPD (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In terms of the collaborative pattern, it is reasoned that, when working collaboratively with other learners, learning opportunities occur on account of the shared construction of knowledge among them (Storch, 2002; Walqui, 2006). Therefore, in this study, it is argued that this shows the bi-directionality of scaffolding. On the other hand, in the dominant/dominant or dominant/passive patterns, very few opportunities for knowledge co-construction exist among partners (Storch, 2002).

In relation to the present study, the four patterns provide a useful framework to determine whether any of these patterns or other patterns exists in the learning context when learners engage in collaborative language tasks.
In general, Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) argued that a sociocultural perspective refers to human activity in its natural environment, which encompasses natural and culturally constructed objects or artefacts, as well as the world of other human beings. In reference to a language task, this view offers the idea that the same task would be implemented in different ways by different learners (Parks, 2000). Indeed, Leontiev (1981) explained that learners’ activity is bound up with the sociohistorical setting and the goals and sociocultural history of the learners. From this perspective, learners need to be understood as “people” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p.141). Accordingly, the notion of learner agency must be appreciated (Basharina, 2009; Duff, 2012; Morita, 2004). This view is shared by Yasuda (2005), who stated that learners act as individual agents who are involved in shaping their activity. Thus, Norton and Toohey (2001) suggested that researchers should take learner agency into consideration when examining learner task performance.

2.3. Learner agency

Agency refers to people’s ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals, leading potentially to personal or social transformation in the context of action and activity (Duff, 2012). According to Wertsch, Tulviste and Hagstrom (1993), Western psychological theories construe agency as a property that an individual possesses. Viewed from this perspective, agency relates to an individual’s freewill (van Lier, 2008). In this sense, human agency requires some sort of connection to mental state, such as intention or presence of the self. However, this conceptualisation of agency is criticised by sociocultural researchers. For instance, Ahearn (2001) showed that this view of agency ignores the social nature of agency and the influence of culture on human intention, beliefs and actions. Thus, Wertsch, Tulviste and Hagstrom (1993) earlier suggested a sociocultural approach to agency.

Through the lens of sociocultural theory, agency is regarded as both socioculturally and interactionally mediated (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; van Lier, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), a critical feature of human action is that it is mediated by tools, whether these are material or semiotic. A property of mediational tools is that they are inherently tied to historical, cultural, and institutional settings, so that agency must be tied to a broader sociocultural context (Wertsch et al., 1993). As a result, agency is constructed through participation in activity in a specific community of practice.
(Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In a pedagogical context, van Lier (2008) explains that agency involves the general principle that learning depends on the activity and the initiative of the learner – more so than any “inputs transmitted to the learner by a teacher or a textbook (p.163)”. In the language classroom, learners can manifest this agency by taking the initiative: for example, in raising questions or providing comments (Waring, 2011). However, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) argue that agency is more than voluntary control over behaviour. In agreement with them, van Lier (2008) states that agency is more than overt interactive behaviours. In fact, van Lier shows that some forms of being active may not mean they are agentive responses. For example, Igor, in a research conducted by Allwright (1980), appeared to be the most active learner but was not a successful one. It is explained by van Lier (2008) that the orientation of particular agentive behaviours must be aligned with the learning goals. Thus, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) confirm that a sense of agency entails the ability to assign relevance and significance to things and events. Thus, the sense of agency orients learners to a purposeful pursuit of a particular goal.

In application to the second language learning context, agency refers the view that learners are not simply passive or complicit participants in language learning, but can also make informed choices, exert influence, or resist (Siegal, 1994; Zuengler, 1989). The notion of agency, thus, refers to learners’ behaviours that facilitate learning, such as participation and actively seeking out assistance (Hawkins, 2005; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). However, by the same token, agency also relates to learners’ actions that do not lead to participation or positive learning outcomes (Harklau, 2000; Morita, 2004). Hence, agency as a construct can support or limit language learning opportunities depending on the sociocultural and interactional context and the intentions or goals of the learners. In particular, researchers have described learner agency on two levels (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; van Lier, 2008). Learner agency may be spoken of as at the collaborative level (i.e. from the “We”) or at the individual level (i.e. from the “I”). In reference to the present study, it is argued that the former refers to agency representing groups of learners, while the latter refers to agency of individual students. Under the operation of sociocultural factors in the learning context, agency from the “We” perspective leads to the different activities among groups of learners when conducting the same task. Agency from the “I” perspective results in various task performances.
among individuals. The present study has aimed to examine learner agency from these two perspectives.

In the light of learner agency, there is no doubt that learners may actively participate in or resist the requirements of a learning task. Nevertheless, Fogle (2012) has shown limitations in the treatment of agency in second language studies. Accordingly, researchers tend to pay more attention to one type of agency, complicit or participatory agency; whereas the resistance or rejection of target language and culture has not been widely examined.

Learner language resistance is an agentive response towards language learning occurring in and through teaching and learning discourse, as argued by Ahearn (2001). In reference to second language learning, resistance is constructed as a type of avoidance or deliberate failure to replicate target language norms. (Morita, 2004; Ohara, 2001). Therefore, learner resistance in the present study refers to students who appear to be silent or not conforming to expected classroom discourse and behaviours during collaborative tasks or whole-class discussion. These forms of agency may be negatively interpreted by teachers (Morita, 2004). In the context of language learning teachers may regard learner resistance as constraints or causes of problematic outcomes (e.g. troubles at school or failure in learning) (Harklau, 2000; McKay & Wong, 1996). Such interpretations may be the reason for the marginalisation of learners through failure to participate as confirmed by Fogle (2012) As an example, Harklau’s earlier (2000) study showed that young adult learners’ resistance led to increased confirmation of their deficiency in the eyes of their teachers. However, more recent findings by Skinnari (2014) reveal that remaining silent in language classrooms may in fact have a positive effect on language learning.

2.4. Research on task from the perspective of activity theory
As already mentioned, activity theory is adopted as a framework for this study. One of its basic principles is that motives, needs and objects (i.e. the desired goal), which are constructed socially and physically, drive and mediate human activities (Wen, 2008). Accordingly, researchers could examine individually differentiated behaviour in the classroom.
One of the most influential of these studies was conducted by Coughlan and Duff (1994), who collected data from interviews with five participants asked to describe a picture. The data demonstrated that the task was understood in a different way by each individual, and the same task was performed differently by the same participant when the task was repeated. Of interest, the results of Coughlan and Duff’s study are similar to that later conducted by Spence-Brown (2007), which examined an interview task conducted by eight subjects in the context of an intermediate level tertiary Japanese language course in Australia. This study showed that, in spite of the surface similarities in the task, the pairs of students and interviewees engaged in a range of rather different activities due to their changing motives.

Apart from Coughlan and Duff’s activity Theory research, Gillette (1994) also conducted a series of in-depth case studies of successful and unsuccessful adult L2 learners, which focused on the learners’ agency in the activity of learning a foreign language. Not only did Gillette analyse how students go about learning the language (diaries and class notes), she also provided, through their language learning histories, explanations as to what determined their strategic approach to language learning. The study showed that the initial motive of activity determined the outcome of the engagement in the activity. In support of most of Gillette’s conclusions, Parks’ (2000) research explored the investment of three students in producing a short documentary-style video in an English as a Second Language (ESL) task. The results showed that differences in the task completion emerged due to the values attached to classroom learning and task preference, and attitudes toward group work.

Also in agreement with the conclusions drawn from Coughlan and Duff (1994), Yasuda (2005) offered some insights into the writing process of ESL Japanese students in an academic context. Yasuda analysed all the drafts students had written until they completed a final version, and conducted retrospective interviews on students’ perceptions of their revision behaviours. The results indicated that different activities were underway even though all of the participants were engaged in the same task.

In addition, the study conducted by Shima (2007) investigated the process of learners’ participation in a small group work task, focusing on learner agency in a pre-intermediate level Japanese course at an Australian university. The findings showed
that, not only does each group show a unique approach, but also each learner within the same group engaged with and experienced the task differently by reinterpreting the task based on their individual goals, histories and situations. Furthermore, it revealed the effects of peer influence on learners’ behaviour.

In Thailand, Sirisatit (2010) carried out a study which used activity theory as an analytical framework to examine university participants’ activities in a business EFL task-based course, with participants’ responses differing across task types and time. At the same time, Chan (2010) examined task process and outcome, from an activity theory perspective, in a business English course at a university in Hong Kong. These studies showed that learners’ activities and outcomes from tasks were influenced by the sociocultural factors and learners’ goals or motives.

In the Vietnamese English teaching and learning context, there is very little research on language tasks, with the exception of research conducted by Nguyen (2013b), who investigated tasks in action in Vietnamese EFL high school classrooms. However, this was not specifically based on an activity theory framework. That study suggested that teacher thinking also plays a significant role in transforming tasks in classrooms, and in building learners’ task performance and rehearsal. Although the study provided an emic perspective on teachers and students and explored the importance of learner agency, it subscribed to the idea that tasks can have certain controllable and predictable features. This is clearly congruent with a psycholinguistic view of tasks-as-workplan or devices for language learning.

To conclude, activity theory has been used as a framework to examine language tasks in order to illuminate processes in second language learning. However, it appears that, to date, no relevant research has been conducted in Vietnam through the lens of activity theory with regard to learner agency and processes of learner task performance.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and concepts related to the present study; in particular, literature related to mediation and learner agency, which are key focuses of the study. In terms of mediation, it has identified three types of mediating tools that learners access during engagement in L2 tasks. Firstly, learners may utilise material tools that externally direct their minds during task accomplishment. Secondly, learners
may access semiotic tools where their psychological processes are mediated. In this sense, language is considered as a significant and powerful instrument that learners employ to mediate their thinking when engaging in a language task. In this sense, L1 and private speech have been included to illustrate this point. Thirdly, learners’ task engagement may be mediated by teachers or peers (i.e. human tools) through processes of scaffolding.

The chapter draws upon a view of second language learning and task engagement from a sociocultural perspective. From this perspective, the definition of “task”, and the differences between “tasks” and “activities”, have been presented.

In addition, the chapter included the literature centred on learner agency, another key focus of the present study. Through the lens of a sociocultural perspective, learners are agents in the learning process, so they have the right to make choices. Accordingly, they may show themselves as being active or resisting engaging in a language task. Obviously, learner resistance may be resulting from social factors in the learning context, not only from their own personal factors. Therefore, the concept of learner resistance, which needs to be reconsidered, has been described. Lastly, previous research on task from the view of activity theory has been discussed in relation to the present study the present study. Activity theory is central to the theoretical orientation of the study because it helps to understand learners’ behaviour in the classroom as well as their engagement in language tasks.

In summary, from the perspective of sociocultural theory, language learning, as task engagement, is a mediated process through social interaction. Thus, learning may be scaffolded when learners are interacting with other people in the learning context. In this sense, Nakata (2014) argues that, with the right kind of scaffolding, each learner can better regulate their learning by him or herself, and thus continue to exercise and develop his/her agency. This view is shared with Podolefsky, Moore and Perkins (2013), who show that scaffolding creates learning environments that are able to support student agency. The present study aims to examine sources of mediation in use by learners in the context being researched. Thus, it explores how the teaching and learning context supports learners to use their agency. In the sense of learners as agents, their activities are socially and historically constructed. Therefore, learners may conduct the
same task in different ways to each other. Accordingly, the study also investigates contextual as well as personal factors that determine the ways learners perform a given English task. Thus, the study attempts to find answers to the following research question and its subquestions:

How do Vietnamese college students engage in English tasks?

1. What sources of mediation do learners use to deal with tasks?
2. How do learner activity variations emerge from particular tasks?
3. What influences the participants’ task performance?

Next, Chapter 3 will introduce activity theory, which is the theoretical framework of the study.
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Activity theory, an overarching theory of sociocultural theory, has been adopted as the theoretical framework of the present study. As mentioned previously, activity theory is derived from sociocultural theory and shares many of its features. However, unlike sociocultural theory, activity theory focuses on the analysis of goal-directed activities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Therefore, activity theory was utilised as the framework for this study aiming to examine learners’ task engagement in a learning context. Accordingly, the study has employed the activity theory frameworks of Leontiev (1981) and Engeström (1987).

Researchers also refer to activity theory as cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), since it is a framework for studying humans’ activity with regard to themselves (i.e. their own personal factors), and cultural as well as social factors (Blin & Jalkanen, 2014; Foot, 2014; Lantolf, 2012; Lee, 2003). With respect to second language learning, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) state that activity theory provides a useful framework for investigating second language learning, since it privileges human beings as agents of their own learning. Referring to second language research on language tasks, Parks (2000) shows that activity theory can be a useful framework to clarify how learners engage differently in tasks.

This chapter will demonstrate that activity theory has been adopted and modified by sociocultural researchers, resulting in several models of the theory. Accordingly, this chapter will describe the origins and generations of activity theory; and then will argue the reasons why activity is essential for this study.

3.1. The first generation of activity theory

Activity theory is based upon the work of Vygotsky and his student Leontiev (1979), and has developed through three generations. However, this chapter intensively discusses only the first and the second generations, since the third is not the focus of the study. The original activity theory comprised three constituents: subject, object, and artifacts or mediation tools, as shown in the mediation action triangle in Figure 3.1. This is derived from the concept of mediation suggested by Vygotsky which suggests that human actions are mediated by artifacts within the environment. Engeström (2001) described Vygotsky’s identification of the mediation action triangle as the first
generation of activity theory. This first generation presents the relationship between individuals (subject) and their goals (object), mediated by physical or psychological tools. In fact, Vygotsky asserts that humans do not directly interact with the world but engage in the world through tools. For Vygotsky and sociocultural theorists, tools refer to instruments that people utilise to mediate their thoughts during the engagement in the real world. By the employment of tools, individuals could reach a desired goal (i.e. object). Individuals ultimately make sense of the world through the mediating influence of tools.

Figure 3.1. The first generation of activity theory

However, the first model of activity theory was criticised as it focused entirely on the individual, and it did not address the role of social relations and structures (Engeström, 2001). In alignment with this criticism, Leontiev (1981) earlier emphasised that human activities were not only mediated by relevant physical or cultural tools but also by the wider sociocultural context. Hence, Leontiev (1981) developed the concept of collective activity. According to Leontiev’s view, activity is not merely doing something but is doing something that is motivated either by a biological need, such as hunger, or a culturally constructed need (e.g. literacy) (Lantolf, 2000a). Lantolf (2000a) has also argued that motives are only realised in specific actions that are goal-directed and carried out under particular spatial or temporal conditions (operations) mediated by appropriate tools. As a result, Leontiev (1981) developed a hierarchical model of activity comprising three levels: activities, actions and operations (see Figure 3.2). In this view, activities are in connection with motives whilst actions are linked to goals,
and the last level, operations, is connected to conditions. Later, Kuuti (1996) explained the relationship between the three levels as follows:

Activities are longer-term formations; their objects are transformed into outcomes not at once but through a process that typically consists of several steps or phrases. There is also a need for shorter-term processes: activities consist of actions or chains of actions, which in turn consist of operation. (p. 30)

Figure 3.2. The three levels of activity theory (Leontiev, 1981)

As seen in Figure 3.2, activities involve chains of actions, which then comprise operations. Activities are defined by motives, which may be physical, social or psychological (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Leontiev (1981) defines a motive as the object of the activity. Actions instantiate the motives in the form of goal-directed behaviour (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 216); that is to say, motives are recognised through actions. Operations are specific processes through which actions are performed, which are shaped by actual conditions where the activities occur (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). As an illustration of the relationships among the three levels, Hashim and Jones (2007) refer to the activity of hunting prey. In this case, one of the actions is to scare the animals, and shaking tree branches is an operation. The activity has a motive, which may be the need to catch food. The action has goals, such as to make noise or cause disruption. The operation has conditions (e.g. altering pressure on the branch according to its flimsiness).

A second way to examine the three levels of activity theory is through the links between motive, action and operation in the form of WHY, WHAT and HOW (Block, 2003;
Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). That is to say, analysing an activity is about understanding why something is being done, while the level of action refers to what is done, and the operation level helps to answer the question of how something is done. Operations do not have goals, and they are performed frequently to become routines without conscious attention (Leontiev, 1981). Actions take place under particular circumstances or conditions (Swain et al., 2011). Thus, the operation layer of these actions defines how the conditions shape, automatise or de-automatise the actions (Donato & MacCormick, 1994).

The three levels of activity are used to analyse goal-directed actions between groups of students when conducting the language tasks as confirmed by Sirisatit (2010). The analysis of a real-world context using the three levels provides a holistic and insightful mechanism to describe an activity system (Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014). With reference to the present study, this aims to help understand why the same task may be associated with different activities by different groups. In other words, the three levels of activity are useful to determine how learner agency from the “We” perspective is impacted upon by social and personal factors. This means that while groups of students might seem to engage in tasks similarly, through the activity perspective they may conduct the task differently. The three levels of activity theory provide frameworks to help explore the ways different groups conduct the same task, taking into consideration the distinct goals of each group, and the unique conditions in which each group operates following three steps as outlined by Hasan & Kazlauskas (2014). First, it helps analyse the significant activities of the system in each group regarding each activity’s subject, object and purpose. Secondly, actions and mediating tools when conducting the activities are identified, and tools could be primary, secondary or tertiary. Primary tools are relatively simple-- those used mostly unconsciously for basic operations, such as a pencil and paper while secondary tools are representations of primary tools (i.e. pictures or models of primary tools) or modes of action (Foot, 2014). In this perspective, secondary tools are related to conventions, such as in rules and norms (Wartofsky, 1979). Secondary tools can also include such discursive constructs as expectations, hypotheses, and explanatory models (Engeström, 1990). Tertiary tools are abstractions or imaginary tools, which shape the identity of an activity system, and provide a perspective for understanding the system (Engeström, 1990, p. 174). In relation to the present study, primary tools are material tools whereas secondary and tertiary tools are semiotic tools.
Therefore, the analysis in this step defines types of mediating tools. Thirdly, the dynamics and tensions within and between the activities are identified. Such dynamics or tensions come from within elements of activities, such as the lack of tools (mediation), or between elements of activities (e.g., learners’ learning purpose and the teacher’s teaching purpose).

Based on Leontiev’s (1981) concept of collective activity, Engeström (1987) then modified his original theory to provide three more elements: rules, community, and division of labour; in addition to subject, object and tools (see Figure 3.3). Next is the discussion of the second generation of the theory.

3.2. The second generation of activity theory

Figure 3.3. The second generation of activity theory (Engeström, 1987)

As seen from Figure 3.3, the six elements of an activity system should be seen as parts of a whole rather than in isolation, and in interaction among each other as denoted by the arrows. The model represents individual actions within a broader collaborative setting. Each element will be discussed in further depth in what follows.

Tools
Tools are also called artifacts (Hashim & Jones, 2007), and refer to the devices that people use to conduct an activity. As Vygotsky (1978) has argued, humans do not act
directly on the physical world but do so via tools which can be physical (e.g. ploughs) or symbolic (e.g. language), which humans use to mediate and regulate their relationship with themselves and others (Lantolf, 2000a). Furthermore, according to Kozulin (1998), Vygotsky also indicated that people’s activities could be mediated by other human beings. Hence, in the pedagogical context, tools refer to the instruments that participants use in completing or accomplishing tasks (Sirisatit, 2010). With regard to the present study, physical tools may be computers, textbooks, or video-audio materials. Symbolic tools may be the first language (Vietnamese), or target language (English) or other languages, images, written instructions, and the teacher’s teaching methods. In addition, other people (e.g. friends or teachers) who engage in the task completion in the learning context could be seen as tools. Sirisatit (2010) argues that the mediating tools that learners use may influence the way learners organise and perform a task.

**Subject**

Subject refers to the individual or group of individuals, who is working towards the same object to gain an outcome. In this study, a subject refers to a learner, whereas subjects refer to groups of learners. As stated by Jonassen and Rohger-Murphy (1999), subjects or learners are the central, driving characteristics in defining the activity. It is further explained by Yashima (2013) that learners’ (subjects) activities in responding to a specific task are determined by their own language learning goals, motives, linguistic history and beliefs.

**Object**

The term “object” is used interchangeably with objective by some sociocultural theorists (Mwanza, 2002). Objects are defined as the understanding, held by the subject, of the purpose of the activity, and are viewed as the target of a goal-directed action (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). For example, an individual’s object of a goal-directed action may be to pass a test, or master English grammatical rules. As argued by Engestrom (1993), objects play a crucial role in the collective activity system since they capture the mental or physical efforts of a subject to reach desirable outcomes in an activity system. Accordingly, objectives distinguish one activity from another.

**Community**

Community consists of multiple individuals and/or subgroups who share the same general object(s) and who construct themselves as distinct from other communities. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), the community can be an entity as broad as a
society or culture or as narrow as a particular classroom. In the present study, it includes the class teacher and peers who share the same object of a task. The conditions created by that community would influence the extent to which learners participate in the practices of a community (Norton, 2001). Therefore, social relationships in a specific community where language learning takes place may orientate learners’ task engagement.

**Rules**

Rules refers to regulations, which may be formal or informal regulations, regulating the way people act (Hashim & Jones, 2007), and guiding them to decide the proper actions to take with other community members (Engeström, 1987). As a result, Jonassen and Rohger-Murphy (1999) show that rules can serve as boundaries to each task. In the present study, rules may refer to task rules and instructions in addition to scoring rubrics of the English class, as well as cultural or social interaction norms in the class. These may significantly affect the orientation to tasks and task completion.

**Division of labour**

Division of labour is perceived as how tasks are divided horizontally between community members, as well as any vertical division of power and status (Engeström, 2001). In reference to task engagement, Sirisatit (2010) construes division of labour as the formation of groups as well as the relationship between students or between students and others (i.e. the teacher) involved in the completion of tasks. Noticeably, Lantolf and Genung (2002) and Sirisatit (2010) note that the success, or otherwise, of task performance may be influenced by the contribution of certain types of division of labour.

Apart from the six previously mentioned components, “outcomes” is another one seen from Figure 3.3. Outcomes are considered as the particular result(s) of an action (Chan, 2010). Relating to the present study, this means the result of a task once it is completed. For example, the outcome of a speaking task is to make a conversation at the bank. However, only the six components are accounted for when studying humans’ activities in a sociocultural context. The elements are integrated and mutually influenced, and isolating any one element is only done for analytical purposes.

To relate the theory to the present study, the six components of activity theory (Engeström, 1987) were employed to examine individual and group task performances. These components (i.e. tools, subject, object, rules, community, and division of labour)
helped to generate insights into how social and personal factors influenced learner agency at the individual level. In this sense, active or passive participation during a task or class activity could be identified as dimensions of these factors.

In addition, Engeström (1999) expanded the second generation into the third generation of Activity theory, which aims to analyse joint activity. It is not employed in this study because joint activity is not the focus of the study.

In general, Leontiev’s (1981) three levels of activity theory is employed to examine tasks-in-process in the present study. From this perspective, it is useful to investigate how the same task was conducted by distinct groups within the same English classroom. In addition, the six components of Engeström’s (1987) model help to reveal factors impacting on individual learners’ task performance, and are used in analysing, describing, and explaining how certain communicative goals can be achieved in an activity system through mediation by tools, subject, rules, division of labour, community, and goal-directed objects. From the perspective of activity theory, language learning is seen as an activity which is not just the acquisition of forms but is a way of mediating ourselves and our relationships with the world (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

In the present study, language classrooms are considered as the sociocultural context where language learning takes place (Yashima, 2013). In light of language learning as a process embedded in a specific sociocultural context, learners are regarded as active participants or as agents (Norton & Toohey, 2001). As argued earlier, an individual’s agency is constantly constrained or afforded by social groupings, material and symbolic resources, as well as other social and personal factors (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). A sense of agency enables learners to perform, accept, refuse or resist choices with regard to themselves and the social world of the classroom (Yashima, 2013). Yang (2013) argues that agency can explain how and why learners act. In other words, learner agency itself is socioculturally and interactionally mediated, and learner agency then regulates the way learners perform tasks. Concerning the purpose of the present study to examine learner agency through the lens of activity theory, a combination of Leontiev’s (1981) and Engeström’s (1987) activity framework is adopted to study language learner agency from the joint or group activity perspective (i.e. the “we” perspective) and from the individual perspective (i.e. the “I” perspective). Moreover, the concept of mediation which is a central notion of activity theory is employed to investigate sources of mediation during the task completion of English learners.
In general, the theoretical framework of the present study is illustrated in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4. The theoretical framework of the present study**

As seen in Figure 3.4, Leontiev’s (1981) three levels of activity theory were employed to examine task-in-process in the present study. From this perspective, it is useful to investigate how the same task was conducted by different groups. The six components of Engeström’s (1987) framework would help to reveal the factors impacting on individual learners’ task performance. An additional purpose of the present study is to discover the source of mediating tools used by learners in the classroom contexts being researched. Activity theory is used as a useful framework to achieve this purpose, since mediation is also a crucial construct of activity theory (Jasmine, 2013; Kaptelinin, Kuutti, & Bannon, 1995). Activity theory, in the present study, is argued to be an appropriate framework for the study of English language learners’ task engagement and the use of mediating tools and actions in the teaching and learning context of Vietnam. Through the examination of task-in-process, the study could indicate that the same task
was implemented differently by different groups of learners, and that individual learners’ task performance was shaped by socio-personal factors due to their sense of agency in the specific sociocultural learning context. In addition, the study of learners’ task engagement could explore the mediating tools in use in the context. These are the aspects upon which the present study attempts to throw light. In other words, the proposed study examines language learners’ task engagement in the Vietnamese context of English teaching and learning. Accordingly, the research also illuminates whether teaching and learning practices in this context limit or enable learner agency.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative research methodology adopted by this study and explores the research design that was developed. From the perspective of activity theory, a second language class is considered a constantly changing sociocultural context, and second language learners are viewed as agents mediated by sociocultural and institutional factors within that learning context. Therefore, experimental research, where learners are seen as objects controlled by the researcher or task designers, is not appropriate for this study; and therefore a qualitative research design was considered more suitable.

The chapter begins by identifying the broader research paradigm that directs and guides this study with some minor justification related to the selection of a qualitative research approach. This is followed by the research design of the study (Section 4.2); and then by the description of the research site, the sampling techniques and the participants (Section 4.3). Next, the chapter explores the ethical considerations guiding this the study (Section 4.4) with the next three sections (Sections 4.5 to 4.7) detailing data collection methods, data management and transcription, and data analysis procedures which were undertaken in this study. This is followed by, an exploration of researcher’s bias and roles (Sections 4.8 and 4.9). Finally the strategies used to enhance the quality and rigor of the research project are discussed (Section 4.10) followed by a chapter summary (Section 4.11).

4.1. Research paradigm and the justification of qualitative research approach

The present study adopted a constructivist paradigm (Honebein, 1996) that in some classifications, is also identified as interpretivism (Fazlıoğulları, 2012, p. 49). As Farzanfar (2005) identified the nature of inquiry within the constructivist paradigm as interpretive, the resulting inquiry aims to understand a particular phenomenon, not to generalize the findings to a population. Researchers advocating the use of this paradigm tend to study reality as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by participants in their interactions with each other and with the wider social systems (Tubey, Rotich, & Bengat, 2015, p. 225). Under the constructivist paradigm, real-world situations are non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling, as confirmed by Tuli (2010). As a
result, the constructivist paradigm underpins the incorporation of a qualitative approach involving inductive research methods to gain a deeper understanding of a research problem in a unique context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Tubey et al., 2015).

Qualitative methods

The inclusion of a qualitatively focused research design moves away from the more positivist stance assumed by quantitative researchers who view learning as an internal psychological process that is independent of social and physical contexts. These researchers prefer experimental designs such as the use of random sampling and intervention programs (Aliyu, Muhammad, Rozilah, & Martin, 2014; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). However, these types of experimental designs cannot capture the complexities of classroom life (Shulman, 1986) and are insufficient for explaining the teaching and learning process occurring in the classroom. For these reasons much research on SLA has moved away from the use of experimental and statistical approaches towards an interpretative epistemological perspective in order to capture more of the complexity of classroom life (Johnson, 2009). In this more qualitative perspective, language learning is socially constructed and emerges from social practices of learners (Creswell, 2009; Scotland, 2012), a view that is aligned with that of a sociocultural theory of learning.

In educational research on language tasks, researchers such as Roebuck (2000) and Seedhouse (2005) have advocated for the use of more qualitative methods. Roebuck (2000), for example, criticized forms of experimental research that perceived learners as objects who could be manipulated by the intentions of the researcher and by task instruction, or where learners are denied agency. Seedhouse (2005) later advocated for the use of qualitative research to establish an emic perspective on tasks.

The natural setting

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The present study aimed to gain better insights into a natural English teaching and learning situation with a focus on learners’ task performance. In order to achieve this purpose, the study
involved the exploration of a variety of people’s perspectives, including teachers and students in the natural setting of the classroom. As an exploratory quest, the researcher kept an open mind for any issues or phenomena that might emerge during the data collection period, toward “a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the issue, not the meaning the researchers bring to the research” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). The methodological focus of the study involved an “interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world which transforms the questioned issues into a series of representations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). In addition, the investigation in the present study was framed by activity theory, and was not commenced with a predetermined hypothesis. Under the framework of activity theory, this study aimed to gain a better understanding of English learners’ task engagement in a Vietnamese context. As the purpose of qualitative research is to achieve in-depth understanding of a problem rather than to only generate its findings (Patton, 2015), it was considered to be an appropriate methodology to undertake this research. The next section presents the research design of the study.

4.2. Case study design

To activate this study, guided by activity theory, a case study design was adopted. These types of designs differ from other qualitative designs, as they are open to the use of a range of theoretical or conceptual categories that guide the research and analysis of data (Meyer, 2001). Case study is appropriate for the present study because, as stated by Yin (2009), it seeks to answer questions such as “how” or “why”. The research interest of the present study was to investigate the process in which learners engaged in English language tasks in a learning context of Vietnam, rather than the academic outcomes of task completion. In this sense, a case study design was suitable since, as Merriam (1998) argues, case studies can be applied to research where interest is in the process, instead of outcomes, and in the context, instead of in a specific variable.

The type of case study adopted

As implied by the name, a case study regards a case as the unit of analysis of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) and can be a defined as individual, class, program, or community (Creswell, 2013; Duff, 2008). Burns (2000) describes a case as a bounded system with an entity in itself, while Stake (2005) emphasises that a case is a system
with identifiable “activity patterns” (p.444). In the present study, the boundary of each case was defined as the individual class and included the participants and the activities they engaged in.

The size of a bounded case leads to the consideration of the type of case study to be adopted by this study. Three types of case study designs are identified by Creswell (2013): intrinsic case study, single case study, and multiple case study. An intrinsic case study is applied when the case under study presents unusual or intrinsic interests, such as a learner having learning difficulties (Stake, 1995). However because of the need to explore the task engagement of English learners from a sociocultural perspective, an intrinsic case study was not considered appropriate. In terms of single case study, this involves a focus on a single bounded case to explore the inquirer’s research issues or concerns (Stake, 1995) and again was not appropriate. By contrast, in a multiple case study, researchers select more than one case to illuminate the research issues (Creswell, 2013). Therefore a multiple case study was employed in this research study, in order to provide more robustness to the conclusions of the study and produce greater confidence in the findings (Meyer, 2001; Yin, 2009). In application to the present study, this method explored learners’ task engagement in two English classes, where a teacher worked with a class of approximately 20 students (details are presented in Section 4.3.3).

According to Stake (2006), the final purpose of a qualitative multiple case study is to emphasise the experiences of different people who experience the same phenomenon or program in different or the same contexts. Thus, it is suggested that cases should be selected based on an opportunity to learn from the cases, relatedness to the phenomenon being studied, and their balance and variety (Stake, 2006). With reference to the present study, the criteria for case selection were participants’ voluntariness, and learners of different language skill classes. These criteria helped the researcher to select cases that might provide opportunities to learn about learner agency and mediating tools in use, through examining English task engagement of learners in multiple classes in the context being researched.

In sum, the present study was designed as a multiple case study and Patton (2015) identifies that the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise the findings but to
specialise a case in a specific context, thus making a small-sized population of participants acceptable. The sampling technique employed in this study was a convenient and purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2009), which is presented in the following section, including information on the participants of the study. The section begins with an introduction to the research site.

4.3. The research site, the sampling techniques and the participants

4.3.1. The research site

The study was conducted in a college in the Mekong delta of Vietnam. The college has 400 full-time students who have entered the college immediately after graduation from high school, and around 200 part-time students (i.e. who are over 30 years of age or who go to the college and work at the same time). The focus participants in this study are full-time students, who have classes in the morning and in the afternoon. After passing the entrance examination designed by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, they are required to pass a 3-year college course to gain a college degree (e.g. a college degree in business administration, in accounting or in engineering) where they are categorised as English major and non-English major students. Non-English major students study English as a compulsory subject for the requirement of their graduation, and they have to complete the general English course, which is equal to 32 hours (6 credits), in the first two semesters. By contrast, English major students study English intensively. Their courses are conducted mostly in English, except in some conditional subjects (e.g. philosophy, national defence education or physical education). During their course, they are expected to complete basic English skills classes in speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar and the conditional subjects in their first year. Each of the classes related to English skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught in isolation from each other. When the course proceeds to years 2 and 3, they are still required to keep learning the four skills and study more English subjects, such as morphemes, public speaking, pronunciation, etc. After three years at the college, they are expected to be able to work in offices where they can deal with documents in English. Therefore, the reading classes from year 2 focus on topics related to office work while English skill classes in their first year centered on general topics. Every subject has nine 45-minute sessions, which is equal to 3 credits.
The evaluation of the subject is conducted by the subject teacher. That is, the teacher designs and marks the final tests. The final exam is equivalent to 70% of the total grade while class tests, which are often 45-minute tests, are worth 30%. Students are encouraged to participate in class activities where they may gain additional bonus marks that will be then added into the 30% class tests. That is, some teachers may give additional marks to students who often raise their hands to speak or contribute to in-class activities.

4.3.2. The sampling techniques

The study employed convenient and purposive sampling techniques. As the study took place in the college where the researcher has been working as a teacher of English, it was easier to access the research site. As suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2006), researchers who chose research sites convenient to them have found it advantageous for their data collection through finding and building a rapport with participants.

The selection of the participants was conducted according to the University of Wollongong Ethics guidelines and proceeded after Ethics Approval was granted. The first step in participant recruitment was asking for volunteer teachers and students. The purpose of the study and the procedures for data collection were made known to the participants, who were informed that they could withdraw participation and the collected data at any time during the study without penalty. From six classes of English major learners and teachers, two classes agreed to participate in the study. By adopting a qualitative research design, the present study aimed to provide a rich and in-depth understanding of English-major college learners’ task engagement, from the perspective of activity theory, in the context of Vietnam. Accordingly, the small size of the participant population was satisfactory as mentioned above.

4.3.3. The participants of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1 - Reading class (year 3)</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>22 (10/12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 2 - Speaking class (year 1)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 (6/12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. The participants of the study
In terms of the participants in this study, shown in Table 4.1, they were from two classes of English major students and their teachers of English, in a college in the Mekong delta of Vietnam. The first class were third-year students, while the second were first-year students. Students were aged between 19-21 years. At the time of data collection, both classes were in the second semester of their academic year. Data collection for class 1 was conducted during their reading class, whilst that for class 2 was carried out during their speaking class. Accordingly, three and four class observations were made in the first and second class, respectively. In the reading class, there were 22 students (8 males and 14 females), while the speaking class involved 18 students (5 males and 13 females). According to the written test conducted at the beginning of their course, their English proficiency ranged from elementary (A1) to upper-intermediate (B2) based on the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for languages. The, teaching syllabus was integrated with relevant knowledge to support students who work in offices where English is spoken. In terms of collaborative work, teachers may either nominate students to work together in pairs or group work, or allow them to choose their own partners. Due to this the membership of groups or pairs often varied across lessons (see Sections 5.1 and 6.1 for more description of the two classes).

The researcher tried to attend every class lesson in order to ensure “prolonged engagement and persistent observation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250), which is a qualitative research trustworthiness criterion. This was subject to the result of consultations with class teachers as well as students. At times the researcher was required to video-tape or record parts of the lesson as the researcher did not personally attend all lessons. For those lessons where videos were not allowed to record data, the researcher observed and made field notes, and the lessons were then described from these classroom observations. Some teachers and students in Vietnam are not comfortable with being video-taped during lessons and activities to be analysed by others, as they believe that their activities may be criticised. In particular, some students refused to be video-taped but accepted audio-recording, despite receiving and signing the consent form which informed them what may occur during data collection. While the researcher respected
participants’ wishes, and thus conformed to research ethics guidelines this issue is identified as one of the limitations of the study.

One aim of the study was to explore learner agency at an individual level, relating to underlying reasons for individual learners’ task performance. Students who appeared to be active, silent, or defying the normative classroom discourse, as noticed during task engagement, were invited to provide further information. This resulted in six students in both reading and speaking classes participating in interviews for further data.

All participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure adherence to the confidentiality aspect of research ethics. All the information about the participants has been kept strictly confidential with data collected containing participants’ images, such as videos or voice recordings, or other identifiable materials being accessible only by the researcher and the two research supervisors.

4.4. Ethical considerations

Ethic approval was obtained from both the University of Wollongong and the college where the study was conducted. The participants were informed of the purposes of the study and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, some the following ethical issues related to confidentiality and study effects were taken into consideration.

4.4.1. Confidentiality

Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity of the college and participants (Patton, 2002). Physical data were locked in a filing cabinet, and electronic data stored on a password-protected computer, which could only be accessed by the researcher and the research supervisors.

The researcher did not use the data collected from any participants wishing to withdraw from the study and those who did not want to participate in the study.

4.4.2. Study effects

Every effort was made to ensure that the presence of the researcher in the class would not have a negative impact on the teaching and learning process of the teachers and learners, respectively. During class observations, the researcher sat quietly in a corner of
the classroom in order to not interrupt class’ activities. Stimulated recall sessions and informal talks were carefully conducted so that the study had minimal direct influence upon the learning and teaching activities and did not make the participants feel uncomfortable or unconfident to continue participating in the study. In this sense, stimulated recall and informal talks were conducted in a quiet classroom in the form of conversational exchanges without pre-planned sets of questions. Hence, the questions in appendix F were the guide to trigger the focus of the conversation. The researcher agreed to be absent from some class meetings when the class teachers refused the researcher’s presence.

4.5. Data collection methods

Table 4.2 summarises the selected tasks of each class and the methods employed to collect the data for the study. Data for the present study were collected over a 4-month instructional term, and seven tasks (three in the reading class and four in the speaking class) of different lessons provided working data for the examination of learners’ task engagement. The three reading tasks involved a True/False task, Matching task, and Discussion task requiring learners to discuss the topic of active listening. In the speaking class, the four tasks required learners to discuss and create conversations on various topics (e.g. a conversation at the bank, the effects of the weather).
Table 4.2. The methods of data collection used in the study, by class and lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1 (The reading class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selected task for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 2 (The speaking class)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The selected task for analysis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews with students**
(conducted individually at the end of the course)
As previously mentioned, the present study aimed to investigate the way learners conducted English tasks with respect to learner agency and use of mediating tools. From the sociocultural view, the same tasks may be performed differently among learners due to factors from the context as well as from the learners. Therefore, in order to reveal these factors during the task accomplishment, the data collection methods used included both introspective methods and observation (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) as case study research draws upon multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2013). The present study adopted class observations, audio-video records, semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students, stimulated recall sessions with students, and after-task informal talks with students and teachers (Yin, 2009; Meyer, 2001).

4.5.1. Classroom observations

Observations were conducted over a semester in two classrooms where the lessons occurred. Observation is a common method of data collection in qualitative studies (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013; Patton, 2015). As Yamagata-Lynch (2010) advises, activity theory researchers need to observe “situations in which participants are engaging in goal-directed actions and object-directed actions” (p. 71). Therefore, the researcher focused on observing learners’ activities towards a given task, which were associated with a series of goal-directed actions between two groups of students in each class. From this perspective, the observations involved the recording of the way English tasks were conducted in two different groups or pairs in each class. Aspects of students’ task engagement were noticed during class observation as the researcher paid attention to students who appeared to be active, silent or non-conforming during the task engagement. In addition, the researcher focused on those students who rarely raised their hands to ask questions, give feedback or make observable responses to the class teacher’s questions in the classroom. Video and audio records also helped capture learners’ interactions that might be missed during the observations. While observing the classes, the researcher took the role of an “observer as participant” as described in the section on researcher role (see Section 4.3). That is, she watched students’ activities, took field notes, and recorded data, and was sometimes involved in participants’ activities. It is reasoned that too much interaction with participants may distract the researcher from recording data and also affect participants’ behaviour (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Thus, the researcher tried to keep her participation in class activities
with students at a moderate level. Class observations were guided by Hardman’s (2008) framework, which aims to observe pedagogical practices in classrooms along activity theory dimensions, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Hardman’s (2008) framework for observing classroom practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity theory concept</th>
<th>Guided questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>What is produced in the episode?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>What tools are used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>What is the object/focus of the episode?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the purpose of the activity for the subject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the teacher working on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why is the teacher working on it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labour</td>
<td>Who does/do what in the episode?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who determines what is meaningful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>What community is involved in the episode?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What groups of people work together on the object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>What kinds of rules?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Episodes were defined in the study as any parts of a dialogue where language learners were talking about the language which they were producing (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). In relation to the present study, episodes were parts of a discussion of a given task. To suit the aim of the present study, which relates to learners’ task engagement, Hardman’s (2008) class observation focusing on teachers’ practices was adapted to fit the purpose of the present focus on interactions of two groups of learners when engaging in an assigned language task. During the data collection, the researcher kept a reflective journal which involved continuous field notes and thoughts to modify the data collection procedure and aimed to “complement empirical evidence and render the study findings more attuned to reality and informative for practice” (Friedemann, Mayorga, & Jimenez, 2010, p. 454). At the end of each class observation, a class observation summary was made to record noticeable aspects of the class, including silent or resistant learners during class discussion. The summary helped to plan further stimulated recall sessions with students as well as further observations and interviews.
Table 4.4. The observation of a speaking task in class 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class : 2 (Speaking class)</th>
<th>Name of the task observed: Making a conversation at the bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guided questions</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Tram, Thu, and Sang</td>
<td>Vy, Quan and Tien</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Select 6 words from the list of words reviewed to compose a skit on a conversation at the bank, in groups, and then present the conversation in front of the whole class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Pen or pencils and paper to make notes for the conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labour</td>
<td>Sang dominates the discussion; directs the discussion.</td>
<td>- Each member equally takes part in the discussion (e.g. each takes turns to make notes for the conversation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Three students work together in a short time. - Teacher’s interventions help them complete the task</td>
<td>- The group cooperatively discussed the conversation till the end. - They consulted one another, the teacher and neighbouring students, when having difficulties.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Select six words to make the skit - Prepare skit 10 minutes - Present the skit in the end</td>
<td></td>
<td>Task rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of post-task activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do students do at this stage?</td>
<td>The group present their conversation by sharing the same note (created with the help of the teacher)</td>
<td>The group present their discussion by sharing the same note.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of the field notes

Group 1

There are not many interactions in the first group of Sang, Tram and Thu. At the beginning, few interactions are
recorded among the three members to make the skit on the conversation at the bank. Throughout the short discussion among the members, Sang tends to dominate the other two while Tram and Thu are more likely to be subservient to him. Also, Sang shows that he resists to work with his group members, so he then leaves the discussion with Thu and Tram. Therefore, the teacher has to come to help the group. The group then totally resorts to the teacher to create the skit. Even with teacher assistance, Sang does not join in the creation of the skit of his group.

| Group 2 | In this group teasing and kidding were common among the members of the group. They work cooperatively to make the skit, and they look for help from the teacher and neighboring students. Quan and Vy take turns to take notes of the ideas for the skit during the discussion. Quan appears to be the person who guides other members in terms of the direction of the skit. |
4.5.2. Audio-video records

In addition to observations, audio-video recordings were a primary source of data. The observed lessons were video recorded as Marshall and Rossman (2006) reasoned that “film preserves activity and change in its original form” (p.121). Accordingly, video-recorded lessons allow researchers to rediscover the phenomenon under study (Nguyen, 2013b). With reference to the present study, videos helped the researcher move backwards and forwards among the recorded lessons to examine the emergence of categories during the data collection. Audio-video recording provided a means of tracking activities between groups of students when conducting the same assigned task. One tripod-mounted digital video camera was set up to capture the interactions of two groups. In addition, two MP3 recorders were placed with the two groups to record their spoken participation. The camera targeted learners’ interactions and use of mediating tools when conducting the task. Audio-video records also captured interactive conversations between the teacher and students as well as between students when working in groups or in pairs. These video and audio records were also used in stimulated recall sessions conducted with students after class observations.

Observations and audio-video recordings recorded valuable data in terms of documenting physical and spoken interactions occurring during task engagement. However, other factors coming from the learners, which might influence their task performance (e.g. learning history, or learning goals) could not be revealed by these methods of collection. As a result, the study used interviews to collect this kind of data.

4.5.3. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are widely used in qualitative data collection (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Roulston, 2010). King and Horrock (2010) explain that an interview enables participants to share their experiences, understandings and perspectives. Through the lens of activity theory, Yamagata-Lynch (2010) emphasises that interviews are valuable for activity theory investigators in terms of exploring the subjects, mediating tools and perspectives about the object. Of the various types of interviews that could be used, a semi-structured interview was selected for this study. This type of interview combines a pre-determined set of open questions to refer to during the interview, which varied from one participant to another (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Yin, 2003). In a semi-
structured interview, the researcher can leave out some questions in a particular interview or add others to explore thoughts that may arise during an interview (Yin, 2003). This type of interview suited the present study because it gave the researcher the flexibility to go into details when eliciting participants' own views on their task performance.

At the end of the course, the researcher conducted additional, in-depth interviews with student participants who were noticed to be active, silent, defying classroom norms, or changing in their task performance as a result of working in different groups or pairs during task engagement. The semi-structured interviews aimed to discover factors that were personal and contextual and had an impact upon individual task performance.

As for the interview questions, Patton (1990) suggests six types of questions that can be asked in a qualitative interview according to the purpose of the research: background/demographic questions, experience questions, opinion questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions and sensory questions. The interviews of the present study involved background and opinion questions. Accordingly, qualitative interviews often open with background or demographic questions (e.g. How long have you been learning English?), since these are useful to elicit historical elements (King & Horrock, 2010). In relation to the present study, this type of interview question revealed information related to the learners’ second language learning history. Opinion questions were used to understand the interpretive processing of learners (King & Horrock, 2010). These questions aimed to obtain insights into participants’ goals, intentions, or desires (Joungtrakul, Sheehan, & Aticomsuwan, 2013, p. 148) and to gain learners’ opinions of sociocultural factors, as well as factors affecting their level of participation in the given tasks.

The interviewing questions were designed in accordance with Kvale’s (1996) strategies of questioning involving introductory questions, follow-up questions and probing questions. Depending on the respondent’s answer, additional questions were posed or clarifications sought. Therefore, there were variations in the questions asked depending on each participant (see Appendix F for the interview questions).

Each interview lasted about 10-15 minutes and was recorded using an audio recorder. Firstly, the interviews focused on the learners’ personal language background, language
study history and experience. Next, the interviews attempted to explore their perceptions of factors affecting their task performance in the English class. In addition, interviews were conducted with the class teachers at the beginning of the task. This helped identify their objectives towards a given task.

As the study focused on events occurring at specific points in time when learners dealt with the given task, the exploration of these events contributed to an understanding of the reasons why learners reacted in certain ways at different points of a task. As a result, stimulated recall was utilised for this purpose.

4.5.4. Stimulated recall

Stimulated recall is a method used to recall participants’ thoughts and actions after they performed a task or participated in an event (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Lyle (2003) also suggests that stimulated recall appears to be a useful research device to uncover cognitive processes as these process are not evident through simple observation. It is argued that stimulated recall is “an information processing approach whereby the use and access to memory structures is enhanced, if not guaranteed, by a prompt that aids the recall of information” (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 17). From this perspective, the present study aimed to offer students an opportunity to elaborate on a moment that they recalled from viewing a video of themselves during a lesson. Such moments may prompt additional thoughts from a student based on what they recalled. The “recall” function only works if they actually remember what they said or thought – there is no guarantee that they will recall everything or anything even if they see themselves in a video. Therefore, whatever data is collected in a stimulated recall session is a combination of both thoughts that are recalled and thoughts that arise as they view the video - hence it is constructive.

With respect to the present study, some recorded and observed class lessons were selected to conduct stimulated recall sessions. Simulated recall was to investigate what students thought and why they performed a task in a particular way at a critical time. This attempted to throw light on how learners responded to given tasks with certain behaviour at a specific moment during task engagement. In order to improve recall accuracy, Bloom (1954) shows that recall is 95% accurate if the recalls are prompted a
short time after the event. In this case, stimulated recalls were conducted immediately after the class lesson.

During the stimulated recall sessions, parts of videos from group or pair work, which contained events to be explored, were shown to students who were asked for explanations of the events. The sample question asked during the stimulated recall was, “Why are you doing this at this time?” Based on the responses from the students, additional questions could be added to elicit further clarification (see Appendix F for the guided questions). As with semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall sessions were recorded by an MP3 recorder.

4.5.5. Informal talks with the class teachers and students

In addition to the stimulated recall sessions, some informal talks after tasks were conducted immediately after the class. These interviews were essential to provide supplementary data to clarify participants’ behaviours at a critical point in time. However, learners sometimes did not feel comfortable to be asked in a formal way using recorders. Thus, some students, when asked in stimulated recall sessions, suggested having a chat with the researcher instead of their voice being recorded. They explained that some of their comments might be related to their peers or the class teacher. According to research ethics, their suggestion was accepted. Therefore, some post-task talks that were sensitive for learners took place in the form of informal chats, which were more in the nature of sharing thoughts between the participants and the researcher. In these talks, students could be posed questions such as, “Why do you say these words at this time?”, with an aim to get students to share what was actually happening at a specific time in the task process. The study included this data, which supplemented the stimulated recall responses.

This form of data collection has been mentioned as informal conversations and is widely used in qualitative research. Patton (2002), for instance, considers informal conversations to be the most open-ended interviewing strategy. This data collection method was conducted in an open and friendly atmosphere to eliminate any respondent anxiety (Cohen et al., 2000). Due to the fact that no audio or video-recorders were used during informal talks, learners were more comfortable to give responses (Patton, 2002). In a recent study, Tran (2015) adopted informal conversations as a follow-up interview
which occurred at any time that suited the interviewer and the interviewee. The present study, however, used informal talks conducted after the task as a source of supplementary data, for the sake of ethical considerations.

Moreover, some pre-task and post-task conversations were conducted informally between the researcher and the class teachers. The pre-task talks aimed to inform on the object of the class lesson or the given task. The post-task conversations focused on their thoughts about some students’ actions or the teachers’ actions at particular moments during the task engagement. At this point, the researcher adopted the role of an insider sharing with the teachers her teaching beliefs, experiences or concerns. To illustrate, as an insider in the community, the class teachers might feel more comfortable to reveal likes or dislikes about specific task performances of their students. In contrast, during the post-task conversations with students, the researcher took the role of an outsider with whom students could express their favour or disfavour regarding the task or their opinions about their class teacher. In this sense, the researcher moved between being an insider and an outsider, as stated earlier in this chapter. Due to no audio-video recorders being in use during informal chats, the researcher took notes in the form of shorthand writing, as recommended by Tran (2015). Immediately after the conversations, the researcher re-wrote the transcripts in their full form in order to retrieve information given by the students and teachers.

In response to the learners’ English proficiency and the research aim, which focused on information given by learners, interviews, stimulated recalls and informal talks, all were conducted in Vietnamese, the native language shared by the participants and the researcher. Permitting the participants to use their native language in interviews was expected to increase the quality of the data (Tran, 2015).

In short, the present study adopted interviews, observation, stimulated recall and post-task informal conversations with the participants to collect data. With these data collection methods, the researcher expected that the present study, which is an activity theory study, could address both observable behaviour and mental activities, as suggested by Yamagata-Lynch (2010). In the end, seven tasks (three tasks in class 1 and four tasks in class 2) provided working data for the present study. The management of the data of the study will be provided as follows.
4.6. Data management and Data transcription

Throughout the data collection process, each of the files of different data types, such as observation, audio-video recorded group interactions, and stimulated recall, was duplicated and stored separately to make sure that the files would not be lost due to technical problems. Each data source was saved in a separate file with the corresponding name (e.g. observation, videos, or stimulated recall). The file then had sub-files named after the date of data collection and the name of the observed lesson. For example, one sub-file of the observation was named as 24 Oct 24-active listening. This allowed the researcher to easily access a particular type of data when needed. This is a technique of managing data recommended by Merriam (1998). Data were stored in safely and securely in a desktop in the office where the researcher worked, as Patton (2002) advises that data management should consider the issue of keeping the data safe and secure.

The researcher attempted to transcribe as much data as possible during data collection, with an aim to make data analysis an iterative process as suggested by Borg (1998). Transcription is the first step in data analysis, but it is quite time-consuming and challenging for the researcher. King and Horrock (2010) highlight that qualitative researchers should consider two questions at the stage of data transcription: who will transcribe the data and how much paralinguistic detail (i.e. non-verbal language) to be included. Considering the first question, data in the present study were transcribed by the researcher because this allowed her to be more familiar with the data (Gall et al., 2007; King & Horrock, 2010). The audio-video recorded data were transcribed into written form in both English and Vietnamese. Semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall and informal conversations were first translated into Vietnamese. The Vietnamese versions of the transcript of interviews, stimulated recall and informal talks were given back to the research participants to check for accuracy. This was related to member-checking, one of the techniques to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, as described later in the section of trustworthiness. After that, all transcripts were translated into English for coding.

Transcription aims to describe the talk as fully but as simply as possible, as argued by Keith (2003). Indeed, if too much detail is included in the transcription it may be hard to
read, and may constrain member checking, and even may obscure the research purpose (Kvale, 1996; Ochs, 1979). In contrast, a too simple a transcription may result in a failure to capture important aspects of the interaction (Keith, 2003). Bloom (1993), as a result, has pointed out that the researcher’s challenge is to reduce the data selectively while still preserving the potential for rich interpretation. Hence, the researcher must think about a transcription convention before beginning the development of a transcript, because data can be transcribed in various ways (Davidson, 2009). In response to this problem, Lapadat (2000) earlier proposed that the selection of transcription style depends on the purpose of the study, theoretical stance and analytic intent. In reference to the present study, there were two transcription conventions: one for transcripts of talk-in-interaction; and the other for transcripts of semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, and informal talks.

4.6.1. The transcription of talk-in-interaction

In this study, talk-in-interaction involved the talk between students and the class teachers, and the talk among students in group or pair work. Therefore, this transcription involved the transformation of audio-and video-recorded data into written form. According to Herazo and Donato (2012), talk is the major historical and cultural mediation tool. Thus, the present study analysed the conversation between the class teacher and students, and students with each other, with an attempt to determine the tools of mediation used by the teacher as well as by students during discursive activities. This is supported by Ohta (2000), who has argued that conversations among learners or between the teacher and learners provide a window through which mediation can be seen and analysed.

Thus, transcripts of students’ talk in group or pair work, obtained from video and audio recordings, were a main source of data for the present study. The transcripts of audio-video recordings of learners’ collaborative tasks were segmented into goal-directed actions in the form of sequences, as suggested by Yamagata-Lynch (2010). A table was then created for each transcript of one group or pair collaborative task, to describe the process of task discussion among the group members line-by-line. Contextual description and non-verbal actions were also inserted in a separate column of the table to describe what was happening at a given point in the task. For this study, the inclusion
of contextual description was necessary since it could reveal social as well as cultural factors of the researched context where task engagement was taking place. This reflects the suggestion made by Wells (1997) that written representations of actual discourse data be as thick as possible through providing as much detail about the participants, the activity and the historical, social and intellectual context. Hence, the researcher attempted to provide contextual explanations in the transcript so that readers could gain an overall understanding of the context in which task engagement was taking place. Hence, field notes of class observations provided contextual explanation for the transcripts. This is in line with what is suggested by King and Horrock (2010), that the only way to incorporate paralinguistic features into the transcript is to “take handwritten notes of any particularly expressive examples” (p.147). Regarding the purpose of the present study, some non-verbal actions were added to highlight the cooperative nature of talks among learners, or between the class teacher and students. For example, the researcher added descriptions of learners’ intonation at particular points of significance and their action of using dictionaries. Besides this, the study also focused on private speech, thus non-verbal communication related to private speech were included. The inclusion of these paralinguistic features allowed the researcher to reveal theoretical concepts, such as the type of mediating tools used by learners during the task completion. In this sense, data analysis related to talk-in-interaction was supported by the transcription (Mclellan, Macqueen, & Neidig, 2003).

From the view of involving non-verbal features in the transcripts, it is necessary for qualitative researchers to consider the adoption of a consistent transcription style (King & Horrock, 2010). For this study, transcripts of interactive conversations employed a transcription style suggested by Keith (2003), which included transcription features such as pauses, overlap, emphasis, intonation, problematic features, and some nonverbal features. Keith (2003) argues that standard systems of transcription sometimes do not provide what the researcher needs, thus it is acceptable for researchers to include their own symbols. As a result, the study included other symbols with common transcription conventions of talk-in-interaction (see Appendix C).
4.6.2. The transcription of semi-structured interview, stimulated recall and informal conversation

Keith (2003) affirms that, if the focus of the analysis is the content of data sources, researchers may exclude particular paralinguistic elements (e.g. hesitations or facial expressions) while transcribing their data sources. Regarding the present study, the analytical focus of the above-mentioned data sources was the content, thus paralinguistic features were ignored, and a basic transcription was employed.

4.7. Data analysis

4.7.1. The data analysis approach

This section introduces the data analysis approach used in the present study as well as steps of the data analysis process. For qualitative studies, data analysis is defined as an iterative process in which researchers move backwards and forwards between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Dörnyei, 2007). Hardy (2011) describes qualitative data analysis as a recursive process where the analysis of the collected data may informed subsequent observation or interview.

The data collected in the present study were analysed through a thematic approach. This analysis approach is a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting themes within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The approach to qualitative analysis could be “data-driven or theory-driven” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Data-driven coding refers to themes emerging from the data themselves, thus Patton (2015) equates it to an inductive approach to coding qualitative data. In contrast, theory-driven coding means that themes come from the literature review or the theory underlying the study. This latter approach is described as a deductive approach (Patton, 2015). In particular, a few qualitative authors (e.g., Hardy, 2011; King, 2009; Stirling, 2001) have recommended the combination of the two approaches in analysing a data set. In fact, each approach, when being conducted in isolation, may bring weaknesses. The deductive approach to thematic analysis tends to provide a less rich description of the data overall, and the analysis of some aspects of the data could be shallow (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Regarding the inductive approach, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the analysis process would be less focused if the data are only analysed inductively, since many categories may emerge from the data. As a result, the analysis of the data in this study...
employed an integrated approach of both inductive and deductive development of codes. The data were initially coded based on the themes distilled from major concepts mentioned in the literature review. After that, more themes emerging from the data were searched for.

The present study followed the four steps of thematic qualitative analysis suggested by qualitative researchers such as, Braun and Clarke (2006) and Stirling (2001) as follows. Section 4.7.2 in this chapter will show how data analysis in the present study was conducted through these steps.

(1) Familiarizing with the data
First of all, the researcher familiarised herself with the data. To achieve this, the researcher transcribed the data set and kept reading the transcripts of the data set. When reading the transcripts, the researcher attempted to define the patterns of the transcripts: that is, she tried to read it in an active manner at this stage, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2006). This step was also useful for the researcher to get a sense of the whole data set (Creswell, 2013). Once the data became familiar, the analysis process moved on to the next step: generating initial codes.

(2) Generating initial codes
In this step, the researcher began to code the data. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), data coding is an analytic tool which researchers employ to manage amounts of raw data. In other words, this step aims to generate basic themes, as argued by Stirling (2001). As a result, data coding means that data are broken down into smaller segments, and the segments are then compared, and grouped in themes in accordance with their similarities (Walker & Myrick, 2006). This definition of coding is similar to that of Simons (2009), who defines coding as the process of breaking down data into chunks and labelling a name for each. As discussed previously, data analysis in this study was performed inductively and deductively. Therefore, the researcher first started the coding process with a predetermined list of codes developed on the basis of the literature and the theoretical framework of activity theory guiding the research question. As the coding process advanced, the list of codes expanded. The coding of data in the study was conducted on the English transcript, since it would be easier for the supervisors, performing peer-debriefing, to check the coding.
The researcher attempted to code for as many potential patterns as possible, and one piece of text could be coded as many different themes, as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006). Furthermore, the coded texts involved the surrounding texts so that the context of the coded data would not be lost, as suggested by Bryman (2001).

The researcher coded the first transcript of each data source twice to ensure a process of check-coding, and she acted as an intra-coder. After this trial, two versions of coding were compared to notice any inconsistencies in the codes, which were then reviewed. The intra-coding check ends when approximately 90 per cent agreement between different times of coding is achieved (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, in this stage, another research student of the same cohort helped the researcher to code the same transcripts of interviews, stimulated recall, audio-video recordings, and informal conversation. Then, the inter-coder agreement was checked. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a minimum inter-rater agreement should be 80%, and the rate of most of agreement was higher than 80%. In case the agreement was lower than 80%, the researcher and the student discussed the differences in code definition to achieve an acceptable degree of consistency.

According to Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014), qualitative data coding can be performed either manually or through a software program. NVIVO software was used to facilitate the analysis process. Thus, this step meant tagging and naming selections of text within each data item. Once the data set was all coded and collated, the data analysis process moved to the next step, to search for categories or themes.

(3) Developing themes

A theme or category is defined as something capturing something of importance in the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning in the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step involves the consideration of how to combine different codes into potential organising themes (Stirling, 2001). The coded patterns could be named after both existing themes in the literature or those emerging from data (Constas, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994). With reference to the present study, the sources for naming the themes were initially based on the pre-existing categories from the literature and the theoretical framework of activity theory (e.g., L1,
private speech, task-related functions of L1 use, subjects, etc.). Apart from these prefigured themes, the study involved additional codes emerging from the data during analysis, due to the fact that the present study utilised an integrated analysis approach as previously stated. Therefore, the researcher then looked for groups of codes presenting surprising themes, which were conceptually interesting or unusual. After reviewing and additional coding, some new themes were found. For example, learners employed “their life experience”, or they used “word sounds” or “forms of irregular verbs” to help them deal with the task. These themes (i.e., life experience, word sounds, forms of irregular verbs) were then defined as forms of semiotic mediation.

At this stage, the researcher took account of the relationship among codes, themes and different levels of themes. Hence, themes were formed by grouping initial codes. In the end, some codes seemed not to fit into any themes. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) advise that researchers should not abandon any codes at this stage before moving to the step of reviewing themes, as follows.

(4) Reviewing themes

This step relates to the refinement of the themes developed in stage 3 of developing themes, and the additional coding of data within a theme that might be missed during the earlier coding stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher first read all the collated extracts of every single category. Accordingly, several themes were combined into one, while others were broken down into separated themes. Also in this stage, the researcher identified whether or not a theme contained any lower-order themes or subordinate themes, with an aim to develop global themes, as stated by Stirling (2001). Stirling (2001) suggests a network which can support qualitative researchers during the thematic analysis, as presented in Figure 4.1.
In application of the data analysis process discussed above, the thematic network was adopted to analyse each data source, such as talk-in-interaction, semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall or informal conversations as follows.

4.7.2. The analysis of data sources

In this section, the coding of talk-in-interaction, semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall, informal talks, and field notes of class observations, will be presented. The analysis process of these sources of data is in line with the four steps illustrated above, and follows the thematic analysis approach. This section merely demonstrates how each data source was coded and provides an example of initial codes for each of the data sources. Among these data sources, interviews, stimulated recall and informal conversations were grouped as the same coding.

The coding of talk-in-interaction

The transcripts of group work / pair work or the talk between the class teachers and
students were segmented into sequences, which consist of turns. Since this study was guided by activity theory, sequences involve a series of goal-directed actions, as suggested by Yamagata-Lynch (2010). After that, the coding of the transcripts was conducted line-by-line within the analytical framework of activity theory. Table 4.5 demonstrates how initial codes centered on mediating tools were developed from talk-in-interaction among students in a collaborative task (the True/False task in the reading class).

As demonstrated in Table 4.5, the transcript of pair work between two students was segmented into sequences showing goal-directed actions of students when conducting a speaking task. The description was added, and this was helpful for the researcher’s understanding of the actions occurring at the given point in time. Thus, it then facilitated the coding process as well. Then, each sequence was coded turn-by-turn with the focus on the goal of each turn and the appearance of mediating tools in use. After finishing coding a turn, a summary of what had taken place in the turn was made, prior to moving to the next sequence to be coded. The first column of codes refers to initial codes generated from each turn. After that, the initial codes were distilled and combined into organising themes, and global themes were then developed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Goals-directed actions of the turn</th>
<th>Coding mediating tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: Làm đoạn hội thoại về ảnh hưởng của thời tiết, làm sao đây? (<em>Make a conversation about the effect of the weather, what should we do?</em>)</td>
<td>Tran says the requirement of the task</td>
<td>- Translate the task requirement to inform what to do about the task</td>
<td>- Translation of the task requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: mát mẻ, có gió (<em>cool, windy</em>)</td>
<td>Phuong suggests characteristics of a season</td>
<td>Provide information to build the content of the conversation</td>
<td>Information provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: spring</td>
<td>Tran suggests a season to make contribution to the conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: thời tiết mà (<em>it must be weather</em>)</td>
<td>Phuong rejects Tran’s contribution</td>
<td>- Refuse the inclusion of an idea for the conversation</td>
<td>- Refusing the information given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: Tao nghĩ là (<em>I think</em>) what kind of weather, what kind of weather is good for you?</td>
<td>Tran uses Vietnamese words in the English sentence</td>
<td>- Substitute words in an English sentence</td>
<td>- Vocabulary substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: tao làm A nha? (<em>I’m A, ok?</em>)</td>
<td>Tran suggests that she will be the person who will first start the conversation</td>
<td>Assign themselves the role to play in the conversation.</td>
<td>Task role assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: dìa nào giới thiệu? (who will introduce?)</td>
<td>Phuong asks who will be in charge of introducing their conversation when finished</td>
<td>Ask for the task role assignment</td>
<td>Request for task role assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: Hi everybody, I’m Tran gì gì đó(….something like this)uhm today uhm we talk about uhm uhm</td>
<td>Tran does not respond to Phuong’s answer but tries to say the introductory sentence which introduces the group members and the topic of the conversation.</td>
<td>Make the introductory part of the conversation</td>
<td>Word substitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Vietnamese is used to substitute English ideas that may be said in the introduction.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior-knowledge related to creating an introductory statement of a talk in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: The kind of weather is perfect for me. Then, hello, we</td>
<td>Phuong says the topic of the task to complete the introductory sentence provided by Tran.</td>
<td>- Complete the introductory statement</td>
<td>Prior knowledge related to creating an introductory statement of a talk in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: Hey, mời đầu vào phải là(…. at first you must say that ) we are we are Phuong and Tran and we are talking about the kind of</td>
<td>Phuong suggests what may be said to open the introduction</td>
<td>Provide the information that may be said in the introduction</td>
<td>Information provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conversation content development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sequence 3: The students move on to making the body of the dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tran: Mội đầu vào phải nói là(<em>At first must say that</em>)</th>
<th>Tran is trying to start the conversation</th>
<th>Suggest ideas for the conversation</th>
<th>Giving suggestion Conversation content development</th>
<th>Task-related function</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: uh</td>
<td>It means going on, continuable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: Hello, we are...what’s going?</td>
<td>Tran attempts to say a sentence to open the conversation but she struggles with the sentence</td>
<td>- Create the opening of the conversation</td>
<td>Prior knowledge related to making the opening of a casual dialogue in English.</td>
<td>Background knowledge of L2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong: how’s it going?</td>
<td>Phuong provides the sentence</td>
<td>Create the opening of the conversation</td>
<td>Prior-knowledge related to making the opening of a casual dialogue in English.</td>
<td>Background knowledge of L2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran: Bàn có khỏe không?(*Do you feel well?) (the meaning of “how is it going?”)</td>
<td>Tran says the meaning of the sentence in Vietnamese</td>
<td>Translate a sentence while attempting to develop the opening of the conversation.</td>
<td>Sentence translation Conversation content development Prior-knowledge related to making the opening of a casual dialogue in English.</td>
<td>Task-related function</td>
<td>Background knowledge of L2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Phuong: Hay nói là đã quá lâu không gặp đi (May say that we haven’t seen each other for a long time). uhm… you look so tired | Phuong suggests a response to “how’s it going?” and provides a sentence | - Suggest ideas for the conversation  
- Set the context of the conversation | Giving suggestion  
Providing the context for the conversation  
Conversation content development | Task-related function | L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tran: yes, because the weather here is so hot. Sau đó mày hỏi ta là what kind of weather is perfect for you (Then you may ask me that…). According to you, what kind of weather is perfect | Tran suggests a response and also suggests Phuong get involved the topic of the conversation | - Organise and sequence the information of the conversation | Organising the information  
Conversation content development | Task-related function | L1 |
| Phuong: Mày nói dạng như miễn cường. So-so phải không? (You say in a reluctant way …. Right?). You look so tired ((writes the utterances down on a paper)). | Phuong suggests the way to perform the next statement, which shows that they are so tired. She asks for confirmation of the question earlier provided, “How is it going?” | - Suggest a manner to perform the task  
- Ask for confirmation of an English utterance (i.e. so-so) in that context of the conversation | Suggesting a manner to perform the task  
Request for a confirmation  
Conversation content development  
Prior-knowledge related to English | Task-related function  
Background knowledge of L2 | L1 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tran:</th>
<th>uh</th>
<th>Tran accepts</th>
<th>- Provide confirmation</th>
<th>Providing confirmation of English language</th>
<th>Peer scaffolding</th>
<th>Human mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phuong:</td>
<td>you look so tired vì thời tiết cùng ánh hướng làm cho mệt nữa(......because weather effects and makes people tired). Trời nóng quá cũng mệt nữa hà? (Hot weather makes you feel tired?)</td>
<td>Phuong repeats the utterance and provides a new idea which aims to explain the appearance of the utterance. She asks for experience from a peer to make sure that the utterance is contextually meaningful and appropriate</td>
<td>- Set the context for the conversation - Request experience on the effects of hot weather from her partner</td>
<td>Establishing the context of the conversation - Ask for experience from a partner</td>
<td>Peer scaffolding</td>
<td>Human mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tran:</td>
<td>uh, trời nóng quá làm mày đuối luôn đó(....hot weather makes you feel exhausted). Bụa nào may thấy nhức đầu là bụa đó trời nóng đó(A hot day usually makes you feel headache).</td>
<td>Tran confirms and illustrates the effect of hot weather by giving an example</td>
<td>- Confirm the information provided - Give her experience on the effects of hot weather</td>
<td>Information confirmation - Experience provision Experience related to the topic being discussed</td>
<td>Peer scaffolding</td>
<td>Human mediation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.2 demonstrates how four organizing themes were developed from basic themes: learners’ L2 background knowledge, learners’ experience, peer mediation, and L1 use. Then, the development of global themes from the organizing themes was as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.2. The development of four organizing themes**

- **L2 (Background knowledge of English learning)**
  - Prior knowledge related to creating an introductory statement of a talk in English
  - Prior knowledge related to developing the introduction of a talk in English
  - Prior knowledge related to making the opening of a casual dialogue in English
  - Prior knowledge related to English language use

- **Learner experience**
  - Giving experience on the effects of hot weather
  - Giving confirmation on English utterances

- **Peer mediation**
  - Giving experience on the effects of hot weather

- **The effects of hot weather**

- **L1 use**
  - Task requirement interpretation
  - Giving Task role assignment
  - Request for task role assignment
  - Information provision
  - Organising information
  - Providing the context for the conversation
  - Ask for experience from a partner
  - Reminding the task requirement
  - Refusing information given

- **Language related function**
  - Translate English into L1
  - Substitute words
  - Request for confirmation of an English utterance
After basic themes were distilled to group into organising themes, as seen in Figure 4.3, the organising themes were grouped into global themes. Accordingly, two global themes (i.e. semiotic tool and human tools) were created from the four organising themes.

**The coding of semi-structured interviews, stimulated call and informal conversations**

Table 4.6 indicates how a semi-structured interview was coded, and the same procedure was conducted for stimulated recall and informal conversations. After being transcribed verbatim, the transcripts of these data sources were coded line-by-line. The first column of codes shows the generation of initial codes. After that, the initial codes are combined into organising themes, which are then grouped into global themes derived from the elements of activity theory (e.g. subject, object, community, etc.), which is the theoretical framework of the study.
Table 4.6. The coding of semi-structured interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Extracts</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tien</td>
<td>It is good to be fun when we are doing exercises together. The exercises sometimes are difficult so teasing makes us release stress.</td>
<td>Teasing during the task engagement is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huy</td>
<td>If I make mistakes the teacher will correct me. I don’t worry about making mistakes or being laughed at the mistakes I make. I make mistakes so I could learn from them.</td>
<td>-Making mistakes is natural in language learning. -Learning from the mistakes they make.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han</td>
<td>I was not so bad at the subject, but I got lower marks as I seldom spoke in class. As a result, teachers did not notice me. Unlike me, others who were more active got higher marks and caught teachers’ attention. Thus, since then I’ve tried to raise my hands in the classroom.</td>
<td>-Bad learning experience in the past. -being active for a purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huy</td>
<td>I like teaching English for others so I often teach what I’ve learned to other friends. Thus, I love speaking up in the classroom because I want to tell what I understand.</td>
<td>Preferring to instruct peers. -Preferring to act out in the classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thao</td>
<td>I realise the significant role of English so I want to study it well to pursue further education in the field of fashion in the US.</td>
<td>The learners’ purpose towards English learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tien</td>
<td>If I work with my friends like Huy, I can make jokes or kidding. But if working with someone who is serious, I can't make jokes at them because they may not like this.</td>
<td>Changing their behaviour when working with friends or class acquaintance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tram</td>
<td>I need more time to prepare for what we will say. I’m very bad at</td>
<td>The task requiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening and speaking so I can’t speak it on stage by myself. I cannot take spontaneous English utterances like my friends</td>
<td>to prepare and perform a conversation on stage. -being aware of her own English proficiency.</td>
<td>Self-perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The coding of class observation field notes

Field notes were summarised, and the pattern-matching approach suggested by Gibbs (2002) and Nunan (2004) was used to analyse field notes. Pattern matching is defined as a process of identifying patterns discernible across pieces of information (Gurdial Singh & Jones, 2007). Lankshear and Knobel (2004) argue that the pattern predicted for a study is directly influenced by the theory used to frame that study. The present study is guided by activity theory, so the pattern will be based on the six components of activity theory. In this sense, the summary of class observation was conducted in terms of two summaries of two groups’ task completion. After that, each summary was searched for the pattern underpinned by the six elements (i.e. subject, objects, tools, division of labour, community, and rules).

4.7.3. The analysis of data related to each research question

As seen in Table 4.7, the data sources and the analytical tools in correspondence with each sub-research questions are indicated.

Table 4.7. The data sources and the analytical tools to deal with the research question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>The analytical framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do college Vietnamese learners of English engage in English language tasks??</td>
<td>- Video-audio records of group interactions</td>
<td>The mediation concept of activity theory/sociocultural theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.1. What sources of mediating tools used by learners during the task engagement?</td>
<td>- Observation field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulated recall or informal conversations with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.2. How do learner activity variations emerge from particular tasks?</td>
<td>- Video-audio records of group interactions</td>
<td>The three levels of activity theory (Leontieve, 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Observation field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulated recall or informal conversations with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.3. What factors affect learners’ task performance?</td>
<td>Video-audio records of group interactions</td>
<td>The six components of activity theory (Engestrom, 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Observation field notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Stimulated recall or informal conversations with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Informal conversations with learners or teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Semi-structured interviews with students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The first question:** “What sources of mediating tools used by learners during the task engagement?”

This question aimed to demonstrate that language learning is a mediated process. Hence, learners employed mediating tools in the context to complete the given tasks. Transcripts of video-audio records of students’ interactions during collaborative tasks and of student-teacher interactions, observation field notes, informal talk and stimulated recall, were analysed to reveal types of tools in use by learners during the task engagement. Priori-codes were based on the mediation concept mentioned in the literature review (e.g., L1 use, private speech, peer scaffolding, teacher scaffolding, etc.). The coding process for mediation is thematic analysis and Figures 4.2 and 4.3 above could illustrate the process of how codes related to mediation were developed.

**The second sub-question:** “How do different groups of students engage in the same English language tasks?”

The first question aimed to reveal the learner agency from the collective perspective: that is, learner agency when learners collaboratively work in groups. From the sociocultural perspective, the same task would be associated with different activities when being conducted by different groups of learners, due to learner agency. Because learners are agentive, each group of learners would bring different motives and goals towards the tasks. Besides this, the task conditions are distinctive. Therefore, learner agency at this level would be presented through the different activities in the two groups while conducting the same tasks. In order to answer this question, the three levels of activity theory (Leontiev, 1981) were used as an analytical tool. The transcripts of talk-in-interaction among students in two groups when conducting collaborative tasks were divided into chains of goal-directed actions in the form of sequences, and were coded turn-by-turn to reveal the goals of students. In other words, the transcripts of the talk aimed to figure out “the WHAT”, that is, the series of actions conducted by each group to complete the same given task. The stimulated recall sessions and informal conversations helped to indicate the WHY: that is, the motives or objectives of each group when performing the given task. The task condition in each group shaping their actions (i.e. the HOW) was indicated through observation, stimulated recall and informal conversations.
After initial coding, some basic themes were defined such as, working alone, discussing the task together, aiming to have a great presentation of the task in the end, aiming to finish the task, time is not enough, rehearsing the conversation prior to presenting it, paying attention to intonation, taking turn to write the conversation, appointing one person to take notes of the group’s discussion, close friends, class acquaintances, etc. Then, these codes were combined into organising themes (e.g., “Goals” of the groups including aiming to have a great presentation of the task in the end and aiming to finish the task; “Task conditions” including time constraint; “Group member relation” including close friends and class acquaintances; “During-the-task-actions” including taking turn to with the conversation and appointing one person to take notes of the group’s discussion; and “End-of-the task actions” including rehearsing the conversation prior to presenting it and paying attention to intonation). Next, these themes were reviewed and additional coding was conducted. After this process, “Group member relation” was combined and became one of the sub-categories of “Task conditions”. Global themes (i.e., WHAT, WHY, and HOW) were then developed. Accordingly, the global ones included WHAT (e.g., During-the-task actions and End-of-the task actions), WHY (e.g., Goals), and HOW (e.g., Task conditions).

The third sub-question: “What factors affect learners’ task performance?”
The purpose of this question was to explore the learner agency at the individual level. Simply put, learner agency at this level was revealed through the examination of what factors were impacting upon task performance of individual learners. From the sociocultural view, due to the fact that learners are the agent, their actions are formed by both personal and contextual factors. In order to answer this question, observations, stimulated recall, informal conversations with students, and the semi-structured interviews with students, were analysed to identify the factors that might affect learners’ task performance. The six components of activity theory (Engeström, 1987) formed the analytical tool. Therefore, the pre-determined codes for data analysis were on the basis of these components. The six components of activity theory (Engeström, 1987) formed the analytical tool (i.e., Subject, Objects, Division of labour, Rules, Object, Tools and Community.). Therefore, the pre-determined codes for data analysis were on the basis of these components. For example, basic
themes emerged from initial coding included “teasing during the task engagement is good, making mistakes is natural in language learning, learning from the mistakes they make, bad learning experience in the past, being active for a purpose, thinking that they are too old to learn English”. Then, these themes were grouped into organising theme such as Learning belief; Language learning history; Learning purposes, Perception of themselves as language learner. After that, the organising themes were grouped into global themes (i.e., Subject, Object, Division of labor, et.). For example, “Subject” included three organising themes Learning belief, Language learning history, and Learning purposes.

In general, in the present study, the researcher was the only person who collected, analysed and interpreted the data. Therefore, the researcher’s bias should be considered, due to the fact that researchers in qualitative research are also seen as research instruments (Tavakol & Zeinaloo, 2004).

4.8. The researcher’s bias

The researcher’s subjectivity might potentially influence the findings of the research. From this perspective, researchers’ background and position may have an impact on the way they conduct research and on their way of interpreting the data of the research, as argued by Malterud (2001).

However, the researcher of the present study comes from the same context where the participant students learn English, and has been teaching English at the research site for 8 years. In other words, the researcher shares the same English learning and teaching context with the participants. Such experiences can be both advantageous and disadvantageous when interpreting the transcripts of conversations among students. In terms of advantages, shared experiences allowed the researcher to interpret task procedures to enhance a reader’s comprehension of the process of a learners’ task completion. To illustrate, contextual explanation was provided at certain points of the task process, as necessary so that readers outside the research context could get a better understanding of the context as well as of learners’ actions in the context. By the same token, the researcher’s experience might result in bias such as particular interpretations of transcripts in relation to learner interactions. Thus, transcripts of learners’ task engagement were given back to the participants to
check for accuracy of some reported details. Furthermore, after-task talks with students or class teachers allowed for a more rigorous interpretation of the learners’ interactions. These strategies were aimed at reducing researcher bias.

Interestingly, Pauline (2005) argues that qualitative researchers’ belief, values and experience ought not to be considered as methodologically weak, but rather as strong if a researcher properly decides his/her role in the research (Glesne, 2005). In this regard, qualitative researchers could adopt a role as an outsider or an insider (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The next section will reveal what role the researcher took in the present study.

4.9. The role of researcher

During her presence at the research site, the researcher’s role was both as an insider and as an outsider, which varied according to the process of data collection. As Yamagata-Lynch (2010) emphasises, activity theory researchers should consider their role in the study. Therefore, the researcher tried to balance her role between being an outsider and an insider. That is, the researcher attempted to position herself in the middle (Breen, 2007). Insider-researchers are defined as those who study a group to which they belong, whereas outsider-researchers refers to those who do not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007; Unluer, 2012). In relation to the present study, the research site is where the researcher has worked as a teacher of English, so it could be advantageous for her to understand what takes place in the classroom at the site. This is aligned with the advantage of being an insider-researcher, as the researcher has a deep understanding of the culture being researched, as argued by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002).

Nevertheless, as argued by Uluer (2012), greater familiarity with the research site may result in a loss of objectivity, and this in turn may lead to making wrong assumptions, which is a research bias. As a result, the researcher of this study sometimes turned her role to be that of an outsider. Glense (2005) emphasises that a qualitative researcher may change their role during the study. Accordingly, four positions related to the investigator’s role in naturalistic inquiry are introduced, as a continuum: observer, observer as participant, participant as observer, and full participant (Glense, 2005). With reference to the present study, the researcher
changed her role as the study progressed: she entered the research site as “an observer”, but over time became “an observer as participant”.

At first, the researcher witnessed learners’ interactions without any interference in participant activities. However, as maintaining this role during data collection may cause a lack of first-hand knowledge about the participant activities (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), the researcher changed her participation to that of “an observer as participant”. Taking this role, she primarily observed learners’ activities (i.e. as an outsider), and sometimes engaged in tasks with learners (i.e. as an insider). By taking this dual position during class observation, the researcher could gain first-hand knowledge of participant activities while she was still an outsider to learners. In fact, research participants may be willing to share some types of information with an insider or an outsider researcher (Glesne, 2005). Thus, learner participants might feel comfortable to share some information necessary for the study with an outsider. For example, students might feel it is easier to reveal the reasons why they resisted joining a given task. For the teacher participants, they might be more comfortable to share opinions with an insider, who is also a teacher of English, and who came to the class to learn about it not to criticise any of their teaching practices.

The researcher decided not to adopt the position as participant-as-observer or full participant, though these would provide her with greater first-hand knowledge of the learners’ activities. The full participant role might turn her into being a complete insider so that it could be hard to collect some information from learners (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2005). Moreover, frequent participation in class activities with students may have an impact on the way they conduct the task; and this might distract the researcher from collecting the required data or affect the study’s interpretation (Glesne, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Generally speaking, although the researcher shared common experiences with research participants, she tried not to be a complete insider researcher. Due to advantages and problems of being either an insider or an outsider researcher, the researcher attempted to be in the middle, to employ the strengths of both and limit the weaknesses of each.
4.10. Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness refers to how well the research method investigates what it intends to (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003), and the extent to which the researcher gained full access to informants’ knowledge and meaning (Remenyi, Williams, Money, & Swartz, 1998). Accordingly, trustworthiness of the present study was established through the following strategies: triangulation, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, peer-debriefing, and external auditor.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation refers to the combination of methodologies in the study of a phenomenon (Denzin, 1978). According to Denzin (1978), triangulation could be through data triangulation, investigation triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In the present study, data triangulation was applied to limit the risk regarding trustworthiness caused by the reliance on one data collection method (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the data were collected through different sources: class observations (field notes, audio and video records), interviews, stimulated recall, and informal conversations. By the use of different data sources, the research instruments were triangulated to corroborate evidence from several sources (Creswell, 2013).

**Prolonged engagement and persistent observation.** The researcher resided in the context of the study for the whole semester (16 weeks). In particular, prolonged engagement and persistent observation were ensured so as to establish trust with the participants, and to deal with any possible personal distortions that might occur (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In regard to the proposed study, this was helpful for the researcher to detect details of learners’ interactive tasks that appear to be most relevant to the research issues, and to understand the learners.

**Peer-debriefing.** In addition, the research supervisors provided the researcher with professional support during the study, through peer-debriefing. Accordingly, peer-debriefing facilitated her consideration of methodological activity, as well as provided feedback on data collection and data analysis procedures. In this sense, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that peer-debriefing aims to provide the researcher with “an external check with the inquiry process” (p. 301). Furthermore, peer-debriefing supported the researcher by testing her growing insights as well as exposing her to critical questions and feedback (Thyer, 2001).
**External auditor.** One of the researcher’s colleagues, a teacher of English, became her external auditor to question the methods, emerging conclusions, biases and so on of the research. In particular, external audits was applied in order to minimise the effects of the researcher’s bias on the research (Creswell, 2013).

**Member checking.** To increase the trustworthiness of the research, member checking was conducted (Mertens, 2005), where transcripts of interviews and stimulated recall sessions, as well as informal talks, were reviewed by the participants as to the accuracy of the transcriptions.

**4.11. Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research approach and methods used in the present study to investigate college English learners’ task engagement in the Vietnamese context. Guided by activity theory, the present study adopted a qualitative case study approach as the research methodology. The study adopted pre-existing themes from the activity theory related to mediation (e.g. semiotic mediation, people mediation, and material mediation) and learner agency (e.g., Subject, Object, etc.) as a lens to analyse the data in chapter 5 and 6. Specifically, multiple methods of data collection, comprising semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall and informal talk, were employed, which enabled an in-depth description of the research problem and the case. Following the justification of the qualitative research approach and research methodologies, detailed descriptions of the research setting, data collection and analysis procedures were presented. Lastly, this chapter summarized a number of strategies that were undertaken to enhance the rigour of the research in the study.
INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS IN CHAPTERS 5 AND 6

In Chapter One of this study, the primary purpose of this research was presented, to explore English learners’ task engagement regarding the concept of mediation and learner agency from a sociocultural view. The major research question that provided the focus of this study therefore was, “How do college Vietnamese learners of English engage in English language tasks?”

In what follows the findings of this study are presented. The findings will flow across two chapters (Chapters Five and Six), with each of the cases presented in a single chapter. Each of these case reports is representational of the use of case studies to discuss aspects of a bounded system by presenting a series of multiple case reports. In order to provide a thick description and to ensure as comprehensive picture as is possible for the reader, each case study is contextualised within an overview of the background of each case. This information is drawn from multiple forms of data, such as interviews, field notes, stimulated recall, informal talk and video data. The headings (e.g., material mediation, semiotic mediation) and sub-headings (L1, private speech) used within in the chapters are directly related to the themes that arose from thematic coding of the data mentioned in chapter 4. To provide context for each of the two Findings chapters, these will commence with a brief introduction to each case, followed by information about the teacher and the students, as well as about general classroom procedures (Sections 5.1 and 6.1).

In each chapter this is followed, in Sections 5.2 and 6.2, by the major findings of each case relating to mediation and learner agency. Initially, the findings in relation to mediating tools used by learners during the completion of given tasks will be explored and presented. Within this section, three types of mediating tools, material tools, semiotic tools and human tools found, will be introduced and contextualized.

This will be followed, in Sections 5.3 and 6.3, by findings related to learner agency at the collective level (i.e. the “we” perspective), and following this those at the individual level (i.e. the “I” perspective) will be explored. Regarding learner agency at the collective level, this deals with how learner agency was exercised when students worked as groups or pairs. As the findings demonstrate, while the same English tasks were undertaken by two different groups of students, this resulted in differing responses by each distinct group of students. The data illustrate the
influences of motives on the goals of each group’s actions, and the role of the underlying conditions in shaping the manner in which to perform the task in each group. There were seven selected English tasks (3 in class 1 and 4 in class 2), each of which was conducted by two separate groups of students. Following each task was a post-task interview with each group in order to provide data on motives, which were linked to the object of activities in each task.

The next component introduces the findings related to learner agency at the individual level in order to explore what factors in the activity system of English learning affected individual learning performance, through a sociocultural view. From this perspective, a learner’s task performance is not only shaped by his or her personal factors (e.g. learning history) but also by factors from the learning context. In this context, the six components of activity theory (i.e. subject, community, rules, division of labour, tools and object) guided the study of the learning context that framed the task performance of individual learners in the two classes. That is, the activity theory components helped to examine personal factors of learners as well as social factors in the learning context resulting in specific performances towards given tasks (e.g. being silent, active or disconforming with classroom norms) or during class participation (e.g. being active or silent in answering teachers’ questions or responding to the class teachers’ or classmates’ feedback).

During the presentation of findings centered on mediation and agency, selected excerpts from classroom discussion are presented together with additional data collected from stimulated recall and interviews, to provide a clearer understanding of mediation or agency at points during task engagement. Due to the extensive quotation of excerpts, some of them have been placed in Appendices I, J, K and L.
5.1. Introduction to the case

5.1.1. The class teacher, the students and the reading course

The first case is the Reading class, and this section will introduce the teacher, students and general information about the reading course.

The Reading teacher

The reading teacher in the study is a female with eight years of experience in teaching English, with a Master’s in TESOL qualification. She has been working as a full-time lecturer at the college, and used to teach the students Listening lessons in the previous semester.

The Reading class students

The class consists of 22 third-year students, 10 males and 12 females, aged between 19-21. At the time of data collection, they were in the second semester of their academic year. Their English proficiency ranged from elementary (A1) to upper-intermediate (B2) based on the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for languages. As mentioned in Section 4.3.3 (the participants of the study), pair and group work were encouraged and could either be assigned by the class teacher or because this was convenient, for example choosing a student seated next to them. This led to changes in the members of groups or pairs in every lesson. Three tasks were recorded for the study, and two different groups/pairs in each task were selected. Thus, the membership of pairs or groups was not the same for every task. The makeup of the study focus groups is presented in Table 5.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. True/False</td>
<td>Huong and Huy</td>
<td>Nguyen and Muoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Matching</td>
<td>Lien, Dien and Quyen</td>
<td>Han, My and Hoang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discussion</td>
<td>Han and Huy</td>
<td>Thi and Ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first task, the pair of Huong and Huy were more advanced in EL than that of Nguyen and Muoi (based on the CEFR). Regarding the Matching task, Quyen (in the first group) and Han (in the second group) were more proficient than their group members. Lien, Dien and Quyen were close friends who always sat at the same table and tended to work in the same group in different classes. They also often socialized together after the class. By contrast, those in the second group were class acquaintances. In the last task, Han, Huy and Thi belonged to group of more advanced students of English, while Ha was less advanced, with Huy a bit better in English than Han.

Some of these students were invited for further data collection in interview or stimulated recall sessions. Invitations extended to these students related to their classroom interactions in terms of levels of activity, passive or non-conforming behaviours related to classroom norms during task engagement. These students provided data for the focus on individual learner agency in this study. Table 5.2 below is the description of those students.

**Table 5.2. The focus participants for studying learner agency at the individual level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>How learner agency is shown</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Phong (male)</td>
<td>Nonconformity with classroom norms</td>
<td>- resisted collaborative tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- kept using dictionaries when not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huy (male)</td>
<td>Active during task completion and class discussion</td>
<td>- raised hand to speak up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- liked to use English in class but changed in the amount of English use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thi (male)</td>
<td>Silent during class discussion</td>
<td>- rarely spoke up during end-of-the-task activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quyen (female)</td>
<td>Nonconformity with classroom norms</td>
<td>- produced off-task behaviour during task completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huong (female)</td>
<td>Changeable in her participation during task completion</td>
<td>- appeared to be passive and sometimes active when working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silent during end-of-the-task activities</td>
<td>- kept taking notes of others’ responses and the teacher’s feedback - seldom contributed to the task activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muoi (female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han (female)</td>
<td>Active during task engagement and class activities. Changeable in her behaviour during task engagement.</td>
<td>- actively contributed to task completion. - appeared to dominate or be subservient when working with different partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 shows that seven students (three males and four females) participated in stimulated recall sessions and end-of-the-course interviews providing data to study the individual learner agency (see Appendix K). The students’ behavior could be categorised as active (e.g. Huy, Han), silent (e.g. Thi), or nonconforming (e.g. Phong, Quyen) students. In addition, some students showed a combination of these behaviours.

The organisational flow of the Reading class

As previously discussed, the objective of this class was to increase learners’ familiarity with understanding and using office terms in English. The units conducted during the course were: (1) Time management, (2) Stress management, (3) Assertiveness, (4) Leadership skill, (5) Team building, (6) Giving feedback, and (7) Active listening. Each unit lasted for four or five 45-minute sessions. Reading lessons took place every week, and each lesson usually dealt with one unit. Regarding the procedure in each class lesson, at the beginning of each class the teacher often got students to do warm-up activities to review the previous lesson or to activate learners’ background knowledge related to the new lesson. Then, the teacher usually introduced the new lesson and had students conduct a series of tasks in pairs or in groups. After that, students might be called to share their answers with others. At this stage, some students would show activeness or silence towards contributing to these class activities. The course book used was titled “English for the Office”, and compiled in 2007 by a previous lecturer of English at the college and used internally within the major English reading classes.
An additional consideration for teachers and students was the conduct of mid-term and final tests. The mid-term test required a presentation where students worked in groups on a topic given by the teacher, related to lesson units covered during the class. In the study, this test was conducted when learners had finished Unit 4. By contrast, the final test was a written one that aimed to test learners’ knowledge of all units.

This section has introduced information about the class teacher, students and reading lesson procedures. The next section will describe the three selected tasks observed in the class.

5.1.2. The focus tasks

Table 5. 3. The selected tasks in the Reading class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson &amp; Unit</th>
<th>Leadership skills/ Unit 4</th>
<th>Team building/ Unit 5</th>
<th>Active listening/ Unit 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The selected tasks for analysis</td>
<td>True/False task</td>
<td>Matching task</td>
<td>Discussion task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 overviews the selected tasks and the lesson units from which the tasks came (See Appendix H for the reading tasks). The True/False task was the second task in the lesson titled Leadership skills, which was the fourth unit in the course book. The lesson aimed to provide students with knowledge central to what makes a good leader and how leadership skills can be developed. This task was preceded by requiring pairs of students to discuss “characteristics of a good leader”, to provide learners with ideas concerning leadership characteristics. The task was presented as eight written statements describing leaders and managers. The purpose of the task was to perceive the distinction between leaders and managers. Students were required to decide whether each statement was true or false and provide an explanation for their decision.

Second, the Matching task was a component of the unit titled Team Building, and was activity 2 of the unit. The unit aimed to equip learners with an understanding of the issues concerning establishing and developing teams. In addition, it looked at what made a team successful and the personalities that make up an effective team.
The task provided a checklist of 11 phrases denoting a successful team, labeled from A to K (e.g. A. Talented individuals). Simultaneously, there were 11 definitions of components numbered from 2.01 to 2.11, and the definitions were in the form of statements (e.g. 2.03 People with the necessary individual skills). Students were required to match the phrases in the checklist with the statements. The task aimed to provide learners with terms describing different personalities that make a good team.

The third task, a discussion task, came from the unit of Active listening that aimed to help learners understand how a person can listen to someone actively. The discussion of Active listening occurred at the beginning of the lesson. Therefore, the task was to activate learners’ prior-knowledge related to the topic of the lesson, Active listening. Before having students discuss the topic in pairs, the teacher introduced the use of 5W+1H words when discussing a certain topic in English. Then, students were asked to discuss the topic in pairs.

The chapter has so far provided information about the first case of the study, the reading class, involving: (1) the class teacher, the students and the reading course; and (2) the three focus tasks selected from the class. The next section will present findings related to mediation.

5.2. Mediation

5.2.1. Material mediation

The mediating material tools that students employed were the coursebook, handouts, notes and dictionaries (e.g. paper-based dictionaries and mobile app dictionaries). In the sense of using mobile phones as dictionaries, learners also employed their phones as another learning source where they could get access to online sample texts of the topics being discussed.

The course books provided students with the required tasks to be completed, and most of tasks were conducted with the use of these. Some students used the textbook as a tool to access background knowledge related to the task at hand. In the discussion task occurring at the beginning of the lesson of Active listening, for example, students were expected to discuss the term “Active listening”. Thi, paired with Ha, did an exercise in the textbook of the same lesson to gain the basic knowledge related to “Active listening”. In the interaction with his partner, Thi said
to Ha that the exercise would be useful for him since it would provide him with first-hand knowledge about the topic, as seen below in excerpt 5.2.1.1.

**Excerpt 5.2.1.1**

37 Thi: cái gì? À, tao biết, nhưng làm bài này trước *(what? Ah, I know but I want to do this first)*

38 Ha: what is active listening? Active listening là cái gì *(trans) ((looks at the board and says))*

40 Thi: Bài này, xem nè, cung cấp ý cho mình *(This exercise, see, provides us ideas)*

Thi further expanded that some information in the exercise was used in developing their discussion of Active listening. He stated that he made use of the word “questioning” for the discussion:

*I did the first exercise in the textbook to get some very basic information for the discussion. The exercise I did actually helped me like I use the word questioning. This was the best solution for the discussion in such a short period of time. (Post-task interview- Thi)*

In fact, later in their discussion as shown below (excerpt 5.2.1.2) that Thi used the word “questioning” picked from the exercise in his discussion about the “How” perspective of Active listening.

**Excerpt 5.2.1.2**

93 Thi: Làm thế nào để bàn có thể nhận biết được active listening? *(How can we recognize active listening?)* (20.0) Questioning

95 Ha: conferring

96 Thi: questioning, conferring. “How can? How can? Bằng cách nào, bằng cách nào chúng ta có thể nhận biết được active listening?” *(How can, how can we recognize active listening?)* ((in a soft voice))

In order to solve lexical problems during the task, the use of a dictionary played a central role. Both printed dictionaries and mobile dictionary software installed in their smartphones were employed to look up word meanings or check the word class of English vocabulary. The understanding of meanings of words they confronted was valuable for them to solve the reading tasks. For example, when dealing with the True/False task, students used paper-based dictionaries to search for the meaning of new words found in the task. As shown below in excerpt 5.2.1.3, Muoi had
difficulties with the word “autonomous” which meaning was unknown to her, so she used her print English Vietnamese dictionary to look up the word.

**Excerpt 5.2.1.3**

21 Muoi: The best leaders do not ask their staff to do (.) anything (.) they are not (.) prepare to do ((reads the fifth statement))

23 °Autonomous là gì ta?° (*what does autonomous mean?*) ((to self))

24°Autonomy° ((to self))

25 ((opens her dictionary and looks up the word))

In the Matching task involving a few new English terms, students employed both paperback and mobile app dictionaries to support them in searching the meanings of new vocabulary. Excerpt 5.2.1.4 below indicates that Lien resorted to the mobile phone to find the meaning of a word asked by her partner.

**Excerpt 5.2.1.4**

130 Quyen: Ai tra dùm chữ continuity= (*who helps to look up the word “continuity”*)

131 Lien: tính liên tục ((types the word in and reads its meaning from her phone)) (*continuity means the fact of something continuing for a long period of time*)

Unlike the first group, Han, My and Hoang employed an English-Vietnamese paper-based dictionary to figure out the meaning of new words. Excerpt 5.2.1.5 shows that Han asked My for the meaning of “depth”, a word in the phrase G. In response, My used the dictionary to give the meaning of the word as well as to indicate that it was the noun form of “deep”.

**Excerpt 5.2.1.5**

53 Han: từ này nghĩa là gì My? (*what does it mean, My?*) ((points to a word in the book))

55 My: Đâu? (*where?*)

56 Han: Depth á (*it’s depth*), gó á (*in G*)

57 My: ((Looks up the dictionary)) là danh từ của deep (*it is a noun of deep*), nghĩa là chiều sâu, độ sâu (*a distance below the top surface of something*)
In addition to the use of dictionaries to deal with English word meanings, students resorted to them to identify the word class of English words. The understanding of the word type of a word of interest was valuable for them to decode the meaning of English language in reading tasks. Excerpt 5.2.1.6 below shows that the students discussed the word type of “talented” in the matching reading task. My (line 17) and Han (line 27) used their dictionary to check its word class (see Appendix I for except 5.2.1.6).

In fact, when being asked why her group focused on the word class when solving the task, Han confirmed that understanding what class a word belongs to may be useful to define the meaning of the word:

*Because this influences its meaning in a sentence. If the word is an adjective so it meaning will be different from the meaning when it acts as a noun.* (post-task interview - Han)

Besides the utilisation of mobile phones as mobile dictionaries helpful in solving lexical problems, mobile phones were used as mini-computers where they could search for online information related to the topic being discussed. This is illustrated in the task discussing Active listening. The two sequences below illustrate how students browsed the Internet for sample texts through their phone to help them deal with the mentioned tasks.

As revealed below in excerpt 5.2.1.7, later in the discussion about Active listening, Han searched the Internet for information in relation to Active listening. In the first place, Han “Googled” the information and then Huy joined. They both worked with the online information and refined it for their discussion, as shown later in the sequence. In line 146, Han found a piece of information that could show when active listening occurs, and shared the information with Huy. Huy then made notes of the information in his notebook (line 149).

**Excerpt 5.2.1.7**

139 Han: ((uses her cell phone to google “what is active listening”)) active listening (.) What is nè (*here*), is a communication to (*inaudible*). È (*Hey*), Huy, active listening nè (*here*), active music listening.

142 Huy: ((looks at Han’s phone screen)) thoát bỏ dì (*ignore it*). Kéo xuống nè, when

nè. (*Scroll down, when here*)
144 Han: tự túr (slow down) using in public ((keeps reading from her phone))

145 Huy: WHEN ((asks Han to look for the information related to when))

146 Han: Ê, when nè (Hey, when here)

147 Huy: ((leans towards Han))

148 Han: (? inaudible) medical worker

149 Huy: Yes ((nods his head and writes down something on his notebook))

The online text was as an additional source to improve their ideas about the topic. When asked for the reason why they employed a sample text from the Internet, Huy made the following point:

*We used it as reference, which was to add to our ideas so it makes ours better since we’d come up with our own opinions about active listening. If only we just copied it without any of our thoughts about it, it wasn’t acceptable.* (Post-task interview - Huy)

In general, regarding the use of material mediating tools, the course books and handouts provided students with assigned tasks, while notes assisted them to present the task (e.g. conversation) on stage. Dictionaries (i.e. mobile app dictionaries and paperback dictionaries) served as an essential device for them to cope with lexical difficulties during the task, such as search word meaning or word class. With the assistance of retrieving English word meaning, dictionaries could support students in understanding the given language in reading tasks so that they could complete the task. The realisation of the word class of an English word (a noun, a verb or an adjective, etc.) was advantageous for students to define its meaning as well as to construct English utterances. In addition, students’ mobile phones were deployed as a material instrument which helped to access online learning sources beneficial for task completion. In addition to the employment of these material mediating tools, they utilised a range of other devices for semiotic mediation during the completion of task, as discussed in the next section. The use of material mediating tools is summarized in Table 5.4 as follows.
### Table 5.4. The summary of material mediating tools in the Reading class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of material tools</th>
<th>Forms of material tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books and Handouts</td>
<td>Provided students with assigned tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Assisted them to present the task (e.g. conversation) on stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries (i.e. mobile app</td>
<td>An essential device for them to cope with lexical difficulties during the task, such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dictionaries and paperback dictionaries)</td>
<td>search word meaning of word class. With the assistance of retrieving English word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meaning, dictionaries could support students in understanding the given language in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reading tasks so that they could complete the task. The realisation of the word class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of an English word (a noun, a verb or an adjective, etc.) was advantageous for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to define its meaning as well as to construct English utterances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>A material instrument which helped to access online learning sources beneficial for task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.2.2. Semiotic mediation

In terms of semiotic mediation, various tools were utilised by learners. Firstly, learners’ L1 (Vietnamese) appeared to be used frequently whenever they confronted difficulties during task engagement. Self-directed talk, either in L1 or in English, was another device that mediated learners’ thoughts towards issues arising during task engagement. Next, the given task itself was utilised as a tool which semiotically directed their mind in accomplishing it. Additionally, students at times referred to another exercise of the same lesson to deal with the given task. Furthermore, students
used their background knowledge of English or their own life experience about the
topic being discussed to solve the given task. Moreover, in some cases, students
played with the sounds of English words when dealing with problems related to the
word. From this perspective, they might emphasise or stress a word. Lastly, reference
to the title of a lesson was considered as another semiotic tool.

5.2.2.1. The use of Vietnamese (L1)

Vietnamese was used regularly when learners engaged in collaborative tasks. In
terms of the use of Vietnamese to support completion of a certain task, it appeared
that Vietnamese was used when students were faced with challenges. In this sense,
the learners’ first language served as additional linguistic support that helped learners
to deal with language-related problems or task management-related problems during
the accomplishment of the task.

Language-related functions of L1 use

Vietnamese talk during students’ task engagement mostly dealt with problems
centered on English language such as problems involving vocabulary, grammar,
phrases and sentence construction. The following section will explore and explain
how Vietnamese was used by students to maintain task engagement. L1 was used to
translate L2 in order to decode L2 meaning, discuss the word class of English words,
and discuss L2 grammar rules in the completion of the task. In particular, the
employment of the L1 to translate the target language was salient when dealing with
language-related difficulties during the task engagement

L1 used to translate L2 in order to decode L2 meaning

In the reading class, a large number of Vietnamese conversations were used to
translate texts, particularly in the given tasks of True/False and Matching. In this
way, students were then able to make sense of the target language to facilitate their
task accomplishment.

As indicated in excerpt 5.2.2.1.1, for example, Vietnamese translation was employed
to access the meaning of given English statements in the True/False task so that they
could decide whether they agreed or disagreed with them (see Appendix I for the full
excerpt).
Excerpt 5.2.2.1.1

12 Muoi: Ê, cái câu bố này đúng hay sai thưa nhằm người có khả năng quản lý nhưng không có khả năng nói trước công chúng ((talks to Nguyen))

(hey, sentence 4 is True or False? Since I see that some people may be able to manage but not able to speak in front of public places)

14 Public, public speaking nghĩa là nói trước công chúng đúng không? (public speaking means speaking in front of others?)

15 Nguyen: ((both looks at the sentence)) một người lãnh đạo phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt (a good leader has to be good at public speaking)

17 Muoi: “have to” là phải há? (have to means being forced to?) ((asks Nguyen))

18 Nguyên: một người lãnh đạo phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt (a good leader has to be good at public speaking)

19 Muoi: Không, đâu có cần đâu (No, it’s not always necessary)

In lines 15 and 18, Muoi translated a statement in the task (i.e. Good leaders have to be good public speakers). Earlier, Muoi had used Vietnamese to confirm the meaning of “public speaking” in order to work out the meaning of the statement (line 14). She also confirmed the meaning of “have to” (line 17). As a result, she expressed her disagreement on the statement (line 19). At another point, Muoi and Nguyen worked on the meaning of “autonomous decision”, and Nguyen asked for the meaning of the word (line 37) so Muoi then provided the meaning of “autonomous” (line 38). Accordingly, Nguyen considered the meaning of “autonomous decision” (line 39). Similarly, when dealing with the statement, “Good leaders try to keep everyone happy”, Nguyen (line 42) translated it into Vietnamese, and Muoi decided that it was not necessary for a leader to keep everyone happy. That is, she disagreed with the statement. In general, Vietnamese was used to provide the meaning of English words or to translate the given statements. L1 was used to check the meaning of English words as this was necessary before the task could be addressed appropriately. Before either agreement or disagreement could be decided upon, students needed to have a clear understanding of the task. This was enabled through initially translating L2 to L1 and then responding to the task requirements.

This was also found in the Matching task which required an understanding of English phrases and statements so that they could match phases with correct statements. Therefore, Vietnamese was employed as a device to translate English words, phrases or statements. Excerpt 5.2.2.1.2 shows that Lien, Dien and Quyen relied on
Vietnamese translation of English language in the task in order to complete the Matching task. Dien and Quyen kept finding the meanings of English vocabulary in the phrases that were unknown to them. Then, when working on the statements describing the given phrases, students also expressed their meanings in Vietnamese (e.g. line 173). In line 173, Quyen provided the Vietnamese meaning of a statement, and they then came up with an answer (line 190). Likewise, Dien tried to give an answer to a statement by discussing the meaning of another statement in Vietnamese (line 176). Accordingly, Quyen agreed with Dien on the answer (line 179) (see Appendix I for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.2

132 Quyen: Versa::ti::lity?
133 Lien: Tình linh hoat, tháo vác (the quality of being able to change or be changed easily according to the situation)
134 Dien: thôi qua kia doc đi (please move to the next page), dịch hỏi vậy troi (why keeps translating)
135 Quyen: tra dem tao chư process (help me to look up the word process please)
136 Lien: Process hà? (Process?) [[tiền bô (movement to a more developed stage)
137 Dien: [[tiền bô (movement to a more developed stated)

In the group of Han, My and Hoang, students accessed the meaning of phrases and statement in a similar way as the first group. As demonstrated in excerpt 5.2.2.1.3, these students worked on the meanings of the phrases through Vietnamese (lines 35-52). After that, they translated the statements into Vietnamese and then provided the phrases to match the statements. (see Appendix I for excerpt 5.2.2.1.3)

Line 42 indicates that Han was saying the Vietnamese translation of the first statement. She then provided the phrase, ‘talented individuals’, as an answer to this statement. In particular, Han also explained the meaning of the phrase in Vietnamese (e.g. “Tôi nghĩ là talented individuals (So I think it is talented individuals) Nó nghĩa là tài năng cá nhân (It refers to talent of every single person)”). The same procedure was repeated in the second statement (lines 47-52) and till the end of the task. My and
Han first read the statement in English. After that, they discovered the Vietnamese meaning of the statement. Correspondingly, Hoang suggested a phrase to match with this statement by providing the Vietnamese meaning of the phrase (line 52). In this, Vietnamese proved useful for learners to identify the meanings of the target language in these problem solving tasks, which then assisted them to find correct the answer to each statement.

Interestingly, learners not only communicated with their partners in Vietnamese, learners also talked to the class teacher in Vietnamese when they requested help with word meanings. As demonstrated below in excerpt 5.2.2.1.4, later in the Matching task, Han, My and Hoang failed to understand the meaning of “team players”. Thus, Han asked the class teacher (line 221). In response, the teacher suggested that the meaning of the phrase depended on the context where the phrase was used (line 222).

**Excerpt 5.2.2.1.4**

218 Hoang: hay hỏi cô đi *(Let’s ask the teacher)*
219 My: ((calls the teacher)) cô ơi, cô *(teacher, teacher)*
220 T: yes? ((approaches them))
222 T: ((talks to the group)) Team players? It depends on the situation.
223 Han: depends on the situation
224 T: yes ((The teacher walks away))

Overall, in an attempt to deal with reading tasks, students have to understand the target language in the tasks so that they accomplish them. Therefore, students translated the English language in given tasks into their L1. In this sense, Vietnamese was mainly used to decode the meaning of language tasks requiring learners’ receptive skills to solve them.

In particular, considering the True/False task where students tried to give the reasons for their agreement or disagreement on the given statements, students found giving the reasons in English challenging for them. Therefore, Vietnamese was used to express their mind. Then, they might form the English statements. It means that students first offered their thoughts in Vietnamese, and the English formation then followed. As demonstrated below in excerpt 5.2.2.1.5, Huong was attempting to articulate her thoughts in English showing
her agreement with a statement (line 73). Nevertheless, this was difficult for her, so Vietnamese was later recommended (line 76). As a result, she then stated her view of the statement in Vietnamese (line 78). Correspondingly, Huy too responded to Huong in Vietnamese (line 80).

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.5

73 Huong: I agree with this because (4.0) if ah...ah...because I think the leader has to focus similar ah...ah...

75 Huy: I think so

76 Huong: leaders have to focus or (?inaudible) to organise (4.0) thôi nói tiếng Việt di (Let’s speak Vietnamese) ((laughs)) to organise, organise

78 Ý tôi nói là người làm lãnh đạo cần phải có suy nghĩ xa để tổ chức….tổ chức một kế hoạch nào đó (I mean leaders need to think of the future so that he can well organise a plan in the future)

80 Huy: Kế hoạch cho tương lai xa này hà? (A plan in the far future?)

81 Huong: ừ (right)

Regarding the discussion task dealing with Active listening, students also utilised Vietnamese in an attempt to seek English words or present their viewpoints about Active listening. Thi and Ha conducted their discussion of Active listening almost entirely in Vietnamese. As Ha expressed, it was easier for her to understand the discussion with her partner. She found that it was useful to first generate ideas, and then to translate them into English:

*If Thi speaks in English most of the time, I won’t be able to understand his point well. I think that it’d better to understand and get ideas first. Then, we can translate it into English. (Ha - post-task interview)*

Regarding Huy and Huong, they used English a lot more than Thi and Ha. However, they still conversed with each other in Vietnamese at some point during their task engagement showing that L1 was a foundation for L2 production. For instance, excerpt 5.2.2.1.6 is illustrative of this. This sequence shows that Han and Huy made an effort to examine the “when” perspective of 5W+H towards Active listening. Han tried to put forward an English word meaning “a press release” where active listening might occur. However, she failed to remember the word, so she gave its Vietnamese meaning (line 50). Huy too responded to Huong in Vietnamese (lines 51 and 53). Huy
made a point that the suggested word conveyed a meaning different from Huong’s intended meaning (see Appendix I for the excerpt).

LI use to discuss the word class of English words

As presented below in excerpt 5.2.2.1.7, the group of Han, My and Hoang discussed the word type of words in the given task at the beginning of the Matching task. At first, Han examined the word class of each word in the phrase, “Talented individuals” (line 1). Then, Hoang asked for confirmation whether “talented” was a noun, and My confirmed that it was an adjective. After this, My and Han had an argument over the word class of the word (lines 6-11). Later in their task engagement, they referred to the part of speech of “depth” when defining its meanings (lines 56 and 57).

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.7

1 My: Đây là danh từ (this is a noun) ((points to the word individuals)) đây là tính từ (this is an adjective) ((points to the word “talented”))

3 Hoang: talented là noun hay? (is talented a noun?) ((looks at My’s book))

4 My: ADJECTIVE ((says the word aloud and emphasises it))

5 Han: talented (.) talented

6 My: talented là tính từ còn đây là danh từ (talented is an adjective while this is a noun) ((points to the word “individuals” in the checklist in her book))

8 Han: Khoan, coi chừng! (Hang on, be careful!) Talented có thể là động từ quá khứ đó (Talented may be a simple past form)

10 My: không, nó là tính từ mà (No, It’s an adjective)

11 Han: chắc không đó? (Sure?)

………..

56 Han: Depth á (it’s depth), gó á (in G)

57 My: ((Looks up the dictionary)) là danh từ của deep (it is a noun of deep), nghĩa là chiều sâu, độ sâu (a distance below the top surface of something)

LI use to discuss L2 grammar rules in the completion of the task

Some students also explored grammatical points used in reading tasks, and excerpt 5.2.2.1.8 illustrates this occurring at a point in the True/False task. Muoi and Nguyen discussed one statement, and Muoi noted the verb “have to” in the statement. She asked for her partner’s confirmation of the meaning of this verb as expressing a
strong obligation in the statement. It appears that the discussion of L2 grammar was conducted in L1 during learners’ L2 task completion.

**Sequence 5.2.2.1.8**

12 Muoi: Ê, cái câu bốn là đúng hay sai chủ tao thấy nhầm người có khả năng quản lý nhưng không có khả năng nói trước công chúng ((talks to Nguyen))

**(hey, sentence 4 is True or False? Since I see that some people may be able to manage but not able to speak in front of public places)**

14 Public, public speaking nghĩa là nói trước công chúng đúng không? *(public speaking means speaking in front of others?)*

15 Nguyen: ((both looks at the sentence and say it in Vietnamese)) một người lãnh đạo phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt *(a good leader has to be good at public speaking)*

17 Muoi: “have to” là phải hay? *(have to means being forced to?)* ((asks Nguyen))

18 Nguyên: “một người lãnh đạo phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt” (a good leader has to be good at public speaking)

19 Muoi: Không, đâu có cần đâu *(No, it’s not always necessary)*

Muoi then further expanded that the meaning of the verb may inform her of the obligation of the statement. Accordingly, she was more likely to see strong obligation as false. Thus, the confirmation of the verb’s meaning led to her judgment of the statement:

*Sentences that mean people are necessarily obliged to do something are often incorrect* - (Muoi - the stimulated recall)

In general, in terms of its use as a semiotic tool to deal with language-related problems, the use of L1 demonstrates that students’ first language was a valuable device to access the meaning of the target language when working with receptive tasks (i.e. reading tasks) which involved problem solving. In this regard, learners used L1 to decode the English language meaning in all three reading tasks in the form of translation.

Apart from the language-related problems discussed above, learners were challenged with problems of task management and how to sustain the task discussion. Thus, Vietnamese was used to deal with these concerns as well.

**The use of L1 as a tool to deal with task-related problems**
The use of Vietnamese was intended to keep the tasks at hand moving forward and to achieve task control. Students resorted to, L1 to discuss the procedure or strategy to deal with given tasks, make the task clear, refocus partners’ attention and assign a duty to each group member to accomplish the task.

*The use of L1 to discuss the procedure or strategy to deal with given tasks*

Some students used Vietnamese to define a procedure upon which task implementation could be carried out. In this regard, they might create an overall view of how they could deal with the task at the beginning. Alternatively, they proposed a strategy to solve the task at a certain point in their task engagement. In this sense, they suggested their own way of completing the task to suit their own purposes in case the task was challenging for them.

In the matter of defining the task procedure, some students suggested doing the task before being directed by the class teacher. For example, excerpt 5.2.2.1.9 below indicates that Quyen advised her group to do the next task, the Matching task, while the whole class still worked on the other task.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.1.9**

1 Quyen: Minh làm cái này đi (we do this). Minh đi trước dài dài (we must be ahead of others). Xem nào, làm câu dễ trước đi tự bây (let see, we do the sentences that look easy first) ((turns to the next page))

4 Dien: talented individuals nghĩa là gì? (what does it mean?) ((Lien and Quyen look at the phrase))

In addition, some students adopted strategies to counter challenges arising from the task at a certain point. In this matter, when conducting reading tasks, students might pass more difficult statements to deal with the next ones, and they then would solve the unfinished statements later. As a result, they could keep the task engagement moving forward. Excerpt 5.2.2.1.10 is illustrative of this at a point in the students’ engagement in the True/False task. Nguyen and Muoi were considering the meaning of the one statement that they needed to decide on whether true or false. After consulting the statement with each other, the student decided to leave it unanswered and move to the next one.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.1.10**

118
Here Vietnamese was also used to explain the task procedure to partners during the task. As seen in excerpt 5.2.2.1.11, Thi gave the reason for conducting the exercise in the book when Ha realised that they had not done the task required by the teacher, discussing Active listening.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.1.11**

35 Ha: uh ((looks at the pair next to them and then looks at the board)) Không, làm bài tập trên bảng mà không phải bài này đâu. *(No, do the exercise on the board not this one)*

37 Thi: cái gì? À, ta biết, nhưng làm bài này trước *(what? Ah, I know but I want to to do this first)*

Overall, students communicated in Vietnamese to establish a procedure so that the given task could be progressed. This occurred both at the beginning and during task completion. Regarding this function during task completion, it refers to the discussion in Vietnamese to propose strategies to cope with difficulties derived from the task at certain points of task engagement. The use of Vietnamese in this sense facilitated some students’ task implementation. Moreover, in order to deal with the task, students needed to grasp an understanding about the task; therefore, it resulted in the use of the first language to make the given task clear to them.

*The use of L1 to make the task clear*

In an attempt to clarify the task, some students used L1 to give examples to illuminate the task requirement. For example, in the task of discussing the topic, Active listening, Thi tended to use Vietnamese to explain each component of 5w+H (i.e. what, when, who, where, why and how) in relation to Active listening. Excerpt 5.2.2.1.12 below is as an illustration of this point. At this moment, Thi gave an
explanation of the “What” (i.e. What is active listening?), and provided an example to illustrate this (see from line 55).

**Excerpt 5.2.2.1.12**

51 Thi: [what is active listening? Minh hiểu active listening là cái gì? (what do we know about active listening?)

52 Ha: là mình chủ động (means that we must be active)

53 Thi: Không, nghĩa là lắng nghe tích cực. (No, it means we listen positively)

54 Ha: giống như mình hỏi người ta câu hỏi phải không? (is it like we make questions to people?)

55 Thi: giống như tôi nói chuyện với may, thì mayor cùng phải có gì đó để đáp trả lại (it’s like when I talk to you and you must do something to respond to me). Nếu không tao nói câu hỏi, thì tôi đâu có hứng nói nữa (Otherwise, it seems like I keep talking to myself so I’m not interesting in talking anymore). May có thể gật đầu để cho thấy mayor hiểu tao nói (You may nod your head to show that you understand what I’m saying). Đó là active listening (It is active listening)

In addition to the use of Vietnamese to clarify the task, learners might employ it to refocus their attention on the task.

*The use of L1 to refocus partners’ attention*

At some points during the task engagement, students might communicate to each other in Vietnamese to refocus their peers’ attention on the task at hand. This may involve a reminder of a requirement of the task or part of the task unfinished, for the purpose of completing the task in alignment with its requirement.

When conducting the Matching task, it is clear that some students were more likely to converse in Vietnamese to direct their attention to the statement they were going to deal with. As seen in excerpt 5.2.2.1.13 (see Appendix I for the excerpt), Huong said “Tôi câu tiếp (the next sentence)” to focus Huy’s attention on the next statement which needed to give the reason why they agreed. After Huong said it, Huy read the next statement and provided the reason for his agreement.

On the other hand, some Vietnamese was used to remind peers to complete parts of the reading task unfinished beforehand. For example, excerpt 5.2.2.1.14 shows that Nguyen reminded her partner of the statements that were left unanswered in the True/False task.
Excerpt 5.2.2.1.14

48 Nguyen: còn câu năm? (how about sentence five?) ((talks to Muoi))

49 The best leaders do not ask their (?inaudible) ((reads the fifth statement))

50 Muoi: không hỏi nhân viên của họ về những thứ mà họ chưa chuẩn bị (do not ask their employers for what they have not prepared)

51 Nguyen: nó giống như họ không cần ai hết hả? (it’s like they do not need anyone, huh?) giống như, như là… (it’s like…)

In addition, some students assigned specific roles of each member within the groups or pairs. They also assigned the content of conversation among members. This was conducted in Vietnamese.

The use of L1 to assign a duty to each group member to accomplish the task

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.15 illustrates the function of L1 use in the group of Quyen, Lien and Dien at a moment when they conducted the Matching task. Quyen suggested one of them be responsible for looking up the meanings of new words. Accordingly, Lien took the responsibility of searching for new word meanings with her phone.

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.15

103 Quyen: tập trung vò (be concentrated), tao nghĩ là một đứa chịu trách nhiệm tra từ dĩ, có máy từ không hiểu (I think one of us should be in charge of looking vocabulary up in the dictionary since there are some words that I don’t understand the meaning)

105 Lien: Ok

106 Quyen: cái versatility nghĩa là gì? (what does versatility mean?)

107 Dien: và tử continuity nữa (and also continuity). Móc điện thoại ra cói (take your mobile phone out) ((talks to Lien))

109 Lien: ((turning on her cell phone))

110 Quyen: Nè, cái câu này nè (Here, this sentence), working techniques

In particular, not only did learners communicate in L1 with their peers, they also conversed with the class teachers in L1 when requesting help during the process of doing a task. As shown in excerpt 5.2.2.1.16, students communicated with the class teacher in Vietnamese while completing the Matching task. At this point, some students had difficulties with the meaning of the phrase, “team players”. Therefore, they decided to ask the class teacher for its meaning. In response, the teacher provided an answer in English.
Excerpt 5.2.2.1.16

215 Hân: Có khi nào hai chấm hai là ký thuật làm việc không may? xem nè chỉ tập trung vào mục tiêu của nhóm, chứ không phải mục tiêu cá nhân (two point two. Do you think two point two is working strategies? You see here just focus on the team goal, not the individual goal)

217 Hoang and My: không biết (no ides) (10.0)

218 Hoang: hay hỏi cô đi (Let’s ask the teacher)

219 My: ((calls the teacher)) có ơi, cô (teacher, teacher)

220 T: yes? ((approaches them))

221 Han: Có ơi, chừ team players nghĩa là gì? (Teacher, what does team players mean?)

222 T: ((talks to the group)) Team players? It depends on the situation.

Generally speaking, L1 has served as a central semiotic mediation when learners were faced with particular language challenges. Furthermore, they communicated to each other, sometimes with the teacher, in Vietnamese to deal with problems centered on the task. Apart from L1, the study reveals that language might semiotically orient learners’ thinking during the task accomplishment via self-oriented talk or private speech, which was employed to internally mediate their thoughts about a given task.

5.2.2.2. Private speech

In the True or False task, when working on statements to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements, self-addressed talk was produced. Excerpt 5.2.2.2.1 (see Appendix I for the full excerpt) demonstrates private speech in the group of Huy and Huong.

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.1

1 Huy: Ai cùng lật unit four hết (Every one turns to unit four) ((looks around the class))

3 All managers are good leaders ((reads the first statement from the book))

4 Huong: ((reads from the book)) All managers are good leaders

(10.0)

6 Huy: * leadership skills* (.)*leadership skills* ((reads to self then seems to think))
At the beginning of the task (lines 1-9), after reading the first statement, Huy uttered to himself “leadership skills” which was the title of the lesson written on the board. After this, Huong read “Decide whether you agree or disagree”, which was the task requirement, to herself. Here the students attempted to internalise the lesson title and task requirement in order to better manage their thoughts over the statement, with an aim to provide an appropriate answer.

At another critical point in their task completion, after reading the fifth statement (i.e. The best leaders do not ask their staff to do anything they are not prepared to do themselves) to Huong, who thought the statement to be true, Huy repeated the statement to himself (see line 22). The repetition of the statement aimed to direct his attention to its meaning so he could make a decision on whether it was true or false. In fact, when reading the statement to himself, Huy clarified a phrase, “their staff”, to self. To illustrate, he said, “their staff, that means their workers, their employees”, and uttered the word “themselves” several times to himself as well (lines 22-25), which assisted his understanding of the meaning of the statement. Huy then decided that he disagreed with the statement.

However, Huong then expressed her disagreement with the statement, and said, “Agree, agree or disagree” to himself (line 27 below). Notably, “agree or disagree” is part of the instructions of the current task. Thus, self-repeating the task instruction assisted her to maintain the purpose of the task in his mind and reconsider his previous answer.

While Huy was considering the answer, Huong read the next statement, “An effective leader always makes autonomous assistance”, as shown in line 28 below, and picked up the word “autonomous” which was unknown to her. Thus, the word was said in a rising tone (line 29). That is to say, she questioned the meaning of the word to herself at this point while repeating the word to herself three times in a low volume (line 31). The self-questioning and self-repetition of the word “autonomous” aimed to regulate
her thoughts on the meaning of the word. However, she was not able to figure out its meaning and asked Huy for help (line 32).

At another moment, private speech was used when they attempted to provide reasons for their agreement or disagreement about statements. As indicated in line 47 below, Huy made efforts to illustrate why he agreed with the first statement, “All managers are good leaders”. Before giving the reason, he has said the statements to himself twice. Huy, however, kept self-reading the statement several times in order to manage his understanding of the statement, so that he could make the right decision and generate the reason for his agreement. In fact, after the self-repetition of the statement, Huy confirmed his agreement with the statement and tried to give his reasons (see lines 48-50).

Similarly, self-oriented talk was also found in the second group of Muoi and Nguyen illustrated in excerpt 5.2.2.2.2 (see Appendix I for the full excerpt). Muoi and Nguyen worked more in isolation from each other; hence, there was more self-directed talk in these pairs during the completion of the task. Self-addressed talk which served as an aid to deal with the task is highlighted in this excerpt.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.2.2**

10 Nguyen: ((read to self)) °All managers are good leaders°
11 °True? °(.)) ° False? ° ((raises her voice))

In this extract, Nguyen (line 10) read the first statement and then asked herself, “True” or “False” (line 11). This self-questioning regulated her task focus as she considered whether the statement was true or false.

At another point, when Muoi read the fifth statement aloud to Nguyen, this was followed by private speech (line 21 below). After reading the statement, Muoi asked herself the meaning of a word in the statement. To illustrate, she asked herself what the word “autonomous” meant (line 23). The question was to direct her thoughts to the meaning of the word. She then said the word “autonomy”, a member of the same word family, to herself (line 24). The provision of the word belonging to a word family with common features aimed to support her to identify the meaning of the word "autonomous". Similarly, private speech was noted when Muoi read another
statement, “Good leaders try to keep everyone happy”, to herself (line 30), with a short pause. Reading the statement to self with a short silent period evidences that Muoi was working on it internally. As a result, she then stated her opinion that it was not true, as shown in line 31.

Towards the end of the task, Nguyen turned back to an earlier unfinished statement. She first read it out loud (line 78) and then kept repeating the word “manager” to herself (line 79). Reading the statement aloud and saying the word was aimed to guide her attention to the meaning of the statement so that she could provide the correct answer to it. In the stimulated recall, Nguyen revealed that repeating the word “manager” helped focus her understanding of the statement:

I did so because I was thinking about it. I was not sure whether all managers are considered as good leaders. (Nguyen - Stimulated recall)

Generally speaking, self-oriented talk noticed in the True/False task was predominantly in the form of self-reading of a given statement in a soft voice. In this sense, self-directed talk involved the repetition of a statement where learners might keep saying the same statement several times; and self-explanation of a word found in the statement (e.g. Huy explained the meaning of “staff” to himself during the self-reading of a statement). These attempts aimed to direct their attention to the meaning of the statement. Also in this perspective, learners read the given statement aloud. Furthermore, learners might produce questions regarding the meaning of words unknown to them or questions to call for the answer to the statement they were working on. In figuring out the meaning of unknown words via self-speech, learners might repeat the words to self or say another word that belongs to the word family of the word of interest. In addition, they might keep reading one word in a statement in order to figure out the meaning of the statement. Especially, learners might read the lesson title and the task requirement to self. Namely, the forms of private speech noticed in this task aimed to self-regulate learners’ thinking process in dealing with challenges during task orientation and task accomplishment.

In the Matching task, self-talk was recorded while students attempted to understand given phrases or statements that were defining the phrases. In excerpt 5.2.2.2.3 where students were seeking an appropriate answer to a statement, Dien first read the statement in Vietnamese out loud (line 162) and, after a short silent pause, she posed
a question to herself (e.g. "là cái gì cha?" ("so what does it refer to? "). Saying aloud the Vietnamese translation of the statement together with a silent period aimed to mediate her thoughts about the meaning of the statement so a correct answer might be matched to it. After that, the posing of the question to self also served as another aid to direct her attention to the meaning of the statement in relation to possible answers.

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.3

160 Lien: Sức mạnh chiều sâu, depth là sâu (strength depth, depth means distance down)

161 Quyen: Deep kia mới sâu mà (Another deep means distance down)

162 Dien: phương hướng rõ ràng đến từ một nhóm bên trong một đội (clear direction comes from a group within a team) (. ) "là cái gì cha?" ("so what does it refer to?"")

In the same way, this function of self-talk was found in the group of My, Han and Hoang as indicated in excerpt 5.2.2.2.4 below (see Appendix I for the full excerpt). To illustrate, lines 116-119 show that the three students were dealing with the sixth statement. First, Han read the statement in Vietnamese to herself (line 103). My then provided an answer to it, the phrase named as “F. Success breeds success” (line 104). In response, Han considered the right answer to the statement by asking questions to herself (line 105). Han asked questions to herself in order to determine the more appropriate answer between “F. Success breeds success” and “G. Strength in depth”. After consideration between the two, she decided F as the phrase to be matched with the statement.

At another critical moment in their task completion when they were working on the seventh statement, Han said the Vietnamese translation of part of it to herself (line 114), then read the translation of the other part of the statement as well as the part in English to herself (lines 117-119). Similarly, Hoang read the statement to herself in a soft voice (line 128). In the meantime, My suggested an answer to Hoang to match to the statement by saying one word, “flexible”, which was seen as a synonym of “C. Versatility” (line 120). However, Hoang seemed to ignore My while questioning herself about the answer to the statement (line 121).

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.4
Also in this group, it is evident that private speech was noticed when students tried to examine the grammatical forms of English words, as indicated in excerpt 5.2.2.2.5 (see Appendix I for the full excerpt). Lines 8-13 reveal that Han and My were arguing over the word class of “talented”. My stated it as an adjective (line 10) while Han thought it was a simple past verb (line 9). To examine the word class of this, Han stated to herself the grammar rule (line 13) and kept defending her opinion that “talented” was a simple past tense verb acting as an adjective (line 22). Han uttered such a grammar rule to herself at this point to externalise the rule in her mind, and this process assisted her in determining the correct word type of “talented.” Later, she said “verb”, which meant that she incorrectly thought the word was a verb, and “talented”, to herself (line 24). The self-saying of these words was to operate her consideration for the right part of speech of the word; that is, whether the word was a verb or not.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.2.5**

8 Han: Khoan, coi chừng! *(Hang on, be careful!)* Talented có thể là động từ quá quá

dó *(Talented may be a simple past form)*

10 My: không, nó là tính từ mà *(No, It’s an adjective)*

11 Han: chắc không đó? *(Sure?)*

12 My: chắc, tao tra rồi *(Sure, I’ve already checked in the dictionary)*

13 Han: °là tính từ, trạng từ° (.)*trạng từ bổ nghĩa cho tính từ* ((in a soft voice)) *(it is an adjective°, an adverb° (.)*adverbs modifies adjectives°)*

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In addition, when they made efforts to identify the meaning of a word in the task, it appears that some students performed talks to themselves. Excerpt 5.2.2.2.6 (see Appendix I for the full excerpt) shows how students in this group dealt with unknown
words via private speech. At this time, they tried to find an answer to the second statement, “Commitment to the team’s goals not just personal glory”; thus, they attempted to examine the meaning of the statement. Correspondingly, they had to look for the meaning of the last word in it, personal glory. Line 193 proves that My was saying an utterance to herself, which was the meaning of the word that she guessed while she was looking it up in the dictionary. That is, she guessed the meaning of personal glory as the role of individuals, and she said the meaning to herself. She uttered the meaning she guessed to herself and questioned to self the word meaning so as to manage her attention on the meaning of the word being discussed. That is, this helped her to consider whether personal glory referred to the meaning she earlier speculated.

Later in their discussion, private speech was produced when they worked on the meaning of a phrase, “team players” (218-227). They failed to figure out the meaning of the phrase so they asked the teacher for help, and Han raised the phrase with the teacher (line 221). In response, the teacher provided an answer in English, that its meaning was contingent upon the context in which it existed (line 222). After that, both My and Han repeated what the teacher said to themselves. My said the teacher’s response to herself in English (line 225), while Han talked to herself in Vietnamese (line 226). My and Han repeated the teacher’s response to themselves with an aim to direct their attention to examining the current context, in order that they could define the meaning of “team players”. What was occurring at this moment demonstrates that the learners attempted to internalise the clue that “it depends on the situations” given by the teacher to consider the word’s meaning. In fact, this claim is reasonable when considering that My then posed a question to herself about the meaning of the phrase in the current context (i.e. so what does it mean in this context) (see line 227). Unfortunately, the learners then failed to comprehend the meaning of the word as the clue provided by the teacher did not help. Thus, it led to the insufficient guidance in the ZDP.

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.6

191 Han: ê, câu này mày có nghĩ là (.) là (hey, this sentence do you think that it may be (.) may be). Có khi nào không nghĩ tôi lợi ích cá nhân là team players không? (maybe that no thoughts to individual goals refers to teamplayers?)
On the whole, the private speech produced during the completion of the Matching task helped some learners to understand the meaning of the English language provided. In this sense, self-addressed speech was in the form of self-questions to call for the answer to the statement being worked on. Alternatively, they said the Vietnamese translation of a given statement to themselves. They also produced a speculative Vietnamese meaning of an English word to themselves when they attempted to search for the correct meaning of the word. Also in the attempt to search for word meanings, learners repeated the teacher’s clue in relation to the possible word meanings in context. In this sense, these forms of private speech were internalised into learners’ thoughts to control their cognitive process over their focus challenge (e.g. the word meaning). That is, learners were self-regulated by self-talk. Another form of self-oriented talk was the saying of English grammar rules when trying to work out the part of speech of a word. This related to the externalisation of the grammar rule which was already possessed by learners. The attempt to externalise the rule then regulated themselves in dealing with the problem they encountered.

As a general rule, reading tasks required the learners’ ability of decoding meanings from the given task in order to complete them. Thus, self-oriented talks were performed for the purpose of assisting their understanding of the meaning of English statements so that they could decide whether a statement was true or false. Similarly, the understanding of given statements helped them to find appropriate answers to be matched with the statements. In these cases, private speech forms were internalised in their thoughts, or these forms of self-talk aimed to project learners’ current understanding from their mind onto the issues they faced. As a result, learners self-regulated themselves through the production of forms of private speech during the reading task accomplishment.

In the discussion task about Active listening using 5W+H (what, when, who, why, where and how), Huy and Han produced self-oriented talk in an attempt to generate ideas on the topic, as demonstrated in excerpt 5.2.2.2.7. At the beginning of the task, Han kept repeating the question, “What is active listening?”, to herself, and she also
emphasised Active listening which was the topic being discussed (see line 2). The question to self and the emphasis on the topic supported her thinking about the answer to the question so that the student could produce new information about the topic.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.2.7**

1 Huy: ((looking at the board))

2 Han: °What is active listening?° °What is active listening?° (in a soft voice))

At another point when Huy tried to contribute to the discussion, private speech was also used (see excerpt 5.2.2.2.8). In line 22, Huy provided an English utterance, “you can listen and question”, and he then repeated the utterance (line 24). This attempt aimed to find more ideas to talk about Active listening at this moment.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.2.8**

22 Huy: "you listen and (.) you can (.) question"

23 Han: ((writes down))

24 Huy: "listen and can question"

Similarly, self-talk was created within both Huy and Han when attempting to generate information vital for the discussion of Active listening regarding “When” (i.e. when people listen actively), as shown in excerpt 5.2.2.2.9 (see Appendix I for the excerpt). Lines 31-32 indicate that Huy and Han provided their own English utterances: Huy provided “when you listen to…”, while Han said “when you want to know”. After that, both repeated to themselves their own utterance (lines 33-34) for the purpose of developing their talk with more information. The self-repetition of the utterances provided earlier at this point indicates that Huy tried to internalise the utterances to himself in order to generate more information about the point being discussed. This is the example of internalization where the jointly constructed language emerging from social interactions is transferred into his own language. As a result of this process Huy then gave a new utterance, “when you make presentation”, as presented in line 35.

Similarly, Han’s private speech, line 44, showed that she repeated to herself “meeting, presentation”, previously given by Huy, with an aim to help her produce
new information. After that, she did in fact generate a new idea, interview (line 44). Han imitated Huy’s utterance, then produced a new one based on her partner’s utterance showing that the language she first learned from the interaction with Huy had been internalised to create her own language through a process of imitation.

Self-oriented talk was also produced at another point of the task completion, as identified in excerpt 5.2.2.10 (see Appendix I for the excerpt). When the discussion proceeded to discussing the term regarding the HOW component, Han analysed the component in relation to active listening to herself (lines 104-106). First, she formed a question in Vietnamese equivalent to “Active listening, how, how is active listening is important”, which was spoken to herself. After that, she commented that understanding active listening from this perspective was just the same as from the WHY perspective. Therefore, Han tried to interpret the term in relation to HOW in another way, by posing another question, “How to listen actively?”, including the Vietnamese translation of the question as well (lines 104-106). The series of self-oriented talk at this time was internalised in the learner’s mind to assist her in gaining more understanding of the question, with HOW centered on active listening. As a result, she could make a contribution to the discussion with new information. In fact, after that, Han offered a new idea given in Vietnamese (line 107).

Similarly, private speech was recorded in the second group when conducting the discussion task. As revealed in excerpt 5.2.2.11 below, speech addressed to the self was produced when Thi and Ha were talking about the HOW component of the topic. In line 96, Thi talked to himself to interpret active listening in relation to HOW. Accordingly, he made two questions, “How can, we recognize active listening? “ and “how do we practice to be an active listener”, which originally were in Vietnamese. Thi then said the questions to himself in order to search for information about the topic regarding the HOW perspective. At this point, by posing the questions to himself, Thi tried to externalise the “HOW” component so that he could understand Active listening in relation to HOW.

Excerpt 5.2.2.11

88 Ha: How?

89 Thi: How, bằng cách nào (trans)

90 Ha: bằng đầu hiểu hoặc là gật đầu (by signals or nodding your head)
91 Thi: Ý (Right), how can we recognize active listening?

92 Ha: How ((confused))

93 Thi: Làm thế nào để bạn có thể nhận biết được active listening? *(How can we recognize active listening?)* (20.0) Questioning

95 Ha: conferring

96 Thi: questioning conferring. How? How? Bằng cách nào, bằng cách nào chúng ta có thể nhận biết được active listening? *(How can, how can we recognize active listening?)* ((in a soft voice)) (10.0) °hoặc bằng cách nào chúng ta có thể tập luyện để trở thành active listening, active listener° (or how do we practice to be an active listener) ((in a very soft voice))

Overall, an attempt to discuss the term Active listening through the use of 5W+H resulted in self-oriented talk. They might repeat the question with one of the components in 5W+H, or they emphasised the topic being discussed to themselves. Besides this, they might pose questions to themselves to gain a better perception of a component (e.g. how) in relation to Active listening. These private speech forms were internalised for the purpose of directing their thoughts to the challenge related to new information. Accordingly, they could generate more information needed to complete the discussion. That is to say, learners produced these forms of private speech to regulate themselves during the discussion. Interestingly, learners might repeat pieces of information provided by themselves or a partner with the aim of producing new information. Self-repeating information provided by others was seen as a process of appropriating given information to generate new information. In this sense, persistent imitation appeared to regulate learners’ linguistic functions during the learners’ task completion.

In general, so far, the study has shown that language plays a central role in mediating learners semiotically during the task accomplishment. Language may be used as a semiotic tool when learners dialogue with others. In this sense, some students in the present study communicated with each other in their first language, Vietnamese, to deal with linguistic and problem-solving challenges during the task. In addition, learners dialogued to themselves to solve challenges emerging during task completion. Namely, private speech served as another critical tool semiotically mediating learners’ thoughts. Apart from L1 and private talk, students might employ other resources of tools which could semiotically orientate their mind during the implementation of the given task.
5.2.2.3. The use of other sources of semiotic tools

The use of the given task

In the perspective of the use of the given task as a semiotic device, learners might resort to task words or phrases as the key to finding answers to reading tasks. Also seeing semiotic mediating tools from this perspective, learners made use of the task requirement to guide their completion of the task.

For example, the Matching task provided students with statements that served as a valuable device in helping them to complete the task. Simply put, they might make use of key words, found from given statements in the tasks, to look for appropriate answers. Excerpts 5.2.2.3.1 and 5.2.2.3.2 are illustrative of this point.

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.1 (see Appendix I for the excerpt) shows that Dien, Quyen and Lien were working on the answer to statement 2.10. They chose the phrase, “H. Clearly defined objectives”, as an answer to it based on the discussion of the key words in the statement (i.e. research, training, developing) (see lines 37, 40, 44). After that, Dien was suspicious of the given answer because, he argued, there were not any words in the statement referring to “clearly”. This shows that some students’ matching of the answers was based on key words indicated in the given task (line 50).

Similarly, excerpt 5.2.2.3.2 indicates that, after giving an answer to 2.04 (lines 90-91), Han gave the illustration for her answer by showing key words in the statement (line 93). Han showed her partners key phrases, such as ‘accept new people’ and ‘make it as easy as possible’, which led to her selection of “K. New members” as a possible answer to the statement.

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.2

90 Han: ((ignores)) câu tiếp theo đi (the next statement please) Nhân viên (Staff) (5.0) tôi nghĩ 2.4 là new members (I think 2.4 is new members)

92 Hoang and My: ((look at Han’s book))

93 Han ((explains to Hoang and My)): nè, xem nè (here, you see) accept new people and make it as easy as (.) as (.) possible (.) to ((points to the words as reading them))
In addition, the requirements of the given task also served as a significant device mediating student completion of the tasks. In this perspective, the task requirement managed students’ attention on conducting the task in right direction.

In excerpt 5.2.3.3, after reading the first sentence (line 4), Huong articulated the requirement of the True/False task in the textbook (line 7). By reading the task instruction to self, Huong tried to internalise the macrostructure of the task for herself.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.3**

1 Huy: Ai cũng lật unit four hết (*Every one turns to unit four*) ((looks around the class))

3 All managers are good leaders ((reads the first statement from the book))

4 Huong: ((reads from the book)) All managers are good leaders

   (10.0)

6 Huy: *leadership skills* (.)*leadership skills* ((reads to self then thinks))

   (30.0)

7 Huong: *Decide whether you agree or disagree* (.)*true or false* ((reads the requirement in a soft voice)) (20.0)

In the Matching task (excerpt 5.2.2.3.4), after Dien asked for the meaning of phrase, “talented individual”, Dien wrote the meaning next to the phrase. Quyen noticed this and reminded Dien that it was a Matching task, that this was the requirement of the task (line 11).

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.4**

4 Dien: *talented individuals* nghĩa là gì? (*what does it mean?*) ((Lien and Quyen look at the phrase))

6 Lien: talented là tài năng (*talented is being with talent*) Giống như Vietnam’s got talent à (*Like Vietnam’s got talent*)

8 Dien: Technical

   (20.0) ((writes something down to her book))

10 Quyen: No, no, *match*

11 Dien: ơ quên (*um, forget*) ((turns to the next page))
In the same fashion, at the beginning of the task discussing Active listening, while Huy was looking at the board, Han kept saying the question, “what is active listening?”, to herself (as shown in line 2, excerpt 5.2.2.3.5). It is clear that the repetition of this represented a process of internalisation of the task requirement to self so as to develop the new language of herself. As a result, she could find the answer to it.

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.5

1 Huy: ((looking at the board))

2 Han: °What is active listening?° °What is active listening?° °What is active listening?° ((reads to herself in a soft voice))

In general, the given tasks appeared as a valuable mediating tool in the engagement in the task. In this sense, the task instructions were useful to orientate the content about a topic or guide students to conduct the given task in an appropriate direction. In addition, the task requirement might be interpreted during the task discussion to generate more information needed to finish the task.

In the sense of the use of task as a semiotic tool, the study also shows that learners deployed other tasks as an aid to solving the given task.

The use of another exercise of the same lesson to deal with the given task

An interesting finding is that students might undertake another task in order to gain ideas crucial for the accomplishment of the assigned task. As demonstrated in excerpt 5.2.2.3.6 (see Appendix I for the excerpt), Thi and Ha were expected to discuss Active listening. However, Thi decided to do an exercise in the focus lesson. After his partner noticed this and advised him to conduct the assigned task, Thi reasoned that he did the exercise on purpose. As shown in the last line (line 40), Thi argued that the exercise could provide him with ideas related to the focus task. His argument for the completion of the exercise was further affirmed in his post-task interview. He stated that the exercise might help facilitate the completion of the assigned task:

“…I wanted to find some ideas related to the topic. I was sure that the discussion must relate to exercises in the lesson. Thus, I did the first exercise in the textbook to get some very basic information for the discussion. The exercise I did actually helped me. I learned the word
questioning which was then applied in my discussion…” (Thi - the post-task interview)

In agreement with Thi, Ha then confessed that the exercise was valuable for her in dealing with the discussion:

“… Thi was right. Then, I could have some ideas for the discussion; the ideas mentioned in the exercise and through the talk with Thi so I felt easier to talk about active listening” (Ha - the post-task interview)

In addition to the employment of other tasks as a mediating tool, learners might resort to their prior knowledge of English learning to solve the given task.

**The use of background knowledge of English learning**

In the sense of employing English background knowledge during task accomplishment, some students used their knowledge of English grammar and word families.

*The employment of English grammar background knowledge*

Reading tasks were solved with the employment of English grammar knowledge at some moments during the task engagement, as indicated in excerpts 5.2.2.3.7 and 5.2.2.3.8 (see Appendix I for the excerpts).

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.7 illustrates that the knowledge of function of word classes facilitated students’ completion of the matching reading task. Han and My considered the word class of “talented” in the phrase “talented individuals”. My pointed out that “talented” was an adjective and “individuals” was a noun (line 6). However, Han was still unsure of this, so she spoke to herself the rule that adverbs modified adjectives (line 13). The regulation of the function of adverbs and adjectives when the two parts of speech exist in the same statement aimed to help her define the correct word class of “talented”. However, in this example, this ‘rule’ was incorrectly applied.

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.8 reveals that the understanding of the English modal verb was useful for students to examine the meaning of the given statement in the True/False task. Muoi discussed the meaning of the statement, “Good leaders have to be good public speakers”, with Nguyen. While Nguyen was considering the meaning, Muoi asked Nguyen for confirmation of the modal verb “have to”, whether it meant being forced to or not. Resorting to grammatical knowledge, however, potentially led to
undetected errors such as the inferred tense change from ‘has’ to ‘have’ in lines 15 and 17.

**Word family**

When trying to figure out the meaning of an English word, students applied knowledge of English word families to access to the meaning of the word. As demonstrated in excerpts 5.2.2.3.9, students were attempting to discover the meaning of “autonomous”. Accordingly, Muoi said to herself the word “autonomy” (line 24) as a root form for “autonomous”. Understanding root words had the potential to retrieve the meanings of word extensions or changes in word class.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.9**

21 Muoi: The best leaders do not ask their staff to do (.) anything (.) they are not (.) prepare to do ((reads the fifth statement aloud))

23 °Autonomous là gì ta?° (what does autonomous mean?)

24 °Autonomy°

25 ((opens her dictionary and looks up the word))

Apart from the use of English linguistic background knowledge, learners’ social understanding or life experience was also employed to complete a given task.

**The use of learners’ life knowledge**

Throughout the accomplishment of the assigned tasks, the students’ own personal life experience appeared as a valuable device. That is, they utilised their social understanding and life experiences to solve problems at various points during task engagement.

For example, excerpt 5.2.2.3.10 shows that, when dealing with the Matching task, Lien took the example of a reality television show in Vietnam to illustrate the meaning of the word “talented”, asked by Dien.

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.10**

4 Dien: talented individuals nghĩa là gì? (what does it mean?) ((Lien and Quyen look at the phrase))

6 Lien: talented là tài năng (talented is being with talent) Giống như Vietnam’s got talent à (Like Vietnam’s got talent)
Similarly, as shown in excerpt 5.2.2.3.11 (see Appendix I for the excerpt), when Huy considered the statement, “All managers are good leaders”, as being true, Huong showed her disagreement with the statement through the reason that some managers might become leaders as a result of their own social manners, not owing to their ability. Her argument demonstrates the utilisation of her understanding of this social matter.

**The use of word sound**

At some points during the task, playing with the sounds of words appeared as a viable tool to draw their attention to the language issues they were working on. Namely, sounds might be stretched, emphasised or spoken louder when the language issues were being dealt with.

Playing with word sounds occurred frequently in the Matching task, as presented in excerpt 5.2.2.3.12 (see Appendix I for the full excerpt). At the beginning of the task, Dien asked for the meaning of a phrase, “talented individuals” (line 4). As seen in this line, Dien emphasised some sounds of the phrase as being underlined. The emphasis on the words aimed to draw her peers’ attention to the phrase the meaning of which she was looking for. Thus, Lien provided the meaning of the phrase for her (line 6).

Next, while finding a suitable phrase to match with the statement, “Commitment to the team’s goals not just personal glory”, Quyen wondered about the meaning of the last word, “glory”. Hence, Quyen stretched the first sound of the word when asking her partners (line 26).

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.12**

1 Quyen: Minh làm cái này đi (we do this). Minh đi trước thời đại đi (we must be ahead of others). Xem nào, làm câu dễ trước đi tự bây (let see, we do the sentences that look easy first) ((turns to the next page))

4 Dien: talented individuals nghĩa là gì? (what does it mean?) ((Lien and Quyen look at the phrase))

6 Lien: talented là tài năng (talented is being with talent) Giọng như Vietnam’s got talent à (Like Vietnam’s got talent)

.........
At another point in the task (see excerpt 5.2.2.3.13 in Appendix I), students employed language sound play to consider an answer to the statement 2.10. First, Quyen proposed that the statement could be matched with the phrase “J. Working techniques” (line 110). There was no response from the partners, so she read “to be able to perform” aloud. “To be able to perform” was modified from “ability to perform” which was part of the statement. In particular, the word “able” was stressed when reading aloud. The stress on the word aimed to help manage her thoughts on the meaning of the statement to determine whether “J. Working techniques” was the proper answer to the statement or not.

Later in their task completion, Quyen questioned the meaning of the word “process”, coming from the phrase “I. Learning process” (line 135, excerpt 5.2.2.3.14). Both Lien and Dien responded to Quyen with an answer of the word’s meaning, but Lien found that her partners confused the word with the word “progress”. Hence, Quyen distinguished the two words by saying them aloud (line 138). After that, she said the focus word “process” again with a loud voice, and then stressed the words in two different positions (i.e. stressing on the second and then the first syllable) (line 139). Quyen first read the words aloud with an aim to draw the partners’ attention to the focus word so that the meaning of the needed word would be provided. Then, Quyen stressed the syllables of the word with the aim of directing her thoughts to the possible meanings of the word, in order that she could figure out the meaning of the word. Lien then gave the meaning of the focus word in line 140 (see Appendix I for excerpt 5.2.2.3.14).

In addition, the group of Han, My and Hoang utilised word sound play when solving this task, as shown in excerpt 5.2.2.3.15. Early in their task engagement, My and Hoang worked on the meaning of the first phrase in the list “A. Talented individuals”. As indicated below, they were considering the part of speech of “talented” in the phrase. In line 3, Hoang wondered whether the word was a noun. In response, My confirmed it as an adjective by emphasising “adjective” with a loud voice. At this point, speaking and emphasising the answer aloud aimed to direct the peer’s attention to the correct answer, that the word was an adjective not a noun (see Appendix I for the excerpt).

The use of the title of a lesson
Reference to the title of the lesson was employed in dealing with the True/False task. As shown in excerpt 5.2.2.3.16, at the beginning of the True/False task, Huy kept repeating the title of the lesson “leadership skills” to himself.

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.16

4 Huong: ((reads from the book)) All managers are good leaders (10.0)

6 Huy: ° leadership skills° (.°leadership skills° ((reads to self then seem to think)) (30.0)

Huy repeated the title with an aim to manage his thoughts on the task at hand. In fact, he stated in the post-task interview that the title was supposed to be an aid for him to solve the task:

“English teachers often tell us that the headings usually tell readers something about the reading passage. So I applied this strategy for the exercise. I think the exercise is part of leadership skills so if something is not related to leadership skills, it will be false”

In short, learners made use of a range of tools which semiotically mediated their understanding during the completion of a given task (e.g. background knowledge relate to English learning, their life experience, the given task, playing with word sounds). Among these semiotic tools, language played an important place in supporting learners’ task implementation. From this perspective, learners communicate to one another in their first language in order to solve language-related problems or task management-related problems arising during the task completion. They also communicated to themselves when encountering challenges; thus, private speech appeared as a significant semiotic means to help them conduct the given task. In addition to L1 and self-talk, students searched for semiotiv mediation form other sources, which is presented in Table 5.5 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of semiotic mediation</th>
<th>Forms of semiotic mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>L1</strong></td>
<td>Dealt with language-related functions (e.g., discussing the meanings of new words to decode the meaning of the given task)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dealt with ask-related functions (i.e., to set up the process to complete the tasks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private speech</strong></td>
<td>Managed students’ thoughts over problems at a point to find solutions to the problems (e.g., finding an appropriate answer, understanding of the meaning of the statement, defining the right part of speech of the word).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other forms</strong></td>
<td>Directed students’ minds over the content about a topic or guided them to conduct the given task in an appropriate direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gained the information related to the given task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the given task</td>
<td>Defined correct word class or meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of another exercise of the same lesson to deal with the given task</td>
<td>Gained a more understanding of the topic they are working on or demonstrate word meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of background knowledge of English learning(e.g., English grammar knowledge, Word family)</td>
<td>Figured out appropriate word meanings or word classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of learners’ life knowledge</td>
<td>Looked for the information centered on the given task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of word sound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the title of a lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the use of material and semiotic tools to mediate their thoughts, students’ task accomplishment was mediated by other people, such as class teachers or classmates.

5.2.3. Human mediation

During engagement in the given tasks, some students drew upon class teachers, peers or other students who were not their immediate partners to complete given tasks. In this sense, teacher mediation and peer mediation appeared to assist learners’ task completion.

5.2.3.1. Teacher mediation

In terms of teacher mediation, this was evident in teacher scaffolding at the beginning of the lesson and during the tasks. Both designed-in and contingent scaffolding were present in each lesson. In this class, the teacher attempted to activate students’ background knowledge about the topic, stated the task requirement, informed how the task was expected to be completed (in pairs or in groups) and gave the time allotted for the task. During the task, some students requested assistance from their class teacher to deal with linguistic problems. In addition, teachers attempted to support students’ task accomplishment through giving additional instructions during the task.

In the discussion task of Active listening (see excerpt 5.2.3.1.1), prior to the students’ discussion the class teacher conducted a short discussion with the whole class. First, the teacher asked the students to distinguish between active and passive listening, and wrote the two words on the board. One student (Huy) volunteered to answer the question, but he got stuck so the teacher helped him with the answer (line 4). After that she provided a clue (“two ways” line 4) to elicit more responses from the students. The teacher emphasised the word “TWO” however, there were no responses from the students. Then, the teacher illustrated passive listening by suggesting the example of watching films or movies while she simultaneously underlined the word “passive listening” (lines 7-8).

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.1
Teacher: What is the difference between active and passive listening? ((writes the two words on the board))

Huy: when someone complains about uhm about ((gets stuck))

Teacher: complain about something? ((talks to Huy)) TWO ways ((rises her fore fingers and middle finger and looks for other answers))

Students: ((give no more responses))

Teacher: when you watch some films or some videos and you listen passively ((underlines the word passive listening written on the board)).

Teacher: ((the discussion stops for a while))

After that, she moved to the focus topic to be discussed, Active listening, as illustrated in excerpt 5.2.3.1.2 (see Appendix I). The teacher gave an example of listening in Vietnamese classrooms as passive listening. In addition, she mentioned characteristics of active listening, “listen” and “reflect”, by saying these louder, and mentioned “two ways” of listening once again. Then, she introduced 5W+1H to support students’ conduct of a more in-depth discussion on the term in pairs. The teacher wrote each component of 5W+1H on the board. After that, she gave explanations on each component. During the discussion of each component, the teacher invited students to contribute to the discussion (e.g. some students raise an answer to “when” in line 27). Then, she drew the students’ attention to what, where, why, and how while encouraging them to ignore the others (lines 28-32). After that, the students were informed to work in pairs to discuss the term, and they then found a partner who they liked to work with. Lines 34-35 show that the teacher reminded the students of the four focus components of 5W+1H when considering Active listening. It is clear that the teacher attempted to assist the students with preliminary ideas of Active listening by giving examples of passive listening. In particular, the teacher tried to direct students’ attention to distinctive features of Active listening by saying these features louder (e.g. listen, and reflect). Furthermore, the teacher attracted the students’ attention by writing the focused terms on the board, underlining or circling the focused term. Importantly, the provision of 5W+1H served as a great assistance in pair discussion of the term.

The class teachers also made efforts to assist students’ task completion by giving further clues or suggestions related to the topic being discussed. For example, excerpt 5.2.3.1.3 (see Appendix I) shows that the teacher further provided students
with a clue while they were conducting the discussion about Active listening. In line 58, the teacher advised students to consider the relationship between “active listening” and “communication” while Han and Huy were discussing Active listening. She emphasised the words “active listening” and “communication” with an aim to draw students’ attention to the clue so that they could generate more information for the discussion. Han and Huy then picked up on the word “communication” and took it into consideration so as to generate new information for their discussion (lines 61-66).

Considering the True/False task, the teacher introduced the task and provided the purpose of the task at the beginning, and tried to elicit learners’ understanding of a manager and a leader, as shown in excerpt 5.2.3.1.4 (see Appendix I). As seen in this excerpt, the teacher reminded students of the previous task they had just finished. From line 3, she then introduced the task being discussed. In lines 7-8, the teacher informed students about the purpose of the task, which was to “compare a manager and a leader”. Next, she asked for students’ views on the difference between a manager and a leader (line 9). The teacher emphasised the word “different” while providing the question. The emphasis on the word aimed to control the students’ attention on the question at hand. In the following turns, the teacher wanted the students to confirm whether the two were the same or different. Huy, a student in one focus group, gave his answer that a manager was the same as a leader (lines 11 and 14 above). Similarly, another student had the same idea as Huy’s (line 13). As a result of these answers, she gave students a situation so that students could relate their answers to her question, as shown in excerpt 5.2.3.1.5 (see Appendix I). As demonstrated in line 15 of this excerpt, the teacher gave a situation in which she requested students to think in order to examine the distinction between a leader and a manager. However, the students failed to give any responses to the question, so the teacher reminded them of the situation again in line 19. Still there were no answers recorded from the students. Then, the teacher got them to move on to the task (line 21). In an attempt to support students’ task completion later, the teacher read the first statement of the task and emphasised one word in the statement, “All”. It was a type of tip that Vietnamese students might employ when dealing with True/False exercises. That is, statements with determiners such as “all” were usually considered
as False. In this context, the teacher reminded students of this as a clue so that they could make a decision on the first statement.

As for the Matching task, students had been involved in several activities before the task was started. First of all, the teacher drew students’ attention to the distinction between a team and a group by posing the question, “Is a team similar or different from a group?” After that, they conducted a fill-in-the-blank exercise, which described a team. Then, another exercise required learners to read through five definitions and decide which one best described a team. The two exercises were in their textbook; they were to provide students with the overall description of a team. Next, the teacher introduced the focus task requiring students to match terms to appropriate definitions describing a good team. The teacher then got students to work in pairs for fifteen minutes.

Apart from the assistance at the beginning of the task, the teacher attempted to help students during the task. During the completion of the Matching task, for example, students resorted to the teacher to work out the meaning of the word “team players” in the Matching task, as shown in excerpt 5.2.3.1.6 (see Appendix I). They had discussed the meaning of the word, but they could not figure out its meaning so they decided to consult with the teacher. Han raised the question about the meaning of the phrase to the teacher (line 219-221). In response, the teacher stated that the meaning depended on the context where it existed (line 222). Students could not grasp the meaning of the word and decided to ignore it. Evidently, teacher’s assistance fails to help students to figure out the meaning of the word so it is a case of the lack of explicit guidance in the ZDP.

Overall, teachers might provide assistance when students raised problems. It means that students employed teachers’ assistance to facilitate their task accomplishment. In this sense, students might resort to their teachers to deal with word meaning problems or to make the task requirements clearer.

5.2.3.2. Peer mediation

Students worked together in pairs or in groups to solve a given task; thus, students supported each other to finish the task. In this perspective, the partners might provide help in terms of linguistic assistance. Alternatively, they might give assistance
centered on task management in order that they could share a mutual understanding among them about the given task.

First of all, peer mediation appeared in the form of giving linguistic assistance. In this sense, students working in the same group provided help to each other with assistance related to English words (e.g. providing meanings of new words, word spelling, equivalent English vocabulary, or indicating word spelling mistakes).

During the interaction among group members to complete a given task, learners often asked their partners for help with the meaning of new English words found in the task. This in fact was often occurring in reading tasks, where learners had to decode the language in order to do the tasks. For example, excerpt 5.2.3.2.1 demonstrates that peers appeared to support the understanding of word meanings when dealing with the Matching task. At one point in solving the task, Quyen asked her peers for the meaning of new vocabulary “individual” (line 128). Dien then gave the meaning of the word to Quyen.

**Excerpt 5.2.3.2.1**

128 Quyen: Có ai nói cho tao biết individual nghĩa là gì? *(Who can tell me what individual means?)*

129 Dien: cá nhân, cá biệt tròi ơi *(a single person, my god)*

In the same fashion, asking for the meaning of an English phrase occurred in the group of Han, My and Hoang at one moment when dealing with the True or False task (see excerpt 5.2.3.2.2 in Appendix I). After Nguyen read the sixth statement to herself, Nguyen requested Muoi to give the meaning of “autonomous decision” in the statement (line 37). Muoi provided Nguyen with the meaning of the word “autonomous” (line 38). Thanks to the word meaning, Muoi could infer the meaning of the phrase (line 39).

Furthermore, students appeared to help their partners to identify the mistake during the completion of their task. Excerpt 5.2.3.2.3 may illustrate this point.

Excerpt 5.2.3.2.3 shows that Han and Huy attempted to provide the reason why people have to listen actively. In line 75, Huy gave an idea, and Han caught the idea
and wrote in down in her note (line 78). Nevertheless, Huy realised Han got one word wrong so he stressed the correct word (line 79).

**Excerpt 5.2.3.2.3**

75 Huy: to receive more information  
76 Han: Uh [and, and  
77 Huy: [clearly information  
78 Han: uh, ((writes down)) to ask for more information  
79 Huy: ((shakes his head)) receive::  
80 Han: Yes, to receive more information ((writes down))

In addition to linguistic assistance, peer mediation might aid students to gain a mutual understanding about the task. During the accomplishment of the given tasks, students sometimes refocused their peers’ attention on the requirement of the task so that they could solve the task in line with the instruction given. For example, excerpt 5.2.3.2.4 shows that Dien misunderstood the task requirement at the beginning of the Matching task. Thus, Dien tried to provide an explanation of the phrases instead of matching them to the given statements. Dien provided the meaning of “talented individual” (line 9). Accordingly, Quyen reminded her that the task required them to match the phrases with statements (line 10).

**Excerpt 5.2.3.2.4**

8 Dien: Technical  
(20.0) ((writes something down to her book))  
10 Quyen: No, no, match  
11 Dien: quên (um, forget) ((turns to the next page))

In short, students relied on support from the class teachers or their classmates (i.e. their immediate or not their immediate peers) to fulfill a given task as summarized in Table 5.6. The present study shows that teacher mediation might scaffold learners with task clarification, English language meaning, or further prompts given during the task discussion. In particular, teachers might be the students’ co-learner with an aim to help them finish the task. The forms of teacher support might be provided when requested by students or noticed by the teacher when students struggled with the task. In terms of peer mediation during the task, learners resorted to their peers to
complete a task. In this sense, they also looked for help from peers who were not in their immediate group. During the interaction, students supported one another to co-construct the conversation or deal with a given statement. In this perspective, peer mediation might be in form of linguistic assistance, such as giving word meanings or providing English words. In addition, students may aid their peers in terms of establishing a shared understanding about the task management.

Table 5.6. The summary of people tools in the Reading class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of people mediation</th>
<th>Forms of people mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed-in scaffolding</td>
<td>Activated learners’ prior knowledge or provided learners with background knowledge vital to the given task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent scaffolding</td>
<td>Gave more clues or explanation of the task requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer mediation</td>
<td>Gave linguistic assistance (e.g. providing help with meanings of new words or word spelling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gained a shared understanding about the task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The section has so far presented the findings related to three types of tools learners have used to mediate their thoughts during the completion of the given task: semiotic, material and human tools. Next are findings centered on learner agency, commencing with agency at the individual level.

5.3. Learner agency

5.3.1. Learner agency at the collective level

This section presents findings regarding how different group agency developed and determined the way they performed a given task: the task performance of two distinctive groups when dealing with the True/False task, Matching task and Discussion task.

Task 1: True/False task

The True/False task is a component of lesson 4, titled Leadership Skills, with the lesson aiming to equip students with knowledge concerning what makes a good
leader and how a person can develop leadership skills. This task was preceded by a task requiring students to work in pairs to discuss “characteristics of a good leader”, thus providing learners with some ideas concerning leadership characteristics. The task included eight statements describing leaders and managers. In this task, the students worked with the same partner as in the previous task to discuss whether the statements given in the book were true or false. Later, they were expected to provide explanations for their decision on this. After that, they were encouraged to voluntarily share their answers with other classmates and the teacher. The teacher then gave comments on the answers and decided whether an answer from a student was right or wrong. The focus groups were Huy and Huong (group1), and Muoi and Nguyen (group 2).

As shown in Table 5.7, the ways two groups conducted the task differed from each other.

Table 5.7. The mediating activity system of task 1, class 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Activities)</th>
<th>Group 1: Huong and Huy</th>
<th>Group 2: Nguyen and Muoi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members in each group discussed and decided whether they agreed or disagreed with the true/false statements given in the textbook. Then, they were expected to give the reason why they agreed or disagreed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How was it done? (Operations)</th>
<th>(1) Discussed the task together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) Finished responding true/false first, and then provided explanations for their agreement or disagreement towards the given statements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Conversed mostly in English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (1) Mostly worked individually |
| (2) Only responded either true or false |
| (3) Conversed in Vietnamese |
| (4) Consulted each other |
Throughout the engagement of the first group in this task, they cooperated to work out the meaning of each statement in order to decide whether they agreed with the statement or not. They first focused on determining that each statement was either true or false, and then moved to provide reasons for this. Huong and Huy each took turns reading a statement while the other provided an answer. Excerpt 5.3.1.1 below is illustrative of this point.

**Excerpt 5.3.1.1**

15 Huong: All leaders are good managers

16 Huy: Disagree (answer provided)

17 Effective leaders need to focus on the future (reads the third statement))

18 Huong: I think so, agree ((then reads the next statement)) Good leaders have to be good public speakers.
20 Huy: Agree (2.0) ((reads the next statement)) Best leaders do not ask their staff to do anything they are not prepared to themselves (5.0) Agree or disagree?

22 Huong: Agree

Huong and Huy conversed mostly in English throughout the task completion. However, at one point when giving an explanation, Huong suggested speaking in Vietnamese so that she could better express herself, as indicated in excerpt 5.3.1.2 (see Appendix K).

The group then used some Vietnamese during the discussion. Generally speaking, however, Huong and Huy used a small amount of Vietnamese in comparison with Nguyen and Muoi.

In terms of looking for assistance when having difficulties, they consulted each other without the use of dictionaries. In particular, Huy often appeared to be the person providing help for Huong. For instance, Huong asked Huy for the meaning of the word “autonomous” in excerpt 5.3.1.3 (see Appendix K).

As for Huy, the search for new word meanings in reading was not always necessary. Therefore, he tended to ignore new vocabulary in the task:

“…this is a true/false reading assignment so I’d like to do it by ourselves without using dictionaries. It is true that reading requires the ability of guessing the word meaning in the given context….There weren’t many new words, which were not necessary to look for the meanings.” (Huy - the post-task informal conversation)

The post-task talk also reviewed that the group’s motive was to appear the best after the completion of the task and to share their work with others. With this motive, their goal-directed actions were operationalized after considering the condition of the task time limitation. Accordingly, their goal-directed actions were, as earlier mentioned, to fulfil their motive (e.g. discussing the task cooperatively, using English than Vietnamese). As the students were concerned about the time limitation, they decided to work together to first find the answers (showing “agree or disagree”) to all the statements before moving on to explain their answers:
...since the allotted time for the task was quite short, we had to do the exercise that way so that we could finish it on time. (Huy - the post-task informal conversation)

Furthermore, Huong confessed in the informal conversation conducted after the task that she did not resort to any dictionaries since she was working with Huy, who could help her with meanings of new words as well as grammar. Interestingly, she called her peer an “alive-dictionary”. That is to say, the partner served as a mediating learning resource useful for the task completion. This constituted a task condition informing the student’s actions. As a result, Huong did not rely on other learning resources, such as dictionaries, which were constantly used in the second group:

“…. I worked with Huy so I may ask him for help with vocabulary or grammar. Huy knows lots of words. He is an alive dictionary of this class”

(Huong - the post-task informal conversation)

Their goal-directed actions were derived from their belief about English language learning. Huy revealed his perspective that learning a foreign language (e.g. English) should be hand-in-hand with speaking in that target language. Huy said in the talk after the task that, “Once you learn English, you must try to speak it, at least in English classes”. With this belief about language learning, the pair perceived English reading as reading comprehension which requires learners to sometimes ignore new words and guess the word meaning from the context (as mentioned above).

Unlike Huong and Huy, Nguyen and Muoi were more likely to undertake their task individually. Each of them read their own statement and worked on the meaning of the statement in isolation from each other. However, they discussed difficulties when figuring out the meaning of statements or new words. Each of them then decided on the answer to their own statement. For example, excerpt 5.3.1.4 shows that Muoi and Nguyen were working with different statements right at the beginning of the task. While Muoi was dealing with the first statement, Nguyen was working on finding the answer to the second one. Each of them read their own statement of interest to themselves, and this procedure continued till the end.

Excerpt 5.3.1.4
1 Muoi: All managers are good leaders ((reads the first statement)). True or False?

(30.0)

3 Nguyen: All leaders are good managers ((reads the second statement)). False, True or False?

5 Muoi: False, úa (hold on)°All leaders are good managers°°Ứ, dùng rõ° (yeah, it’s true)? ((in soft voice))

7 Nguyen: ((reads to self)) °All managers are good leaders°

8 Muoi: °Effective leaders .) needs to focus on (. the future ° ((read the third sentence from the book to self))

10 Nguyen: ((read to self)) °All managers are good leaders°

11°True?° (. ) ° False?° ((raises her voice to self))

When each of the members had problems, they would consult the other for help. Excerpt 5.3.1.5 illustrates this point (see Appendix K). As shown in excerpt 5.3.1.5, Nguyen was working with the sixth statement (line 35) while Muoi was dealing with the last statement (line 33). Then, Nguyen asked Muoi for the meaning of the expression “autonomous decision”, which was in the statement on which Nguyen was working (line 37). In response, Muoi provided the meaning of the expression (line 38).

Similarly, at another point in this task, as demonstrated in excerpt 5.3.1.6 (see Appendix K), Nguyen felt unsure about statement four, so she consulted with Muoi, who already had her own answer to it as false. Muoi then shared her opinions on the statement with Nguyen, and they discussed the statement.

Moreover, they also resorted to dictionaries to look up word meanings. During the engagement in the task, each of them had an English-Vietnamese dictionary with them. When faced with new vocabulary, they first consulted the dictionary and then asked each other in case that the dictionary could not help.

Although they were required to give answers to the “why question”, this group just finished the task by answering “agree or disagree”. In other words, while the teacher expected them to provide the reasons why they agreed or disagreed with a statement, they didn’t complete this part. During the discussion, they used Vietnamese only to communicate with each other. There was no English utterance found in the pair’s interaction.
When the task ended and the teacher called for students to share their answers with others, this pair just appeared silent and kept taking notes on the feedback from the teacher.

With the interest of finding the reason why this group conducted the task in a way distinctive from the first group, this group’s motive when conducting the task was found to be totally different from the first one. Data from the post-task talk with them shows that Nguyen and Muoi desired to finish the task as required without sharing their work with others. Muoi said, “We just wanted to finish the task so in case that being called we could answer” (Muoi – after-task informal conversation). In fact, during the time when other groups shared their answers, Muoi and Nguyen just seemed to listen to others and the teacher. Nguyen revealed the reason why they didn’t share their task to others, as being that they were busy with catching answers from others:

*We took notes of the explanations from my classmates saved for the final test of this class* (Nguyen – after-task informal conversation)

That is to say, their motive was derived from the desire to pass their final exam, that is, learning from the class to pass the final exam. It is evident that the motive of this group was just to complete the task without making any contribution to the class activity, which is different from that of the first group.

With such a motive, the task conditions influenced their goal-directed actions. After considering the task conditions, of limited time, the class regulation and available learning resources, they adopted strategies that helped them conduct the task faster. To illustrate, Nguyen gave “time constraint” as the explanation for the reason why they tended to work in isolation from each other despite the task requirement of collaborative discussion:

*We were afraid that the time was not enough for us. Thus, if we discussed it together and there might be arguments due to disagreement on something between us, so it might take more time.* (Nguyen - after task informal conversation)

The time constraint also led to the use of Vietnamese when talking to each other. For example, Muoi said that the use of Vietnamese might save time for their discussion:
Vietnamese was easier to understand each other so we could quickly understand and give help each other. (Muoi – after-task informal conversation)

Similarly, they could not complete the task with the provision of reasons for their agreement or disagreement over the statement due to the time limitation. As said by Nguyen:

*The time was not enough. We’d just finished with true or false and then the time was over.* (Nguyen – after-task informal conversation)

When being asked what they would do if the teacher called them for the answer to “why”, since they had not prepared for their explanation for their answer, Muoi confirmed that:

*She often calls the students who volunteer. But just in case of being called, I just say it is true or false, and other classmates might help us with the explanation.* (Muoi – after-task informal conversation)

The talk with Muoi above shows that the English class regulation is another condition resulting in their goal-directed actions. Clearly, the teacher in the class was more likely to call voluntary students raising their hands for speaking up. In addition, previous teacher-regulated classroom practice allowed students to assist each other if one failed to give an answer.

Moreover, the data also indicate that the learning resource that students had at hand mediated and operationalised their actions. Nguyen’s words from the post-task conversation illustrates that they had a clear strategy of how to proceed as each had their own dictionary so they could deal with language difficulties without consulting their partner so much:

*We’d better work in isolation from each other and we might ask the other when one of us had difficulties. We all had dictionaries with us so each could work by self.* (Nguyen – after-task informal conversation)

Overall, two groups conducted the task differently, derived from different goals towards the task, and each group action was mediated by distinctive conditions. Time constraints and learning resources are considered the main conditions mediating the activities of both groups during the task. Group two’s activities were also determined by the task difficulty and the regulation of the English class. During the task
completion, the second group (Muoi and Nguyen) were strategically isolated from each other. By contrast, Huong and Huy cooperatively completed the task in a very visible manner, with Huy providing direct assistance to his partner during the task.

**Task 2: Matching task**

The task being investigated was named as Activity two in the textbook, with a 15-minute time limit for completion. The task provided a checklist of 11 phrases describing a successful team, labelled from A to K (e.g. A. Talented individuals). Besides this, eleven definitions of the phrases numbered from 2.01 to 2.11 were given. Students were expected to match the phrases in the checklist with the statements defining the phrases. The two focus groups were: group 1 (Lien, Dien, and Quyen); and group 2 (Han, My and Hoang). As demonstrated in Table 5.8, the activities being employed to conduct the task were quite different between the two groups.

**Table 5.8. The mediation activity system of task 2, class 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Actions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Lien, Dien and Quyen</th>
<th>Group 2: Han, My and Hoang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both groups discussed the matching of 11 phrases describing the characteristics of a successful team.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How was it done? (Operations)</th>
<th>Group 1: Lien, Dien and Quyen</th>
<th>Group 2: Han, My and Hoang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Conducted the task earlier than other groups.</td>
<td>(1) Conducted the task as the teacher assigned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Assigned each member to be in charge of a special duty.</td>
<td>(2) Did not assign special duties among members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Dealt with each statement in the order as given.</td>
<td>(3) Worked with the easier statements first.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Made jokes and were kidding during the task.</td>
<td>(4) No jokes or kidding found</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Did not volunteer to share their task</td>
<td>(5) Actively volunteered to share their task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Why was the activity | *Goals: | *Goals: |
The first group conducted the task while others and the teacher were still working on another exercise in the textbook. Unlike this group, the second group dealt with the task only when the teacher assigned them to do it. For example, excerpt 5.3.1.7 shows that Lien, Quyen and Lien were discussing the task while the teacher was giving the feedback on a previous task which required them to select the best definition of a team.

**Excerpt 5.3.1.7**

74 Lien: <sự tự tin đến từ (confidence comes from) (5.0) making progress (.) and getting results>. [[ (?unclear)

76 T: [[ B and D are not correct (?unclear)

77 Lien: <strength to strength>

78 T: A team consists of [[a group of individuals each with a similar talent working together towards a common objective= 

80 Quyen: <When people are unavailable>

81 T: It's not correct [[you can see that a team members who have different skills=

83 Dien:                      [[<new people> (?unclear)

84 T: = different members with different skills can contribute (?unclear) Ok, can you get the ideas, everybody? Good
Furthermore, they assigned each of them to be responsible for a duty during the completion of the task. Lien looked for the meaning of new words since she had an online dictionary, while Dien and Quyen discussed the meaning of the statements or the phrases, and then made decisions on answers (e.g. excerpt 5.3.1.8 in Appendix K). In this perspective, they cooperatively dealt with problems they confronted during the task engagement. Excerpt 5.3.1.8 indicates that Quyen suggested one member be in charge of looking up new words in the dictionary, and Lien agreed to take responsibility for this. Quyen and Dien took turns pointing out the new words (e.g. versatility, continuity) so that Lien could search for the meanings. They stayed with their assigned role till the end of the task. They dealt with the statements one by one in the order as given in the textbook.

Interestingly, the group of Lien, Dien and Quyen made a great number of jokes and kidding remarks throughout the task engagement. For example, at one point, they stopped discussing the task to talk about their financial situation when Dien explained that his phone was not able to access the online dictionary (see excerpt 5.3.1.9).

**Excerpt 5.3.1.9**

30 Dien: điện thoại ta không có 3G tra không có được. Mây hiểu không? *(my phone hasn’t connected to 3G so it doesn’t work. Do you understand?)*

31 Lien: Mây nghĩ đăng ký rồi ha? *(Have you stopped connecting the service?)*

32 Dien: Tiền đầu mà đăng ký *(No more money for it)*. Tiền ăn còn không có *(even no money for everyday food)*. Để dành tiền đi Đà Lạt hết rồi *(I save money for the trip to Dalat)*.

34 Lien and Quyen: ((laugh))

35 Quyen: Sao bạn cứ than vấn hoài vậy *(why do you keep complaining about your situation?)*. Minh đi Đà Lạt trong túi mình còn đúng 100,000 nẻo *(I just have 100,000 VND left for the trip to Dalat)*

At another point, they joked about the partner’s handwriting, as demonstrated in excerpt 5.3.1.10 (see Appendix K).

At the end of the task, Quyen, Lien and Muoi kept talking to one another, but did not share their ideas of the task with the teacher and others. By contrast, Han, My and Hoang actively raised their hand to share their answers with the whole class.
The interesting question is why the group conducted the task the way they did. Data from the stimulated recall shows that the motive of the two groups toward the task was not the same. The group of Quyen, Lien and Dien aimed to complete the task as required, and did not expect to share their work with other groups. To illustrate, Lien stated that she wished her group would not be called upon by the teacher in the end since they were not so sure about what they had done. Although they claimed that the task was quite tough, they did not push themselves to a stressful level. The reason was that this group perceived learning English as having fun while maintaining a comfortable level of activity. In fact, Lien said that:

*It was difficult, but for us we always felt comfortable without any worries. We liked being funny.* (Lien - stimulated recall)

Similarly, Quyen indicated from the stimulated recall that they did not expect their answers to be all correct since they preferred learning in a humorous atmosphere:

*Our group didn’t care so much about the answers which were right or wrong. We just tried our best do it. It should be better for learning to be funny.* (Quyen - stimulated recall)

Namely, the goal of this group was induced by their perception of learning English as having fun. Under this goal, they conducted the actions mentioned above under the operation of the task conditions (i.e. task difficulty, the time allotted, and the relationship among group members).

They stated that the task was very hard with a lot of new vocabulary, but the time allotted for the task was limited; thus, they had to do it before being required. As Quyen said:

*The previous exercise was easy but we had 10 minutes, while this exercise is too long, so many new words, so we must do it early.* (Quyen - stimulated recall)

Moreover, they were close friends, so they preferred to work in the same group where they could divide the job of every member. For example, Dien indicated the advantages, when they worked in the same group, that:
We could undertake the exercise in our own way. Lien has online dictionary installed on her mobile phone so she can help to check meanings of new words, while Quyen and I will work on the translation. (Dien - stimulated recall)

In addition, they confessed that they always talked about something unrelated to the task when sitting in the same group. Therefore, they decided to conduct the task earlier otherwise they could not finish it on time, as stated by Dien:

*We understand that we like chit-chat whenever we work in the same group so if we don’t do the task before other classmates we will be behind the time for sure.* (Quyen - stimulated recall)

Unlike the previous group, the group of Han, My and Hoang came to the task with the need to complete it as well as possible and then share their work with others at the end. In addition, they wanted to memorise the new words in the task. Data from the post-task stimulated recall are illustrative of this point. Hoang said, “*We wished we could complete the eleven statements on time*” (Hoang - stimulated recall). Han then added:

*We tried to finish it. The more correct answers we got, the better we were. We would like to share our answers to the other groups so that we can review why we got the answers right and wrong.* (Han - stimulated recall)

My explained that sharing the task in the end with other classmates and the teacher helped her to memorise new vocabulary:

*I want to volunteer to share my answers since this is the best way to memorize new words in the class.* (My - stimulated recall)

The group had this goal and considered their task condition, so they took goal-directed actions as mentioned in Table 5.3. Namely, the conditions of the task involved the group member relationship, the time constraint and the task difficulty operationalized their actions.

Unlike the members in the first group who had been close friends outside the classroom, Han, My and Hoang were just classmates so they did not assign specific roles to each member during the task completion. Although they consulted together
or used the dictionary when they had difficulties with new words, Han was the person who dominated the discussion and was more likely to appropriate the given task throughout the discussion. That is, she decided the proper answers to statements, skipped or stayed with statements. By contrast, My and Hoang tended to follow Han’s direction on the task. Excerpt 5.3.1.11 (see Appendix K) illustrates this point as follows.

In addition, since the time allotted to the task was limited, they decided to do the statements that seemed easier first. Moreover, the task was challenging for them; hence, they adopted the strategy of dealing with less difficult statements before the more demanding ones. In fact, Han pointed out in the interview that:

*I’ve roughly read it and found it quite long so I was afraid that we wouldn’t have enough time. Thus, I decided to work on sentences that seem easier first, and the tougher ones would be later.* (Han - stimulated recall)

**Task 3: Discussion of Active listening**

The task was conducted at the beginning of the class as a warm-up activity in order to activate students’ background knowledge of the topic being discussed. In this task, students had to discuss Active listening using 5W + 1H words (who, what, when, where, why and how) in pairs. As shown in Table 5.9, the activity system of the two groups was distinctive from each other.
Table 5.9. The activity system of task 3, class 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Actions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Han and Huy</th>
<th>Group 2: Thi and Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each pair discussed the term “active listening” using 5W+H. They were advised to focus on “what, where, why and how”.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How was it done? (Operations)</th>
<th>Group 1: Han and Huy</th>
<th>Group 2: Thi and Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Discussed the term together by focusing on all components of 5W+H.</td>
<td>(1) Did an exercise in the textbook before conducting the discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) When having difficulties they consulted each other.</td>
<td>(2) Cooperatively discussed the term by using 5W+H, but focusing on “what, where, why and how”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Searched for online sample texts of active listening near the end of the task.</td>
<td>(3) When having difficulties they consulted each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Communicated in English for most of the time during the discussion.</td>
<td>(4) Communicated in Vietnamese during the discussion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why was the activity carried out this way? (Goals and Conditions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Han and Huy</th>
<th>Group 2: Thi and Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Goals:</td>
<td>*Goals:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To learn how to do the speaking task by using 5W+H.</td>
<td>- To finish the task as required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To volunteer to share what they had discussed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Conditions:</td>
<td>*Conditions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Task rules</td>
<td>- Task rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learning resource: online texts</td>
<td>- Learning resources: the partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Time constraint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Huy and Huong jointly discussed Active listening by attempting to involve all the components of 5W+H, though the teacher earlier suggested they focus on “what, where, why and how”. However, they then perceived that “where” and “when” were the same in the given context, so they excluded “when”. Thus, their discussion of Active listening involved “what, who, where, why and how”. To illustrate, excerpt 5.3.1.12 (see Appendix K) demonstrates that Huy proposed talking about “when” by saying it aloud, but then Huy pointed out that “when” was the same as “where”, which they had discussed previously.

Unlike Han and Huy, Thi and Ha just discussed the four components of 5W+H advised by the teacher. Thi and Ha paid attention to “what, where, why and how”. The two groups were alike in that one member consulted the other when having difficulties. Han asked Huy for help with English words, while Ha resorted to Thi for understanding the Vietnamese meaning of English words. For example, excerpt 5.3.1.13 shows that Han was looking for an English word referring to a “press release”, so she asked Huy for help. Unfortunately, Huy was not sure about the expression.

**Excerpt 5.3.1.13**

50 Han: buổi họp báo đó (*a press release*)

51 Huy: hôm nó nữa (*do not remember the word*)

52 Han: report hà? (*is that report?)


Similarly, excerpt 5.3.1.14 indicates that Ha requested the meaning of “action points” from Thi.

**Excerpt 5.3.1.14**

25 Thi: “action points” (.) Listening and thinking

26 Ha: Nghĩa gì? (*what does it mean?*) ((looks confused))

27 Thi: Những điểm mấu chốt quan trọng (*focused and important points*)

28 Ha: ((takes notes))

Although Thi took a more dominant role in the discussion, providing most of the contributions to the task and giving explanations to his partner, he encouraged Ha to
engage in the discussion. He attempted to expand Ha’s contribution so she could contribute to the task as well. As seen in excerpt 5.3.1.15 (see Appendix K), Thi took the role of an expert who assisted his peer as a novice.

By contrast, Huy was influential during the discussion of the first group, but he hardly ever took his peer’s contributions into consideration. Thus, Han was more likely to follow Huy’s direction. That is, Huy was a bit more dominant, and Han was more subservient to him during the discussion, as demonstrated in excerpt 5.3.1.16 (see Appendix K). In this excerpt, Huy tended to ignore his peer’s contribution to the discussion (e.g. lines 27-29). Then, each pursued their own thinking of the point, although Han ultimately accepted an idea from Huy (lines 35-36).

An interesting finding from the data is that the group of Han and Huy completed their discussion with reference to an online text. When they finished the discussion, Han used her phone to “Google” the information about Active listening. Excerpt 5.3.1.17 (see Appendix K) shows that they made use of the online information to improve their own discussion. This excerpt also indicates that Huy became subservient to Han, influenced by the online information. As shown in lines 144-149, Huy attentively listened to Han reading the information related to Active listening and took notes of the information.

In contrast to Huy and Han, at the beginning of the task, Thi and Ha did an exercise in the textbook. The exercise required them to match words with their definitions, which was about what people did when they listened actively. As illustrated in excerpt 5.3.1.18 (see Appendix K), they were doing the exercise until Ha realised that they had done the wrong task (line 35), so she reminded Thi. However, Thi responded that he intentionally did the exercise.

Throughout the discussion of Active listening, Thi and Ha conversed mostly to each other in Vietnamese. They came up with ideas about Active listening in Vietnamese. They did not write any notes of their discussion or transform the ideas into English. This is totally different from Han and Huy, whose discussion involved much more use of English and note-taking. Although they sometimes spoke in Vietnamese, Han and Huy attempted to speak in English when providing the content of the discussion. They took notes of the ideas of Active listening, which were in English on their
notepaper. Excerpts 5.3.1.19 and 5.3.1.20 (see Appendix K for the excerpts), illustrate this difference between the two groups.

Data from stimulated recall reveal that the goal of each group toward the task was different. With their own goal and under their own task condition, they conducted the task using different activities from each other.

Han and Huy’s goal to the task was not only to finish it as required but also to learn how to undertake a speaking task with the use of 5W+H. For instance, Huy confirmed that he treated the task as if he was dealing with a speaking test where he has to prepare for it without any external assistance:

We wanted to make use of my own knowledge to talk about active listening. Thanks to 5W+H given by the teacher, I find it much easier to discuss it. I find it really useful, so if I deal with other writing or speaking topics in the future I will use it. When I undertook the discussion, I imagine that I was in a speaking test, where I got the topic, so I tried to use what I already had in my mind to complete the exercise. (Huy - stimulated recall)

In addition, they liked to share their discussion with other groups. Huy stated that sharing their work with others was a great opportunity for him to practice English speaking in the classroom. He also emphasised that English learners should be active and speak English in the English classroom:

I like to share whatever assignments given with other groups because I like speaking English so much, and I got chances to speak it in English classrooms. Learning English requires students to speak it and be active. (Huy - stimulated recall)

With these goals toward the task, Han and Huy conducted their goal-directed actions. They made use of their background knowledge to talk about Active listening. Although the teacher suggested that they ignore “who, and when”, they discussed all the components of 5W+H:

I just wanted to discuss all of 5W+H, except when that is the same as in this context. As I’ve said that it was like I was in the speaking test with this topic so I wanted to try to speak all aspects about active listening. She just said that they weren’t important, but we could say about it; it was fine. (Huy - stimulated recall)

Another goal-directed action taken by Han and Huy was that they used English most of the time during their discussion. As said by Han:
Speaking English in the group is like the practice of what you are going to say with your friends. So, I will memorize what I want to later talk to the teacher. (Han - stimulated recall)

In particular, at the operational stage of their activity system, due to the task condition involving available learning resources and the classroom regulations, they conducted other goal-directed actions.

Han used her mobile phone connected to the Internet to search for an online text about the topic of being discussed at the end of the discussion. Han affirmed that they had already completed the discussion with their own ideas of Active listening so they made use of the online text for reference. Therefore, they could improve their discussion with the language use as well as new ideas, which might be attractive to the teacher:

*I did it when we’d our own ideas about it. Google is a great resource to look for active listening. The language is good too so I can learn the language of the topic. Thus, our sentence may sound a lot better for the teacher. Moreover, the teacher hadn’t said that we weren’t allowed to use the Google in class.* (Han - stimulated recall)

In agreement with Han, Huy stated that, on the condition that they had come up with their own thoughts about the topic, the use of the online text of the same topic as reference was acceptable:

*We used it to find additional information, which was to add to our ideas so it makes ours better. We’d actually finished ours. If only we just copied it without any of our thoughts about it, it wasn’t acceptable.* (Huy - stimulated recall)

The use of the online text in this group reveals that the classroom regulation allowed learners to access such learning resources that were useful for the task accomplishment. Furthermore, the classroom regulations shaped the group’s action, that they volunteered to share their work with others in the end. Han specified her group’s attempt to contribute to the whole class discussion at the end of the task, as they aimed to achieve bonus marks given by the class teacher:

*Moreover, the teacher encourages students to volunteer to share our ideas. In that case if we come up with interesting ideas, we might get bonus points.* (Han - stimulated recall)
As to the motives toward the task of the second group, the data reveal that Thi and Ha aimed to finish the task as required. They wished to have some ideas about the topic being discussed:

This was the very first activity in the lesson, and what the teacher expected was to elicit what we know about active listening, which was the main focus of the lesson. So, I cannot say that I want to achieve any special goals here. But, I try to finish the task: that is, trying to get something in mind to speak up if called by the teacher. (Thi - stimulated recall)

For this group, time was a condition that impacted their task accomplishment, so they conducted goal-directed actions in consideration of the time constraint. Due to the limited time condition, they had to search for ideas needed for the discussion. Thus, they did an exercise in the textbook of the same lesson to gain preliminary ideas on the topic being discussed. Thi confirmed that doing the exercise was the best solution for his group to get background ideas for the discussion of Active listening in the limited time allotted:

I wanted to look for some ideas related to the topic. I am sure that the discussion must relate to ideas in exercise in the lesson. Thus, I did the first exercise in the textbook to get some very basic information for the discussion. The exercise I did actually helped me like I use the word questioning. This was the best solution for the discussion in such a short period of time. (Thi - stimulated recall)

In fact, Ha agreed that the exercise really helped her though at first she did not realize that Thi had done it on purpose:

I did not know that Thi has done the exercise which is not the one required by the teacher. My listening is not so good so I thought that the teacher talked about active listening in order to get us do the exercise. And I trusted Thi totally since his English is quite better than me ((smiles)). But then, I saw others did the different exercise, discussing active listening, so I reminded Thi of that. However, Thi says that he did the exercise for a purposes. I was so afraid that we do not have the time to complete the given exercise. And Thi is right. Then, I could have some ideas for the discussion; the ideas mentioned in the exercise and through the talk with Thi so I felt easier to talk about active listening. (Ha - stimulated recall)

As a result of the time limitation, they utilized Vietnamese in their discussion to complete the task on time. Thi explained that using English would take their discussion more time due to the fact that his partner got confused whenever he spoke ideas in English:
In fact, whenever I started to speak in English, my friend (Ha) got confused and asked me to say it again in Vietnamese, and this really took time. Thus, using Vietnamese first was much more convenient and then we could transform ideas into English later on. (Thi - stimulated recall)

However, they then had no time to translate what they had discussed into English. They were satisfied with what they had done although they had not created any utterances in English. It was explained that they had at least come up with some ideas about the topic, which was part of their goal when dealing with the task. To illustrate, Ha said that:

We haven’t had enough time to translate it. But it’s good that I have got ideas of active listening. Thi might help me just in case that I could not speak ((in English)) since we are in the same group, and Thi can speak without thinking ahead like me. (Ha - stimulated recall)

In general, this section reveals that, although each group of learners dealt with the same task, each engaged in different activities. The difference in the goal of each group resulted in distinctive actions that they performed to complete the task. Then, the task conditions in each group also caused different activities. It also indicates that the task conditions operationalising learners’ activities are available tools in each group (e.g. partners, dictionaries, or online resources for the reference of the topic being discussed), classroom regulations, and the time allotted to the given task or the relationship among students in a group. Furthermore, in an attempt to conduct the task, the interaction among group members took the form of being collaborative (e.g. Quyen, Lien and Dien), dominant and passive (Han, Nguyen and Muoi), and expert and novice, such as Thi and Ha. In particular, each member in groups or pairs might work in isolation from each other. For instance, members in the group of Nguyen and Muoi performed the given task individually. Although they consulted each other whenever they had difficulties, the consultation was for the completion of the conversation of each member in the group.

5.3.2. Learner agency at the individual level

This section explores factors associated with individual task performance based on six components of activity theory. It demonstrates that the way learners performed a given task at a given point was influenced by both personal factors (i.e. the components of ‘subject’) and outside circumstances (e.g. community, rules, tools). This section begins with the component “Subject”, referring to personal factors that
shaped learners’ task performance, and involved learning preferences, learning beliefs, learning history and perceptions of themselves as learners of English.

**Subject**

Learners drawing upon their own learning preferences, learning beliefs and language learning history created distinctive task performances. In addition, the perception of self also influenced the way they performed tasks.

Firstly, when engaging in the English learning process, students’ individual preferences led to the use of specific task implementation strategies. For example, Phong preferred working alone with a dictionary to working with other students, since he believed that dictionaries could provide greater help than his classmates could. Thus, he resisted cooperating with other students (e.g. in group or pair work). He explained:

...it helps me with new words or pronunciation if needed. It's true that it is better to work with the dictionary because my friends may not sometimes help me with those. (End of course interview - Phong)

By contrast, some students were eager to participate in classroom discussions and preferred learning English through sharing knowledge with others. To illustrate, Huy revealed that he was keen to teach English to others. He shared that he liked to take chances by volunteering answers in class to “teach” English to his classmates, in order to share his English knowledge that may have been unknown to his classmates:

I like teaching English for others so I often teach what I've learned to others. Thus, I love speaking up in the classroom, I want to tell what I understand with other friends. This is like the opportunity to teach English to friends. (End of course interview - Huy)

Huy asserted that such sharing was useful for him, since classmates sharing their English knowledge could assist in his own learning:

This is interesting because they sometimes inform me or remind me of something I forget about. (End of course interview - Huy)

However, Thi was a student who preferred learning English through listening. He stated that he liked to listen attentively to his classmates, so he could learn from what they said and the resultant teacher feedback. As a result, he rarely talked during the class discussion stage at the end of collaborative tasks:
I don’t feel like talking too much without considering what I am talking about is right or wrong. Moreover, I prefer learning from listening carefully to my classmates, learning from what they say and from the feedback the teacher gives on them. I rarely raise my hand to talk except for being called by teachers. (Post-task interview - Thi)

In addition to personal learning preferences, learners’ performance was also regulated by the beliefs they held about language learning. Huy regarded reading in English as much more than simply the ability to read individual words and to know word meanings. This refers to reading comprehension strategies in which students don’t need to rely on single word meanings to understand a passage, so skimming, scanning and guessing could be alternative strategies for the understanding of the reading passage. Thus, Huy rarely translated English passages into Vietnamese when reading them, as he explained:

I see my friends do it ((translate English passage into Vietnamese while reading them)) but I don’t. They have to translate into Vietnamese word by word. I just keep reading and ignore unknown words. Speaking is the same. (End of the course interview - Huy)

In addition, Huy believed that making mistakes was vital in the process of learning English, and that English learners can learn from their mistakes. Accordingly, he expressed that he loved to speak English without being concerned with making errors:

...I just speak it. If I make mistakes the teacher will correct me. I don’t worry about making mistakes or being laughed because of the mistakes I make. I make mistakes so I could learn from them. (End of the course interview - Huy)

...once we learn English, we must try to speak it, especially in English classes. Don’t worry about being right or wrong; otherwise, we will never be able to speak it well. (End of the course interview - Huy)

Furthermore, Huy shared that he regarded learning a target language as speaking the language. Therefore, he attempted to speak English in the classroom and frequently used English during task engagement:

We are learning English so we must speak English in class… I just keep speaking and try not to think it in Vietnamese. (End of the course interview - Huy)

Unlike Huy’s beliefs, Han explained that she attempted to actively participate in class because she believed that teachers of English would focus more
attention on her. She further explained that volunteering to participate in classroom activities also showed a positive learning attitude towards the English class:

*I then realised that learners should be more active to volunteer answering the teacher’s questions because it reflects the positive attitude of learners to the subject. Therefore, the teachers often notice volunteer students more than others who don’t volunteer.* (End of the course interview - Han)

Other students’ beliefs at times resulted in off-task behavior; for example, the interactions that Quyen describes concerning her response to reading tasks:

*I like having fun in classes. I like singing, chatting or something like this although it may be sometimes noisy. I’m kind of a person who prefers doing something else when doing exercises. I believe some students play while they learn and they can learn really well.* (End of the course interview - Quyen)

In addition, it was clear that learners’ prior English learning experiences affected their task performance. For example, the type of English learning Han experienced at secondary school mediated her active English class participation. She explained that she used to get lower marks because of her silence in English classes while her classmates achieved higher marks due to their frequent contributions to class activities. Therefore, she changed to become a more active student:

*I was not so bad at the subject, but I got lower marks as I seldom spoke in class. As a result, teachers did not notice me. By contrast, others who were more active got higher marks and caught teachers’ attention. Thus, since then I’ve tried to raise my hands in the classroom.* (End of the course interview - Han)

Phong’s current beliefs appeared to be related to a bad experience he reported that had occurred when working with other students at high school. As a result, he did not favour group work or pair work in English classes. He revealed that working in groups or in pairs was unfair since not all members contributed to the work but the result was shared by all:

*.... when I was at high school, but I found that working with others just wasted time.... only one or two people work but the achievement will be shared among members. It’s so unfair.* (End of the course interview - Phong)

Apart from language learning preferences, beliefs and history, learner perceptions about themselves as language learners mediated the way they conducted tasks.
For example, Thi shared the reason why he rarely spoke in class although he belonged to the group of more capable students. He provided his age as the reason for his reticence in the English class:

_I'm oldest in this class, you know, so I am not as smart as other friends. Other friends are much younger than me. As you know that the older people are the more slowly they learn languages. I used to study English so well in the past, but I feel now it gets worse when I get older. Seeing my classmates who are younger makes me feel inferior to them. I am not be behind them in other classes, such as grammar, but I become shy whenever requested to speak, so I like listening to others speaking. The friends could say whatever they think without being afraid of making mistakes, but I expect what I say must be correct. Maybe when people are older they tend to think carefully about what they are going to say._ (End of the course interview - Thi)

As the main agent in the learning process, learners were influenced by personal elements during the fulfillment of tasks. From this perspective, their learning preferences, beliefs, language learning history or self-perception influenced their task performance as described above. Besides personal factors, learners’ task performances were regulated by factors in the learning context. These factors include community, object, division of labour, rules and tools.

The first factor to be discussed is ‘community’, referring to classmates or partners with whom learners interacted to complete the tasks. Community demonstrates the dimension of interpersonal interactions occurring during task engagement.

**Community**

In this study, community is defined as a group of students who engaged in joint action during task engagement and in shared and negotiated common perspectives about the task. The study indicates that peers or group mates had a significant influence on the way tasks were performed. In this way, it regulated the use of learners’ first language, the target language, the level of their participation, and task behaviour during task completion.

Initially, peers influenced the amount of Vietnamese or English used during the discussion of a given task. For example, Han reported that she spoke English more when working with Huy than she did when working with other students. This was due to the fact that Huy tended to speak English most of the time, and was a more competent speaker than other students:
He loves to speak English with friends and teachers in the class so he is the student who speaks English the most fluently. Therefore, I like working with Huy in exercises related to speaking or discussing something. I have to discuss with him in English because he speaks in English only. It means that I can speak English more. Other students they do not speak English as much as Huy. (Post-task interview - Han)

Huy confirmed during the post-course interview that he did prefer speaking English in class, but when grouped with students who failed to understand what he said in English he was forced to switch to Vietnamese:

_However, I sometimes ought to use Vietnamese because they may not understand what I’m saying, or they cannot express their mind in English. For example, I told you last time when I worked with Huong I had to use Vietnamese._ (Huy - end of course interview)

This demonstrates that Han and Huy appeared to hold a shared perspective on L2 learning, in that it is best achieved through the use of L2.

Thi’s experience with Ha was similar to that reported previously by Huy in terms of the impact of working with other students who struggle to understand English. Thi explained that, if he spoke with Ha in English, the peer would not be able to understand him. This resulted in his use of Vietnamese:

_In fact, when I start to speak in English, my friend ((Ha)) gets confused and asks me to explain in Vietnamese, and this really takes time. Thus, using Vietnamese first is much more convenient and then we can transform ideas into English later on._ (Post-task interview - Thi)

Excerpt 5.3.2.1 (see Appendix K) demonstrates that Thi and Ha were discussing the “how” perspective of Active listening. When Thi said an English statement, “How can we recognise active listening?” (line 91), Ha showed confusion about the statement (line 92) and failed to understand it. As a result, Thi switched to speaking in Vietnamese.

Furthermore, it is also apparent that the choice of partners impacted upon students’ level of participation in tasks, which is then related to the distribution of power among group members. In some situations, students were unwilling to share their work with others and the class teacher, and this was related to their partners.

Huong was considered to be passive in class and rarely participated in end-of-the-task-activities (e.g. sharing their task with others and the teacher or giving feedback
on classmates’ answers). However, she raised her hands at the end of the True/False task due to encouragement from her peer, Huy. Huy reported that he encouraged Huong to volunteer to share answers with other groups at the end of the True/False task. This shows how Huy and Huong established a peer learning community:

_She seldom raises her hand to speak. I just encouraged her so she did._ (Post-task interview - Huy)

Similarly, although Han always appeared to be active when working with different partners, the post-task interview showed that her partners did at times have an impact on her. It could be argued that she tended to dominate some of her peers, in that she led the discussion and provided answers to the task when conducting the task with My. For example, excerpt 5.3.2.2 (see Appendix K) shows that, when trying to identify the word class for the word “talented”, Han did not trust the answer given by My that the word was an adjective, though the peer showed evidence from the dictionary. Then, she herself checked the answer for the word class of “talented” in her dictionary.

By contrast, Han was more likely to follow Huy’s direction and appeared to be dominated by Huy during their discussion of Active listening. In excerpt 5.3.2.3 (see Appendix K), during this discussion Huy was more likely to reject or ignore contributions from Han (e.g., line 11, line 20).

In fact, Han affirmed that she admired Huy for his English knowledge; thus, she became a bit more reticent during their discussion:

_Huy is knowledgeable in English so I believe in him more…I listen to him more._ (End of the course interview - Han)

The case of Han illustrates the distribution of power in the learning community through superior knowledge of English. From this perspective, the student with more knowledge was more dominant and tended to control and direct what others did. In this context, Han was less knowledgeable than Huy, so Han was subservient to Huy. However, she dominated the task completion work when working with Muoi and Nguyen, who were less knowledgeable than her. It would appear that Nguyen and Muoi gave up their right to power since they lacked the knowledge to assert themselves in the learning community.
Moreover, the learning community in which students conducted the tasks at times also resulted in off-task behaviour. Quyen remarked that, whenever Dien, Lien and she sat in the same group, they would engage in off-task conversation:

> When being sat with my close friends I'll talk a lot more. We are close friends and are the same in that all like kidding in class. If I sit with other groups of students I still talk but with trying to modify myself. (End of the course interview - Quyen)

The point of conducting off-task conversations in this group revealed that learning communities involving close friends might not only regard the task as the goal but also see social engagement as a goal.

It appeared that group membership also affected the ways students performed the given tasks. Accordingly, learners’ task performance was varied when grouped with different members. Some learning communities may influence the language choice (i.e. L1 or L2) of a student. In addition, the kind of community affected the level of a student’s task participation. Therefore, a learner might appear to be active or silent during task engagement when being allocated to different groups. In addition, there are differences in power distribution among members in a learning community. Thus, a learner could be dominant or subservient to others due to their partners being more or less knowledgeable than them. Some learning communities involving close friends considered task as a dimension of social engagement and conducted off-task discussions, outside of the implied ‘rules’ of task performance. The next section will discuss how factors relating to the component of rules affected learners’ task performance.

**Rules**

As previously mentioned, rules refers to formal or informal regulations that determine ways learners act and behave in class. Learners’ task performances were also impacted upon by the English course rules and the rules of the given task. In terms of the course rules, the practice of giving bonus marks for volunteering students or conducting final exams also influenced learners’ performances in the classroom. With respect to task rules, the time allotted to a given task, the permission to use or not use various learning materials during the tasks, or the how the task was expected to be dealt with (e.g. in pairs or in groups), actually led to specific ways of dealing with the task among learners.
Han, who often volunteered to share answers with other students and the teacher at the end of tasks in order to gain bonus marks, illustrates the influence of this course rule. She said that she readily volunteered answers because of bonus marks that could be awarded to volunteers. In this class, the teacher offered bonus marks for students who made contributions to class activities, which would be then added to their final result:

*I often volunteer to give answers since the teacher will give bonus marks added to the result of the final exam.* (End of the course interview - Han)

It is also apparent that course regulations related to testing and evaluation mediated the task performance of Muoi in a different way. Muoi appeared quiet and rarely made any contributions to class discussions, rarely ever raised her hands to share her answers with the teacher or classmates at the end of the tasks. Muoi then shared that she focused on classmates’ answers and teacher feedback, which may prove to be valuable for the final exam at the end of the course. She further explained that the final exam would be derived from the course material, which they could find in the tasks done in classes:

*I listen to the answers and feedback from the teacher. I tried to take notes of the teacher’s feedback or my friends’ answers. This is so important since these will be useful for the final exam. …The teacher informed at the beginning of the course that final exams would test what they’ve learned in the course. Thus, part of the final test will be taken from the lessons learned in the course.* (End of the course interview - Muoi)

Evidently, an implicit “rule” for this English class was “teaching for final exams”, which drew students’ attention to passing the final exam. Muoi’s ignorance of end-of-the task participation (e.g. sharing her answers with classmates and the teacher), where she might achieve bonus points for participation, was the consequence of the final test counting for a large amount of the course evaluation (70%). In this sense, the final test had a 70% weight in the overall grade, while 30% was for the mid-term test:

*The final exam will be equal to 70%. I am more concerned about this.* (End of the course interview - Muoi)

In terms of the impact of ‘task rules’ on learners’ task performance, tasks that did not allow students to use dictionaries affected the task accomplishment of some learners.
For example, Phong confessed that he felt it was hard to complete the tasks without the use of dictionaries:

*In tasks where the use of dictionaries is forbidden, I feel hopeless and tough. It's like I lost one hand which could help me to do the tasks.* (End of the course interview - Phong)

Phong also shared that he tended to be silent during collaborative tasks, and revealed that tasks that required him to work with others made him uncomfortable. He imposed a “personal rule” on his behavior and preferred to work by himself.

The amount of time led to individual work in the group of Nguyen and Muoi. Nguyen gave “time constraint” as the explanation for the reason why they tended to work in isolation from each other despite the task requirement requiring collaborative discussion:

*We were afraid that the time was not enough for us. Thus, if we discussed it together and there might be arguments due to disagreement on something between us, so it might take more time.* (Nguyen - after task informal conversation)

Clearly, the amount of time allotted by the teacher mediated students’ task completion. Although both collaborative discussion and the time allotted were the requirements of the task, time constraint then appeared to be the factor to be more concerned about. Therefore, the time allotted regulated students’ task engagement at that moment.

Generally speaking, procedures, and “rules” of the reading course and the given task, regulated a learner’s task engagement. As previously mentioned, the course with incentives (e.g. bonus marks) for students’ class participation made some students eager to participate in class activities. If the aim of the class was the final exam, this would be the main focus for some students. For example, these students did not participate in end-of-the task activities, but noted contributions from others as this could be useful for the final exam. In terms of the rules, given tasks that limited the tools that could be used hampered some students engagement in tasks. In addition, tasks that were required to be completed in groups disadvantaged students who preferred to
work on the task individually. The following section will indicate how objects related to a learners’ learning purpose determined a learner’s task performance.

**Object**
As a component of activity theory, “object” is considered to be related to the purpose or the aim of learners taking the course or doing the task, which might influence the way they perform a task. In this sense, learners might appear to be eager or unwilling to join the task due to their reason for doing the course or task. The aim of the course or teacher may or may not be in line with a learner’s learning purpose, and might influence task performance.

Muoi revealed that her learning aim resulted in her silence during the whole class discussion. Her purpose was to pass the final exam, so she paid attention to recording classmates’ contributions to the task, and the teacher feedback, rather than making contributions to the discussion:

*I listen to the answers and feedback from the teacher. I tried to take notes of the teacher’s feedback or my friends’ answers. This is so important since these will be useful for the final exam.* (End of the course interview - Muoi)

Huy appeared to be keen on speaking English during the task because of his English learning purpose of being able to communicate with people from foreign countries. Furthermore, he would like to be a teacher of English who could talk with his students in English. This aim inspired him to speak English in the classroom whenever he got a chance:

*I like learning English because I like speaking English with foreigners. I want to teach English after graduation. I wish I could speak English with my students like the teacher. This will be fun.* (End of the course interview - Huy)

In general, the learning aim of a student influenced his or her task performance, resulting in learners who aimed to pass the final test appearing silent during end-of-the-task activities. In addition to object, division of labour, which is defined as the formation of pairs or groups of students and the relationship between them, could have an impact on the way a learner performed the task.
**Division of labour**

This factor is regarded as the formation of groups as well as the relationship between students or between students and the teacher, involved in the completion of tasks. The effect of this factor on learners’ task performance was evident in the case of Phong, who appeared to be silent during collaborative tasks. Phong was not in favour of conducting tasks in pairs or in groups. As he stated in the interview, he was uncomfortable to work with other classmates. Thus, he showed his resistance to collaboration with other students during the task:

*I like to work by myself. I don’t really feel comfortable to work with others.*  
(End of the course interview - Phong)

Considering this factor in three tasks, there was a division of work among group members. In the Matching task, Quyen’s group assigned distinctive work for each member (e.g. Quyen looked up new word meanings while Quyen worked on the meaning of the statements to give answers, and Dien took notes of the group’s discussion). By contrast, members in Han’s group worked together and did not divide the specific work for members. Regarding the True/False task, Nguyen and Muoi completed the task in isolation from each other, while Huong and Huy cooperatively dealt with the task. Huy was the person who provided most of the answers, whereas Huong took notes of the answers given by Huy. As for the discussion task of Active listening, two groups distinctively divided up of work among members. During the engagement in this task, Huy made most of contribution to the group discussion by providing his ideas of Active listening; Han tended to be subservient to Huy and took notes on Huy’s ideas. In the group of Thi and Ha, Ha initiated ideas about Active listening and Thi then would expand the ideas. Thi also gave explanation to Ha.

In general, tasks required the formation of groups or pairs might discourage some learners from participating in accomplishing the task. The final social factor from the learning context regulating learners’ task implementation is the source of tools being used during the tasks.

**Tools**

Tools as ‘instruments in use’ mediated the implementation of tasks. For example, Phong indicated that he could not conduct the task without the use of dictionaries, as
dictionaries were useful for him in terms of language assistance (e.g. giving meanings of unknown words or instructing the way to pronounce a word):

*I prefer doing tasks with my dictionary, and I have to have it with me whenever I do an exercise. Dictionaries could help me with word meanings, word spellings, pronunciation and so much more.* (End of the course interview - Phong)

Similarly, Han who was at first subservient to Huy, tended to become more dominant when she employed her phone to access an online text about the topic being discussed, Active listening. Initially, Han always listened and followed instructions from Huy, while Huy appeared to ignore Han’s contribution to the discussion at some points. However, Huy later became more attentive to Han when she accessed the online text about Active listening. This point illustrates that tools could determine the power distribution in group discussions. Accordingly, the learner with more tools would be more powerful so that they may be more likely to direct others, such as for Han.

Overall, during the engagement in the English learning process, learners are affected by both sociocultural factors from the learning context (e.g. peers, rules of the task or the course, the teacher’s object) and their personal factors (e.g. learning object, learning preference, learning history and belief) as mentioned in Table 5.10. These factors resulted in active or passive task performance among learners. Regarding learners who were silent during the task engagement or during the whole class discussion (e.g. Thi and Muoi; both factors led to the way they performed the task. However, they indicated that they actually participated in the learning activities. For example, Thi preferred to listen to other students while Muoi favoured of taking notes which she thought useful for the final exam. Interestingly, at times personal factors and contextual factors described above overlapped and influenced one another, indicating that these factors are interrelated to each other. To illustrate, the final exam was both considered as the learner’s object and the classroom rule. Regarding Muoi, the final exam was her object in the reading class, so her attention was to pass the final test. This hindered her participation in the contributions to the class activities. The final exam accounting for a large percent of the course evaluation was construed as the regulation of the class. Moreover, the formation of
groups or pairs to deal with the given task might be described as the task rules and division of labour. These had an impact on learners’ task performance.

Table 5.10. The summary of factors influencing individual task’s performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language learning history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learner’s self-perception of themselves as a learner of English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Whole class; partners or groups of classmates with who they work with.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>The Regulations of the Reading class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The requirements of the given task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>The aims of the course/teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labour</td>
<td>The formation of groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The relationship between students and between students and the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>The types of resources available to them (dictionary, peer’s assistance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6: CASE 2- THE SPEAKING CLASS

6.1. Introduction to the case

6.1.1. The class teacher, the students and general information about the speaking course

The second case is a speaking class; and this section will introduce the teacher, the students and general information about the speaking course. The speaking teacher was a female who had just finished her Master’s in TESOL and had been teaching English for five years as a full-time lecturer at the college. This was the first time she had taught students in this class.

The Speaking class students

The students were 18 first-year students, 6 males and 12 females, aged between 19-21. Similar to the first case, the students were in the second semester of their academic year, and their English proficiency was from elementary (A1) to upper-intermediate (B2) based on the CEFR.

The speaking material is changed every two years. The course book for this class was American English File 1 (the second edition) written by Clive Oxenden, Christina Latham-Koenig and Paul Seligson, published by Oxford University Press. However, the teacher may adjust the material and bring other topics to the classroom. Students are frequently criticised for poor speaking skills, so teachers are encouraged to be flexible in teaching speaking in order to motivate learners’ English speaking. That is, class teachers were allowed to modify the speaking course book or bring topics from the outside world into the speaking class in order to suit learners’ levels of English speaking. The students were equipped with survival language involving words and phrases that the students could use when encountering daily situations. For example, they learned to produce a conversation at the bank or at the post office. The topics of this class included: in a restaurant, at a bank, at a post office, weather, and natural experiences.

The organisational flow of the Speaking class

The class lessons occurred weekly for 5 forty-five minute sessions. Each topic was dealt with in one or two class lessons. At the beginning of each lesson, there were
warm-up activities, which were usually to review vocabulary learned in the previous lesson. In those activities, the teacher might have students play vocabulary games to show how much vocabulary they knew. Alternatively, students might make conversations using the vocabulary. After that, the teacher introduced the new vocabulary for the lesson. New words were written on the board and meanings were explained in English while students might note meanings in their notebooks. The teaching of new words was conducted totally in English, but students could look for meanings in Vietnamese by using a dictionary. Students also practiced the pronunciation of new vocabulary by repeating after the teacher. Then, the teacher had students conduct a task to help them memorise the new words. The task usually required learners to make a conversation about the topic being learned and was expected to be accomplished collaboratively. The teacher got students to perform their conversations on stage. The book provided several tasks including listening or writing tasks, but the teacher was more likely to adapt tasks to give students more chance to speak English. Therefore, some tasks were assigned to learners through handouts where the requirements of the tasks were stated, while some were presented by the teacher.

The speaking course required oral mid-term and final tests. Both required students to prepare a topic in groups or pairs given by the teacher on the date of the test, with the topics based on units studied in the class.

During the speaking class, students were asked to work cooperatively so that opportunities to practice English could be increased. Thus, group and pair work were often used in speaking tasks. The members of pairs and groups varied as students tended to change their seats every lesson.

In this class, four tasks with two different groups/pairs engaging in each task provided working data for the study. Due to the changeability of group or pair members in every lesson, the members of groups and pairs were varied in each task. An overview of the focus groups is presented in Table 6.1.
Table 6.1. The focus groups/pairs of the speaking class in four selected tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conversation at a bank</td>
<td>Tram, Thu, and Sang</td>
<td>Vy, Quan and Tien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Making a conversation about the effects of weather</td>
<td>Tam and Hoa</td>
<td>Phuong and Tran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Making a conversation at the bank/post office/ at a restaurant</td>
<td>Thao, Sang, and Van</td>
<td>Quan, Tien, Tram and Nhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Describing a party</td>
<td>Thao, Tien and Phuong</td>
<td>Lam, Van and Nhu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the first task, Vy, Quan and Tien were a group of close friends who often sat in the same group, while Tram, Thu and Sang were just class acquaintances who had never worked together before. Tram and Thu were students of lower English proficiency, whereas Sang, Vy, Quan and Tien were more proficient in English.

In task 2, Tam and Hoa were less advanced students and close friends. In contrast, Phuong and Tran were more advanced.

Regarding task 3, Thao and Sang were much more advanced in English than Van. Similarly, Tram was far less proficient than Quan, Tien and Nhi.

In task 4, two groups both had members of the same level of English proficiency. The first group consisted of more advanced students, while the second belonged to group of less advanced students.

Among those students, some students, who appeared to be active, passive or nonconforming to classroom norms during task engagement, were invited to a further interview or stimulated recall session providing additional data to the study on individual learner agency. Table 6.2 below presents a description of those students.
Table 6.2. The focus participants for studying learner agency at the individual level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>How learner agency is shown</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Tram (female)</td>
<td>Silent during collaborative task Changeable in her task performance occasionally</td>
<td>- reluctant to speak up - showed herself active in some groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sang (male)</td>
<td>Nonconforming with classroom norms</td>
<td>- resistant to play games in the class - resistant to work with less capable students, but preferred to work with more advanced students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quan (male)</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>- actively made contributions to task completion - cooperated well with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu (female)</td>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>- kept silent during the task engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thao (female)</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>- actively contributed to task completion. - preferred to use English in the class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 shows the five students (two males and three females) who participated in stimulated recall sessions and end of the course interviews for further data to study the matter of individual learner agency. The students are categorised as groups of active (Quan, Thao), silent (e.g. Tram), or nonconforming (e.g. Sang) students. Noticeably, Tram usually appeared to be silent but sometimes changed in her task performance when working with different partners and became more active.

The following section describes the four selected focus tasks.

6.1.2. The focus tasks
Table 6.3 provides the selected tasks of the speaking class. This first task required students to make a skit about a conversation at a bank. The task occurred at the beginning of the class when they would learn about the new lesson titled “at the post office”. This task also aimed to review the previous lesson titled “at the bank”, so it aimed to help students use the vocabulary learned in the previous lesson to make a conversation in groups, and then present their conversation in front of the whole class. Before students were required to work in groups to create their conversation, the class teacher had them play a game to review the vocabulary learned in previous lessons. After that, students were required to choose six words to use in a conversation. They worked in groups of three to make the conversation “at a bank”, and then acted out their conversation in front of the class.

For the second task, students were to develop a conversation about “The effects of weather on people” in pairs, in ten minutes. This task was a component of the lesson titled “Weather”, which provided students with vocabulary related to weather, seasons, and the types of activities undertaken in each season. The students had talked about their favourite type of weather in the previous task. Thus, the second task aimed to help learners make use of vocabulary related to weather to make a conversation about the effects of weather on people. In addition, students were expected to utilise the knowledge gained about each season that they had learned from the previous task.

The third task was a review lesson which helped student review topics (e.g. at the bank, at the post office, etc.) and consolidate related vocabulary learned in the previous lessons, as preparation for the final exam. The topics were reviewed one by one, and this task was to review the topic of “at the post office” after reviewing the
topics “at the bank” and “in the restaurant”. Prior to the task, the class teacher helped students review words learned in the previous lessons. The words reviewed were bank teller, deposit, withdraw, balance, bank statement, ATM, cash, credit card, debt, insurance, save, post office, tax, bill, package, letter, stamp, deliver, and envelope. Then, students worked in groups of three or four to select 8 words to include in the conversation. In the end, students presented a conversation in front of the class.

The last task in the final class meeting aimed to review and consolidate main points of the course in preparation for the final exam. The main objective of the course was to equip students with vocabulary related to general topics, such as the post office, the bank, and the restaurant. By giving this task, which was an additional course task, the teacher attempted to introduce learners to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) speaking test. The IELTS is a leading English language test for higher education and tests learner English skills through speaking, listening, reading and writing exercises. As for the IELTS speaking test, it involves three parts. Part one requires answering general questions on various familiar topics for 4-5 minutes, while part two tests the ability to talk about a topic given by the examiner, in two minutes. Students have one minute to prepare their talk. After that, candidates answer follow-up questions related to the topic, which is part three of the test.

The final task was a sample of an IELTS speaking task 2, in which students had about two minutes to prepare in groups. The task required students to talk about a given topic - “Describe a Party”. The topic was from the IELTS speaking test samples downloaded from the Internet. Handouts, which outlined the task requirements, were given to the students. There were four guiding questions in the handout to construct the talk: What was the party? Why was the party held? Who attended the party? What did you do for that party? After two minutes, each group of students would present their talk for 2 minutes. There were also follow-up questions which students were expected to respond to after they presented their talk. The questions were:

1. What are the differences between serious party and friendly party?
2. Why are some people late for parties intentionally?
3. Why do some people like party while others hate it?
4. What would you do if the guests feel bored?

5. Will there be more and more people to attend parties?”

6.2. Mediation

6.2.1. Material mediation

In this class, tools which were found to be materially mediating learners’ task engagement were dictionaries, handouts, and phones.

Firstly, dictionaries were used by the group of Tam and Hoa when they attempted to make the conversation about “the effects of weather”, as shown in excerpt 6.2.1.1. Lines 22-27 indicate that they were looking for an English word to describe a feeling of being uncomfortable, so both Tam and Hoa looked up in their dictionaries for the word. Then, they resorted to dictionaries to search for another English word which meant to make arrangements for something to happen (e.g. lines 55-59). At another point during their discussion (e.g. lines 144-148), Tam and Hoa utilised dictionaries to look for the word class of English words when constructing conversation in English. Hoa used her paperback dictionary to check whether “sickness” was an adjective or not, since they needed an adjective to create an English utterance for their talk about the effects of weather. The dictionary then assisted her to recognise that “sickness” is a noun, and it also informed her about another word which was an adjective “sick”. Then, line 148 shows that they adopted “sick” to form the utterance “get sick” (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 6.2.1.1

22 Tam: devast (.) devast (.) devastated
23 Hoa: Là khó chịu phải không? (It is being uncomfortable, isn’t it?)
24 Tam: Ú (Ok)
26 Hoa: Từ này cũng có nghĩa là khó chịu nè ((Hoa shows the word in her dictionary)) (this word has the same meaning as being uncomfortable)

In terms of the use of handouts, the task of describing a party was assigned to learners through handouts, so students employed the handout with its guiding
questions to solve the task. As illustrated in excerpts 6.2.1.2 and 6.2.1.3, when dealing with the task, both groups of students employed guiding questions to orient their thoughts about the content of the conversation describing a party.

**Excerpt 6.2.1.2**

74 Phuong: mình tổ chức hà (*we hold the party?*)

75 Thao: ừ (*right*)

76 Phuong: mình miêu tả thời, describe mà, mình chỉ là người quan sát (*talks to Thao and points to the word “describe” in the handout*) (*we just describe, describe here, we are just observers*)

**Excerpt 6.2.1.3**

19 Van: một buổi tiệc thân mật chứ không phải serious. Buổi tiệc này không mang tính chất nghiêm trọng (*a friendly party not a serious party. This party must not be formal*) (*reads from the handout*)

22 Lam: nghiêm trọng thôi, chứ nghiêm túc thì phải có (*not serious but must be formal*)

(20.0) miêu tả luôn chứa phải làm đoạn hội thoại (*describe it not make a conversation*) (*looks at the handout*)

In addition, students used phones to access a sample text from the Internet to support in making a conversation about a birthday party, as seen from excerpt 6.2.1.4. Line 79 illustrates that Lam showed her group members the online text she had found in her mobile phone. Nhu looked at the text, translated it, and suggested writing it down as their talk about the party. They kept translating the text and made use of the text, which provided them with ideas to complete their talk of the birthday party.

**Excerpt 6.2.1.4**

79 Lam: Phải biết lên kế hoạch. Nè, nè, xem nè (*Make a plan. Here, here, look at this*) (*shows the sample text of the same topic from her mobile*)

81 Nhu: (*translates the text*) phải có kế hoạch… (*must have a plan*) rồi ghi vô (*so writes it down*)

82 Lam: (*translates the text*) Bạn không cần phải lên kế hoạch nhiều chỉ cần mời người nào bạn cần mời thôi (*You don’t need to make much plan for the party, you just need to invite someone to whom you really want*) friends spend time together

84 Nhu: (*looks at the text*) có hát bài hát nữa kia (*there are also songs for the party*) (*the idea mentioned in the text*)
Overall, in an attempt to create language in the form of making conversations in English, dictionaries, the provided handout and phones appeared to materially mediate students’ capacity to do the tasks. Dictionaries were used to search for new words, while handouts provided students with assigned tasks. Table 6.4 summarises the use of material tools in this class.

**Table 6.4. The summary of material mediating tools in the Speaking class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of material mediation</th>
<th>Forms of material mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handouts</td>
<td>Gave students with assigned tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Assisted them to present the task (e.g. conversation) on stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries (i.e. mobile app dictionaries and paperback dictionaries)</td>
<td>An essential device for them to cope with lexical difficulties during the task, such as search word meaning of word class. Supported students in understanding the given language in reading tasks so that they could complete the task. Realised of the word class of an English word (a noun, a verb or an adjective, etc.) Was advantageous for students to define its meaning as well as to construct English utterances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>Helped to access online learning sources beneficial for task completion (e.g. look for samples of conversation of the same topic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, students’ mobile phones were deployed as a material instrument which helped to access online texts of the same topic. Below are the semiotic devices used during task accomplishment.
6.2.2. Semiotic mediation

Similar to the first case, various tools were employed to semiotically mediate learners’ thoughts during their task completion. They included learners’ L1 (Vietnamese), self-addressed speech, the given task itself, background knowledge of English, and learner's life experience about the topic of being discussed. In addition, students played with the sound of words when dealing with problems related to the word, often by emphasising and repeating it. Finally, students employed the string of irregular verb forms as another semiotic means to deal with problems during task engagement.

6.2.2.1. The use of Vietnamese (L1)

Although students were expected to use English in class, Vietnamese was used regularly when learners engaged in collaborative tasks. In terms of the use of Vietnamese to support completion of a certain task, Vietnamese occurred when students were faced with challenges, so the first language served as additional linguistic support that helped learners deal with language and task management problems during the accomplishment of the task.

Language related function of L1

In this regard, L1 was used to assist learners with problems such as finding English words or expressions, and correct word spellings. This aimed to help them create new English statements by themselves. In this perspective, they used L1 to search for English words or expressions in producing their own English talks, define the correct English word spelling, recommend English word use, search for formulaic language, comment the English language created by themselves, discuss the word class of English word and discuss L2 grammar rules in the completion of the task.

The use of L1 to search for English words or expressions in producing their own English talks

Students employed L1 to look for English words or terms necessary for creating English conversation. During the discussion of English words and expressions, learners gave comments on language use. In the speaking tasks, students frequently used Vietnamese to search for English words, terms or expressions, and this function of L1 use was repeated in the four speaking tasks. For example, in the task describing
the effects of weather (excerpt 6.2.2.1.1), while attempting to write a statement that the weather made people feel uncomfortable, Hoa asked for the English word describing the feeling of being uncomfortable by conversing in Vietnamese (line 21). In response, Tam provided an English word (line 22). At another point in their discussion, they tried to form an English utterance expressing activities people might do at the beginning of the summer. Tam provided the idea in Vietnamese first (line 41), and Hoa then translated the idea into English (line 42). After that, Tam suggested the idea about outdoor activities (line 43). Correspondingly, Hoa started writing down the English statement describing the idea proposed by Tam (line 44). In line 45, Tam helped Hoa to create the statement by translating word-by-word from Vietnamese into English. However, Tam then forgot a verb meaning “organise something to happen”, and thus asked her peer (line 47). Accordingly, Hoa provided a verb, but she was still confused between “hold” and “held” and which one was the infinitive verb form (line 49). Throughout the discussion of this group, the provision of ideas in Vietnamese, from which English translations were formed, occurred frequently (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.1**

20 Hoa: Because today (.) the weather (.) is too hot. I’m feeling ((writes down the statement)) (.) khó chịu là gì ta? (what is being uncomfortable ?)

22 Tam: devast (.) devast (.) devastated

Likewise, students in the second group also used Vietnamese to search for the English expression needed, as presented in excerpt 6.2.2.1.2, where Tran and Phuong were attempting to develop the concluding sentence of their talk. This sentence was challenging for them, as expressed by Tran in line 127. Thus, they left it until they finished the rehearsal of their talk. Then, Tran specified her ideas of the statement in Vietnamese (lines 174-175) and later translated the ideas into English in line 176. In line 178, Tran offered another idea in Vietnamese, which was then translated into English by Phuong (line 179) (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.2**

123 Phuong: I think, uh, ý tao muốn nói là thời tiết nào cũng được miễn là mình thấy thoải mái là được rồi (I mean that whatever type of weather is as long as you feel comfortable)
125 Tran: It’s not important uhm

126 Phuong: that is Ok

127 Tran: không biết đường điện tâ, ý tao là đang như… (.) (I don’t know how to express it, I mean that… ())

………..

In the task of describing a party, one could conclude that a lot of Vietnamese talk during the group discussion aimed to look for English words. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.3 indicates that Phuong was searching for an English word which she needed to describe the decoration of the party. Hence, Phuong asked Thao for the word by saying its Vietnamese meaning (line 31), so Thao provided the English word for which Phuong was asking, “balloon” (line 32). Likewise, Tien needed a word to tell people about the present brought to the birthday party (line 54), and he asked Phuong. Phuong provided the word in need (i.e. teddy) (line 55) so that Tien could complete his statement. Later in their discussion, a neighbouring group asked this group for help with an English word (line 63). In response, Tien gave the word, ‘order’ (line 64). After that, Thao provided the word ‘book’ (line 65) which was better than “order”, as commented by Tien. Nevertheless, the word seemed not to be recognised by the neighbouring group, so Tien told them the meaning of the word “book” in Vietnamese. Noticeably, “book” in this context meant to arrange something in advance. Tien provided another meaning of the word, and the meaning in L1 at this point aimed to help students to identify the vocabulary in the target language (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.3

31 Phuong: ((asks Minh)) bong bóng là gì? (What is a small, thin rubber bag blown air into until it is round in shape, used for decoration at parties?)

32 Thao: balloon

33 Phuong: balloon? ((rises her voice))

34 Thao: balloon nè, có hai chữ "o" (balloon, with double O) ((writes the word down on her notes))

………..

In the same vein, the second group (excerpt 6.2.2.1.4) conversed in Vietnamese to call for English words needed to create their talk. Nhu, Van and Lam discussed in Vietnamese when Nhu wanted an English verb, “congratulate”, to develop their talk.
At a different moment when they attempted to express the idea that birthday parties were on fixed date every year, Nhu failed to remember the English word “fix”. As a result, they conducted a long conversation in Vietnamese to retrieve the word (lines 59-69) (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.4

35 Nhu: Để chúc mừng sinh nhật, chúc mừng là gì? (to celebrate birthday, what is praising a party?) Congratulations? ((rises her voice))

37 Van: Chúc mừng hà? (Congratulations?)

38 Lam: ((reads from her online dictionary)) Động từ của nó là “congratulate” (its verb form is congratulate)

Also found in the reviewing speaking task, student attempted to call for equivalent English words and expressions by providing the Vietnamese meanings as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.5 (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.5

24 Thao: ° yesterday ° I couldn’t go ° so I gave you a present ° , a letter đi (let say a letter) and ° and a package°

26 Have you, nhận là gì? ((to Sang and Van))

27 Sang: nhận?

28 Van: receive

Line 24 shows that Thao was trying to write an English sentence and she needed an English word (line 26), so Sang provided the word (line 27). Therefore, Thao could complete the sentence as indicated in line 30. Later, Thao looked for an English expression conveying the idea of inviting someone out to eat something. She stated the idea in Vietnamese (e.g. line 42 “Đi ăn đi uống cái gì nói thế nào? (how to say that you invite someone to eat something?)”). Hence, Sang offered an English phrase (lines 43 and 45).

Considering this L1 function of looking for English renderings, it also presented in the second group when dealing with this task, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.6 (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).
Excerpt 6.2.2.1.6

34 Nhi: (5.0) cái người trong ngân hàng là gì? (a person who works in a bank, how to say?)
35 Tien: bank clerk
36 Quan: bank clerk
37 Tien: bank teller cũng được (bank teller is also fine)
38 Nhi: teller ((she chooses bank teller))

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.6 reveals that, throughout their discussion to make their conversation, the students in this group employed Vietnamese to call for help with English vocabulary. For instance, at a critical time when Nhi wanted one word meaning a person working in a bank (line 34), Tien then provided the English word needed (lines 35 and 37). Later in their discussion, they attempted to develop the content of their conversation by creating an idea of inviting some singers to a party. In an attempt to do this, Nhi first provided the idea in Vietnamese. Then, Tram contributed English words needed (e.g. invite, singer). Then, Tien formed an English utterance (in line 166).

Concerning the task requiring students to make a conversation at the bank, the group of Vy, Quan and Tien conversed in Vietnamese to work on English vocabulary and English phrases to construct the content of the conversation (excerpt 6.2.2.1.7). At one point, Vy tried to make an English sentence but she used Vietnamese to substitute some words in the sentence (line 21). Then, Quan and Tien provided the English words needed (lines 22 and 23). At this point, it appears that Vietnamese was used to substitute some information in an English utterance since the information was still being worked on (i.e. students still think of the English vocabulary). Later in their discussion (lines 70-73), they formed another English sentence for the conversation. Tien and Quan provided the Vietnamese sentence first, and Quan then said the English rendering (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.7

21 Vy: I need to take take rút tiền (withdraw money)
22 Quan: withdraw
So far, the discussion shows that, when dealing with speaking tasks, L1 was employed as a tool to search for English vocabulary or expressions needed for the development of English utterances. Students first offered their thoughts in Vietnamese, and the English formation would then follow.

In addition to the search for English vocabulary or terms needed to form utterances in the process of developing English conversations, Vietnamese was also employed to identify the correct spellings of an English word.

The use of L1 to define the correct English word spelling

As seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.8, when taking notes on the group discussion of the conversation, Nhi struggled with the spelling of the word “manager” (line 136). In order to help a peer with the word spelling, Tien spelt out the word in Vietnamese (line 137). Evidently, Vietnamese supported students in accessing to the correct spelling of English word at this point.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.8**

136 Nhi: tao không biết viết tire do ((manager)) (*I do not know the spelling of the word*)


138 Quan: Right, manager

As presented in excerpt 6.2.2.1.9, Vy was in charge of writing down their conversation at this point, and she was writing down the word “of course” given by Quan. She wrote it and said the spelling of the word at the same time (line 17). However, Quan recognised that she made a mistake when spelling the last two letters “L-E”, thereby causing his posing of the question in line 18 to correct the spelling mistake. As a result, Vy spelt the word again by producing its spelling in Vietnamese (line 19). The use of Vietnamese here aimed to ensure the correct spelling of the English word (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

This function of L1 use was also found in the task requiring students to talk about “the effects of weather” (see excerpt 6.2.2.1.10 in Appendix J). Lines 47-51 reveal that Tran and Phuong tried to create an English statement about the bad effects of hot
weather. Thus, Tran offered the English statement “my eye is so blurry”. However, Phuong could not catch the statement, so Tran had to say it in Vietnamese, and Tran could recognise the sentence (line 49). This shows that Phuong missed the statement because of the last word, which might be unfamiliar to her. Once Tran provided the statement in Vietnamese, Phuong could catch the word. This shows that providing the Vietnamese meaning of English vocabulary assisted students to recognise the spelling of English words in use.

Furthermore, English words with more than one meaning were provided with the more frequently used meaning in order to identify its form in a given context. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.11 describes that Tien and Thao provided English words (i.e. “order” and “book”) asked by a neighbouring group, who looked for a word to express the idea of ordering a birthday cake in advance. Then, they were more favourable to the word “book” which they thought better than the other word. However, the group seemed not to recognise the word “book”; thus, Tien gave its meaning in Vietnamese. In this case, “book” has two different meanings in different contexts: one refers to written texts when used as a noun, and the other refers to making a reservation when shown as a verb. The first meaning is more familiar to learners, so providing the meaning in Vietnamese helped them to recognise the word.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.11

63 The group behind: ((talks to Tien)) Dặt bánh sinh nhật là gì? (how to say ordering a birthday cake in advance)
64 Tien: order
65 Thao: ((talks to the group)) book
66 Tien: book hay hơn order (book sounds better than order)
68 Tien: book, cuốn sách đó (a set of written texts)

It is clear that L1 were sometimes used to distinguish among English words the sounds of which may be confusing for them in trying to apprehend the word forms, and this was illustrated in excerpt 6.2.2.1.12. At this point, Tien looked for the simple past form of “feel” and Thao helped Tien with the word form by saying the three forms, “feel felt felt” (line 89). Tien reminded Thao that she might be confused with “fall fell fallen”. In this concern, Tien thought that Thao could be confused between
“felt” and “fell” in the two strings of three verb forms provided. In fact, Vietnamese students of English often make final sound pronunciation mistakes. They are less likely to pronounce the final sounds, which are often important in the word recognition word process. In this case, the students failed to pronounce word-final consonants, so they pronounced “felt” and “fell” the same. Phuong prompted that the correct word needed in this context was the one with “T”. That is, the correct simple past verb is “felt”.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.12

89 Thao: feel felt felt
90 Tien: coi chúng lớn nha fall fell fallen *(be careful otherwise you may be confused with fall felt felt)*
91 Thao: phải không cô? *(is that right, teacher?)* ((to the teacher but she says nothing and keeps walking away from the group))
93 Tien: fall fell fallen, còn chữ feel *(how about feel?)*
94 Thao: feel felt felt
95 The group: feel felt felt
96 Tien: phải không? *(sure?)*
97 Phuong: ừ, felt mà có chữ T đó *(Right, the felt with T)*

During the discussion of words needed for constructing their own talk, they also communicated in Vietnamese to give recommendations on using or not using a certain English word.

*The use of L1 to recommend English word use*

Students might come up with several English words with the same meaning that they needed to develop an utterance for their conversation, so they had to discuss which word to be adopted. In this sense, a word that sounds more familiar was more likely to be used. Alternatively, the selection of a word was defined by the context in which the word existed or by the formality or informality of a situation.

In excerpt 6.2.2.1.13, after Hoa asked for a word to express the feeling of being uncomfortable, Tam gave the word “devastated” (line 22). After that, Hoa pointed out another word in the dictionary with the same meaning as the earlier word. However, Tam rejected the word since it sounded strange (line 27).
Excerpt 6.2.2.1.13

20 Hoa: Because today (.) the weather (.) is too hot. I’m feeling (.) khó chịu là gì ta? *(what is being uncomfortable?)* (writes down the statement))

22 Tam: devast (.) devast (.) devastated

23 Hoa: Là khó chịu phải không? *(It is being uncomfortable, isn’t it?)*

24 Tam: Ú *(Ok)*

(30) *(Hoa keeps turning her dictionary)*

26 Hoa: Tự này cũng có nghĩa là khó chịu nè *(Hoa shows the word in her dictionary)* *(this word has the same meaning as being uncomfortable)*

27 Tam: Thôi từ đó là quá, dùng từ nào đơn giản hơn đi *(this word sounds strange, please use a word that is simple)*

At another point, when they looked for a verb (see excerpt 6.2.2.1.14 in Appendix J), after the verb “hold” was given, Tam provided another verb, “organize”, found from her dictionary. After that, they argued about which word was more appropriate. While Tam preferred “organise” which she believed is more frequently used, while Hoa favoured “hold” which she claimed to be more suitable for use in a dialogue (line 59).

Furthermore, learners might talk to each other in Vietnamese to consider the formality and informality of word used in a conversation. For example, excerpt 6.2.2.1.15 shows that Tien, Tram and Quan were creating an English sentence. Quan then came up with “I want to celebrate a birthday for my mom”, but Tien then suggested using mother instead of “mom”. Tram seemed to agree with Tien; however, Quan commented that “mom” was more informal. Hence, the content of the conversation moved along with “mom” thereafter.

The use of L1 to search for formulaic language

During the search for terms or expressions in English to complete their conversation, learners sought out ready make chunks used in a certain situation. To illustrate, excerpt 6.2.2.1.16 shows that Thao wanted to form an English utterance about inviting someone out for food or drink. Thao requested for the equivalent utterance in English (line 42), and Sang provided a statement (line 43). Then, Thao seemed to adjust the statement, so Sang confirmed that “Would you like” means inviting someone. In this case, one possible reason for this is the students discussed a ready-
made lexical phrase functioning as making an invitation, to complete the speaking task.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.16**

41 Thao: My last birthday (?inaudible). Rồi Van nói là là (**then Van says that**) are we...? Đi ăn đi uống cái gì nói thế nào? (**how to say that you invite someone to eat something?**)

43 Sang: Would you like to drink?

44 Thao: Anyone would like to=

45 Sang:= would you like to drink or eat something? Mời là would you like (**Would you like means inviting someone**)

The use of L1 to comment the English language created by themselves

Students also made comments on the language included in their conversation during the development of the conversation content. Excerpts 6.2.2.1.17 and 6.2.2.1.18 may be illustrative of this. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.17 shows that Nhi noted that one expression, “wait a minute”, had been used several times in their conversation so she was afraid that it was repetitive. Similarly, Hoa in excerpt 6.2.2.1.18 pointed out that they had used “I think” frequently throughout their conversation.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.17**

238 Quan: Yes, Wait a minute

239 Tien: sao giọng ở trên quá vậy (**it looks the same as above**) Wait a minute nữa rồi (**wait a minute again**)

240 Quan: Tram kìa (**Tram, your turn**)

241 Nhi: sao wait a minute hoàn vậy? (**why always “wait a minute”**)

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.18**

72 Hoa: mày biết mình dùng từ gì nhiều nhất không? (**Do you know what word which is used a lot?**)

73 Tam: Tù nào? (**What word?**)

74 Hoa: I think, I think, suốt ngày cứ I think (**I think all the times**)

75 Tam: ừ, ((laughs)). I think we (.) we
In general, in an attempt to find words for the construction of conversations or talk in English, students employed Vietnamese as a central tool to achieve this. The words needed might be spelt out in Vietnamese. Besides this, as to words with several meanings in different contexts, its L1 meaning in another context may be provided so that learners could recognise the forms of words in the existing context. As learners of English in the Vietnamese context, they tended to miss final consonant sounds when pronouncing English words. As a result, a few words might be pronounced exactly the same. Accordingly, they used their first language to define what words they were aiming at.

**L1 use to discuss the word class of English word**

When dealing with speaking tasks, students spent their discussion in considering the word class of English words needed, so as to create their English conversation. This was indicated in the tasks of making a conversation about the effects of weather on people and describing a party.

As demonstrated in excerpt 6.2.2.1.19, Tam and Hoa conversed in L1 to analyse the word class of a word that might be used to develop their talk about the effects of weather. Tam was considering whether “mental” is an adjective and whether the word had a verb form or not. In response, Hoa advised searching for the noun form of the word. After that, Hoa found the noun form of the word (i.e. mentality) (line 178). At this moment, L1 facilitated them to find the exact type of the word needed to make sentences in English.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.19**

173 Tam: Mental là tâm thân. Nó là tính từ phải không? *(Mental is relating to mind. Is it an adjective?)* Có đúng tử không? *(Is there its form of verb?)*

175 Hoa: Kiểm danh từ đó *(search for a noun)*, (5.0) ((turns her dictionary and looks up the dictionary)) mentally

177 Tam: °ảnh hưởng của thời tiết tỏi°=(“the effect of weather°”) ((to self))

178 Hoa: =mentality thể trạng tâm lý *(trans)* ((reads the word from the dictionary))

179 Tam: °tôi cảm giác của mình, tâm trạng của chúng tỏ° ((to self)) *(to our feeling, our mood)* Happier than ((to Hoa))
In the same fashion, as seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.20 (see Appendix J), the group of Phuong and Tran discussed the part of speech of the word “flu” when forming an English utterance about the effects of weather. The stimulated recall shows that Tran first recognised the word as a noun, and then she changed her mind to adopt it as an adjective. In the actual interaction, line 107 illustrates that Tran first said “a flu” (i.e. flu is a noun), but then said that it was an adjective. That is, she assumed that the word could take the role as a noun and an adjective. Accordingly, she made a sentence where she had it function as an adjective (i.e. I always get flu in cold weather).

Overall, the understanding of what type a word is could be valuable for students to develop English utterances grammatically. As Tam and Hoa were developing English statements for their conversation about the effects of weather, they confessed that understanding about the part of speech of English words helped them to create grammatically correct sentences:

*We’d like to know that a word is a noun, a verb, or an adjective so that we could make correct sentences. This is really important…. (Tam – post-task interview)*

Also in this sense, it leads to another function of the use of Vietnamese during the discussion of the task. Vietnamese was used to deal with problems related to English grammatical rules.

*L1 use to discuss L2 grammar rules in the completion of the task*

The study showed that English grammar rules facilitated learners’ task completion. This may have helped them to create English language with proper grammar or define meanings of the language in given tasks. The discussion about grammar conducted in Vietnamese during the interaction included the English grammar perspectives that they needed to form English statements (e.g. prepositions, the comparative of adjectives, possessive adjectives, determiners, irregular verb forms, and obligation expressions).

As shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.21, Tam and Hoa were trying to make a sentence on organising outdoor activities earlier in the summer. Tam concerned the appropriate proposition coming after “beginning”, “in” or “of”, and Hoa suggested that the proper one was “of”. They then proceeded in completing the statement with the preposition.
Excerpt 6.2.2.1.21

43 Tam: Không, mọi vô may nói là nên tổ chức những hoạt động ngoài trời 
(No, at first you should say that we should have some outdoors activities)

44 Hoa: Beginning uhm, uhm, uhm ((writes it down))

45 Tam: “mùa hè” là summer, “bắt đầu” là beginning in, in hay of ta, bắt đầu mùa hè? 
(… is summer, … is beginning, but beginning in or of summer?)

46 Hoa: Tao cho là of (I think “of”) (30.0) At the beginning of 
((writes it down))

At another time in their discussion, indicated in excerpt 6.2.2.1.22 (see Appendix J), the students attempted to determine whether an adjective was long or short in order that they could make a sentence with the correct comparative form. In line 183, Hoa questioned whether “exciting” was a long adjective, while shaping its comparative form. Once informed that it is a long one, Hoa completed the form as shown in line 185.

Later in their discussion, their discussion of English grammar related to determiners. They were creating a sentence (line 112), and Phuong then wondered whether “many places” or “much places” was suitable (line 113). In this context, they wanted to be sure of the correct determiner before a noun. In response, Tran indicated “many places” as the right one. This is, to a certain extent, similar to what was found in another task, shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.23 (see Appendix j).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.24 demonstrates that students discussed the proper use of determiner with “how” in an interrogative sentence: how much or how many, when dealing with the reviewing speaking task. They needed this to develop a question about the amount of money, so Vy explained that the correct one is “how much”, because “money” followed.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.24

98 Quan: How many hay (or) how much?

99 Vy: Tiền là phải dùng how much chú (money so it must be must be used)

100 Quan: How much do you want to withdraw?

The group of Tam and Hoa focused their attention on the grammatical point centered on possessive adjectives during their development of the talk about the effects of
weather, as illustrated in excerpt 6.2.2.1.25. Hoa requested confirmation on whether “our” was a possessive, when she tried to write an English utterance.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.25**

210 Tam: ảnh hướng đến cái feeling (*affect feeling*)

211 Hoa: to (.) to (.) our (.) our là sở hữu hà? (*our is possessive?*)

212 Tam: Uh……

Furthermore, students might discuss an English irregular verb form in Vietnamese. As seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.26, Tien looked for the right simple past form of the verb “feel”. Thus, Tien communicated with Thao and even with the class teacher in Vietnamese about the verb he was searching for.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.26**

83 Tien: ủ (hold on) °feel feel felt hay là (or) feel felt felt ° ((to self))

feel feel felt hay là feel felt felt (*feel feel felt or feel felt felt*) ((asks Thao))

85 Thao: Feel nào (*what feel?*)

((the teacher passes the group))

87 Tien: cảm thấy đó cô (it’s about feeling, teacher) ((to the teacher but she walks away)) cảm thấy (it’s about feeling) ((to Thao))

89 Thao: feel felt felt

Overall, when dealing with speaking tasks, L1 may be deployed to search for words, terms or expressions in English in order to produce English. In this attempt, L1 was used to discuss matters related to the word spelling, word type of English words, and grammar rules.

Apart from the language-related problems discussed above, learners may be challenged with problems centered on task management to sustain the task discussion. Thus, Vietnamese aimed to deal with these concerns as well.

**The use of L1 as a tool to deal with task-related problems**

In this matter, L1 was used to discuss how the task would be completed or to clarify the task. Especially for the speaking task, Vietnamese was also deployed to discuss the content or generate information for the development of their conversation. In this sense, L1 was used to discuss the procedure or strategy to deal with given tasks,
make the task clear, refocus attention on the task, assign the role of each member when completing collaborative tasks, discuss the content of their possible talk or conversation and define the manner to perform the conversation.

The use of L1 to discuss the procedure or strategy to deal with given tasks

Students might use Vietnamese to define a procedure upon which task implementation could be carried out. In this regard, they might create an overall view of how they could deal with the task at the beginning. Alternatively, they proposed a strategy to solve the task at a certain point in their task engagement. In the sense, they suggested their own way of completing the task to suit their own purposes or in case that the task was challenging for them.

Prior to the engagement in a given task, students usually conversed in Vietnamese to propose a procedure for the task or to orientate their attention towards what the task was about or how the task could be conducted. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.27 reveals that, earlier in the speaking task, students were required to make a conversation with eight words selected from the words reviewed. At the beginning of the task, Sang and Thao spent time discussing what their conversation might be talking about. They planned to build a conversation about a birthday, so they defined the words that might contribute to the content of their conversation. Accordingly, they selected eight words from which the conversation was later developed.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.27

3 Sang: birthday sẽ có package, sẽ có letter ((points at the words in the paper))
(birthday must have package, must have letter)

4 Thao: Package?

5 Sang: cái túi để mua đồ (bags for buying stuff)

6 Thao: ủ, tại sao lại có thư? ((point to the word “letter”)) (but, why including a letter?)

7 Sang: có thư có nghĩa là mày nói với con nhờ này có ai đó gửi thư chúc mừng sinh nhật mày (it means that you tell her that someone sends you a letter as a congratulation on your birthday)

9 Thao: Ù (OK), ((circle the words they select: letter, package))

10 Sang: rõi tám từ này (ok, these eight words)
Similar to this excerpt, excerpt 6.2.2.1.28 (see Appendix J) shows that the discussion between Hoa and Tam revolved around how to construct the talk about the effects of weather at the beginning of the task engagement. Immediately after Tam provided an English statement introducing their group, Hoa suggested making the body of their talk before developing the introduction (line 2). That is, Hoa decided to create the conversation before making the introduction. The suggestion made by Hoa was accepted, so Tam then proposed talking about the cold weather and the summer when the weather might make people irritated (lines 5-8). In agreement with Tam, Hoa added more ideas which could be talked about on the effects of the weather in the summer and the winter. For example, Hoa said that there are a few activities in the summer and winter, and mentioned types of activities people could do in these seasons (lines 7-8). Then, Tam suggested that they could create a conversation based on these ideas, and their discussion about the talk content was then built around the ideas proposed at this stage.

During the accomplishment of the given task, students might recommend strategies to deal with the task in accordance with their own purpose. As shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.29, although they were expected to make a conversation with eight selected words, the group of Thao and Sang decided to build their conversation with nine words so as to make their conversation more distinctive from those of other groups. Line 73 reveals that they finished the conversation, so Sang reviewed the selected words used in their conversation. After that, Thao suggested including one more word in the conversation (lines 76-77). Then, their interaction proceeded to develop the conversation further with the adding word.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.29**

73 Sang: Cheap, expensive, birthday, letter, package, bank, (?inaudible)

((Thao and Sang write on their own notes))

(10.0)

76 Thao: Nói thêm một câu nữa đi *(let add one more sentence)* Chín từ luôn đi cho nó lạ *(let use nine words so our talk will be unique)* Ghi lại hết chưa? *(Have you finished taking notes?)* ((to Văn))

Students might adopt strategies to counter challenges arising from the task at a certain point; students also adopted similar strategies to those mentioned above when they
faced with difficulties in developing certain parts of the English talk. For instance, at a moment illustrated in excerpt 6.2.1.30 (see Appendix J), Tran and Phuong were attempting to make the concluding sentence of the talk about the effects of weather, but then they left the sentence to be completed after finishing the rehearsal of the talk. Line 133 shows that Tran was struggling with generating ideas for the concluding sentence, and suggested that Phuong be responsible for the sentence. However, they then drew their attention to the introduction of the talk (line 135-137). Tran suggested dealing with the sentence later (line 140). They continued the task engagement with the rehearsal of the talk, and they dealt with the concluding statement when they finished the task rehearsal.

During the task completion, students conversed in Vietnamese to remind their partners of the task procedure that was defined earlier. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.31 illustrates that Tam reminded Hoa of the completion of the introduction of their talk about the effects of weather (line 150). At the beginning, they had decided to make the introduction after finishing the conversation. Hence, when they completed the conversation, Hoa drew the introduction to Tam’s notice. After that, they discussed how to make the introduction (lines 152-155).

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.31**

150 Tam: Ê, trở lại khúc đầu, hồi này tính nói cái đó quên mất tiêu rồi.
Thôi, quên mất rồi (Hey, please back to the beginning, we just want to talk about what. Oops, I forget it)

152 Hoa: Lúc đầu chỉ giới thiệu thôi mà (At the beginning we just introduce)

153 Tam: uh,

154 Hoa: Our group including Tam and Hoa ((writes it down))

155 Tam: We are Tam and Hoa. Today we will talk about the effect of the weather, uhm, uhm ảnh hưởng của thời tiết đến chúng ta (the effect of the weather on us)

Overall, students communicated in Vietnamese to establish a procedure based on which the given task would be progressed. The use of Vietnamese in this sense facilitated students’ task implementation. Moreover, in order to deal with the task, students needed to grasp an understanding about the task; therefore, this results in the use of the first language to make the given task clear to them.

*The use of L1 to make the task clear*
Some talks between students conducted in Vietnamese revealed their efforts to elucidate the instructions of the given task so that they could complete the task in accordance with the task requirements or expectations.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.32 illustrates that Nhu, Van and Lam discussed in Vietnamese to clarify the requirement of the task so that they could proceed to deal with the task. Van thought that they would create a conversation (line 13), but her partners reminded her of the task requirement requesting them to make a speech (lines 15-16), which would be then presented by one member. After that, Van and Lam worked on what they actually needed to do in their talk about the party.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.32**

10 Lam: cô biểu làm cái gì? không hiểu ý đồ của cô là muốn gì, Tao cũng không biết làm cái gì nữa (*what did the teacher asks us to do? I don't get her point, so I don't know what to do*)

12 Nhu: Nè, làm cái này nè (*here, do this*) (*shows the questions in the handout*)

13 Van: chữ không phải làm hội thoại hà? Trả lời câu hỏi chữ không phải làm hội thoại hà? (*so not making a conversation? Answer the questions, not making a conversation*)

15 Nhu: viết bài thuyết trình đó (*write a speech*)

16 Van: đâu phải làm hội thoại đâu (*not making a conversation*)

In the same way, excerpt 6.2.2.1.33 (see Appendix J) shows that Vy, Quan and Tien attempted to resolve understanding about the task’s expectation. In lines 2 and 4, Quan said that they would write a paragraph with six words, but Tien expressed his disagreement with Quan by asking a question (line 5). Therefore, Quan corrected himself, that it would be a dialogue (line 6). Vy then asked the teacher to confirm the task requirement (lines 7-9). Then, their interaction proceeded with creating a conversation.

In particular, learners also communicated with the class teacher in Vietnamese to ask for the clarification of the task expectation. For example, excerpt 6.2.2.1.34 shows that Vy, Quan and Tien were arguing about the requirement of the speaking task. They were confused between making a conversation at the bank or writing a paragraph about the bank. Finally, Vy posed a question about this to the class teacher.
(line 7), and the teacher then confirmed that they were expected to make a dialogue. Thanks to this confirmation, the group then proceeded in making a dialogue.

In addition to the use of Vietnamese to clarify the task, learners might employ it to refocus their attention on the task.

*LI use to refocus attention on the task*

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.35 shows that Tien reminded his group members to speed up their own work so that they could present the conversation, in case they were called by the teacher. Thao, Phuong and Tien prepared their talk about a birthday party in isolation, in spite of the teacher’s expectation that students needed to work on the talk collaboratively. For the sake of a part of the task expectation, that one member as the representative in each group would perform their talk in front of the whole class, the member must be able to present if appointed by the teacher. At this time, Tien refocused his group members’ attention on this so that they could partially complete the task in accordance with the task requirement in terms of having one representative talk to share with the teacher and other groups.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.35**

9 Thao: tổ chức sinh nhật để tưởng niệm (*have the party to commemorate …*)
((talks to Nieu and laughs))

11 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) Hay là để… (*Or to…*)

12 Tien: tự bấy chuẩn bị lệ lệ để hội có kế, biết đường nói (*let prepare quickly, so in case the teacher calls our group we can speak*)

13 Thao: ((smiles and looks at Tien’s note paper)) ghi câu hỏi lại làm gì? (*why do you write the questions*) ((the questions have already been stated in the hand out))

In another speaking task, students talked to each other to remind themselves to finish the task in line with the requirement, as seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.36. Nhi and Tien were making a conversation from 8 selected words as requested by the class teacher. At one stage, Nhi stated that they had just involved four words out of eight in their conversation, so they needed to develop the content with another four words.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.36**

111 Nhi: Hai, ba mới có bốn chữ à, còn bốn chữ nữa mới được (*two, three, just 4 words, four more words to go*) ((counts))
After the completion of speaking tasks which often required learners to make conversations, learners were expected to perform these. Therefore, learners might assign specific roles for each member within the groups or pairs. In addition, they might assign the content of conversation among members, and these were conducted in Vietnamese.

The use of L1 to assign the role of each member when completing collaborative tasks

At the beginning of tasks, students talked to each other in Vietnamese to allocate the role of each member in the group.

When dealing with speaking tasks, the assignment of the roles of each member focused on the allocation of the role to play in each conversation. For example, excerpt 6.2.2.1.37 shows that, after they generally set what might be dealt with to create the conversation content, students assigned a role for each member to play when acting the conversation out. By saying “Tao làm A nha? (I’m A, ok?)”, Tran (line 6) put in a bid to be the first person to start the conversation. In this context, when making a conversation and acting the conversation out, learners often name the turn of each speaker in alphabetical order (e.g. A, B, or C, etc) or as a numeral order (1, 2, or 3), which refers to the first, second or third speaker. Phuong accepted the idea that Tam would be the first speaker and she would be the second speaker to present the conversation. However, as the students treated their talk as a speech, this required one of them to be responsible for the introduction of the talk. Thus, Phuong asked who would be in charge of introducing their talk when presenting it (line 7). In response to Phuong, Tran showed that she would take responsibility for delivering the introduction. To illustrate, she spoke out the introductory sentence involving the speaker’s name and the topic of the talk (lines 8-9).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.37

5 Tran: Tao nghĩ là (I think) what kind of weather, what kind of weather is good for you? Tao làm A nha? (I’m A, ok?)

7 Phuong: dứa nào giới thiệu? (who will introduce?)

8 Tran: “Hi everybody”, I’m Tran gi gi dó (something like this) uhm today uhm we talk about uhm uhm=
Likewise, at the beginning of the task of developing a conversation at the bank, students communicated in Vietnamese to allocate the roles to play in the conversation among group members. As shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.38, Sang nominated Tram to play the role of a bank teller in the conversation (line 6). This is similarly shared in the second group of Vy, Quan and Tien, who assigned the role of each member through the use of L1. As seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.39, Tien first appointed himself as a customer, and then required one of his peers to play the role of a bank clerk (see Appendix J for excerpts 6.2.2.1.38 and 6.2.2.1.39).

Besides this, during the construction of the content of conversation, students discussed the role of each member in order to allocate the conversation content among members. Excerpts 6.2.2.1.40 and 6.2.2.1.41 are illustrative of this point. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.40 indicates that Nhi complained about her turn, which she thought was more than that of the other members, when Quan reminded Nhi of her turn at this point of the conversation. Quan then reminded her of each member’s role, which was to be in charge of producing specific utterances (line 119), so Nhi agreed with Quan and they continued with the conversation development.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.40**

116 Quan: chú waiter, đi với rồi, máy đó ((talks to Nhi)) *(the word “waiter”. At the restaurant, your turn)*

117 Nhi: sao tao hoài vậy, còn tui này nưa chú, bonne dünya mà *(why always my turn, how about you guys, four of us)*

118 Tien: máy làm waiter mà *(you are the waiter)* ((points at Nhi))

119 Quan: nhô này làm quản lý *(She will be the manager)* ((points at Tram)) tao làm quản trị viên *(I will be administrator)* Waiter phải chào Trước *(Waiter must say hello first)*

121 Nhi: biết rồi *(I know)*

Likewise, excerpt 6.2.2.1.41 identifies that learners argued over the allocation of the conversation content to each member in the task on the effects of weather. In this task, Tran and Phuong decided to construct the conversation about their favourite weather differently from each other: one liked cold weather and the other preferred cool weather. After that, the students assigned the roles of who would talk about cold or cool weather. From lines 76-78, Tran appointed herself to be in charge of the cool weather and her partner to talk
about cold weather. However, there was then some confusion for Tran, when Phuong would like to change her mind. Namely, Phuong would like to go with the cool weather. At the end of the sequence, Tran tried to persuade Phuong to approve the cold weather so that she could talk against the weather that caused her to have the flu: in particular, she would take herself as an example of the cold weather effects since she had flu at that time. They then proceeded to the conversation construction with their assigned roles (see Appendix J for the excerpt).

Besides this, students might assign the sub-content that each member would talk about after finishing the conversation, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.1.42. After they completed the conversation, Tam and Hoa appointed the part of the content each of them would be in charge of when acting it out. Accordingly, Hoa assigned herself to be the first speaker in the conversation while Tam was the second speaker.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.42

231 Hoa: Ok, nào chọn phần trình bày nha (select the part for presentation)
232 Tam: mày chọn trước đi (you select it first)
233 Hoa: tao chọn số một (I select number 1)
234 Tam: vây tao chọn số hai (so I select number 2)

In the same fashion, when dealing with the task of describing a party, which requires one representative from the group to perform the task at the end, students assigned who would be the representative. As revealed in excerpt 6.2.2.1.43, earlier in the task, Van appointed Nhu as the person who would present the talk (line 4), so Nhu was in charge of writing the conversation during the discussion. Van and Lam explained that writing the conversation helped Nhu with the memorisation of the talk, which was beneficial for the presentation later (lines 6 and 9) (see Appendix J for the excerpt).

In particular, when dealing with tasks requiring them to discuss a topic or to construct conversations in English, the use of Vietnamese was fundamental to generate ideas necessary for the development of the conversation content. In this attempt, they conversed in Vietnamese to handle problems related to generating the content of the talk in English.
The use of L1 to discuss the content of their possible talk or conversation

In this regard, students communicate in L1 to generate ideas required to develop the content of their conversation. This may involve the requirement of providing further information to expand or adjust the content of the conversation. In addition, they might organise the ideas or give comments on the ideas included in their conversation through talking with partners in Vietnamese. Furthermore, Vietnamese talks with peers aimed to discuss the context for the conversation. Vietnamese conversations found at some points during the task engagement were to suggest a manner to deliver their conversation when it finished.

First of all, when they needed more information to develop conversation, they communicated in Vietnamese. For example, excerpt 6.2.2.1.44 shows that Tam requested new ideas in order to create the content of the conversation about the effects of weather, so Tam said, “what else?”, in Vietnamese to draw their attention to generating needed ideas. At another point, they tried to make the concluding sentence (lines 229-230).

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.44**

147 Hoa: Flu, headache, trời nắng nóng quá (so sunny), có stomachache nữa ((laughs))

(stomachache also)

148 Tam: Còn gì nữa? (what else?)

149 Hoa: Hết biết rồi đó (no more ideas)

228 Tam: There are

During the development of the conversation content, students sometimes conversed in Vietnamese to give an explanation for the inclusion of a certain English utterance for the conversation. For example, excerpt 6.2.2.1.45 shows that Phuong questioned Tran about the inclusion of “How do you feel?”. In response, Tran gave the reason for this and then the discussion moved forward.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.45**

36 Phuong: Đã nói là uncomfortable, còn how do you feel làm chi nữa (We already say uncomfortable, so why do we say how do you feel again?)

37 Tran: Ý ta muốn hỏi chính xác là may bì cái gì (I mean I want to ask what exactly happened with you)
Students might suggest including ideas to expand the content of their conversation. As seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.46, Quan, Nhi and Tram contributed ideas for their conversation. At this point they made efforts to create a talk about making a reservation for a party in a restaurant. Quan proposed mentioning the price, which was cheap, while Nhi suggested saying something about food. However, Tram argued that food was not related to the talk at this point (see Appendix J).

In addition, students might happen to speak in Vietnamese when they wanted to adjust the content of the conversation. To illustrate, excerpt 6.2.2.1.47 proves that Thao recommended that her partner revise the content of their conversation.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.47

171 Thao: Thôi Sang, mày nói là me too đi. Nghĩa là mày không đói giống tôi (Ok Sang, you say “me too”. It means that both of us don’t feel hungry)

172 Sang: Ú’ (Ok)

173 Thao: Chỉ có Van đói thôi, chử tự nhiên good idea thấy kỳ kỳ (Only Van does feel hungry, using “good idea” here sounds strange)

In addition, students may communicate in Vietnamese to organise the ideas on the conversation content. In excerpt 6.2.2.1.48, Phuong and Tran were making the conversation, and Phuong talked to Tran about what she might produce, “what kind of weather is perfect for you?”, after “No, I don’t like”. Similarly, as indicated in excerpt 6.2.2.1.49 (see Appendix J), students were developing ideas showing the influence of hot weather, at this time. Tam proposed an utterance, “Are you so tired?” (line 15), and Hoa then suggested involving the “why” question afterwards (17). After that, they continued to construct the conversation, including the question and the answer to the question.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.48

96 Phuong: Do you like cold weather? ((writes the sentence down))

97 Tran: too. No, I don’t like.

98 Phuong: Xong rồi tao hỏi mày là what kind of weather is perfect for you? (Then I ask you what kind of weather is perfect for you?)

99 Tran: Uhm (.). uhm, a flu, flu là tính từ (is an adjective) I always get flu in cold weather.
Phuong: so what kind of weather is perfect for you?

Throughout the construction of the ideas needed for forming conversations, the use of Vietnamese might aim to give comments or requests for comments on the conversation content that they were working on.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.50 below illustrates that students might talk to each other in L1 in order to request for comments on the ongoing conversation content. At one moment during the construction of the conversation content about the effects of weather, Phuong expressed ideas showing her favour of cool weather, in Vietnamese. Then, she asked Tran for comments on these ideas. In response, Tran confirmed that the ideas sounded acceptable.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.50

71 Phuong: Tôi thích thời tiết mát mẻ vì tôi không bị nhứt đầu. Ön không may? (I like cool weather because I don’t feel headache. Does it sound good?)
72 Tran: Được (Fine)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.51 (see Appendix J) indicates that Phuong and Tran were practising their conversation, and they gave comments on the content during the practice. At this point, after practising the conversation, Phuong suddenly stopped and said that she felt the conversation did not sound good (line 154). In response, Tran suggested Phuong keep moving the conversation forward by stating what she would say next, and the practice then continued (lines 157 and 158). In this sequence, although the students practised their conversation in English, they used Vietnamese to make assessments on the content of the conversation.

Similarly, in the group of Hoa and Tam, they talked in L1 to give comments on the content with an aim to keep the conversation on topic. Excerpt 6.2.2.1.52 (see Appendix J) shows that, while Hoa was writing down the conversation, she remarked that some ideas (e.g. swimming and camping) might be off the topic being discussed (lines 67-68). However, Hoa suggested keeping the conversation moving with the ideas to pave the way for some upcoming ideas. Hoa explained that including “camping” might lead to some utterances revealing the effects of weather. It appears that the discussion at this point in Vietnamese aimed to comment on the ongoing conversation content.
When developing the content of the conversation, students also used L1 to set the context upon which the conversation content would be generated.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.53 indicates that Vy and Tien attempted to form talk that happens at the bank, which was challenging for them, and they then tried to locate the conversation in a situation so that they could develop the conversation. In line 48, Tien expressed that it was hard to generate the conversation. In response, Vy proposed a situation in which the conversation might occur.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.53**

47 Vy: bát đầu phải là what’s your name? *(Let’s begin with “what’s your name?”)*

48 Tien: Sao khó quá vậy? *(Why is it so hard?)*

49 Vy: Mình giả bộ họ rút tiền ở ATM được không, máy nói là được, xong rồi mình nói nói là có thể cho mình mượn tiền được không *(Pretend that you ask that you can withdraw money from ATM with the card or not, you say yes and then say you want to borrow money)*

51 Tien: Bạn đi mượn tiền tôi đi ((talks to Vy)) *(You will borrow my money)*

The use of L1 to define the manner to perform the conversation

Besides the above, students might communicate in L1 to discuss the manner in which to perform the conversation. This might include discussion about the way to perform a certain English utterance in the conversation, the way to perform the conversation on stage, or the way to deliver the conversation in a native-like manner.

As seen in excerpt 6.2.2.1.54 (see Appendix J), Tran and Phuong were trying to create talks for the opening of their conversation. Phuong suggested opening the conversation with a question, “How’s it going?” (line 15). Later, she provided a response to the question, “So-so” (line 23). She suggested for Tran to say the response in a reluctant way. By suggesting the way to say this response, the student could relate to the effects of weather later in the conversation.

Students might converse in Vietnamese to discuss ways to present the conversation on stage, as revealed in excerpt 6.2.2.1.55. At this point, Thao, Sang and Vy had finished their conversation and rehearsed it once, so Thao reviewed the conversation.
While reviewing the conversation, she proposed a scene when acting the conversation out (e.g. Sang comes to Thao and Van to begin the conversation).

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.55**

106 Thao: Thêm vô chỗ này *(let add this)* “Hi Sang”

107 Tao và Van đứng một chỗ và Sang lại *(I and Van stand and Sang comes)*, từ tôi sẽ nói *(we’ll say)* Hi Sang, sau đó *(then)* Sang mới nói *(will say)* yesterday I could not go.

110 Sang: Ú (OK)

111 Thao: Phải đi từ xa lại *(Must come from the distance)*

112 Have you received it yet? I’m not hungry, I’ll drink orange juice. Good idea *(revise the script)*. I have not cash money. I’ll pay for you. Let’s go!

Interestingly, later in their discussion, Thao suggested that her partner emphasise the intonation to deliver the talk in a natural way (excerpt 6.2.2.1.56 in Appendix J). Thao proposed for Sang and Vy to rise and fall their tone when delivering the task. As a result, Sang practiced falling and rising intonation to a statement in the conversation (line 169).

Not only did learners communicate in L1 with their peers, they also conversed with the class teachers in L1 when requesting for help during the process of doing the given task. Even in the speaking class where they were expected to use English, Vietnamese was used frequently among students and sometimes used to communicate with the class teacher.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.57 shows the use of L1 in communication with the teacher in a speaking task in order to present their language problem to the teacher. At this moment, students were trying to define the appropriate simple past form of the verb “feel”. They attempted to direct the teacher’s attention to their problem by saying the meaning of the verb in L1 (see line 87). In addition, they asked for the teacher’s confirmation of the form provided (line 91); however, there was no response from the teacher who ignored the student’s question.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.57**

87 Tien: cảm thấy đó cô *(it’s about feeling, teacher)* ((to the teacher but she walks away)) cảm thấy *(it’s about feeling)* ((to Thao))
The section has so far presented how the use of L1 appeared to be useful for learners’ task engagement. That is, it helped them to deal with language problems or to manage the task. Besides L1, learners might produce talk to themselves when facing problems during the task engagement.

6.2.2.2. Private speech

Private speech was noticed as learners had difficulties during the development of the content of their conversation. In this sense, self-oriented talk occurred to deal with difficulties related to searching for new words or word forms, retrieving a grammar point, or finding new information.

In excerpt 6.2.2.2.1 (see Appendix J for the full excerpt), in an attempt to create the talk about the effects of weather, Tam and Hoa needed a verb to convey the point that people should organise some outdoor activities in summer. However, they forgot the verb in need. In line 49, Hoa appeared to be confused about the infinitive verb form, “held” or “hold”. Hence, she kept saying the string of three verb forms (line 52). In the repetition of the verb form string to herself, Hoa attempted to externalise her existing knowledge of irregular verb forms in her mind, with an aim to recall the correct verb form. In fact, the self-repetition helped her to regain her memorisation of the correct infinitive form, when Hoa then remembered that “hold” is the right verb (line 54).

Likewise, at another time when they tried to make a sentence describing the effects of weather on people’s health (lines 135-138), private speech was performed. In line 136, Hoa provided an English word “sick” to complete the statement that Hoa made earlier in line 135. Hoa then posed a question to Tam about the part of speech of the word. In response, Tam produced self-oriented talk related to whether the word was a noun or an adjective (line 138). The talk was internalised to draw her attention to consideration of the correct word class of the word.

**Excerpt 6.2.2.2.1**
Self-oriented talk was also noticed in the group of Tran and Phuong, when they requested new information to build the content of their talk about the effects of weather. As shown in excerpt 6.2.2.2.2, Tran and Phuong were trying to describe the effects of weather which makes people unhealthy. To achieve that, Tran (lines 30-34) provided the utterance “make me uncomfortable”. After that, Tram said this utterance again to herself, and asked herself a question produced in Vietnamese to call for more information to sustain the talk. The question posed to herself as well as the repetition of the utterance were to direct her thoughts toward a new idea for their talk. Namely, these forms of self-addressed talk directed learners’ attention to the problem they encountered at this time, and provided that basis for generating new information for the talk.

Excerpt 6.2.2.2.2

30 Tran: Có cần ghi浓郁 đầu gì không? (Do we need to mention headache?) Thời, làm thêm một cái nữa rồi hãy nói浓郁 đau (Hold on, it will be later after mentioning one more idea) make me uncomfortable, make me uncomfortable °. Rồi gì nữa ta?° (“what else?”) (in a soft voice).

34 Phuong: It makes me headache, bỏ cái uncomfortable đi (let cross uncomfortable out)

Private speech was also discovered among Tien, Phuong and Thao in a speaking task which described a party, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.2.3. Lines 17-20 show that Tien was challenging with an appropriate preposition followed the verb “graduate”. In order to retrieve the preposition, Tien said to himself the preposition “to” twice with pauses, and he also asked himself whether “graduate” was followed by “to” (line 17). Then, he had to ask other students for help with this. The repetition of “to” and the self-questioning were to draw his attention to the correct preposition after “graduate”.

219
Later in the task completion, Tien had problems with the correct past simple form of the verb “feel” (line 84). Therefore, he related to himself a string of three verb forms, “feel feel felt/ feel felt (have) felt”. This represented the externalisation of his background knowledge about the irregular verbs forms; as a result, this might support his retrieval of the right verb form in need.

Apart from this, there was some self-talking produced by Thao when discussing with Phuong. For example, Phuong asked Thao for the confirmation of the meaning of a word, “relationship” (line 23). In response to Phuong, Thao gave confirmation by saying another word, “relation”, to herself, which word belongs to the word family of the word being asked. Saying the word family aimed to figure out the meaning of the word being asked. That is to say, saying a word of the same word family signified the appropriation of the artefacts at this point to control her thoughts over the meaning of the word. In addition, Thao performed private speech when she tried to organise the content of her talk. Line 73 shows that she talked to herself on the ideas that might be included in her talk to describe the party (e.g. *Let see what we do, book the restaurant, invite friends*). This self-oriented talk was to self-regulate her mental process in examining the possible ideas to be included in the content of her talk (see Appendix J for the full excerpt).

**Sequence 6.2.2.2.3**

17 Tien: ((to self)) “to (. to) (. graduate to hả”? *(is it “graduate to”?)
Graduate, è giói từ di với graduate là gì *(hey, what preposition comes after graduate?)* ((asks Thao))

18 Thao: ((No responses))

19 Tien: ((turns back to the group behind)) è giói từ cua graduate là gì? *(hey, what preposition comes after graduate?)* ((no responses from the group and he backs to his group))

22 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) relationship là bà con hả *(relation refers to family relatives?)

23 Thao: ū, ua relationship? *(yes, hang on, relationship?)* (.) ūrelation, relation° *(in a soft voice and different intonation)* noun dô *(it’s a noun)* 

.....

Excerpt 6.2.2.2.4 demonstrates that self-oriented speech was performed when Thao and Sang considered the grammaticality of English sentences they created for the English conversation in the reviewing speaking task. While they were practising their
conversation, Sang said one sentence twice, “I have not enough cash” (line 137). In particular, Sang said part of the sentence aloud the second time (i.e. not enough cash money). After they finished the conversation rehearsal, Thao repeated the sentence, “I have not enough cash money”, to self (line 140), and Sang did too (line 141). After that, both said the word “cash money”, belonging to the statement, to self (lines 142-143). Saying part of the statement aloud aimed to direct Sang’s attention to the grammatical correctness of the English sentence. Similarly, both students self-uttered the statement as well as the word in it, with an aim to examine whether the statement was grammatically constructed correctly. What they revealed in the stimulated recall session further supports this claim. Indeed, when asked what they thought at this point, they stated that they felt there was something wrong with the sentence so they produced the self-speech (see Appendix J for the full excerpt):

“When I spoke this sentence, I felt something wrong with it. It did not sound quite smoothly, but sounded a bit strange” (Sang - stimulated recall)

“I whispered the sentence because it seemed that the sentence was not congruent with the English grammar rules. I had a feeling that it needed to be fixed up a bit but I could not find what the mistake was” (Thao - stimulated recall)

In fact, later in their discussion, Thao was suspicious of the grammatical accuracy of the statement, and she talked to Sang about this (line 175). In response, Sang considered its grammaticality by repeating part of the sentence, “have not enough”, several times to himself (line 176). Simultaneously, he said the English grammar rule for constructing a sentence to self (lines 176-177). The grammar rule was repeated as the representation of the externalisation of his understanding of the grammar rule on the statement he was working on. As a result, the student’s mental process was regulated to examine the statement structure. Therefore, he then affirmed that the sentence was grammatically correct, and Thao then accepted the sentence as well (line 178).

Excerpt 6.2.2.2.4

137 Sang: That’s a good idea, but I have not enough cash money. (2.0) I have NOT ENOUGH CASH, không đủ tiền (trans)

139 Thao: Ok, I’ll pay for you.

140 °I have not enough cash money °

141 Sang: °I have not enough cash°
In general, Vietnamese or English self-directed talks were performed among learners when they struggled with challenges during the task engagement. Private speech took various forms according to the task that they dealt with. In general, so far as the present study has shown, L1 and private speech mediated learners’ thinking during the task accomplishment. From this perspective, when dealing with cognitive challenges during the task, learners might communicate to others (i.e. partners) in L1, or produce talk to themselves, which might be in English or in Vietnamese. This proves that language plays a central role in mediating learners semiotically during the task accomplishment. Apart from language, learners employed other resources of tools to semiotically orientate their mind.

6.2.2.3. The use of other sources of semiotic tools

The use of the task requirement

In the speaking tasks, task instructions might orientate students’ development of the content of their conversation.

In a task in which the students were required to make a conversation at a restaurant with eight English words, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.3.1 (see Appendix J for the excerpt), the requirement appeared to direct their attention to completion of the conversation. For instance, Nhi reminded that they had used four words in the conversation so they still had another four words to finish the conversation (line 111). At another point, Tran stated that there were five words already involved in their conversation (line 169). This process is also recorded in another speaking task requesting the making of a conversation in a bank with eight words, as seen in excerpt 6.2.2.3.2.

As indicated in excerpt 6.2.2.3.2 (see Appendix J for the excerpt), Sang suggested “hello bank teller” to start the conversation, and refused the introduction that they were at the bank suggested by Tram (line 12). However, Tram (line 14) argued that the conversation might not have enough words
(eight). That is, Tram would like to include the introduction so that the conversation would once more have the number of words required.

Moreover, this reveals that the task requirements guided the generation of information for the conversation development. To illustrate, excerpt 6.2.2.3.3 (see Appendix J for the excerpt) shows that Tran and Phuong, in the early stage of the task, tried to orientate their thoughts to the content of the talk about the effects of weather. In line 3, Tran suggested a word, spring, but Phuong reminded Tran that they should talk about the weather. In other words, while the requirement was “the effects of weather”, what Phuong suggested was related to seasons. That is, the task instruction mediated students’ minds about the task completion at this time.

Likewise, in excerpt 6.2.2.3.4 (see Appendix J for this excerpt), Tam and Hoa were generating ideas for the content of their talk. At one point, Hoa provided an English utterance (line 86), but Hoa was then afraid that the utterance might be off the task (line 88). Tam explained that she wanted to lengthen their talk. In response, Hoa advised her partner to concentrate to the effects of weather (line 90). As a result, they then considered the content of the talk.

At another point, when they seemed to get stuck with new ideas for the talk content, Tam tried to say the task requirement with an aim to internalise the requirement into their current situation so that they could generate new ideas about the topic. Tam tried to relate the effects of weather on people’s feeling and mood. Thus, she then came up with “happier than”.

As to the task requiring students to describe a party, although Thao, Phuong and Tien created their own talk in isolation, which was not in line with the task requirement, the requirement still directed their attention to their engagement in the task (excerpt 6.2.2.3.5 in Appendix J). Earlier in the task (lines 9-12), each member prepared their own talk, and Tien recommended his peers to make their work into a speech so that any of the group members could present the talk if called by the teacher (line 12). That is, they were expected to discuss collaboratively to form one talk, and the teacher would call one member as the representative of the group who would perform the task. However, it was supposed that each member in this group would present their own talk. Therefore, Tien wanted to make sure that all members would finish
their own work in order to be ready for the presentation. Clearly, the requirement of the task influenced their task engagement at this point. At another point (lines 74-78), Phuong consulted with Thao about a point of the content for her conversation. In line 74, Phuong asked Thao whether she might talk about how to prepare for the party. However, immediately after that, she could define that she might just observe the party due to the word “describe” from the requirement of the task (line 76), and Thao then agreed with Phuong (line 78).

Likewise, the task requirement helped the group of Van, Lam and Nhu with the orientation of the content of their conversation about the birthday party (see excerpt 6.2.2.3.6 in Appendix J).

Lines 19-23 in excerpt 6.2.2.3.6 prove that students were working on the orientation of the possible conversation content. In line 19, Van looked at one follow-up question in the handout, “What are the differences between a serious party and a friendly party?”, and expressed that the party must be friendly and not serious. Lam argued that it would not be serious but must be formal. In addition, after a pause, Lam looked at the handout and stated that it would be the description of the party, not making the conversation at the party.

In general, the requirement of given tasks appeared as a valuable mediating tool in the engagement in the task, which guided students to conduct the given task in an appropriate direction. Besides this, in order to generate more information needed to finish the task, learners could resort to the requirement of the given task. That is, they interpreted the task requirement.

Furthermore, learners made use of their background knowledge related to English learning, which aided their completion of a given task.

**The use of background knowledge of English learning**

In this sense, learners made use of their pre-existing knowledge related to English grammar during the engagement in the given tasks. The knowledge involved the background knowledge of grammar, of structuring an English speech, English conversation, argumentative talk, and word family.

*The employment of English grammar background knowledge*
In terms of the English grammar background knowledge, students made use of it for the purpose of forming grammatically correct English statements for their conversation. The grammar knowledge in use during the task engagement involved the knowledge related to English quantifiers, adjectives, part of speech, and modal verbs.

First of all, excerpt 6.2.2.3.7 (see Appendix J for this excerpt) indicates that the knowledge of English quantifiers when making English questions about the quantity supported students’ creation of their conversation. Vy, Tien and Quan attempted to make a question about the amount of money they wanted to withdraw. Firstly, Tien and Vy provided the question in Vietnamese (lines 93-94). Next, Tien tried to transform it into English by saying “Do you want” (line 95), but Vy and Quan suggested the question must be with “How”. After that, Quan asked his partners whether the question would start with “how much” or “how many” (line 98). In response, Vy reasoned that the question was about the quantity of money, hence “how much” must be used.

Similarly, the knowledge of English quantifiers oriented Tran and Phuong’s attention when forming statement about the effects of weather. Excerpt 6.2.2.3.8 indicates that Tran and Phuong were trying to develop a statement describing the cool weather. Accordingly, Phuong proposed an idea in Vietnamese from which to develop an English equivalent (line 111). After that, Tran tried to form the English statement, “I can travel to many places so good” (line 112). However, Phuong then questioned Tran about the use of “many or much” in the statement, that is, “many places or much places” (line 113). Tran confirmed “many places” as the correct one, and Phuong accepted the confirmation and continued completing the statement (line 115) (see Appendix J for this excerpt).

As a general rule, as learners of English in the current learning context, they understood that “how much”/ “much” should come before uncountable nouns while “how many”/ “many” are followed by countable plural nouns. Such knowledge mediated their thought in the creation of English utterances.

Along with the knowledge of English quantifiers, the understanding of English grammar related to English adjectives assisted students in solving their speaking task,
as seen in excerpt 6.2.2.3.9 (see Appendix J). From lines 182 to 185, Tam and Hoa were describing the idea that outdoors activities in summer made people more excited. Accordingly, they had to form the comparative of “exciting”. Line 183 shows that Hoa tried to put the adjective in the comparative form, and Hoa then wondered whether it was a long adjective. After Tam confirmed that “exciting” was a long adjective, Hoa formed its comparative, “more exciting” (line 185). Clearly, the knowledge of forming the comparative of a long adjective mediated their attention in the development of the conversation at this time.

At another time, when they were dealing with the adjective “harmful” to describe the bad effects of weather, students applied the rule of preposition after adjectives to create a correct statement (lines 203-208). After they identified that “harmful” is an adjective with the meaning of having bad effects, Hoa posed a question (line 207) which meant that they would describe the bad effects of weather for whom. In response, Tam provided “for your health”. At this point, the knowledge of English adjectives informed Hoa that there should be a preposition following the adjective to describe the adjective in the statement.

Next, the English grammar rules centered on verb conjugation facilitated students’ task completion, as demonstrated in excerpt 6.2.2.3.10 (see Appendix J for this excerpt). Lines 42-47 present that Phuong and Tran were making an answer to “How do you feel now?”. In line 44, Phuong gave an answer, “I feel so headache”. Immediately after that, Tran reminded Phuong of putting the verb “feel” in the continuous tense because of the presence of “now” in the question (line 50). In response, Phuong asked Tran for confirmation about the spelling of the verb when added with “ing”. That is, whether the verb would have the final consonant “l” doubled when “ing” was added (line 46). Tran confirmed that it would not be doubled, and provided new information to keep their discussion moving forwards (line 47). As students of English, they understood that “now” in a statement will signify the use of a continuous tense. This then led to the consideration of doubling a final consonant before adding “ing” and that the verb in this context would not double the final consonant. This knowledge was useful for them to form the English utterance at this point.
Moreover, the understanding centered on word classes and their functions was beneficial for learners to construct sentences for their conversation, as revealed in excerpt 6.2.2.3.11 (Appendix J). At this moment, Thao was reviewing their conversation and became suspicious of one statement, “I have not enough cash money”, which seemed to be grammatically incorrect (line 75). Hence, Sang repeated part of the statement to himself, and then uttered the rules regulating how an English statement forms “Subject, verb added not” and “adjective-noun-verb-adjective” (line 176). The saying of these helped in considering whether the statement was created according to English grammar rules or not. After that, he confirmed that the statement was formed in line with the English grammar rules; thus, they then accepted the statement. The understanding of basic rules for forming an English statement was evidently useful for them at this time to develop their conversation.

So far, learners’ pre-existing knowledge related to English grammar has served as critical support in learners’ task completion, especially for speaking tasks which required learners to produce English language. As a result, English grammar knowledge assisted learners to form English structures in alignment with English rules and constraints. In particular, learners also employed their first-hand knowledge fundamental to structuring English speeches or making argumentative talks when they dealt with some speaking tasks.

Knowledge of structuring an English speech

The utilisation of the prior knowledge of structuring a speech facilitated their task accomplishment, as demonstrated in excerpts 6.2.2.3.12 and 6.2.2.3.13 (see Appendix J for these excerpts), where two groups of students were making a talk about the effects of weather. Although they were expected to create a conversation, both attempted to develop a speech about the topic. A speech included three parts: introduction, body (i.e. the conversation about the effects of weather) and conclusion. The two sequences pointed out that two groups were making the introduction for their talk.

In excerpt 6.2.2.3.12, Tam started their discussion by proposing a statement which was for the introduction (line 1). However, Hoa suggested leaving that part to be dealt with once they finished the body, the conversation content. Later in their discussion,
they tried to make the introduction (lines 150-155). The background knowledge for making a speech informed them with the function and the language used in the introduction (e.g. introducing the speakers and the topic of the talk). To illustrate, Hoa said that the part was to introduce their talk (line 152). Then, Hoa continued with involving the names of their group members in it (line 154). Tam also gave a statement with the topic of the talk (line 155). Clearly, the knowledge guided their formation of the part in the process of completion of the given task.

Similarly, Phuong and Tran in excerpt 6.2.2.3.13 completed their introduction with the employment of the prior knowledge related to making a speech. After Phuong suggested that one of them be the person who would introduce the talk, Tran nominated herself to be in charge of the introduction by saying the substantial information needed in this part (e.g. Hi everybody, I’m Tran...) (line 8). In addition, Phuong chimed in with the topic of their talk (i.e. the kind of weather is perfect for me) (line 10). Then, Phuong added some more information to the introduction: the group members (e.g. we are Phuong and Tran), and the topic of their talk (e.g. we are talking about the kind of weather is perfect for you).

Knowledge of making an argumentative talk

Interestingly, when engaging in this task, students also applied the knowledge of argumentative talk. The knowledge advised students to make a conclusion aiming to balance their arguments throughout the talk. It means that they might have contrastive opinions about the topic, but they were expected to balance the arguments in the end. Students tried to conduct this as revealed in excerpts 6.2.2.3.14 and 6.2.2.3.15 (see Appendix J for the excerpts).

In excerpt 6.2.2.3.14, after Tam and Hoa finished talking about the bad effects of weather, Tam suggested providing an idea which they called “general ideas” (line 189). By “general ideas”, they meant that they had to make ideas to equalise arguments in their talk.

In fact, Tam revealed that they had included advantages and disadvantages of types of weather. Thus, in the conclusion they needed to come up with ideas to balance between the advantages and the disadvantages:
“We had mentioned advantages and dis advantages so we then need to state the general ideas of the two. It was so difficult” (Tam- post task interview)

In the same vein, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.3.15, after Phuong and Tran had argued with each other over their own favourite weather - one liked cool weather while the other preferred cold weather - they attempted to come up with a concluding idea to balance their arguments. This is illustrated in line 123 where they tried to say that whatever weather (i.e. cool or cold weather) is still fine as long as people feel comfortable. This means that the statement would no longer be likely to criticise any type of weather. In fact, Tran then explained that the concluding idea should show objective views besides their own subjective points of view. The explanation once again proves that the mentioned background knowledge mediated their task completion at this point.

In addition to the use of English linguistic background knowledge, learners’ social understanding, or life experience, was also employed to complete the given task.

The employment of learners’ life background knowledge

Throughout the accomplishment of the assigned tasks, the students’ personal life experience appeared as a tool. That is, their social understanding or life experience was employed to solve a problem at one point in the task engagement. In this perspective, students employed their real-life background knowledge to construct the content of conversations. Firstly, to take excerpt 6.2.2.3.16 (Appendix J) as an illustration of the employment of learners’ understanding of conventions at the restaurant to develop the conversation content, Quan, Nhi and Tien were trying to develop the conversation for in a restaurant. Quan suggested involving the idea of meeting the manager of the restaurant. Nhi questioned about this idea, so Tien gave the explanation that people probably saw the manger once they wanted to hold a birthday party there (line 131). It is obvious that his knowledge in real-life mediated his mind over the content of the conversation at this time.

In another speaking task to form conversation at a bank, in excerpt 6.2.2.3.17 (see Appendix J), students made use of their background knowledge of bank card types to create conversation at the bank. Vy provided an utterance, “Do you have a debit
card?” (line 52). However, Quan argued that debit cards were the basic bank cards (line 53). In fact, most bank cards used among customers in Vietnam are debit cards. Hence, Vy adjusted the information related to debit card (line 54). Obviously, the background knowledge on this helped them to solve the task at this point.

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.18 (see Appendix J) indicates that Tam and Hoa employed their prior knowledge of effects of weather on people's mood as well as on activities people may do, to construct their conversation about the effects of weather. Lines 5 shows that Tam suggested talking about the summer, which weather might make people irritated, while the weather in the winter was cold, so causing no irritation. Hoa (line 7) proposed discussing the summer and winter since there were a few activities to do in these seasons. Then, they decided to develop their conversation based on these suggestions (line 9).

The use of personal background knowledge to describe the effects of weather was also noticed in the group of Phuong and Tran, as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.3.19 (see Appendix J). Phuong and Tran were talking about the effects of weather on people’s health. At one point in their completion of the conversation, Phuong tried to form a statement to describe the effects of hot weather, and she then asked Tran to confirm whether hot weather made people tired or not (line 27). Tran provided the confirmation of this, in lines 28-29.

At another point when clarifying the meaning of “cool” and “cold”, as indicated in excerpt 6.2.2.3.20 (see Appendix J), Tran gave the temperature in a place in Vietnam to illustrate the meaning of “cold”. In line 61, Phuong seemed to be confused between “cold” and “cool”. Next, Tran provided the meaning of “cool” in Vietnamese (line 62), but Phuong was still confused. Therefore, Tran equated “cold” to the low temperature in Dalat. Dalat is a highland city famous for cold weather in Vietnam. The example given by Tran helped Phuong to be clear on the meaning of “cold” and “cool” so that she could make the statement with “cool” in line 65. The possession of knowledge about the weather in Dalat there appeared to be useful for students to make their talk at this point.

Furthermore, students utilised their understanding of rituals in modern life to establish the content of their conversation as shown in excerpt 6.2.2.3.21 (see
Appendix J). At one stage, Tien attempted to pull out ideas on what could be brought to a birthday party as presents. Tien asked his peers for advice on this. In line 41, Thao suggested money might be a present at such a party. In agreement with Thao, Tien said that people now preferred giving money as a birthday present, which helped to cover the expenditure of the party.

The use of word sounds

At some points during the completion of the task, learners might play with sounds of words to draw their attention to the problems (e.g. language issues) at hand. In this sense, learners could stretch, emphasise or speak out word sounds louder when countering these language issues.

In excerpt 6.2.2.3.22 (see Appendix J), Tran produced a statement, but Phuong failed to catch it because of the last word “blurry”, which was strange to her. Thus, after she recognised the word due to the provision of its equivalent Vietnamese meaning, Phuong stretched the sounds of the word as demonstrated in line 50. This was to internalise the word, which was new to her.

When engaging in the reviewing speaking task, the utilisation of language sound play was applied at some moments as identified in excerpts 6.2.2.3.23 and 6.2.2.3.24 (see Appendix J for the two excerpts).

At a point when Tien and Nhi were developing the content of their conversation, Nhi repeated the utterance previously given by Tien, “she wants” (see lines 93-95) as indicated in conversation excerpt 6.2.2.3.23 (see Appendix J). However, Nhi missed the ending “s”; thus, Tien reminded her of it with emphasis on the ending (line 96). In responding, Nhi said the utterance again also with emphasis on the ending “s” (line 97). This emphasis aimed to focus her attention on the ending which she had earlier missed.

In excerpt 6.2.2.3.24 (see Appendix J), students played with word sounds to direct their attention to the grammaticality of English utterances created by them. At this time, the students were rehearsing their conversation, and Sang articulated some words aloud out of a sentence, “I have not enough cash money”, produced in the conversation content (lines 137-138). Reading these words aloud was to direct the
student’s attention to their grammaticality. In other words, this aimed to consider whether they had been produced in accordance with English grammar rules and constraints or not. This is further confirmed later when they finished their rehearsal, and Thao expressed concern about the statement, that it seemed to be ungrammatical. Therefore, Sang judged the well-formedness of the statement (lines 176-177).

**The use of string of irregular verb forms**

As revealed at some moments during the students’ task engagement, the string of verb forms of irregular verbs appeared as a valuable means for them to recall the correct form of the verb needed for making their conversation content. Excerpt 6.2.2.3.25 and excerpt 6.2.2.3.26 are good examples of this.

In excerpt 6.2.2.3.25 (see Appendix J), students tried to retrieve the infinitive form of the verb which means making something to happen. Line 49 shows that Hoa was confused between “hold” and “held”. Then, Hoa kept saying the three verb forms to herself in line 52, and she then recognised “hold” as the right infinitive verb form (line 54). As EFL learners in the context of Vietnam, they understood an irregular verb with its three forms: infinitive, simple past and past participle. The three forms often come together as a string which is then learned by heart to memorise the irregular verb forms. At this point, uttering the verb form string helped them to recall the verb form looked for.

This is similarly found in another speaking task, describing a party, as indicated in excerpt 6.2.2.3.26 (see Appendix J), where the students made efforts to identify the past simple form of “feel”.

As demonstrated in this excerpt, students deployed the string of three forms of the verb “feel” in order to remind them of its correct simple past form. Tien was confused whether the simple past form could be “feel” or “felt”, so he read “feel feel felt” and “feel felt felt” to himself (line 83). After that, he said the two strings to Thao and asked for the confirmation of the appropriate simple past form of “feel” (line 84). Thao gave confirmation by saying “feel felt” (line 87): that is, that “felt” is the proper simple past form. In response to Thao’s answer, Tien reminded Thao of another string of verb forms to warn Thao that she might be confused with the other string (line 88). Clearly, the string of verb forms appeared to be an instrument useful for
learners’ retrieval of a verb form that they needed. As a result, it supported students’ accomplishment of the given task.

In order to complete the given task, Table 6.5 reveals that learners attempted to employ various resources of tools to mediate their thoughts. These involved L1, private speech, learners’ background knowledge (which could be about English learning, of a topic being discussed), the given task, playing with word sounds, etc.

Table 6.5. The summary of semiotic tools in the Speaking class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of semiotic mediation</th>
<th>Forms of semiotic mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Dealt with language-related functions (e.g., search for English words or expressions, word forms) to produce English language (i.e., composing an English statement) Dealt with ask-related functions (i.e., defining the procedure to complete the tasks, or discussing the content of the conversation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private speech</td>
<td>Managed students’ minds over difficulties at a point (e.g., searching for English words or word forms, a grammar structure, or finding new information related to the topic) to develop the content of their conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other forms</td>
<td>Directed students’ minds over the content about a topic or guide them to conduct the given task in an appropriate direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the task requirement</td>
<td>The use of background knowledge of English learning (e.g. knowledge of English grammar, the structure of an English speech, an argumentative talk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Created correct English statements, an appropriate speech.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of learners’ life background knowledge

Gained ideas to develop the content of a conversation

The use of word sounds.

Directed their attention to the grammaticality of English utterances.

The use of string of irregular verb forms

Recalled the correct form of the verb needed for developing conversation content

Within the sociocultural view, language learning is a process of interacting with others in the learning context. Therefore, students’ task accomplishment might be mediated by other people, such as the class teachers or classmates.

6.2.3. Human mediation

During the engagement in the given tasks, students might rely on the class teachers, peers or other students who were not their immediate partners to complete given tasks.

6.2.3.1. Teacher mediation

Teacher mediation appeared at the beginning of or during the task completion. In terms of teacher mediation at the beginning of the task, teachers might help students to review new words, provide the task requirements, inform that the task would be completed in groups or pairs, and give the allotted time of the given task.

Regarding the task of making conversation at the bank, at the beginning, the teacher formed four groups of students, and each group called their group a name and wrote the name on a paper. Then, the teacher said a word and students would write the definition of the word down on their paper. Of course, the word would be defined in the group. After that, each group would show the definition to the teacher, and the group which first showed the definition and was correct would get two points while the others just got one point for their correct answer. Excerpt 6.2.3.1.1 (see Appendix J) illustrates this.
Considering the task of “the effects of weather”, the teacher orientated the students to the task by providing the task requirement, as shown in excerpt 6.2.3.1.2 (see Appendix J) (e.g. line 1), and then wrote the task on the board, “the effect of weather on people”. To give an illustration of the effects of weather, she then provided an example (lines 3-5).

After giving the example, the class teacher asked students to work in pairs to build the conversation, and reminded them of the time allotted for the task, ten minutes (line 5-6). In this aspect of the lesson, the teacher provided students with the purpose of the task, and the task orientation. That is, students were informed that they should develop a conversation concerning the effect of weather on people. In addition, students were given the task orientation, that is, they were informed of the time allotted for the task, and students understood that the task must be conducted in pairs. Overall, at this stage, the teacher appeared to assist students with giving an example to illustrate the task.

Regarding the reviewing task, teacher got students to review the vocabulary at the beginning, which was the same as pre-task activities in most of the speaking classes. The teacher said a definition, and then the students provided the word that was being defined.

In the “Describe a party” task, the teacher explained the task requirements at the early stage of the task completion. After providing handouts with the task requirements, she read the four guiding questions, and gave the time allotted (two minutes). She also informed that the task would be completed in groups (see excerpt Excerpt 6.2.3.1.3 in Appendix J).

After the given task was given to students, teachers might also support students’ task completion in the form of giving additional instructions. In this class, students requested assistance from the teacher to deal with linguistic problems or to clarify the task instructions.

In the reviewing task, students asked for the teacher’s help when they were unsure about the requirement of the given task. As seen from excerpt 6.2.3.1.4 (see Appendix J), students tried to figure out what the teacher required them to do. They were confused between making a conversation and writing a paragraph (lines 4-6).
Then, Vy posed a question about it to the teacher (line 7), and the teacher confirmed that they needed to create a dialogue (line 8).

The teacher assisted students with suggestions from which they could develop the content of a conversation at the bank. As seen in excerpt 6.2.3.1.5 (see Appendix J), the teacher noticed that Vy, Quan and Tien struggled with forming ideas for their conversation at this moment, so she suggested some information of which they could make use to create talk at the bank (line 27). Accordingly, students decided to get rid of the current content they were working on in order to make new content based on the ideas offered by the teacher (lines 32-33). Quan then provided an utterance which was in accordance with what was suggested by the teacher (line 36).

Also in the task of making a conversation at the bank but in the group of Sang, Tram and Thu, not only did the class teacher give recommendations but she also became a co-learner with the group to support them in completing the conversation, as demonstrated in excerpt 6.2.3.1.6 (see Appendix J). Lines 21-25 show that the teacher realised the students’ challenges in constructing the conversation, and provided them with prompts (line 26). The three students still struggled with establishing ideas for the conversation, and Sang seemed not to cooperate with Tram and Thu. Thus, the teacher jumped into the discussion with the group. Line 54 illustrates that she sat with the group and suggested what each member in the group would talk about. After that, Sang stopped working with his partners, so the teacher helped the group to complete the skit. The teacher provided utterances for the conversation, and Tram noted the utterances down (e.g. lines 60-61). In addition, the teacher assigned utterances to each member in the group (e.g. line 62). In the meantime, Thu was looking at Tram while Sang just sat there silently. The teacher-student interaction in the group went this way until the conversation was completed. Noticeably, the teacher kept using English when she attempted to assist the group to complete the conversation. With the assistance from the teacher, the students could make a conversation; however, the students felt challenged because the use of English of the teacher. In fact, Tram and Thu revealed that:
It was the ideas from the teacher so it was hard for me to memorise them. And she spoke English at all the times so I couldn’t catch her. I just wrote down what she said. (Tram- the stimulated recall)

There were some points which I didn’t get her, but dared not to ask her for explanation. Moreover, I didn’t know how to ask her in the way that she could get my mind. (Thu- the stimulated recall)

As for the teacher, she said that

“This is the speaking class so they have to use English at any chances they get. It is to practice English speaking and to improve the skill”. (Teacher 2- the informal talk after the task)

Furthermore, during the task completion, learners might sometimes try to involve the teachers’ attention in their problem at a given point. Excerpt 6.2.3.1.7 (see Appendix J) indicates that the students intended to ask for the teacher’s help with a needed verb form. At this point, Tien tried to retrieve the simple past form of “feel”. He first asked for help from his partner, Thao, but he then wanted to catch the teacher’s attention to his problem when the teacher walked pass his group (line 87). In addition, Thao wanted to involve the teacher in the discussion about the simple past verb form (line 91). However, the teacher provided no response to the students thus failing to scaffold learners at that moment during their task engagement. Students then sought help from their peers to complete the task.

Overall, during the learners’ task completion, the class teachers attempted to scaffold their learning. The assisted performance could be produced when the teachers noticed challenges among learners during the task completion. In this case, the teachers provided further instructions or requirements about the given task. Especially, the teacher might become a co-learner to help learners to solve their problems, such as the teacher did in the group of Sang, Tram and Thu above.

6.2.3.2. Peer mediation

Students worked together in pairs or in groups to solve a given task; thus, students supported each other to finish the task. In this perspective, the partners might provide help in terms of linguistic assistance. Alternatively, they might give assistance
centered on task management in order that they could share a mutual understanding amongst themselves about the given task.

First of all, peer mediation appeared in the form of giving linguistic assistance. In this sense, students working in the same group provided help to each other with assistance related to English words (e.g. providing meanings of new words, word spelling, equivalent English vocabulary, or indicating word spelling mistakes).

Throughout the development of a conversation in a restaurant, there were some points when students supported each other to complete the task by helping with the spelling of English words in need, as shown in excerpt 6.2.3.2.1 (see Appendix J). At one time, Quan provided an utterance in line 4, and Tien chimed in with a word to complete the utterance (line 5). Nhi was trying to write down the utterances earlier given by Quan and Tien. However, she had difficulty with the word “celebrate”, of which the spelling was unknown for her. Accordingly, Tien gave the spelling of the word for Nhi, and Tram did too (lines 7-9). At another time, Tien spelt out the word “manager” so that Nhi could write it down (line 137).

In another speaking task where students described a party (excerpt 6.2.3.2.2 in appendix J), students resorted to their peers to get the right spelling of words. Early in the task, Tien asked for the word “prepare”, the spelling of which was unidentified to him. Thus, he asked Thao for help, so Thao wrote the word down (line 3). Later in the task, Phuong wondered whether the word she wrote was correct (line 71), and Thao pointed out a mistake in the word spelling so that Phuong could correct the word (line 72).

In addition to word spelling, students might struggle with searching English words to produce English utterances. Accordingly, students might rely on their peers for finding English words or terms equivalent for those in Vietnamese.

In excerpt 6.2.3.2.3 (see Appendix J), for example, when creating a statement for the conversation, Thao requested one English word meaning “to be given something” (line 26). Van responded to Thao with a word (line 28). Thus, Thao could develop the statement (line 30).
Quan amended an English word used by Nhi as presented in excerpt 6.2.3.2.4 (see Appendix J). Nhi provided an utterance, “celebrate party birthday”, with the mistake in the last two words (line 30). As a result, Quan informed Nhi that she had to say, “birthday party” (line 32). Correspondingly, Nhi could adjust the utterance with the amended word order (line 33).

Apart from English words, students needed to produce English statements in accordance with the rules and constraints of the English grammar. As a result, students might give help one another with this when producing English conversations.

In excerpt 6.2.3.2.5 (see Appendix J), for example, Thao wondered about the grammaticality of a statement when reviewing the conversation; thus, she raised her concern to Sang (line 175). Sang employed his knowledge of English grammar to consider the statement and confirmed that it was grammatically correct (lines 176-177).

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.6 (see Appendix J) demonstrates that Tran provided Phuong with grammar help when Phuong questioned about the determiner before a noun in a statement. In line 112, Tran provided an English statement, but Phuong then doubted whether “much” or “many” came before “places” (line 113). In response, Tran confirmed “many” as the right word before the noun (line 114) so that Phuong could complete the statement (line 115).

In addition to linguistic assistance, peer mediation might aid students to gain a set of mutual understandings about the task. Simply put, they helped each other to manage the task by reminding of the task instructions or sharing background knowledge to conduct a given task.

In excerpt 6.2.3.2.7 (see Appendix J), at one point when creating the content of the conversation at the bank, Vy suggested including a statement, “Do you have a debit card?” (line 52). Quan then indicated that a bank card, which they had mentioned earlier in their conversation, was equated to a debit one. In fact, the bank debit card is the popular type in Vietnam. Thanks to Quan’s indication of the card, Vy continued the conversation content with the idea about waiting for the card (line 54).
Apart from the assistance from peers working with them in the same group, students sometimes looked for help from others who were not their immediate peers. As demonstrated in the following three excerpts, students sometimes resorted to neighbouring students’ assistance to complete their task.

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.8 (see Appendix J) demonstrates that students looked for help from neighbouring students with word choice and English equivalence for Vietnamese phrases in need. At a moment when Tam and Hoa were arguing over the use of “hold” or “organise” to best convey the meaning of arranging something to happen, they then asked for confirmation from students in a group next to them. Tam turned to ask the students about what verb was more proper (line 63). After one of students told her that either “hold” or “organise” was acceptable (line 65), Tam showed that she selected “organise” for the conversation by providing an utterance with “organise” (line 66). At another time, they attempted to translate the idea of every individual season in a year into English, and they got stuck with finding the suitable English rendering for the idea. As a result, Hoa suggested asking Tham, a student in a neighbouring group (lines 222). Tam then asked the student, who then provided “in each season” as the English equivalent phrase for what they were searching for. Accordingly, Tam and Hoa could move the task along with the appropriate English phrase that the neighbouring had recommended (lines 226-227).

Assistance from neighbouring students was also noticed in another speaking task revealed in excerpt 6.2.3.2.9 (see Appendix J), where they looked for the sharing of life experience about a social matter to accomplish the given task. In order to construct the content for the talk about the birthday party, Tien was struggling with what people could bring to the party as presents. Thus, he asked the group behind him about this (line 38). In response, one student in the group gave him an answer which was unclear (line 39). This shows that Tien happened to look for assistance from the neighbouring group, not from his group members at this point.

In another speaking task, neighbouring peers might aid students with ideas to develop the content of a conversation at a bank, as indicated in excerpt 6.2.3.2.10 (see Appendix J). Quan, Vy and Tien struggled with forming the content of their conversation. While Quan and Tien were working on the conversation content, Vy talked to the group next to her group and asked them to share ideas about the
conversation with her (line 74). In respond, a student in the group provided some suggestions on the content (line 75).

In short, students relied on support from the class teachers or their classmates (i.e. their immediate or not their immediate peers) to fulfil a given task as presented in Table 6.6. The present study shows that teacher mediation might scaffold learners with task clarification, English language meaning, or further prompts given during the task discussion. In particular, teachers might be the students’ co-learner with an aim to help them to finish the task. The forms of teacher support might be provided when requested by students or when it was noticed by the teacher that students struggled with the task. In terms of peer mediation during the task, learners resorted to their peers to complete a task. In this sense, they also looked for help from peers who were not in their immediate group.

Table 6.6. The summary of people mediation in the Speaking class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of people mediation</th>
<th>Forms of people mediation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher mediation</td>
<td>Designed-in scaffolding</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Reviewed new words</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Provided the task</td>
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<td>requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Informed that the</td>
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<td>task would be completed</td>
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<td>in groups or pairs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Gave the allotted time</td>
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<td>of the given task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contingent scaffolding</td>
<td>Provided further</td>
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<td></td>
<td>instructions or</td>
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<td>requirements about the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>given task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer mediation</td>
<td>Provided linguistic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>assistance (e.g.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>providing meanings of</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>new words, word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spelling, equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English vocabulary, or</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>indicating word spelling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mistakes) or help with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>task management (e.g.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reminding of the task</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>instructions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3. Learner agency

6.3.1. Learner agency at the collective level

The section introduces the analysis of task activities between groups in class 2 as follows. It presents the activities system of each group when dealing with the speaking tasks in class 2. There were four speaking tasks, each of which was conducted by two groups of students. As with the first class, the analysis in the
second class shows that the same speaking task was associated with different activities by groups of students.

**Task 1: Making a conversation at the bank**

This is a speaking task that required students to make a skit about a conversation at a bank. The task occurred at the beginning of the class meeting. This task aimed to review the previous lesson titled “at the bank”, thus it aimed to help the students in their use of the vocabulary learned in the previous lesson to make a conversation in groups, and then to present their conversation in front of the whole class.

Before the students were required to work in groups to create their conversation, the class teacher had students play a game to review the vocabulary learned in previous lessons. The reviewed vocabulary included: “bank statement, deposit, bank, paper pocket for the letter, mailman, withdraw, bank account, bill, borrow, lend, bank clerk, and insurance”. The teacher presented these word after word, for which students would give the definitions in groups. Students were then encouraged to show their answer to the teacher to seek points for their correct answers. Among these words, the teacher gave the definition of the word “envelope” and students guessed the word. After that, students were required to choose six words to use in a conversation. They worked in groups of three to make the conversation at a bank and then acted out their conversation in front of the class. Table 6.7 reveals that the two groups approached the task with the same goal; however, the way they proceeded was distinctive.

**Table 6.7. The activity system of task 1, class 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Actions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Tram, Thu, and Sang</th>
<th>Group 2: Vy, Quan and Tien</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How was it done? (Operations)</td>
<td>Each group selected 6 words to make a conversation at the bank, and then performed their conversation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) The group worked together for a short time.</td>
<td>(1) The group worked cooperatively till the end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) There were a lot of difficulties they consulted</td>
<td>(2) When having difficulties they consulted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
pauses during their interaction
(3) One member left the discussion
(4) The teacher came to help them finish the task.
(5) The group presented their conversation by sharing the same note (created with the help of the teacher)

one another, the teacher and the neighbouring students.
(3) Took turns to write the conversation.
(4) The group presented their discussion by sharing the same note.

Why was the activity carried out this way? (Goals and Conditions)

*Goals:
- to complete the conversation as required and to perform it at the end.
*Conditions:
- group relations

*Goals:
- to complete the conversation as required performing it at the end.
*Conditions:
- time constraint
- group relations

In the stimulated recall, Tram, Thu and Sang indicated that they aimed to create a conversation with six words, then practice it in order to present it in front of others and the teacher:

_I just wanted to write a conversation with 6 words and then might speak in front of the class. I wanted to rehearse the conversation, read my part carefully to memorise it so that I wouldn’t look at the notes often._ (Tram - stimulated recall)

Sang said later, in the post-task informal conversation, that his objectives towards the task were not just to finish the task but to create a conversation which was then to be performed in a natural way as native speakers did:

_If it was just finishing a dialogue it is easy, but it’s not easy to have a good dialogue… It must be like the one in real life, like the language register of foreigners. When being spoken, it has to be linked or raised or fallen with the tone of the speaker._ (Sang - informal conversation after the task)

The group of Vy, Quan, Tien were motivated by the same goal as the first group. To illustrate, Quan said that:
We wanted to write a dialogue, then presented it smoothly without looking at the notepaper. (Quan - informal conversation after the task)

Similarly, Tien added that the dialogue was not so hard to remember, so they tried not to look at the notes:

The dialogue was so simple so it wasn’t necessary to look at the notes. (Tien - informal conversation after the task)

However, the two groups then carried out different goal-directed actions regarding the task condition in each group. The group of Tram, Thu and Sang engaged in the task in a tense atmosphere. The time they discussed together was short but included shouting and angry outbursts from Sang. Thu and Tram appeared to be reluctant to join in the task. A lot of long pauses were found in their interaction. Ultimately, Sang quit the discussion with his peers, that is, the members failed to cooperate to conduct the task until the end. At the beginning of the discussion, the three students had a number of interactions with each other in about 2 minutes. Excerpt 6.3.1.1 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) shows the interactions between Sang and Tram with assistance from the teacher. After a long pause, Sang started their discussion by asking what they should do about the task in line 2. Tran responded to Sang but in a voice too low to hear. At that time, the teacher noticed that the group had not interacted with one another, so she reminded the three students of taking roles in the skit (line 4). Accordingly, she provided an illustration of the role of each student in the group. In line 6, Sang assigned Tram to be a customer to say hello to Tran, who would take the role of a bank teller. Tran said something (in line 7) which was inaudible, but shows that she failed to understand what was going on at this point. Thus, Sang appeared to be angry when he shouted at Tram (line 8).

During the discussion, Sang dominated his peers, while Tram and Thu appeared to be subservient to Sang, as illustrated in excerpt 6.3.1.2 (see Appendix L for the excerpt). In this excerpt, Tram suggested that they should include an introduction for the conversation so that listeners would be informed of the context of the conversation. However, Sang rejected this idea, and stated this by saying that “hello bank teller” would tell the audiences about the context. Tran then gave the reason for the mention of the word “bank”, in order that the conversation might involve six words as required. In response, Sang seemed to ignore Tran and suggested saying “Hello” to start the conversation. Also revealed in this excerpt, Sang was the person
who initiated discussion after pauses in the discussion (e.g. line 17), while the others merely followed his direction (e.g. Tram wrote down what was offered by Sang (line 20)).

Sang did not help his peers when they misunderstood the English language at a certain point. As shown in excerpt 6.3.1.3 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), Tram failed to catch the last word in a statement given by Sang because of her misunderstanding between “lend” and “borrow”. However, he did not attempt to help his partner to clarify the meanings of the two verbs.

Data from the stimulated recall show that Thu and Tram were stressed by being grouped with Sang, who they thought was unwilling to work with less capable peers. For instance, Tram expressed as follows:

* Sang just likes to work with classmates who are better than him or as good as him. (Tram - stimulated recall)

In agreement with Tram, Thu pointed out that both of them were less capable in English than Sang, thus he did not like to cooperate with them:

* I think that Sang did not like working with us, who are worse than he is. He hasn’t ever sat with us, except today. (Thu - stimulated recall)

As for Sang, he expressed that he lost interest in working with the two partners and so decided to stop discussing with them. Although he at first aimed to complete the task with great effort to create a good conversation, he quit the discussion when he realised that the partners made very silly mistakes that were unacceptable to him:

* Because they were so passive. Learning foreign language needs to be positive. No one can force you to speak up, but you yourself must be active. They just murmured so I don’t feel like talking to them. (Sang - informal conversation after task)

* It was unacceptable that they make a mistake about something very basic… They make such a silly mistake so how they can make the whole conversation. It’s just a waste of time to keep working. (Sang - informal conversation after task)
Due to Sang leaving the discussion and the teacher finding that Thu and Tram were having difficulty completing the task, she came to work with them. In the post-task interview, the teacher said:

*Right, it seemed that they were lost so I came to help them to complete the conversation.* (Teacher 1 - informal conversation after task)

From that moment until the end of the task, they developed the conversation thanks to the teacher’s guidance. The teacher provided English utterances, and Tram wrote them down on her notepaper while Sang kept quiet. When they completed their conversation due to the teacher’s assistance, they acted out the conversation by sharing the same notes written by Tram. It is clear that the relation among the group members (Sang versus Tram and Thu) was the man condition determining their actions.

In contrast, the group of Vy, Quan and Tien undertook the task cooperatively in a relaxed atmosphere, and each member took an equal part in the task completion. Tien confessed that their group preferred being funny:

*We like being funny and humorous. Whatever groups with Quan and me will be so delighted and active.* (Tien – after-task informal talk)

Quan and Vy took turns to write the conversation, since this was the work of all group members because they expected that all could memorise the conversation and not read the notes when performing it:

*We wanted each would memorise our own part so that we wouldn’t read the notes.* (Vy – after-task informal talk)

Similarly, Quan stated:

*We wanted to write a dialogue, then presented it smoothly without looking at the notepaper.* (Quan – after-task informal talk)

Nevertheless, the time constraint was the condition that impacted upon their goal-directed actions. Since they had to complete the conversation in a limited time, they asked for help with the content of the conversation from a student who was not a member of their group. To illustrate, Vy confessed:

*Because I noticed that Thao was writing a lot so I’d like to learn something from her which might be used to write our conversation. We were afraid that time was almost over but we hadn’t found out any ideas for our group.* (Vy - after-task informal talk)
Furthermore, the relation among the group members served as another condition directing their goal-directed actions. They were friends who often sat in the same group; therefore, there was a division of responsibility among them when dealing with a task together:

We are close friends. We sit together even in other courses so we well understand each other. We chat a lot more chatting than we study ((laughs)). (Quan - after-task informal conversation)

We understand what each will do. Tien provides ideas, I then translate it and Vy then writes down. (Tien – after-task informal conversation)

During the discussion, all members offered and engaged in each other’s ideas to complete the conversation. They helped one another with language difficulties or discussed ideas given by one member, and gave feedback on the ideas, and solutions were acceptable among members. Excerpt 6.3.1.4 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) illustrates this point.

At the end of the task, the three members shared their conversation with the whole class. The three used the same notes during their performance of the task.

**Task 2: The effects of weather**

This task required students to develop a conversation about “The effects of weather on people” in pairs, in ten minutes, and the object of the task was to have students discuss the effects of weather on people. The students had talked about their favourite type of weather in the previous task. In addition, they had also learned the vocabulary related to weather, seasons, and the types of activities undertaken in each season. Thus, the task aimed to help learners to make use of vocabulary related to weather to make a conversation about the effects of weather on people. In addition, students were expected to utilise the knowledge gained on each season that they had learned from the previous task. The two focus pairs were pair 1, Tam and Hoa, and pair 2, Tran and Phuong. The four students were all female and were of average English proficiency. The pairs were alike in that they both decided to perform their conversation in the form of a presentation about “the effects of weather on people”. Thus, they performed the talk in the form of three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. It was explained by the students to the researcher that they had learned
public speaking from another class, so they conducted their talk in the form of a speech.

**Table 6.8. The activity system of task 2, class 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done?</th>
<th>Pair1: Tam and Hoa</th>
<th>Pair2: Phuong and Tran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Actions)</td>
<td>This task required students to develop a conversation about “The effects of weather on people” in pairs in ten minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was done?</td>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was it done?</td>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(1) Discussed the conversation together and developed their talk as a presentation about the given topic.</td>
<td>(1) Sat in a corner of the class and discussed the conversation together and developed their talk as a presentation about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(2) Prepared their talk in the order of body, introduction and conclusion.</td>
<td>(2) Conducted their talk in the order of introduction, body and conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(3) Assigned the role of each member to play in the conversation after they completed their task.</td>
<td>(3) Assigned the role that each member would take in the conversation from the beginning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(4) One member was responsible for taking notes on what they discussed.</td>
<td>(4) Both members took notes of what they discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(5) Consulted partners, neighbouring students, and dictionaries when having difficulties.</td>
<td>(5) Consulted partners when having difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Operations)</td>
<td>(6) No rehearsals conducted upon their completion of the task.</td>
<td>(6) Rehearsed their talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why was the activity</td>
<td><em>Goals:</em></td>
<td><em>Goals:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To make the conversation.</td>
<td>- To complete the conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.8 differentiates the activity system of two groups when engaging in the task. It is clear that the two groups approached the task with different processes. The difference between group one and group two was impacted by the goal of each group toward the task. While the second group expected to finish the task as required and to present it for bonus marks, the first one just wanted to finish the task as required. Tam and Hoa’s motive towards the task was merely to make a conversation that stayed on-topic as required. They did not intend to volunteer for bonus marks from the teacher:

*We tried to complete the exercise so that we might perform the talk if only called by the teacher. Sometimes she just calls for the presentation from groups of students who volunteer to share their talk with the whole class and the teacher, but she may also appoint the presentation from any groups. We don’t know. Just in case and we might have something to say; otherwise, we would lose face ((laughs)).* (Tam - stimulated recall)

Hoa later added that they expected their conversation would not be off the topic of the effects of weather:

*We were afraid of being out of the topic. Such speaking topics are easily expressed in a long and rambling way.* (Hoa - stimulated recall)
With this goal in mind, Tam and Hoa carried out various goal-directed activities as given in Table 6.8. They did not assign the role of each of them to play in the performance of the talk, but they did this when they finished the discussion. Tam revealed that it was not necessary for them to memorise their talk when performing it since they could use their notes. She affirmed that this was fine for her group who did not expect to get bonus points:

*It's ok that one wrote it and then each later selected the part for our own presentation. We didn't need to remember our part in advance since we could use the notepaper. We didn’t yearn for getting marks so looking at notes was still fine ((laughs)).* (Tam - stimulated recall)

During the construction of the talk, they first dealt with the body, then introduction and finally conclusion. They faced challenges related to finding words or expressions in English. Thus, they relied on dictionaries and sometimes asked for help from the students who were not their immediate partners. Tam confessed that dictionaries did not always help them with linguistic expressions such as the phrase they were looking for. As a result, they had to request help from other classmates:

*Because it is much quicker than looking up in the dictionary. Dictionaries do not include all we need, such as how to say every single season in a year.* (Tam - stimulated recall)

The available learning resources, such as class friends and dictionaries, appeared to be the conditions that operationalized their actions during the development of the talk.

Since there were no special aims towards the performance of their conversation in the end, they did not rehearse their conversation as the second group did. This point is made by Hoa:

*We decided that we wouldn’t volunteer for the bonus marks so we had not well prepared our talk.* (Hoa - stimulated recall)
In contrast to the first group, the second group of Phuong and Tran aimed at having a good performance to achieve bonus marks and so pursued different goal-directed actions. Once the task was assigned by the teacher, they moved to sit in a corner of the class where they were separated from other groups. Phuong explained that they wanted to be away from the noise of other students so that they could do the task better:

*We wanted to be more concentrated. It might be hard to be focused on the exercise if we were close to others because of the noise.* (Phuong - stimulated recall)

Similar to the first group, they conducted their conversation in the form of a presentation. Nevertheless, they dealt with it step-by-step in the form of parts of a speech: introduction, body and conclusion. Unlike the first group, this group stated that they took the form of a presentation for their talk since they wanted their talk to be professional:

*We wanted to be more professional when talking about the topic.* (Tran - stimulated recall)

In addition, at the beginning of their task engagement, they assigned the role of each member in the conversation. Tran suggested being the one to start their talk, as shown in excerpt 6.3.1.5 (see Appendix L for the excerpt).

While only Tam wrote the talk down, as seen in the first group, both Phuong and Tran took notes of the discussion of the task. The assignment of each member’s role at the beginning of the task and the note-taking by both the members aimed to help each of them to remember their script better when performing on stage. To illustrate, Tran stated:

*I expected that each had to memorise our part, which we would talk. We wrote it so we could memorise it. We didn’t want to keep looking at the note paper. Moreover, it would be harder for us if only one member wrote it and then we shared the same notes.* (Tran - stimulated recall)

Another finding related to the goal-directed action is that they tried to change words to make their talk sound better. In fact, data from the audio transcript show that, at a critical point in their task engagement, Tran suggested changing “what kind of
weather is good for you?” to “what type of weather is perfect for you?” (see excerpt 6.3.1.6 in Appendix L).

In the stimulated recall, Tran provided the reason for the suggestion:

_To make the speech sound better, we have to change between the words used. If we keep using the same word “good”, other people who are listening to us may feel boring._ (Tran - stimulated recall)

Members in this group resorted to each other for assistance when having difficulties. They did not need dictionaries for help with language problems, since there were not any problems for them, as related by Phuong:

_We had it with us, but we didn’t use since there were not any so difficult words._ (Phuong - stimulated recall)

Tran and Phuong rehearsed their talk twice before performing on stage, so that they could present it better. In fact, Tran said:

_We had to practice it so that we could speak fluently…I was just concerned that I would forget it when speaking it out in front of the whole class._ (Tran - stimulated recall)

In general, the way each group performed the task was different from each other due to the fact that their goals toward the task were not the same. In addition, the distinctive conditions in each group operated different actions between them. However, both groups showed a collaborative pattern during the task accomplishment. Each member in each group made an equal contribution to the task. That is, one member provided help to the other or ideas necessary for developing the task.

**Task 3: The review speaking task**

This task aimed to review making conversations about topics learned in the previous lessons preparing for the final exam. Prior to the task, the class teacher helped students review words learned in the previous lessons. The words reviewed were bank teller, deposit, withdraw, balance, bank statement, ATM, cash, credit card, debt, insurance, save, post office, tax, bill, package, letter, stamp, deliver, envelope. Then, students worked in groups of three or four to select 8 words to include in the conversation. In the end, students presented the conversation in front of the class.
The two focus groups were group 1, comprising Tien, Quan, Nhi and Tram, and the second group comprising Thao, Sang, and Van.

As revealed in Table 6.9, although they were expected to engage in the same task, the way the two groups conducted the task was different from each other.

**Table 6.9. The activity system of task 3, class 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Actions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Thao, Sang, and Van</th>
<th>Group 2: Quan, Tien, Tram and Nhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each group selected 8 words to make a conversation, and then performed their conversation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How was it done? (Operations)</th>
<th>Group 1: Thao, Sang, and Van</th>
<th>Group 2: Quan, Tien, Tram and Nhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Selected the 8 words first then make their conversation, but then decide on making more than 8 words</td>
<td>(1) Selected the words and developed the conversation as the task proceeds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) When having difficulties they consult one another</td>
<td>(2) When having difficulties they consulted one another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) All the members took notes of the conversation</td>
<td>(3) Two members (Nhi and Tram) took notes of the conversation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Rehearsed the conversation together twice</td>
<td>(4) Rehearsed the conversation once.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Found ways to deliver the conversation naturally.</td>
<td>(5) Presented the conversation when called by the class teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Each member read the conversation to self.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Volunteer to be the first group to perform the conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why was the activity carried out this way? (Goals and)</th>
<th>Group 1: Thao, Sang, and Van</th>
<th>Group 2: Quan, Tien, Tram and Nhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Goals:</em> - To complete the conversation and perform it in a natural way, and want their performance looks good</td>
<td><em>Goals:</em> - To complete the conversation as required in order to perform it at the end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the group of Thao, Sang and Van, their motive for the task was to appear as the best in their presentation. They aimed to complete the task with interesting content and good language use. They wished to present it smoothly in a native-like way. To illustrate, Thao confirmed:

*I wanted the conversation of our group must be the best to be performed… I wanted to present it in a way which was not like we read, but with raising and falling tones so that it might sound like the way native speakers spoke.* (Thao - Stimulated recall)

With this goal and concerning the condition of the task, the group carried out goal-directed actions as demonstrated in Table 6.9. First of all, the time constraint was a condition shaping the goal-directed action in this group. Accordingly, they selected the eight words that would be included in their conversation at the beginning of the task. Thao and Sang gave an explanation for this action as a way that could help them to develop the conversation quicker, since they needed time to rehearse before presenting:

*… so that we could make it faster. We had an overall view of the content that we would develop, then we just made sentences and combined sentences together.* (Sang - stimulated recall)

*This way helped finish it faster to save time for reading it before presenting it…* (Thao - Stimulated recall)

Because of the aim to present the conversation at a high standard, the three members of the group all took notes of the conversation during its development. This was useful for each member to enhance memorisation of the conversation:

*Each member had to write and then read it so that we could remember the conversation better.* (Thao - Stimulated recall)

*I had to write down what I would say so that I could later say it fluently”* (Vy - stimulated recall).
Also drawing upon the goal of presenting the conversation smoothly, they rehearsed their conversation twice. As seen in excerpt 6.3.1.7 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), Thao required her group members to practice the conversation again in order to be more fluent.

Thao expanded on this action in her post-task interview, stating that practising helped their on-stage performance to become more fluent and smoother:

*We practiced it several times so that we could speak it on-stage fluently and smoothly. The more practice we do, the more fluently we perform.* (Thao - stimulated recall)

In addition to the two rehearsals that they did together, they each read the conversation to themselves at the end of the task. This aimed to help each member memorise their script better before performing it on stage, as noted by Thao, that “*each members had to write and then read to memorise it*”.

The data show that this group finished their conversation much earlier than others. Excerpt 6.3.1.8 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) indicates that they finished their task and wished to request being the first group to perform their conversation, while other groups were still working on the task.

As also revealed in excerpt 6.3.1.8, Thao wished their group to perform the conversation since she wanted their conversation to be interesting for listeners. They were afraid that their conversation might have the same ideas as other groups if their presentation was presented after the other groups. In the stimulated recall, Thao in fact observed:

*….in order not to be repeated the ideas with other groups. You know that all groups would come up with similar ideas and language to talk about. If being talked after others, our conversation would get repeated with others so it got boring with listeners. People often like to listen to the first groups.*

(Thao - stimulated recall)

With the goal of making an outstanding conversation, they then also decided to develop their conversation using nine words, not eight words as required. As shown in excerpt 6.3.1.9 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), at this moment in their task completion, Thao (line 76) suggested including one more sentence with another word so that their conversation would be unique.
In relation to the goal of presenting their conversation in a native-like way, they focused on intonation. As demonstrated in excerpt 6.3.1.10 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), Thao suggested that her peers should use rise and fall tones when speaking so that their speaking would be like a conversation in real-life.

At the end of the task, the group spent time revising the content of their conversation. They edited the language use as well as ideas and grammar. This was confirmed by Sang, that they revised the conversation content in order to make it as good as possible:

*We pay much attention on the content of the conversation; we keep revising it as well as language expression.* (Sang - stimulated recall)

During the discussion of the task, they asked peers within the group when having difficulties with language. Thao appeared to control the group discussion, providing most of the directions for task completion, while the others were more passive. Although Sang contributed to task completion, provided language help or gave feedback on his partners’ information, Thao was the person who provided the way to conduct the task, while Van just followed the others during the discussion. As indicated in excerpt 6.3.1.11 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), the group was rehearsing their conversation at this point of task completion. After the rehearsal, Sang suggested modifying one of the statements in the conversation to make it sound better (e.g. line 101). In response to Sang’s suggestion, Thao was quiet and gave no response, as shown in line 103. Accordingly, Sang suggested keeping it unchanged (line 104). After that, Thao proposed adding a phrase to the conversation (line 106) and Sang agreed with Thao’s proposal (line 110).

Unlike the first group, Quan, Tien, Tram and Nhi conducted the task with different actions determined by their motive, which was merely completing the conversation as required.

Quan confirmed that their goal towards the task was that “…we wanted to write a conversation with 8 words and then present it” (Quan - post task informal conversation). For that reason, the group selected the words to develop the content of the conversation as the task proceeded. When they completed the conversation, they rehearsed their conversation once. During their interaction, they just paid attention to the number of the words used in the development of the conversation to match the...
requirements of the task. For example, Nhi said, “It was tiring enough to complete it with 8 words” (Nhi – post-task informal conversation). Since they did not intend to impress others with their performance of the conversation, their actions were not the same as those of the previous group which aimed to construct a special, unique and natural-like conversation.

The relationship among group members, as a task condition, informed their actions. Quan, Tien and Nhi were close friends. They usually sat in the same group where they made jokes or kidded during the task. They assigned the labour among the members, and all members made a contribution to complete the task. Nhi was responsible for noting down the conversation for the whole group. After that, the notes were shared when performing the conversation.

However, Tram wrote down the conversation for the sake of her performance of the conversation. As she confessed in the post task conversation: “I wrote it for myself so that I can better memorise it”. Quan suggested he could share his notes with Nhi, “Nhi and I, we could use the same notes”; while Tien would speak only one sentence, so it was not necessary for him to write it down:

I said not much, only one sentence, so I didn’t have to write it. It was easy to memorise one statement. (Tien – post-task informal conversation)

**Task 4: Describe a party**

This task was in the final class meeting, and aimed to review and consolidate the main points of the course that prepared for the students’ final exam. The main objective of the course was to equip students with vocabulary related to the post office, the bank, and the restaurant so that they would be able to make conversation at these places.

By giving this task, which was an additional task in the course, the teacher attempted to introduce learners to the IELTS speaking test. IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is a leading English language test for higher education. Recently, the test has been popular in Vietnam. IELTS tests learner English skills through speaking, listening, reading and writing tests. As for the IELTS speaking
test, it involves three parts. Part one requires answers to general questions on various familiar topics for 4-5 minutes, while part two tests the ability to talk about a topic given by the examiner, in two minutes. Students have one minute to prepare their talk. After that, candidates answer follow-up questions related to the topic, which is part three of the test.

Regarding this task, it was a sample of an IELTS speaking task 2, but here the students had about two minutes to prepare the task and they prepared in groups. The task required students to talk about a given topic - “Describe a Party”. The topic was from the IELTS speaking test samples downloaded from the Internet. Handouts, which outline the task requirements, were given to the students. There were four guiding questions in the handout to construct the talk: What was the party? Why was the party held? Who attended the party? What did you do for that party? After two minutes, each group of students would present their talk for 2 minutes. There were also follow-up questions which students were expected to respond to after they presented their talk. The questions were:

1. *What are the differences between serious party and friendly party?*
2. *Why are some people late for parties intentionally?*
3. *Why do some people like party while others hate it?*
4. *What would you do if the guests feel bored?*
5. *Will there be more and more people to attend parties?*

The two focus groups were group 1, comprising Thao, Tien and Phuong, and group 2 comprising Lam, Van and Nhu.

**Table 6. 10. The activity system of task 4, class 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was being done? (Actions)</th>
<th>Group 1: Thao, Tien and Phuong</th>
<th>Group 2: Lam, Van and Nhu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each group prepared in 2 minutes the topic “Describe a party”.</td>
<td>After that the representative from each group presented their talk in front of the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How was it done? (Operations) | (1) prepared the task individually  
(2) when having difficulties, they consulted one another and neighbouring students.  
(3) presented each talk when being called | (1) worked cooperatively  
(2) developed the talk with reference to an online text about the same topic being discussed.  
(3) there was a division of labour among members  
(4) when having difficulties, they consulted one another |

| Why was the activity carried out this way? (Goals and Conditions) | *Goals:  
- To learn how to deal with the IELS peaking task in real life.  
- To make use of their own idea to develop the talk.  
*Conditions:  
- Time constraint | *Goals:  
- To deal with the task as required  
*Conditions:  
- Time constraint  
- Learning resources: the online text  
- Class regulations |

As shown in Table 6.10, the two groups were expected to prepare a talk on the topic of “Describe a party” in two minutes, and then one representative from each group would present it in front of the whole class. However, the activities each group conducted when performing the task were distinctive to each other.

The motive of the group of Thao, Tien and Phuong was to use their own knowledge of the topic to prepare the speech. All members expected to make use of their own ideas to develop their own speech. For example, Phuong said:

*We wanted each will prepare our own speech as well as possible. If not, I feel that the speech wouldn’t be as good as I expected.* (Phuong - stimulated recall)

In agreement with Phuong, Thao further explained:
Because each of us has our own ideas about the party. If we work together to just for one speech we cannot put on all ideas while we want to use our own ideas. The discussion was just in 2 minutes so we did not have time to decide what ideas to be taken or left. (Thao - stimulated recall)

As revealed from Thao’s utterances above, the time constraint was a task condition in the group, which impacted their goal-directed actions. Since the time allotted was limited, discussing with one another might cost them time. Thus, each member decided to work by themselves to prepare the speech.

As a result, the group prepared the task individually although the task required students to discuss the task in a group. That is, each member prepared their own speech on the given topic. However, at the beginning they discussed together to reach agreement on which party they would talk about, as Tien stated:

> We actually discussed at first and agreed on which topic we will talk about.

(Tien - stimulated recall)

After the discussion of what party to talk about, each member prepared a talk by themselves. During the development of the talk, there were interactions among the three members where they consulted one another when they faced difficulties with new words, or grammar. This served to help the preparation of the speech of each member, as noted by Thao “we helped each other if one member needed”. Since each prepared their own speech, they sometimes had to consult neighbouring students. For example, excerpt 6.3.1.12 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) shows that Tien asked for help from students who were not his immediate partners.

Since they created the talk about the birthday in isolation, they did not appoint anyone to be the representative of the group to speak when the task finished. Each of them prepared to perform the task and was responsible for answering follow-up questions. In fact, Thao indicated:

> …as I’ve told you each of us was trying to make a perfect speech. Thus, any of us could present our speech. We didn’t care teacher might call me or any of my group mates. Each took responsibility for our own speech, and was willing to be called for the presentation and answering questions in the textbook. (Thao - stimulated recall)

The second group was different from the first in that they conducted the task cooperatively. That is, Lam, Van and Nhu jointly developed the talk about a birthday
party together, not individually. In the stimulated recall, it was revealed that they desired to complete the task in accordance with the instructions given by the teacher. Therefore, the goal-directed actions they conducted were distinctive, and each member was in charge of different duties. For example, excerpt 6.3.1.13 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) indicates that the members negotiated the role of each member at the beginning of the task. Accordingly, Nhu took responsibility for noting the talk down during the discussion and presenting it in the end, while Van and Nhu provided help with language and ideas.

Seen from this example, the group had appointed one member to be the speaker at the end of the task, which was distinctive from the first group. Nhu further expanded on this:

_**Because I would speak so I wrote the talk so that I could memorise it better. There was no time for reading it again.**_ (Nhu - stimulated recall)

Limited time was a condition of this group, since they had to complete their speech on time. Accordingly, they had to appoint who would be the speaker to perform the speech, as shown in Nhu’s utterance above. The group used an online text for reference so that they could get ideas for the development of the speech in the time allotted. Once again, Lam’s argument in the stimulated recall session demonstrated that time limitation led to the use of an online text about the same topic in order to complete their task:

_**We didn’t have time for discussing ideas and then making the talk. We just had got two minutes.**_ (Lam - stimulated recall)

In summary, this section reveals that, although each group of learners dealt with the same task, each engaged in different activities. The difference in the goal of each group resulted in distinctive actions that they performed to complete the task. Then, the task conditions in each group also caused different activities. Sometimes, the goal between two groups was the same; it was often the difference in the task condition between groups that then caused different actions. This also indicates that the task conditions operationalising learners’ activities are available tools in each group (e.g. partners, dictionaries, or online resources for the reference of the topic being discussed), classroom regulations, and the time allotted to the given task or the relationship among students in a group. Furthermore, in an attempt to conduct the
task, the interaction among group members took the form of being collaborative (e.g. Tam and Hoa or Phuong and Tran), dominant and passive (e.g. the group of Tram, Tran and Sang; or the group of Thao, Sang and Vy), or expert and novice (such as Thi and Ha). In particular, each member in groups or pairs might work in isolation from each other. For instance, members in groups of Thao, Tien and Phuong or Nguyen and Muoi performed the given task individually. Although they consulted each other whenever they had difficulties, the consultation was only for the completion of the conversation of each member in the group.

6.3.2. Learner agency at the individual level

This section reveals the personal and social factors indicating individual task performance through the lens of six components of activity theory in the speaking class. It shows that learners’ task performance was influenced by both his or her personal factors (i.e. the component of subject) and the outside ones (e.g. community, rules, tools, etc.). The component of subject is regarded as the learner’s learning preferences, learning beliefs, learning history and their perception of themselves as a learner of English. In terms of social elements, it comprises community (i.e. partners or group members), rules (e.g. the rules of the given task), division of labour (i.e. how the task is assigned to be solved in pairs or in groups), object (the purpose of the given task or the course), and tools (the instruments being used to conduct the task). Each of these aspects will be discussed in what follows.

Subject

Data from this class show that learning preferences, learning beliefs and language learning history determined specific task performances among learners. In addition, learners’ task performance was influenced by learners’ perception of self.

Firstly, a learner’s language learning preferences might be the cause of different task implementation strategies. Tram, for example, revealed that she would speak up in class once she had learned by heart the conversation; this enhanced her confidence in performing the task on stage. Thus, she often spent time memorising the conversation before presenting it in front of others. This explained why she appeared to be slower than her classmates and reluctant to speak up in class:

*I always try to take notes of new words as well as structures, which I then learn by heart at home. I often learn by heart dialogues done in the class to...*
learn expressions used in given situations. I write and then learn dialogues before performing it in front of the whole class and then take it home for more study after class. I need more time to learn the dialogue, to memorise it so I can say it smoothly. Otherwise, I don’t feel confident. Thus, I rarely speak up in class. (End of course interview - Tram)

Another illustration of learning preferences affecting task performance related to Sang, who disliked playing games, which was used as a means of reviewing vocabulary; he preferred speaking activities instead. Excerpt 6.3.2.1 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) shows that the class teacher got students to play a game at the beginning of the speaking class with an aim to review the words learned in the previous class. While other students eagerly participated in the game, Sang did not. The teacher even requested him to take part in the game by asking him to show his answer, but he ignored the teacher (e.g. lines 82-83).

As shown in an interview, he found playing such games not challenging enough and boring. Hence, he suggested turning the task into a speaking activity:

…it is boring: writing, then running to show it to the teacher for the points. It’s is so childish. I liked doing something more challenging, something is kind of speaking English. For example, the teacher may have students say the definitions of words, instead of writing them down. So, we may have more chances for speaking in class. (Post-task interview - Sang)

In the sense of learning beliefs, Tien found he could better learn the language through saying it. Therefore, he favored taking part in activities during English class so that he could memorize English:

I like speaking classes. I can talk and exchange ideas with friends. I talk to teachers or friends so I think I then can better memorize the lesson right in the class. I don’t need to study it after class. (End of course interview - Tien)

Some students engaged in off-task behaviour during the task, such as joking or kidding in light of their learning belief which favoured a funny and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom. For example, Tien considered making fun among group members during tasks relieved stress towards challenging tasks:

It is good to be fun when we are doing exercises together. The exercises sometimes are hard so teasing makes them [the partners] release stress. (End of the course interview -Tien)
As shown in excerpt 6.3.2.2 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), at this point they were setting the context in a restaurant where a conversation between a customer and a waiter took place. Tien made jokes at the way the customer called the waiter.

In the same way, Van’s reluctance to talk in speaking classes was due to her beliefs regarding language learning as mastering the grammatical system of that language. She believed that expertise in English grammaticality could support the development of productive and receptive skills, so an understanding of English grammar might help perform the four language skills. However, she pointed out that the teacher allowed students to speak without any attention to grammar. This discouraged her from speaking English in the classroom:

*I think mastering grammar is important since I could speak, listen, read, and write well. I found that later English classes just focused on speaking without being sure if what have been saying is right or wrong…* (End of the course interview - Van)

Sang held the belief that accompanying people who are more advanced would play a role in the success of his language learning. Thus, he favoured working with more capable students of English and resisted being grouped with less advanced peers:

*I like to learn with people who are good so that they can guide me. I want to learn something from such people.* (Sang - end of course interview)

Furthermore, a learner’s task performance was influenced by his or her prior English learning experiences. To illustrate, Sang’s language learning beliefs and preferences were derived from his grandfather, who he claimed was his first English teacher when he was young. His learning belief of the role of accompanying sophisticated peers and language learning success was conceptualized through learning English with his grandfather earlier in his childhood:

*He expects me to be successful. He told me that people was lucky when they met people who were better than them. In his life, he’s met lots of friends who are very good.* (End of the course interview - Sang)

The grandfather also emphasised the role of English speaking and expected him to speak English like a native speaker. That was the reason why he preferred speaking activities in the classroom:
He was a bit strict to me, and always expected me to speak English in the way the native speakers do. He told me English would be really important for my life, especially if I could speak it well. He speaks English so well even until now. (End of the course interview - Sang)

In the case of Van, who refused to speak and yearned for grammar learning in the speaking English class, her grade 6 English teacher had an impact on her English learning. The teacher was very caring about her learners of English and paid attention to grammar. Thus, Van liked the English class and preferred learning grammar. This resulted in her perception of English learning as learning grammar, as shown above. However, as subsequent teachers of English did not focus this aspect so she was no longer interested in English learning.

I studied English quite well at high school when I was in grade 6 and 7. The English teacher was so lovely and caring. She paid much attention to grammar and her students. Then another teacher was in charge of English teaching in grade 8. The teacher didn’t focus on teaching grammar as well as students. Since then, I don’t like English anymore. (End of the course interview - Van)

Likewise, the experience of tutoring English to a friend at secondary school resulted in Quan’s preference for working in groups with other students. According to Quan, tutoring the friend at secondary school led to his success in English. He explained that giving the friend help with English might improve his long-term memory of the language. Moreover, he had to improve his English so that he could be able to tutor his friend. That is, working with the friend was a form of motivation for him to learn English. Therefore, he then preferred helping other friends in English classes and was more motivated when conducting the task in groups or pairs:

I sat next to a friend whom I was nominated to tutor in English. I was with the friend until we graduated from secondary school. I then realised that I got better in English due to tutoring the friend…. I love working with others and I feel more motivated than working by myself. (End of the course interview - Quan)

When I directed the friend, I could memorise the English longer. Moreover, I had to be good at English in order to tutor them. Thus, I now love to help friends. (End of the course interview - Quan)

Tram was another example of how language learning history has an impact on learners’ task performance in English classes. She had started English learning with a 3-year program, which means that the program was not as intensive as the 7-year program. She had learned English since grade 10 (i.e. the 3-year program), while
other students started English in grade 6 (i.e. the 7-year program). As a result, she confessed that English speaking was hard for her:

_I’ve not spoken English much at high school so I now find speaking English so tough… I’ve learned it since grade 10. My English course was the 3-year program so I am less proficient than my classmates._ (End of the course interview - Tram)

In addition, learner perceptions about themselves as language learners might determine the way students conducted the tasks in the classroom. In this class, learners’ task performance could be affected by their English proficiency in the language learning process.

Tram perceived her English proficiency as being not so advanced as her classmates. Therefore, she was reluctant to join in the activity with them:

_I know that my English is not as good as my classmates’…. And I often feel a bit reluctant at first when I work with classmates. I just afraid that I’m not qualified enough to work with them as well as have no ideas to make contribution to the group discussion. I’m afraid that my ideas won’t be accepted._ (End of the course interview - Tram)

Overall, learner’s personal elements, in fact, had an impact on learner’s task completion. In this sense, it shows that learning preferences, beliefs, language learning history or their perceptions about themselves mediate the way learners performed the given task, as described above. From a sociocultural view, other factors in the learning context also play a role during learners’ task completion. These factors will be explained as follows, with the first social factor to be discussed being Community. Community is defined as the partners with whom learners interacted to complete the tasks.

**Community**

In this study, community is defined as a group of students who engaged in joint action during task engagement and shared and negotiated common perspectives about the task. Interpersonal interactions occurring during task engagement had a significant influence on the way learners dealt with the given task. In this sense, it resulted in the level of their participation and off-task behaviour during task completion. Accordingly, students’ interest, silence or reluctance to engage in the task were arguably the consequences of working with certain partners.
Sang reported that his partners, Tram and Thu, made him less interested in conducting the task. He explained that he at first felt excited to make the conversation, but the partners’ passiveness took his interest away:

*Because Tram and Thu were so passive. Learning foreign language needs to be positive. No one can force you to speak up, but you yourself must be active. They just murmured so I don’t feel like talking to them.* (Post-task interview - Sang)

This perspective is illustrated at one point in their interaction, when Sang complained about his two partners’ performance as Tram spoke too softly voice while Thu was often silent, as shown in the last line in excerpt 6.3.2.3 (see Appendix L for the excerpt).

In the case of Thu and Tram, they stated that Sang’s attitude made them feel stressed and they lost confidence to conduct the task. In the post-task interview, Tram and Thu clarified why they were so quiet during the construction of the conversation:

*...Because Sang doesn’t want to cooperate with us. He is much better than us, and I’m not confident enough to raise my opinion ((on the dialogue)). He seemed to refuse any ideas given by me. It made me feel I am so bad and stupid.* (Post-task interview - Tram)

*He likes to be in groups with students who are good only. I actually feel stressed when working in group with him.* (Post task interview - Thu)

At another time, Thu added that the way Sang behaved towards Tram discouraged her from making any contribution to the task:

*In the group he is the best student so he should have helped others. But, whatever ideas given by Tram were rejected by him. So I did not want to contribute any of mine.* (Post task interview- Thu)

Tram further related that the lack of confidence caused by Sang resulted in her reluctance to speak. In fact, she said:

*...I don't get any confidence so I might speak too low....I feel clumsy and a bit scared. I feel so ashamed of me, who is such a stupid student.* (Post-task interview - Tram)

While Sang left the group discussion due to his disappointment with his partners, Thu and Tram also wished to stop working with Sang:

*For me, I feel so stressed and just wish to quit the group.* (Post-task interview - Thu)
I don’t actually feel comfortable to talk to Sang. He is so good so I’m afraid he won’t appreciate my ideas through which he may perceive my weakness. (Post-task interview - Tram)

The class teacher also confirmed that Sang rarely worked with classmates who were less advanced.

Sang is one of the most advanced students in the class, but with strong characteristics. Sang prefers to work with classmates who are as good as or better than he is, and he behaves this in other classes too. Thu and Tram is quite less advanced than him. Both seem to lack fundamental knowledge of English even though they’ve put lots of efforts. (Informal talk-Teacher 2)

However, when grouped with others students, Sang as well as Tram changed the way they conducted the task. In another speaking task, when Sang was in a group with Thao, who was one of the most advanced students in the class, he tended to compromise with Thao. For example, excerpt 6.3.2.4 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) identifies that Thao requested an English utterance expressing the idea of “inviting someone”. Sang offered, “Would you like”, but Thao was not happy with the utterance so she tried another one (line 52). Sang confirmed the utterance was true by repeating the utterance (line 53) and Thao got angry (line 54). Accordingly, Sang provided another utterance in line with what Thao expected earlier. Thao then provided another suggestion for making the required utterance, and Sang translated it into Vietnamese (line 57).

At another point, as illustrated in excerpt 6.3.2.5 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), Sang proposed revising one sentence in the conversation in order for it to sound better (line 101). However, Thao appeared to ignore Sang’s suggestion (line 103), and Sang was subservient to Thao (line 104).

In general, when Thao and Sang worked together, Sang assumed a junior position and tended to follow recommendations given by Thao, unlike his previous attitude when grouped with Tram and Thu. In the post-task interview with Sang, he said that he liked being in the group with Thao, from whom he could learn English due to her advanced knowledge of the language. Moreover, Sang claimed that Thao and he could more quickly establish a mutual understanding about the task:

Thao is quite good at this subject. She is knowledgeable about English, and I’ve learned a lot from her…. like new vocabulary, or grammar. (Post-task interview - Sang)
One a problem is given we both understand it so we don’t take time to keep explaining it. (Post-task interview - Sang)

In the stimulated recall, when he proposed modifying a sentence in the conversation but Thao seemed to ignore this, Sang expressed that he accepted being led by Thao because of her English knowledge, which he trusted:

*I wanted to adjust the sentence so that it would sound better, but she didn’t want it, and it’s fine. We are quite alike that we always aim to develop our talk as good as we can. Thus, if I suggest a new sentence but she refuses it, it means that the current one is not so bad. I believe in her knowledge so I sometimes act upon her ideas.* (stimulated recall - Sang)

Likewise, Tram appeared to be different when dealing with the task in the group with Quan, Tien and Nhi. Although Tram was silent at first, she then became active and contributed to the development of the conversation. As identified in excerpt 6.3.2.6 (see Appendix L for the excerpt), from this point, Tram started to make contributions to the group’s discussion. After that, she kept providing ideas to support the creation of the conversation until the end of the task (e.g. lines 162 and 165).

In the stimulated recall session, Tram provided the reason for her reluctance to engage with the task at first, indicating that she wanted to be sure the group would accept her contributions. Once she realized that the group accepted her the same as other members, she provided contributions to the task accomplishment with confidence:

*I felt a bit reluctant at the beginning. At first, I was afraid that I was worse than they are so I didn’t dare to say anything about the exercise with them, but I then realised that they didn’t look down on my ideas. Thus, I later felt comfortable to contribute with them. I found there wasn’t a big gap between me and them.* (Tram - the stimulated recall)

In particular, she stated that she internally learned during the period of silence:

*Although I did not join the discussion with them, I carefully listen to them and took notes of their discussion.* (Tram - the stimulated recall)

Tram pointed out that the group of Quan, Tien and Nhi increased her level of confidence because they appreciated her contributions and assisted her by explaining what she had failed to understand. Especially, she described Quan as a humble learner of English:

*I felt more comfortable, and I contributed some of my ideas to the conversation. I loved working with Quan’s group, who is good but humble.*
Whatever ideas I gave they agreed with me. This made me feel more confident. In case that I didn’t understand something they were willing to give explanation for me. (Post-task interview - Tram)

In the reviewing speaking task with Sang and Thao, Van was silent, but she turned more active in the group with Lam and Nhu in the task requiring them to describe a party. Excerpt 6.3.2.7 (see Appendix L for the excerpt) demonstrates that Van tended to be subservient to Sang and Thao during the creation of the dialogue (e.g. listening to and following their instructions). By contrast, Van appeared to be active and make contributions during the discussion with Lam and Nhu in excerpt 6.3.2.8 (see Appendix L for the excerpt). In the post-task interview, Van confessed:

_Because I find I'm more appropriate to work with them. Nhu and Lam are as the same level as me so I feel so comfortable to be with them in a group. I can make contribution with confidence and they won’t laugh at me if I say something wrong._ (Post-task interview - Van)

The case of Sang’s task performance illustrates the distribution of power in the learning community through superior knowledge of English. From this perspective, the student with more knowledge was more dominant and tended to control and direct what others did.

In the same way, Tien admitted that he only made jokes when working with some classmates in his group:

_...this is up to who I am in group with. If I work with my friends like Huy, I can make jokes or kidding. But if working with someone who is serious I can’t make jokes at them because they may not like this._ (End of the course interview - Tien)

As he revealed in the interviews after two tasks - one task where he worked with Nhi, Quan, Tram, and the other task with Thao and Phuong - kidding or teasing only happened in the group with Quan:

_Whatever groups with Quan and me will be so delighted and active._ (Post-task interview - Tien)

By contrast, he was less likely to make fun with partners who appeared serious (i.e. Thao and Phuong):

_As long as being with Quan, I make jokes or teases. The friends in this group looked so serious so I did not make fun of them. I became serious too._ (Post-task interview - Tien)
The point of conducting off-task conversations in this group revealed that learning communities involving close friends might not only regard the task as the goal but also see social engagement as a goal.

Evidently, group membership affected the way a learner accomplished the given task. Accordingly, the way they completed the task could vary when grouped with different members. The next section will discuss how the factors related to the component of rules affected a learner’s task performance.

Accordingly, learners’ task performance was varied when grouped with different members. Some learning communities may influence the language choice (i.e. L1 or L2) of a student. In addition, the kind of community affected the level of a student’s task participation. Therefore, a learner might appear to be active or silent during task engagement when allocated to different groups. In addition, there are differences in power distribution among members in a learning community. Thus, a learner could be dominant or subservient to others due to their partners being more or less knowledgeable than them. Some learning communities involving close friends considered tasks as a dimension of social engagement, and conducted off-task discussions outside of the implied ‘rules’ of task performance. The next section will discuss how factors relating to the component of rules affected learners’ task performance.

**Rules**
Learners’ task performance might be also impacted by the task rules. In this sense, the amount of time allotted to a given task could have an impact on some learners’ task performance. In fact, some learners required more time for the preparation of their on-stage performance. For instance, Tram, who seldom spoke up in the speaking class, may illustrate this point. Tram pointed out that she felt it hard to speak English spontaneously, so she tended to learn by heart what she was going to say. As a result, she needed longer allotted time when preparing for speaking tasks so that she could then speak with confidence:

> “I need more time to learn the dialogue, to memorise it so I can say it smoothly. Otherwise, I don’t feel confident... I cannot make spontaneous English utterances like my friends” (End of the course interview - Tram)
Generally speaking, regulations or rules for the given task did regulate how learners conducted the given task. In addition, the object, referring to learners’ learning purpose, impacted upon a learner’s task performance.

**Object**

A specific task performance from a learner could be the result of his or her learning aim or purpose when taking the course or the task. In this view, their object might be the reason behind their task completion. That is, learners might appear to be eager or unwilling to join the given task. Seen from this view, if the aim of the learning course or teacher was not in line with their learning purpose, they might perform the task in a specific manner.

Sang showed his desire for a more focus on speaking in the class. Therefore, he appeared not to be interested in games, which were played at the beginning of the lesson to review vocabulary. He suggested that the games should be turned into other activities so that student would get more opportunities to speak English:

> I like activities related to speaking English. This is the speaking class, isn't it? I think we should to speak English more. (End of the course interview - Sang)

Van indicated the class teacher’s lesser focus on grammar as the cause of her silence in the speaking class. While the teacher paid attention to speaking skills without correcting grammatical mistakes, Van really needed instructions on English grammar which she found valuable for her to speak English. She expressed her desire for being taught more grammar even in the speaking class:

> I found that later English classes just focused on speaking without being sure if what have been saying is right or wrong. Although this is a speaking class, I wish the teacher taught us grammar so that we could make the conversation more easily. I don't want to speak up with structures about which I am not sure. However, the teacher does not even correct what we've talked so we get really wrong afterwards. (End of the course interview - Van)

Stemming from the object of learning English to study abroad, Thao attempted to practice English speaking and engage in the classroom participation. She stated that speaking is challenging for most international students when studying in a foreign country. Thus, she focused on practicing speaking skills with native-like traits (e.g. linking or intonation). This was illustrated in a task (reviewing speaking task) when
she reminded her peers to fall and rise their tone to be like native speakers, as seen in excerpt 6.3.2.9 (see Appendix L for the excerpt). Besides this, she tried to be active in class activities since this would be useful for her if studying in a foreign learning environment:

As I’ve said, I study English for studying in the US after graduation. I was told that I have to practice the speaking skill a lot more in order to study in a foreign country. Many of my friends complained about this thought their English is good at home. The native speakers speak English so fast and play with their tones. I try to practice English speaking in class since it is the only chance to speak it. I speak up in the classroom to practice speaking English and to make me active as well. This will be useful for me when I study abroad where the learning environment requires learners to be active and to be able to make arguments. (End of the course interview - Thao)

Overall, the learning purpose of learners would determine the way they engage in the class activity. Accordingly, the aim of the course, which might be not in tune with theirs, could discourage them from engaging in the tasks. Another contextual factor affecting learners’ task performance related to the formation of group work or pair work to conduct the given tasks.

**Division of labour**
The formation of pairs or groups when fulfilling the given task might influence the implementation of the task among learners. For example, Quan felt more motivated to engage in tasks required to be solved with other students:

* I love working with others and I feel more motivated than working by myself.  
  (End of the course interview - Quan).

Collaborative tasks, in which she could perform the task with her partners, encouraged Tram to speak English, as she felt less confident to speak on stage by herself:

* I only talk when I present with my group since I feel less nervous if having someone to talk with me. Moreover, I have more time to prepare for what we will say. I’m very bad at listening and speaking so I can’t speak it on stage by myself. (End of the course interview - Tram)

In general, tasks requiring the formation of groups or pairs could encourage or discourage learners from the participating in the task accomplishment. The final social factor from the learning context regulating learners’ task implementation is the source of tools being used during the tasks.
**Tools**

Interestingly, data in this class indicate the human tool as most important, since students considered the friends they work with as a tool which assisted them to complete the task. To illustrate, Tram pointed out that she got more involved in tasks where she was grouped with classmates, who could help her with English language. These students actually facilitated her completion of the task:

*Some friends help me a lot: they explain something that I don't understand. For example, they may give explanation of words or grammar points that are unknown to me. Hence, I could catch up with them and do exercises much more easily.* (End of the course interview - Tram)

In summary, this section shows that the personal factors as well as the sociocultural factors from the learning context (e.g. peers, rules of the task or the course, the teacher’s object) as well as the personal factors (e.g. learning object, learning preference, learning history and belief) had an influence on a learner’s task performance, such as being silent or active. Particularly, learners who seemed to be silent learned internally. For example, Tram often appeared to be quite during the discussion, but she kept taking notes of structures or expressions which she then learn herself.

**Table 6.11. The summary of factors affecting an individual learner’s task performance in the Speaking class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Learning preferences</th>
<th>Learning beliefs</th>
<th>Language learning history</th>
<th>Learner’s self-perception of themselves as a learner of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Partners or groups of classmates with who they work with.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>The regulations of the Speaking course</td>
<td>The requirements of the given task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>The aims of the course/teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labour</td>
<td>The formation of groups</td>
<td>The relationship between students or between students and the teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>The types of tool available to them (dictionary, peer’s assistance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5 and 6 has presented the findings regarding mediation and learner agency in the reading and speaking class. The chapters show that students in the two classes utilised a number of sources mediation in order to regulate their thoughts throughout the completion of tasks: material tools, semiotic tools and human tools. In terms of learner agency, the chapters reveals learner agency at the individual and collective level. The next chapter will summarise substantial findings of the study and discuss these findings.
CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter will discuss the findings of the present study and bring the thesis to a close. Firstly, the chapter revisits the research questions and discusses the findings in relation to previous studies in EFL/ESL contexts. After that, the study discusses the findings to provide further insights regarding the theoretical framework of activity theory that the study draws upon. Following discussion of the findings, the chapter will deal with the conclusions of the study with indications of limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies.

7.1. Revisiting the research questions and findings

This section presents the research questions and summarises their findings through Sections 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3. Each of these sub-sections is related to one of the three sub-questions on which the study focused and is presented in the same order as in the previous chapter.

The present study examined EFL learners’ task engagement in a learning and teaching context in Vietnam with the aim to learn how language learners undertake the process of task accomplishment. In addition, a focus on the exercise of learner agency was explored in relation to the task engagement process. Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate sources of mediation used by learners during task completion. In doing this, the study sought to find answers to the following key question and sub-questions:

How do Vietnamese college students engage in English tasks?

i.1. What sources of mediation do learners use to deal with tasks?

i.2. How do learner activity variations emerge from particular tasks?

i.3. What influences the participants’ task performance?

7.1.1. The sources of mediating tools used during task accomplishment

The present study reveals that students made use of various mediating tools in the learning context which semiotically or physically mediated their thoughts when dealing with a given task. In addition, they also resorted to assistance from other people (i.e., human mediation) to fulfil given tasks, in that they might rely on other
students or class teachers to assist the process of completing the task. The resources of each type of mediating tool (i.e. semiotic tools, physical tools and human tools) will be discussed as follows in 7.1.1.1, 7.1.1.2, and 7.1.1.3.

7.1.1.1. Semiotic mediating resources

Among the resources of mediation during task completion, semiotic resources, such as learners’ use of first language (Vietnamese) and use of private speech (produced both in L1 and in English), were more frequently employed, demonstrating demand for semiotic support and that it played a key role in the completion of English tasks. In addition, other resources of semiotic mediation were identified such as students’ employment of their English background knowledge and life experience, as well as the use of task rubrics were utilised. Playing with English word sounds was employed as well to semiotically mediate students’ thoughts during their engagement in the task. In particular, the students in this study also utilised L2 grammatical knowledge such as strings of irregular verb forms as semiotic support for their retrieving of correct verb forms during the task. A discussion of each source of semiotic mediation differentiated by the task modes of speaking and reading follows.

The use of learners’ first language as a tool to complete a task

As mentioned in the previous chapter, students used L1 during the task to provide cognitive and linguistic support and perform various social functions. In this way, the use of L1 was vital to reducing the semiotic load around linguistic challenges that emerged during the task, and to create a social space enabling students to achieve a shared understanding in order to assist them to complete a task. In this way, L1 was employed to support psychological and social functions required by the demands of the tasks. Therefore, the use of L1 in the present study fell under two main categories: language-related functions, and task-related functions.

The former related to the use of L1 to deal with L2 language issues arising during task engagement and involved resolving lexical issues (e.g. discussing the meaning or word type of an English word in Vietnamese) or grammatical issues (i.e. discussing an English grammar point). This function of L1 use existed mainly in speaking tasks where learners searched for English words or phrases to construct new utterances by themselves, or to make utterances in accordance with English grammatical rules. In this sense, L1 was used as a means to access appropriate L2
forms and words (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999). This function of L1 use was also identified in research related to the significant role of L1 in the L2 learning process (Bao & Du, 2015; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009). Bao and Du (2015) considered the role of L1 in secondary Danish learners who learned Chinese as a foreign language, while Gánem-Gutiérrez (2009) explored the semiotic functions of L1 use among university students of L2 Spanish during collaborative interaction at a computer. However, these cited studies only revealed the use of L1 to semiotically mediate learners’ engagement in receptive tasks (e.g. reading tasks). In a departure from these studies, this current research identified the use of L1 as a mediating tool for college learners of English to deal with both receptive and productive processes in reading and speaking tasks aimed at improving learners’ L2 performance in those language modes.

Using L1 to deal with language difficulties, students used Vietnamese to translate parts of English into Vietnamese (e.g. vocabulary, phrases or sentences) during the reading tasks. In this way, they decoded the meaning of the English language given in the reading texts. In this case, the L1 facilitated their understanding of the tasks so that they could complete them. For example, they needed to comprehend the meaning of a given statement so that they could decide whether it was true or false. In the same vein, an understanding of definitions and phrases in the Matching task was necessary for them to match definitions with appropriate phrases. In order to achieve this, they resorted to Vietnamese translations to enable their comprehension of the English language. It could be argued that translation from the target language to L1 was valuable for students when conducting this reading task in the context of learning English as a foreign language. The present study extends the understanding of translation from L1 to L2, as L1 mediates the meaning of L2. L1 meanings and pragmatics often dominated because of a lack of access to various forms of L2 use in this EFL setting.

In addition, L1 was also employed to deal with task-related functions. In this way, L1 was used to plan the procedures upon which the task would be conducted, and to develop strategies to make challenging tasks more manageable. For speaking tasks requiring students to use the English language to make conversations or discuss a given topic, L1 was often used to discuss the content of their talk before producing the conversation in L2. Students first consulted each other for the content in
Vietnamese, and the conversation content was then transformed into English in this way, the use of L1 established a mutual understanding of the task content (Bao & Du, 2015; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001). This function of L1 use is significant in these learning contexts, where learners may share L1 background knowledge to assist them to achieve mutual understanding of task requirements and outputs.

In addition to the use of their first language during collaborative tasks, learners employed both L1 and L2 in various forms of private speech. Students talked to themselves, questioned and proposed solutions to better control their thinking processes over the challenges they encountered.

**Learners producing private speech as a semiotic tool during the task**

The study shows that students performed various forms of self-addressed talk in L1 or in English to direct their attention to problems that emerged during the tasks. This reflects the sociocultural perspective on private speech as a form of cognitive and linguistic assistance when facing problems during task accomplishment. As previously stated, Vygotsky (1986) affirmed that learners might deploy talk directed to the self as an instrument of thought to aid them in finding and constructing a solution to a given task. Berk (1992) has argued that learners “communicate with themselves for the purpose of self-guidance and self-direction” (p. 20). From this view, DiCamilla and Antón (2004) later remarked that the creation of self-directed speech aimed to provide a sense of distance on the problem they encountered, and this facilitated their searching for a solution to the problem from a different perspective. In addition to providing a means of gaining new perspectives on language problems, this process supported student internalisation through imitation of L2 acquired through classroom interactions. The study shows persistent imitation in both reading and speaking tasks that mediated individual learners’ L2 understanding and production.

In an influential study on private speech, Ohta (2001) defined three characteristics of private speech among learners of Japanese: vicarious response, repetition, and manipulation. In the present study, students’ self-talk took the forms of self-reading aloud, questioning, explanation, and repetition.

Firstly, students read given English statements in the tasks to themselves. For example, they read given statements in the Matching task aloud to themselves in
order to draw their attention to the meaning of the statements. Students also made
and read a translation of the statement out loud to themselves. The practice of
reading aloud, which is considered as a kind of self-mediation in the context of
learning another language, is also noted in previous studies (Anani Sarab & Gordani,
2014; Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009). However, self-mediation in these studies aimed to
regulate the learners’ minds on correct language forms. In the present study, such
self-reading assisted them to focus their thoughts on the understanding of the task so
that they could then find appropriate answers.

Another form of private speech found in the present study was in the form of
questions about the issues at hand (e.g. word meanings, grammar or new
information). For instance, students posed questions such as, “What does it mean?”,
to themselves when encountering a new word in a reading task. This is similar to the
finding in Anani Sarab and Gordani’s (2014) study, where adult Persian learners of
English frequently asked the question, “What is this?”, to orientate themselves
towards a specific object during the task discussion. Furthermore, some students
gave themselves explanations for the meaning of vocabulary in the task at hand
allowing them to build understanding of whole statements from the meaning of
single words.

While the private speech reported in Ohta’s (2001) study only repeated utterances
produced by others, the present study shows that learners could repeat utterances
earlier provided by themselves and by their peers. To illustrate, they repeated the
English utterance previously given by their partners in an attempt to generate more
information. This finding adds to the forms of private speech found in Ohta’s study.

Furthermore, the manipulation of word sounds, indicated as a form of private speech
in Ohta (2001), was also noticed in the present study, but it was considered as social
speech not speech to self, which will be mentioned later in this section.

The production of private speech forms as mentioned aimed to regulate students’
mental and linguistic processes over the task issues they were facing. In the self-
regulation process, some private speech forms were performed to externalise their
current knowledge in order to apply it to the problem. Some students attempted to
repeat a grammar rule in order to consider the structure of a statement in reading
tasks. This is a novel finding, because it can be argued that, if the rule had been effectively or fully internalised, it would not have to be externalised – it would be an automatic application. This action by some students is seen as a regulating function indicating that the background pedagogy that some students had experienced was rule and memory driven, with limited opportunity for use – hence their initial strategy was to seek out an appropriate rule in order to understand a statement.

In general, the creation of self-addressed talk demonstrated the sociocultural view that there is a tight interrelation between speaking and thinking. The transformation of thought was visibly evident when learners talked to themselves (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 95). Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin & Brooks (2010) have argued that private speech refers to a process of making meaning or shaping knowledge through the use of language,

Similarly, this section has shown the significant role of private speech as a source of semiotic mediation in English task completion. The next section will present a discussion related to students’ employment of their prior knowledge and experience to accomplish a given English task.

**Learners’ L2 knowledge and learning experience used as semiotic tools during the task completion**

During the implementation of a given task, students also made use of their pre-existing knowledge and/or experiences related to the topic including prior knowledge of English language and learning.

Students used their background knowledge of English to solve linguistic problems by employing their understanding of English word classes to determine the meaning of certain English words. In addition, grammatical knowledge, such as the knowledge of comparative adjectives, was useful in the construction of grammatical English utterances.

Students turned their own life experience or knowledge to develop talk about a given topic. In the case of reading tasks, they applied their background knowledge to interpret given statements in the Matching and True/False tasks to grasp the point of statements, which helped them find correct answers to facilitate the completion of a task. This prior knowledge played an important part in the mediation of learners’ learning processes. In reference to EFL/ESL research, a few authors have emphasised the role of learners’ background knowledge in the L2 learning process.
Walqui (2006) states that new concepts and language are learned once they are firmly built on prior knowledge and understandings. As Tharp and Gallimore (1988) indicated earlier, new information needs to be woven into existing mental structure so that comprehension may occur. The present study demonstrates that the learners employed first-hand knowledge as well as experience as semiotic tools to help them engage with given tasks. The present study affirms the importance that prior knowledge plays in L2 learning, and that new learning should draw upon learners’ prior learning i.e. the pre-existing ideas and concepts learners bring to L2 learning. In addition to the utilization of background knowledge as well as experience, learners made use of task instructions as another semiotic tool during the task completion, as discussed in the following section.

The task text and the semiotic mediation of learners’ thinking process

This study demonstrated that student participants employed key words within given tasks, task instructions or the requirements from within the assigned tasks, as a valuable resource to solve task challenges. In this regard, students relied on the English texts provided in the task to solve it. In the True/False reading task they used single words or phrases from the given statements as a key to figure out the meaning of whole statements so that they could decide whether the statements were true or false. Similarly, key words in the statements also helped them to conduct the Matching reading task. Task statements provided a means of semiotic mediation by providing clues to allow successful accomplishment of reading tasks. In addition, the requirements of the task were often repeated by students to generate more focus and information about the topic being discussed. For instance, when making the talk about a party, students kept reading the task prompt in the handout so that they would create the task in the right direction. As when doing the True/False task, students referred back to the task requirement by repeating “true or false” to remind them of the task requirement. Similarly, DiCamilla and Antón (2004) noted that college students of Spanish read the task prompt aloud to themselves during a writing task to externalise to themselves “the macrostructure of the task” (p. 44).

During the completion of a reading and speaking tasks, students encountered linguistic issues related to word meanings and word classes. At such a point, students
resorted to sounding of words to try and decode their meaning. The next section will present a discussion of this point.

**Playing with the language sounds during the task completion**

As revealed in the study, students sometimes played with the sounds of a word in order to decode its meaning and draw their thoughts to the task issues related to the word. They stressed, emphasised or said the word out loud mainly to direct their peers’ attention to the word the meaning or form of which they were looking. This is in contrast to findings by Harun, Massari and Behak (2014) who considered this as a form of private speech as students employed the reading aloud to orientate themselves, not to orient others.

Furthermore, students in the present study sometimes played with word sounds to redirect or prompt peers’ attention to the correct word or word form they were working on. Cekaite and Aronsson (2005) illustrate that young learners of Swedish stretched their talk during collaborative tasks for the purpose of fostering their friends’ awareness of correct or incorrect phonology and morphology. The present study indicates a similar function but in an EFL learning context for college students. These findings are significant, because they suggest learners were engaged in ‘teaching’ their peers in this context.

Moreover in this context, where learning grammar by heart is still a strategy students employed their knowledge of grammatical forms and classes as a semiotic tool.

**The use of string of irregular verb forms to recall the required form**

Another interesting finding is that students utilised the string of forms of an irregular verb to retrieve a correct verb form they needed. In the learning context of the study, learners attempted to learn three forms of the irregular verbs by heart (e.g. go/ went/ gone). By repeating the string of verb forms, they could remember verb forms and retrieve the needed form. Duong and Nguyen (2006) argue that Vietnamese learners learn English in conscious and repetitive ways, remembering grammatical rules systematically. It would appear that the background second language pedagogy that these students had experienced included memorisation of grammatical forms. The teaching of English grammar rules involving the learning-by-heart strategy played a role here to regulate learners’ minds in the conduct of these English tasks.
So far, the above sections have presented a discussion revealing the significant role of semiotic mediation in the task completion of English learners. Accordingly, various semiotic tools were used when dealing with given tasks. In addition to semiotic mediation, material mediation also played a role in task completion.

7.1.1.2. Material mediation during task completion: the use of modern technology for L2 learning

The material tools used in this study involved handouts, notes, textbooks, dictionaries, and especially the use of mobile phones as dictionary apps and access to online learning resource. The handouts helped them with presenting them with the tasks being solved. For some students, they had to take notes of the discussion during speaking tasks, so notes supported them when performing on stage.

Textbooks were a primary device for learners, especially when the tasks came from their textbook as they provide learners with the assigned tasks. However, the study shows that, while the teacher in the speaking class (class 2) brought supplementary materials, the teacher in the reading class (class 1) did not. One textbook may be expected to be taught in various classes or teaching contexts; therefore, the exclusive use of textbooks may tire students as well as “deskil teachers”. In this view, McGrath (2002) states that no textbook is perfect. McGrath argues that the process of learning and teaching a language is so complicated that a pre-set material cannot be sufficient. As a result, the teacher could be more textbook-based than textbook-led.

Teachers need to adapt their textbook or bring supplementary materials into the classrooms. The researcher suggests that teachers of English should adapt the teaching materials and use diverse materials. In this way, the student textbook can be a more meaningful mediating tool for learners.

As revealed in the present study, dictionaries were a key material device used by students to deal with linguistic problems during the task completion (e.g. looking up new word meanings or word classes). In fact, the context being researched is a foreign language learning environment; thus, it is not strange that students mostly resorted to dictionaries when encountering new vocabulary. This is congruent with earlier research by Carter and McCarthy (1988) who reported that new words are the most common problems for language learners who learn English as a foreign language, since they can only keep going with tasks once clarification of words is
provided. In the present study, students used both paperback dictionaries and dictionary apps installed on their smartphones.

Concerning the use of a mobile dictionary during the task, this supports the notion that smartphones were a useful learning tool offering learners opportunities for language learning, as found in recent research such as Rahimi and Miri (2014). The present study identified that students used their mobile dictionary for checking word meaning thus adding to prior research recognising that dictionaries are amongst the most common mobile apps used by learners (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012; Yaman, Senel, & Yesilel, 2015). Interestingly, students in the present study also employed their smartphones as a mini-computer connected to the Internet so that they could search for sample texts of the same topic being discussed (e.g. they used the smartphone to browse the web for “Active listening”). Students were allowed to use smartphones in the classroom, not only as an instrument to check word meanings but also to look for information related to the topic being discussed. These devices provided favourable conditions for learners to get access to learning resources.

Apart from tools providing semiotic mediation and material mediation as mentioned above, students in the present study resorted to human mediation from peers or class teachers. In this study, students were more likely to complete the given task due to assistance from classmates. The next section will discuss this point.

7.1.1.3. The utilisation of human tools

Tasks were conducted through teacher mediation

The study demonstrates that students’ task accomplishment sometimes relied on assistance from the teacher. As Nieto (2007) argues, teachers are considered as “a mediator between the learners and the language to be acquired” (p. 219). Teachers play a role in mediating learner learning, since they provide opportunities for learners to participate in language learning (Herazo & Donato, 2012). In relation to the present study, teachers attempted to scaffold learners at the beginning of and during the tasks. Earlier in the task, teachers provided designed-in scaffolding in terms of task purpose, time allotted, etc. In this sense, they helped learners to review vocabulary before the speaking tasks or gave examples to illustrate a certain point mentioned in the reading task. During the student’s completion of the task, teachers’ contingent scaffolding took the form of further explanations about the task at hand.
and giving responses to learners’ requests. For example, teachers helped students when they had difficulties with English word meanings or needed clarification of the task requirements.

As argued by Lim (2015), learners are scaffolded through the mediated behaviour from their teachers. Whilst teacher mediation aims to facilitate the learners’ task completion, The present study shows that teachers’ scaffolding sometimes failed to mediate learners at some points during the task. For example, in the speaking class, although the class teacher attempted to assist learners to construct the conversation, this in turn did not really help the learners. To illustrate, the teacher became a co-learner of Thu and Tram, helping them to develop a conversation at the bank, after Sang left the group discussion. However, the teacher’s use of English during discussion with students hindered them in comprehending what she said. The students expressed a preference for making the conversation by themselves. Similarly, the teacher sometimes failed to assist learners to the readings tasks.

In the True/False task, the class teacher had students discuss “characteristics of a good leader” as a pre-task activity, with an aim to assist them to do the task. The teacher attempted to activate students’ knowledge of “the difference of a manager and a leader”. However, no definitions of manager and leader were provided, and the teacher failed to help students to distinguish between the two. Therefore, the students didn’t understand how a manager and leader are different. Some of the examples provided by the teacher were not seen by the students to be useful to completing the task. As a result, students found the task difficult, and completed the task based on their own speculations. While background knowledge of a topic is critical for English readers (Alfaki & Siddiek, 2013), the teacher failed to equip students with an adequate prior understanding of the difference between leaders and managers as a foundation for comprehending the reading text. In this sense, the students were not supplied with enough content knowledge at the beginning of the task (Huang, 2009).

Concerning the Matching task, it was revealed that the task was quite tough for students due to numerous unknown words. While some words seemed to be familiar learners could not figure out their meanings in the context of the task (e.g. the word “team players”). Therefore, limited vocabulary knowledge was a barrier for students in conducting this task. Unfortunately, the teacher did not really help learners to
reduce the new word load through pre-reading activities. In fact, the teaching of some essential vocabulary related to the text topic is beneficial in a reading class (Mihara, 2011). Moreover, Carrell (1988) claims that pre-teaching vocabulary will increase the level of comprehension, because unfamiliar words and phrases may interfere with students’ comprehension. Especially, failure in understanding the meaning of the term, “team players”, in the reading context refers to a lack of textual background knowledge. Huang (2009) advises that English readers should be informed on the textual background knowledge, including the knowledge of different text types and the understanding that specific text organization, language structures or vocabulary are used in different texts. Seen from this perspective, it is understandable why students had difficulties in understanding the meaning of “team players” in the reading context though they already understood its meaning in a normal context, as referring to people who play games in the same team.

In brief, while Taglieber, Johnson and Yarbrough (1988) emphasise the role of pre-reading activities in assisting English learners to overcome major problems that disrupt reading comprehension, such as the lack of vocabulary or lack of background knowledge, the reading class teacher in the present study failed to fulfil this. Failure in equipping students with background knowledge on the reading topic and key vocabulary caused a hindrance for learners’ comprehension. To some extent, the teaching practices in the context failed to create affordances of learning opportunities for learners. As a result, students showed their struggle with the task and had to rely on other assistance and their peers to complete the task. This is a good example of ineffective scaffolding in the ZDP. The teacher’s support was beyond the comprehension of the students, and therefore was beyond the zone of proximal development.

**Tasks conducted through peer mediation**

In the present study, peers were mediators, since the interaction among students was valuable to help them to complete given tasks. Not only did students request assistance from partners in the same group, they also asked for help from other students who were not their immediate partners. A new form of scaffolding behaviour was revealed in the present study.

In this study, some learners asked classmates beyond their group for help with linguistic, syntactical problems or problems related to background knowledge of a
given topic; this is in contrast to research by Ohta (2001) who identified that learners only try to assist their immediate partners struggling with linguistic problems. A possible explanation for this inconsistency is the types of task observed in the two studies. Learners in the present study engaged in speaking tasks, so they needed to employ background knowledge about the given topic in order to construct the English conversation; so this emphasises the significance of background knowledge in language learning. However, Ohta (2001) defined various forms of peer scaffolding employed to aid their partners during the interaction, such as recast, or prompting. Thus, unlike in Ohta’s study, the present study shows that, while conducting a task, learners often provided a correct answer (e.g. grammatical points or word choices, etc.) in response to the partners’ request or mistakes. In other words, the type of peer scaffolding here is called “provision”. Learners in the present study did not recast, prompt, or give any cues to make their peer produce correct utterances. Instead, they provided an appropriate utterance when asked by the peer. Learning English in this context is as foreign language learning where they just speak English in classes; thus, provision occurs frequently among learners in pair and group tasks. By contrast, the participants in Ohta’s study studied the Japanese language in a context where the target language is widely spoken.

The present study shows that students were more likely to resort to peer mediation than to teacher mediation, a finding that is dissimilar to those of other studies (Di, 2015; Erfani & Nikbin, 2015) examining the impact of peer mediation and teacher mediation on EFL learners’ writing development. For example Di’s (2015) study shows that teacher mediation was more valuable; while Erfani and Nikbin (2015) demonstrate that both peer-mediation and teacher mediation were effective in the learners’ writing development during the course of instruction. The attribution of such a distinction between the present study and these previous studies could relate to the task types in which the learners engaged: other studies focused on mediation in writing tasks, while the present study focused on reading and speaking tasks. Overall, as revealed in this study, learners resorting to assistance from both teachers and peers during the task, as revealed in this study, refers to the concept of collaborative dialogue. In this regard, however, learning through interaction and collaboration with others was mainly based on a view of competence whereby more competent students
were asked for support, with less reliance upon in-group negotiation as the only means for resolving difficulties.

7.1.2. Same task, different activities

The second sub-question explores the way two groups of learners conducted the same given task in order to consider learner engagement and agency from a collective level. The findings show that one assigned task was performed differently by the two groups due to the distinctive goals and motives of each group towards the task. For instance, learners would conduct the task with distinctive actions if they aimed to complete it with particular purposes (e.g. to get bonus marks or to show a high level of task completion in front of others), in comparison with those who had no special aims towards the task (i.e. they just wanted to finish the task).

In addition, the condition of the learning context (i.e. the rules of task, course or the classroom; relationship among members in groups or in pairs; time constraint and available tools in use) in each group appeared to define each group’s task performance. In this sense, these elements in the learning context may or may not create favourable conditions for the groups of learners to complete a task. These conditions then shaped the operations of the process through which they conducted the task. For example, students were more actively engaged when in a group of close friends than in a group of class acquaintances. From this perspective, while the goal between groups of learners could be the same, their activities when conducting the task were not the same because of the differing conditions in each group. One task in the speaking class could illustrate this point. Both Sang’s group and Vy’s group had the same goal when attempting to create a dialogue occurring at a Bank. However, each group operated the task through distinctive processes due to the dissimilar conditions, which were shaped by the relationships among members in each group. Vy’s group involved classmates who were close friends, while Sang’s group were class acquaintances who worked in the same group for the first time. Therefore, each member in Vy’s group worked cooperatively, with a division of jobs among them. By contrast, those in Sang’s group showed some tension during their discussion. Sang appeared to be uncooperative with others in the discussion of their conversation. Another illustration of conditions operationalising actions of learners’ task engagement is related to the time limitation allotted to tasks. In this respect, time
constraint could result in different actions among groups of learners, for example, individual work among members or the use of L1 during the task completion. 

Seen through the sociocultural lens, student learners are agents in the language learning process, and a group of learners is also considered as an agent. In this case, learner agency is viewed from a collective level, as defined by Bandura (2000). As demonstrated in the present study, the way groups of learners engaged in a given task was determined both by their personal factors (i.e. their goals and motives to the task) as well as their social ones (i.e. the conditions). These factors affected how each group made decisions, took control, and took actions, playing an active role in guiding and directing the task accomplishment (Mercer, 2012, p. 46). This finding related to learner agency at the collective enterprise illustrated that learner agency could be facilitated or constrained by the social conditions provided within the learning context in which task engagement occurred. This is aligned with the argument of Deters, Gao, Miller and Vitanova (2015) that learning environment does play a role in shaping learner agency.

The general finding that the same tasks are performed differently by different groups is also reported in previous research conducted by Sirisatit (2010) and Shima (2007). Sirisatit (2010) researched the task performance of three pairs of Thai EFL students in an English course for business. After examining three tasks among the pairs, the way the three pairs solved the given tasks was distinctive due to their differing goals and motives. Unlike the present study, the findings in Sirisatit’s earlier study failed to indicate the conditions within the learning context where the task completion occurred. Shima (2007) also examined task performance between two groups of EFL learners of Japanese at an Australian university and focused on the task of analysing the learning of kanji (Chinese characters). The study showed that individual factors as well as relationships with group members determined how learners in each group participated in the tasks. As in the present study, the findings by Shima suggest that the relationship among learners in a group, as a condition shaping learners’ operations, influences activities conducted towards a given task. These findings could result in suggestions regarding the teaching practices in the context (the section on implications below will further expand on this point).

This present study illustrates that the same task assigned to each group of learners became a different activity, when it was actually conducted by each group. That is to
say, task-as-workplan is different from task-in-process in light of the kinds of learner agency actuated in particular settings. In fact, through the lens of activity theory, learners are agentive in their learning process, so they may approach an assigned task in ways that are unpredictable, whatever the teacher’s expectations about the task are, due to the condition of the task, their goals and motives towards the task.

7.1.3. Factors affecting learners’ task performance

The third sub-question aims to explore factors that determined learner engagement and agency at the individual level, by examining the task performance of individual learners (e.g. those who appeared to be active or resistant during the completion of the task with others). The findings indicated that both individual personal factors and social factors in the learning context had an impact on an individual’s task performance, which influenced the level of task participation of an individual during task accomplishment.

In terms of activity theory, the task performance in this study was influenced by all the six components: subject, tools, objects, rules, community and division of labour. As identified in the study, however, the most influential factors were subject and community.

Regarding the subject, the present study indicates that learners’ own personal factors, such as learning preferences, learning goals, learning beliefs, and learning history, had an influence on their task performance. However, this study explores an additional factor belonging to the subject, which is termed perception of themselves as an English learner, which also influenced a learner's specific task performance. To illustrate, Thi perceived himself as the eldest learner in the class, and as such he thought he had better not talk too much in class. Similarly, Tram conceived her English proficiency as less advanced than that of her peers, so she tended to listen to them when working with them. In fact, a few sociocultural studies in the field have indicated comparable results related to the component of subject (e.g. Sirisatit, 2010), which could determine distinctive task performance among learners. However, such studies have not explored the relationship between the way learners perceive themselves as learners of English and the way they perform tasks.
The research conducted by Gillette (1994) also showed how learning history impacted learners’ attitude towards language learning. In the research, one of Gillette’s participants turned himself off studying French due to his past learning experience with a teacher who was quite tough and demanding. Regarding the present study, the case of Phong and Han could illustrate or demonstrate- not prove the effect of learners’ learning history on their task performance. The experience of collaborative work at high school resulted in Phong’s reluctance to work with other classmates. Similarly, Han used to experience lower marks due to her silence in English classes at high school, while others could catch more of the teacher’s attention and get higher marks for their activeness. As a result, she then tried to show herself as being active during the classes.

Also under the framework of activity theory, Da Silva (2008) found that learners’ attitude and actions in English language classes were shaped by the learners’ learning goals. Lavelda, the participant in the mentioned research, considered learning English as beneficial for her life, so she set aside her dislike of writing and of collaborative work because of her learning goal. Overall, the findings indicated in the present study illustrate the point that learners are the driving force of learning. Personal factors of a learner such as learning history, learning preferences or learning beliefs are negotiated with contextual elements in a classroom, and this then leads to their particular attitudes and actions in the classroom. As pointed out by Swain (2006), learners could be provided with opportunities for learning in the learning environment, but with their personal elements, such as history, goal, etc., they have options and choices because they are the agents in the learning process.

In terms of community, this dimension referred to the partners with whom a student worked in collaborative work and as this study explored, the nature of the community played a critical role in determining a student's task performance. This was found to impact the level of participation in a given task where students sometimes showed themselves to be active with some partners or passive when working with other partners while at times they changed in their behaviour during the task discussion. Sang, for instance, felt more motivated when grouped with more capable students, while he resisted cooperating with less advanced peers. Similarly, when Tram was positioned as a less proficient learner by her partner (Sang), so she became silent. By contrast, Tram became more involved in the task if grouped with
others who appreciated her contribution to task discussion (e.g. Quan). This finding relates to aspects of Duff’s (2002) research which revealed how non-native English-speaking international learners chose to be silent when grouped with more proficient local learners to save face. In this sense, they were resistant to the engagement in the task when they were located in a community of more proficient individuals. This suggests that language learners may identify themselves differently in different circumstances, and that such identification affects the extent to which they participate in the learning process, as stated by Norton (2001). Interestingly, the present study reveals that power is distributed among members in a learning community. Those who are more or less knowledgeable tend to dominate or be subservient to the others in the community. No research in the field thus far has indicated this point, and this will be further discussed in Section 7.2.5 below.

Regarding the component of rules, the course regulations or the rules of the given tasks might impact upon learners’ task performance. To illustrate, when the course offered students extra marks for their participation in class activities, some learners tended to actively participate in sharing answers with others due to the bonus marks. Similarly, tasks that forbid the use of dictionaries or with limited time caused troubles for some students. For instance, Phong could not conduct the task without a dictionary. Tram rarely spoke in class, and she then revealed that she needed more time to prepare for the on-stage presentation. Therefore, the rules of tasks or the course would create constraints or favorable conditions for the occurrence of learning.

Concerning the component of division of labour, this study demonstrates that the specific organisation of groups or pairs during the completion of a given task impacted upon the task performance of some learners. Thus, learners might be active or resistant according to the way a group was organised and responsibilities divided up. For example, Phong disliked solving tasks with others, so he excluded himself from the task; whereas Quan favoured collaborative tasks, thus he became motivated to conduct the tasks with other students. In the same way, Tram felt more confident to perform the task on stage with her partners; hence, she only spoke up on such occasions. This result is similar to that found by Parks (2000) showing that one participant disliked cooperatively with other students but working alone, since the
participant conceived of group work as being groupthink so students are not allowed to think for themselves.

Lastly, the component of object was defined as a learner’s learning purpose towards language learning, the learning course or the given task, and this might affect the way a learner performs tasks in the class. For example, Thao expected to upgrade her study in a foreign country where she believed speaking skills would be very important for her, so she paid more attention to speaking. Accordingly, she appeared quite active in speaking classes. In particular, if the object of the task defined by teachers is contrasted with that of a learner, this may discourage the learner from participation in the task. To illustrate, Sang expected more English speaking practice in the speaking class; thus, he excluded himself from activities that, he assessed, failed to focus on speaking.

With the findings stated above, they actually bolster the claim that learners are agentive in the process of language learning, and that both personal and circumstantial or social factors attribute to learners’ task performance. Accordingly, students could choose to include or exclude themselves from a learning activity in a certain learning context. Their personal factors and the contextual elements lead to active performance or resistance to task engagement among them. Norton and Toohey (2011) highlight that “learners’ participation, non-participation or resistance in classroom discourse depends on who they want to be and become” (p. 223).

In brief, learners are agents in the process of language learning, and personal, circumstantial and social factors contribute to their task performance. Accordingly, they make choices to include or exclude themselves from a learning activity in a certain learning context. Personal factors and contextual elements thus lead to active performance or resistance to task engagement.

7.2. Discussion

This section discusses major findings centered on mediation and learner agency. Firstly, Section 7.2.1 discusses the significant role of semiotic mediation in the task accomplishment as found in the study. In this sense, language played a role as a central resource to provide semiotic mediation, especially the use of L1. Next, Section 7.2.2 shows the fact that different task types led to the use of different kinds of mediating tool. Then, the discussion of mediation process as multi-layered is presented in Section 7.2.3. After that, the discussion on agency is dealt with through
Sections 7.2.4, 7.2.5, 7.2.6 and 7.2.7. Section 7.2.4 shows the interrelation between learner agency at collective and individual levels. Section 7.2.5 then discusses the relation between mediation and learner agency. After that, Sections 7.2.6 and 7.2.7 deal with the discussion of learner resistance as a form of learner agency. Section 7.2.6 indicates the causes behind learner resistance in language classroom. Lastly, Section 7.2.7 argues that being silent in a language class could be another form of learning.

7.2.1. Language as a central semiotic mediation during the task completion

As revealed in the present study, semiotic tools played a significant role when learners used a wide range of semiotic tools, so the study confirms what previous studies have found. Learners in the present study, in fact, deployed numerous sources of tools which semiotically mediated their thinking process during the task accomplishment (e.g. their first language, private speech, background knowledge related to English learning, or their prior experience of the topic being discussed). In fact, John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) argue that “semiotic mediation is key to all aspects of knowledge construction” (p. 192).

Among the forms of semiotic mediation in use, language appears to be central in internally mediating learners’ thinking about problems emerging during the task engagement. In this sense, students used their first language (Vietnamese) to communicate with others (i.e. classmates and the teacher), or they produced talk addressing to themselves (i.e. private speech) with an aim to direct their attention to the problems they encountered while conducting the given task. In addition, L2 (English) appears to be a resource of semiotic mediation. In this perspective, it is illustrated from the study that learners employed their prior knowledge related to English (e.g. word family or grammar) to solve the given tasks. This is in line with the social view of the role of language in the learning process. Vygotsky (1987) stipulates that learners use language to dialogue with others or to themselves in the development of their learning. In this regard, Jamali and Gheisari (2014) later reason that language and thought are tied together, so language plays a role as the key semiotic mediator for thinking within or between individuals.

Regarding this view, in the present study, the first language and private speech have been widely used among the types of semiotic mediation resource. Apparently,
language itself serves as an essential instrument for learners to conduct the task in this study. This is in accordance with previous sociocultural researchers (Aimin, 2013; Hammami & Esmail, 2014; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Wells, 2007) who emphasise the key role of language in semiotically mediating learners’ learning process. Lantolf and Thorne (2006), for instance, argue that “language is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world” (p. 201). Similarly, Hammami and Esmail (2014) confirm that learners would develop their knowledge through interacting with others by employing language, which is one of the most significant tools for doing so.

In terms of the use of L1, Vietnamese was frequently employed in collaborative tasks in both speaking and reading classes, although students were encouraged to use English in classes. This finding is not surprising in the researched context of teaching and learning English where English is learned as a foreign language and access to English outside the classroom is limited. Accordingly, language learning is most often in the form of extensive production of complex forms and the use of the target language from the outset, as emphasised by Lantolf (2000a). Moreover, recent sociocultural advocates make the point that learners in such a context normally already possess a well-developed L1 system (Eun, 2016; Harun et al., 2014). As a matter of fact, the L1 system then serves as a regulatory device for the learners’ cognitive process in L2 learning (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2009). The view of L1 as a central mediation tool in the learning process of L2 was actually mentioned by Vygotsky (1987), who claimed that the semantic aspects of a word were acquired before the actual name of the word. This means that learning in L2 ultimately depends on the developed semantic system of the L1 or that the learning of an L2 or a foreign language has its foundation in the knowledge of one’s L1. Thus, although students were encouraged to exclude Vietnamese in English classrooms, Vietnamese were used frequently during the discussion of the given tasks.

A considerable extent of the Vietnamese talk that was produced to cope with language issues during the task revealed current learning and teaching issues that impacted upon the teaching context. Firstly, students used L1 in order to discuss English grammar when dealing with speaking tasks. That is, learners needed to consider grammar rules in order to create English utterances in accordance to English syntactical norms. However, the speaking class teacher was more likely to exclude
the instruction of grammar or the correction of grammatical mistakes in speaking classes. This was likely related to their teaching belief with respect to a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. CLT has strongly emerged as a means to support the teaching of English in Vietnam; and one of common misconceptions when adopting CLT in the context relates to the exclusion of grammar instruction or error correction (Mai & Noriko, 2012; Wu, 2008). In addition, the use of Vietnamese to recognise the spelling of English words with distinctive final consonant sounds uncovered another English learning issue related to English pronunciation. While final sounds play an important role in the process of distinguishing words, learners who learn English as a foreign language tend to omit these final sounds, especially Vietnamese students (Luu, 2011).

Overall, the use of L1 in the language class to accomplish a task appears as a useful tool for learners to acquire the foreign language. The frequent utilisation of Vietnamese in English classes is due to the fact that it is a part of learners’ background knowledge. Indeed, learners “have normally already develop their L1 system as a regulatory tool for their cognitive system” (Harun et al., 2014, p. 135). Therefore, although learners may be expected to use English, they may keep using their L1 during collaborative language tasks. The exclusion of L1 in classroom risks limiting the English learning. To illustrate, the speaking class teacher tried to help a group of learners (Tram and Thu) at one point to complete their conversation, but she communicated with them in English. As a result, this hampered the learners’ understanding of the discussion with her. The teacher’s attempt to use L2 in the speaking class may reflect her teaching framework adopting a CLT teaching approach. In addition to the exclusion of grammar teaching as mentioned previously, the avoidance of learners’ first language is in fact another common misunderstanding about CLT, as argued by Wu (2008). Unfortunately, the exclusion of learners’ L1 hinders learners’ comprehension, as shown in the present study. This may prevent learners from accessing learning interactions in the context. In other words, this proves the point that L1 use provides additional support assisting learners cognitively so that they can analyse and work at higher levels, which may be more difficult for them to achieve if they rely on the sole use of the target language (Eun, 2016).
7.2.2. Various task types associated with various mediating tools in use

The study indicates that students were more likely or less likely to adopt a certain tool in a task than they did in another task, due to the task in which they were engaging. In this study, the adoption of mediating tools was distinctive between receptive tasks and productive tasks.

In the case of reading tasks, learners had to decode the meaning of given language in order to complete the task. Correspondingly, the use of mediating tools revolved around processing in the comprehension of English language in the given tasks. To illustrate, they used Vietnamese to translate the statements in the matching or True/False task. Alternatively, their prior knowledge was utilised to interpret the meaning of a certain point in the task. Accordingly, assistance from peers or the teacher aimed to assist their understanding of the meaning of language in the tasks (e.g. they asked the teacher or partners for the meaning of new words). Besides this, self-directed speech was more widely used in reading tasks. Private speech occurred more frequently to mediate them to complete the matching task or true/false task. The possible explanation for this is that reading tasks provided learners with clues right in the task (e.g. words, phrases or statements) which students could make use of to solve the tasks.

Unlike reading tasks, speaking tasks required learners’ ability to produce English language through discussing a topic or creating a conversation about a given topic. In this regard, learners not only needed the knowledge of English (e.g. word use or grammar, etc.) but also needed ideas for the construction of the conversation content. Thus, the occurrence of mediation types was to help them to encode language. For example, the most frequent tool used was L1 which helped them to discuss what the conversation would be about. In the same way, the use of a dictionary was to search for English words, and they discussed with their partners to figure out a grammar rule to construct English utterances. On the whole, the types of mediating tool used were determined by the type of task. Having said that, mediation during learners’ task engagement is an embedded process whatever the task type conducted by the learners, and the following section will present a discussion of this.
7.2.3. The mediation in task completion as being multi-layered

The study shows that there was always more than one mediating tool appearing to mediate learners’ thoughts at a given point during the task engagement. To illustrate, students might produce some self-talk to consider the grammaticality of a statement previously made by themselves. Clearly, at this point, the students utilised both self-oriented talk and the prior knowledge of English grammar to complete the task. That is to say, two resources of semiotic mediation were occurring at the same point. Therefore, tools being used might sometimes overlap and affect one another, indicating that they were interrelated and mediated one another in the process of task implementation. All types of mediation (i.e. material, semiotic and human mediation) or several forms of the same type of mediation (e.g. the use of L1 and their background knowledge at the same time, which are semiotic tools) could be occurring simultaneously during the task engagement. The use of multiple tools to mediate learners’ thinking process shows that tools were interrelated and supportive of one another for the purpose of facilitating learners’ task accomplishment. Material and human tools mediated semiotic processes in a process of cross-mediation.

In the process of mediation where multiple tools occurred at a point in time, semiotic mediation was used more frequently among learners. As shown in the present study, language was used throughout the task completion. In this sense, they may communicate with each other in their first language, or they could produce self-oriented talk (in Vietnamese or in English) when dealing with difficulties. It could be argued that learners could sustain the task completion with the absence of human tools or material tools, but they could not do so without semiotic tools. For example, without the peer/teacher assistance (i.e. human mediation) or without dictionaries (i.e. material mediation), they could talk to themselves or utilise their first-hand knowledge (i.e. semiotic mediation) to direct their thoughts about the task. This in fact confirms the perspective of the significant role of semiotic mediation, especially the role of language, in the learning process. According to John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), semiotic mechanisms are central to all aspects of human knowledge co-construction, since they link the internal and the external (p. 192). In this sense, Vygotsky (1981) highlights that the internalisation of an individual’s knowledge is not direct but through the mediation of semiotic instruments.
This section has dealt with the discussion related to mediating tools used by learners in the study. The next section introduces a discussion of the findings of the study regarding the concept of learner agency. In this study, learner agency was displayed through learner actions, which were observable. Learner agency is here discussed at both the collective level where they worked in groups or pairs, and at the individual level. Following is a discussion of how learner agency was interrelated across the two levels.

7.2.4. Collective learner agency and individual learner agency as interrelated

This study finds an interrelationship between learner agency from “we” and “I” perspectives. When learner agency was spoken from the “we” perspective, it was defined as interaction of agencies of individuals in the group. In this sense, community and group work shaped individual agency. That is to say, the distinctive activities among groups of learners when engaging in the same task were found to be a result of the negotiation and combining of the individual agency of each member within the group. The present study illustrates that the same task assigned to each group of learners became a different activity when it was conducted by each group. That is to say, task-as-workplan was different from task-in process in the light of learner agency. In fact, through the lens of activity theory, learners are agentive in their learning process, so they could behave in an assigned task in unpredictable ways whatever the teacher’s expectations about the task were. This is also observed by Fahim and Haghani (2012): “…learners are active agents who, according to their own objectives, give specific directions to the activities and even different times and conditions have different impacts on their performance on the same task” (p. 698).

When learners jointly complete a given task, every learner with his or her own personal elements (e.g. beliefs) contributes to goal-directed actions to fulfil group motives towards the given task. Thus, the group’s goal-directed activities were shaped by the negotiation of individual agencies within the group. To take the task of making a talk about the effects of weather as an example, it is shown that the differences in goals towards the task led to different activities between two groups. The group of Tam and Hoa merely aimed to fulfil the task without any intention to share their talk in the end; while Phuong and Tran conducted the task in a different
way, to present their talk on stage to gain bonus points from the class teacher. As a result, the goal-directed activities conducted by the two groups were distinctive.

Due to the negotiation of the agency of individual learners in a group, there were various patterns of group participation. Collaborative, dominant/passive, and expert/novice patterns were found among the groups of students during collaborative tasks.

An observed pattern of participation was that each member in groups/pairs conducted the task in isolation from each other. This means each member would do their own job, and then share their own final product together in the end or consult with each other during the accomplishment of their own task. Therefore, no level of equality and no level of mutuality is recorded in this pattern, but students behaved in a “semi-solitary” way. Other patterns defined in previous research relate to the collective effort among members to complete a given task as a shared product. In this sense, all group members contribute to making a single English talk when conducting the task collaboratively (e.g. describing a party). By contrast, the “semi-solitary” pattern took place when each member worked individually for most of the task which was expected to be jointly completed.

A possible explanation for the “semi-solitary” pattern is that groups of learners with the same level of English proficiency tended to conduct collaborative tasks individually. With considerations of their purpose and the task condition, members in this kind of group decided to conduct tasks individually. For example, each member in the group of Tien, Phuong and Thao aimed to create a talk from their own ideas in the limited time allotted; hence, each member made one talk for themselves in the conversation task. Similarly, Muoi and Nguyen conducted the True/False reading task in isolation because their desire was to complete the task on time and each of them had an available tool (i.e. dictionaries). Also, it shows that distribution of material tools impacted the way groups participated.

In relation to the “semi-solitary” pattern, students could scaffold one another even though the final outcome of the given task was not collective. As shown in the study, although each member worked independently to complete the given task, they interacted with one another at some point when requiring assistance.
7.2.5. Learner agency as shaped by mediating tools

Mediating tools were one of the conditions determining the goal-directed actions of different groups of students. From this perspective, there were available learning resources such as dictionaries or devices connected to the Internet helping students access online texts of related topics, or partners created favourable conditions for learners to complete the task. Students with dictionaries could work individually alternatively, access to online texts motivated some students to improve their discussion of a topic so that they could present it to others.

Furthermore, the study shows that the relationship among group members mediated their task engagement. In this sense, learners engaged in different activities when working with partners who were close friends or classmates. Groups of close friends were more relaxed and more cooperative, and divided labour among members, such as in the goal-directed actions conducted by the group of Quyen, Lien and Dien in the matching task. Each member in the group was in charge of different duties during the engagement in the task (i.e. Lien looked up new word meanings while Quyen and Lien worked out meanings of statements). Therefore, the three students were cooperative during the task. By contrast, Han, My and Hoang were more likely to complete the matching task in isolation at some point. Therefore, the relationship among learners considered as a higher level or tertiary mediating tool plays a key role in the mediation of learners’ task engagement. This type of mediation may be abstract or invisible, and (Foot 2014) may receive less attention from the class teacher since it is abstract and may be difficult for teachers to recognise.

In terms of the impact of mediating tools on learner agency, when dealing with the tasks in groups or in pairs, the student who possessed more mediating tools were more powerful and dominant. Students who were more knowledgeable about the English language or the topic being discussed, held greater sources of semiotic mediation, and tended to control group discussion. In some cases, the possession of more sources of mediating tools helped students to change their roles from being passive to more dominant. The group of Han and Huy illustrates this point. Han was more subservient to Huy, who was more advanced, earlier in the discussion of active listening; but Huy relied on her later when Han provided the online text of active listening on her mobile phone. In this sense, Han owned more sources of mediation at this point with her phone as a material mediating tool, and with access to a sample
text on the same topic (i.e. the semiotic source). Hence, such sources of mediation provided her with more favourable conditions to exercise her agency at that moment. This illustrates that learner agency was not stable but mediated within this learning community. In brief, these learners were agents in the process of language learning, and both personal and social factors contributed to their task performance. Accordingly, they made choices to include or exclude themselves from a learning activity in a certain learning context. Personal factors and contextual elements thus lead to active performance or resistance to task engagement.

7.2.6. Learner resistance as not merely attributed to an individual’s personal factors

Concerning learner resistance, the study demonstrates that the negotiation between the personal and the social elements in the learning context caused some specific task performance related to being silent or disconforming with the classroom norms. To illustrate, Muoi appeared to be quiet during the whole class discussion because she would like to focus on taking notes on the teacher’s feedback, which would be beneficial for the final exam. For her, the final exam was much more important. Similarly, Tram turned reticent when grouped with some partners, as mentioned above. The reason for learner reticence found in the present study is distinctive from that in Xie’s (2010) research. From the perspective of sociocultural theory, Xie (2010) investigated the causes of reticence among English learners in the Chinese context. Xie indicated that teachers’ having too much thematic control during their interactions with learners resulted in learners’ non-participation. That is, teachers merely favoured learners’ replies conforming to the content of the given text. The possible explanation for the difference between Xie’s research and the present study is the task process. The present study mainly focused on the process where students worked together to discuss a given task. By contrast, both teachers and students engaged in the discussion about a topic in preparation for reading texts in the research by Xie. Moreover, it appears that Xie paid attention to teachers as the sole factor contributing to learners’ inactive participation. As a result, the causes for learner silence in the research related only to teachers’ control and dominance. In spite of the adoption of a sociocultural view on English learner silence, Xie (2010)
failed to obtain a multi-dimensional understanding of the issue, because the author did not focus on factors derived from the learners themselves. By contrast, the present study focused on both the contextual factors as well as personal ones from the learners.

Regarding students disobeying normative classroom discourse, Phong always resisted cooperating with other classmates due to his learning experience in the past causing a dislike of collaborative tasks. Likewise, Sang became resistant to working with groups of partners who were less capable than him, which shows that his learning history and beliefs led to his resistance to being grouped with those peers.

Generally speaking, under activity theory, learners’ language performance should be considered as multi-directional in the learning context. Since learners have agency in such a complex and dynamic process, they would negotiate their individual factors with contextual factors in the learning context, which may offer potential affordances for learning opportunities, as well as constraining learning. An interesting finding related to learner resistance is that being silent in the class did not equate to not learning.

7.2.7. Being silent/passive as another form of learning internally

Tram was criticised for keeping quiet during in-class activities after the task by the class teacher. She rarely posed questions, commented or responded to the teacher’s questions. However, Tram emphasised that she actually learned English through observing or listening to the teacher and the classmates. Tram took notes on language new to her during the discussion of the task. She then learned the notes after the class, and this was useful in improving her English. Muoi listened carefully to what classmates shared and the teacher’s feedback since this would help her with the final test. Similarly, Thi was always silent in the whole class activities, since he preferred listening attentively to others, which he believed suited him. That is, some students might appear to be passive or silent, but they actually concentrate on the task through attentive listening. This means that they internally participate in the task. This is similarly shared with Skinnari (2014) who indicates that silence among EFL learners meant attentive listening and concentrating on the task. This is, in fact, in accordance with the concept of intent participation that was earlier posited by Rogoff, Paradise, Arauz, Correa-Chávez and Angelillo (2003). Based on the idea that young children
learn their first language or skills from actively observing and listening to ongoing activities, Rogoff et al. (2003) proposed the term “intent participation”, which refers to learners’ participation in the learning process through keen observation and listening. Akhtar, Jipson, and Callanan (2001) also argue that the power of learning through keen observation and listening is clearly perceived in children’s language development. In this way, children emulate the language that adults use and develop an understanding of what language is appropriate. Similarly, Huston and Wright’s (1998) research demonstrates that children are able to learn new vocabulary after exposure to television stories which contain those words. In relation to foreign language learning contexts, intent participation may be observed among learners who remain silent or show non-verbal responses in the classroom, as in the present study.

In conclusion, the section has presented some major findings of the study, with relevant discussion. Presented in the following section are the implications of the study.

7.3. Pedagogical implications of the study
This section presents the implications of the study based on the discussion above. Accordingly, the implications involve pedagogical suggestions related to mediation and learner agency.

7.3.1. Implications related to the concept of mediation in language learning

* The use of learners’ first language in relation to teachers’ scaffolding in English classes
Vietnamese is used frequently among learners during task accomplishment. L1 use does facilitate learners’ language learning in terms of its functions as a useful device for learners to deal with mental challenges related to language or task management. In fact, the learning context being researched is an EFL setting where the target language only occurs in the classroom. As a result, the presence of L1 remains a natural resource in the language classroom. Although teachers of English may try to eliminate L1 in the target language class, especially in speaking classes, the avoidance of L1 use may be sometimes detrimental to learners’ English learning. As shown in the study, the teacher in the speaking class maintained the use of English during the discussion with a group at a point when she was attempting to assist the group in completing their conversation about a topic. However, her attempt failed to
help students due to her constant use of the target language, which caused them struggles in their understanding of the teacher. While language learning originates from social interactions with others in the learning environment, such a failure to comprehend the classroom environment could hinder language learning. Therefore, teachers of English should consider the use of L1 in the foreign language class or in L2 class. In this regard, teachers may retain the use of learners’ first language when interacting with learners who are less advanced. For those students, the employment of their first language could be actually more convenient for them in making the classroom a more comprehensible place, as affirmed by Mart (2013).

In addition, the functions of L1 vary according to the task type that learners are conducting. Therefore, teacher should pay much more attention to the type of support they should provide to learners when assigning a certain task to learners. Even though the use of L1 is unavoidable in English classes in the present context, learners may not rely on L1 too much if provided with the proper assistance from teachers. In this perspective, sufficient teacher’s support provided at the beginning of the task could lead to a reduction in learners’ cognitive load during the task accomplishment. Due to the cognitive load decrease towards the task, language learners may be less likely to adopt their first language in the task engagement. In application to language teaching, teachers should pay attention to pre-task activities of different tasks (i.e. productive and receptive tasks), where appropriate designed-in scaffolding needs to be offered to learners.

In terms of productive tasks (e.g. speaking tasks), teachers should activate learners’ prior knowledge or provide them with background knowledge on the topic being discussed. In fact, learners in the present study spent their L1 use searching for ideas about a topic to construct a talk or a conversation about it. Simultaneously, learners’ background knowledge and experience related to the topic served as a useful tool in these tasks, as indicated in the study. Therefore, the background knowledge about the topic facilitates learners in creating new information based on what they already know about it. Apart from the organised background knowledge related to the given topic, learners need to produce appropriate language (e.g. new words or grammatical structures). Consequently, learners may struggle in seeking vocabulary or forming utterances in line with English grammar rules. Thus, teacher’s designed-in scaffolding could revolve around these issues: that is, the teaching of words, phrases
or grammatical structures centered on the topic. As shown in the study, although teachers may ignore English grammar as a focus in the speaking class, some students still need it to complete the task.

As to the receptive tasks (e.g. reading tasks), schematic knowledge plays even a more substantial role in the comprehension of the task. Therefore, designed-in scaffolding should foster learners’ familiarity with the topical knowledge through activating their experience or providing background knowledge about the topic. The lack of content background knowledge may obstruct the learners’ comprehension necessary to conduct reading tasks. This is the reason why learners in the study struggled with the True/False task, where they became confused between “leaders” and “managers” as the major topic. In addition, teachers need to draw learners’ attention to the formal schematic knowledge before conducting reading tasks. This concern relates to the meanings of vocabulary under the topical knowledge. In relation to this study, learners’ comprehension was inhibited due to the word “team players” being unknown to them in the context of team building. Therefore, teachers of English may consider the teaching of terms or phrases with special meanings in the given context of a task. In the present study, the insufficient schematic knowledge caused obstruction to the completion of reading tasks. That is, the teaching practice in the context seemed to block learners’ access to linguistic resources, thus learner agency was constrained when conducting the reading tasks.

Therefore, teachers of English should be recognizant of the task type given to students, so as to provide appropriate scaffolding for learners. In fact, with proper assistance from teachers, learners could better self-regulate their own learning and could exercise their agency (Nakata, 2014). With the consideration of sufficient scaffolding for learners, not only could learners use L1 at a moderate level, but the role of teacher mediation would be enhanced in the learners’ task engagement.

*The reconsideration of English pronunciation teaching and learning*

Teachers, especially speaking teachers, should draw learners’ attention to final consonant sounds to distinguish words. Teachers may take the two words, fell and felt, as an example of how final sounds help to recognise words. As a result, learners may not rely on their first language in the process of English word recognition.

*Encouraging group dynamic patterns providing learners learning opportunities*
Throughout the discussion with partners in groups or pairs, learners’ interaction may follow various patterns offering different extents of assistance. In particular, a semi-solitary pattern emerged among learners in the present study. As mentioned, collaborative and expert/novice patterns are considered as the effective patterns for learning opportunities. Hence, teachers should encourage learners to work with one another in the same group by pointing them to the benefits of working together, such as enhancing memory and learning retention. To eliminate solitary work during collaborative tasks, teachers may consider students who could work together when forming pairs or groups. This will be further discussed later in this section.

* The practice of private speech during task engagement
When confronted with challenges during the task, learners may produce various forms of self-directed speech. This speech aims to internalise the challenges in their mind so that they could manage their attention to these challenges. Alternatively, self-addressed talk is to externalise their already existing knowledge of the problems they encounter. Simply put, private speech is produced to self-regulate learners’ thinking process during the task fulfilment. Relating this to language teaching, there should be an effort to integrate the training of self-oriented talk as a cognitive assistance in English classrooms. In this sense, English learners could be instructed in how to recall language items through the utilisation of inner talk. To illustrate, students may be encouraged to keep self-talking for an unknown word to recall its meanings. Otherwise, they may be advised to repeat part of the given information, make questions to themselves, or say the given information aloud with an aim to generate new information.

* The given tasks should be clear to learners
Learners even make use of the given task as an instrument to support them in solving the task; and this relates to teachers’ attention to suitable help in the early stage of different task types. The study shows that learners may employ the task requirement or instruction to direct their thoughts on the task. For example, the task requirement was used as an aid to guide the way they completed the task. Therefore, teachers need to make sure that the task instruction is clear and comprehensible to learners so that it could be a useful tool for learners later to deal with the task. Besides this, the given task may provide words or phrases used as a key to complete it, especially for reading tasks. In relation to English teaching, teachers are encouraged to inform
learners on the meaning of specialised terms, which meanings are specialised in the context of the given task. In other words, the use of task as a mediating tool recalls teachers’ attention to the task type assigned to learners, upon which proper assistance should be given. For instance, students appeared to use the task requirement to orientate the content of an English conversation when conducting speaking tasks, while they tended to rely on key words given in reading tasks to accomplish the tasks. Accordingly, the speaking task expectation must be clear to learners at the beginning of the task, whilst formal background knowledge should be provided for learners earlier in the reading task.

*The use of books and dictionaries as main material tools*

With regard to material tools, books and dictionaries played a critical role in externally directing learners’ thoughts. In the reading class, the coursebook is the main resource of material tool presenting tasks for learners. However, the use of textbook as the exclusive teaching resource leads to learner resistance for some learners. Accordingly, teachers should adapt the textbook and adopt supplemental teaching materials in language classrooms.

In terms of dictionary, besides the paperback dictionaries, there is a novel type emerging in the language class as a technical development in modern society, which is the mobile phone installed with online search facilities. With this device, learners could look up the meaning of unknown English words, or search for sample information on the same topic discussed in the class. In this case, English teachers should play a role in examining the use of such devices in the language classroom. Teachers could encourage learners to use online resources of texts surfed on the phone as references. That is to say, they can access to such resources after they finish the task. This may limit the possibility that learners may copy the information as a way to deal with the given task without actually working on the task.

7.3.2. Pedagogical implications related to learner agency

*Task-as-workplan is different form task-in-process*

Due to the fact that learners are agentive, different groups of learners would conduct a given task in different ways. Under the activity theory, learners would co-construct the activity in alignment with their own socio-history and locally determined goals during engagement in the activity. Therefore, it is impossible to make reliable
predictions concerning the kinds of language use and learning opportunities for learning that may arise. Accordingly, this leads to the notion of “same task, different activities” in language classes. Hence, teachers should treat tasks as the blueprints, due to students’ varieties of goal-directed actions.

*Learners’ task performance as socially and historically mediated*

Through the lens of activity theory, the study shows that the negotiation between personal factors of an individual and social factors in the learning context results in a learner’s unique task performance. Every factor or component in the activity system, namely subjects, objects, tools, rules, community, and division of labour, influences the task accomplishment of individual students. From a pedagogical perspective, teachers may consider these elements when evaluating learners’ task performance, especially unusual learning performance such as being silent or disobeying the normative classroom discourse.

Firstly, the component of subject is influential in defining the way a learner acts during the classroom activities. Hence, teachers of English should learn about their English learners. In order to achieve this, an interview with learners or a survey with them at the beginning of the course is recommended, to understand their learning preferences, self-perception, history, etc.

As for the learners in this study, community is the most prominent contextual factor determining a learners’ task performance. Due to the fact that partners have an impact on the level of a learner’s participation in collaborative tasks, EFL teachers should take this component into account when forming groups or pairs to solve a given task. Unlike the present setting being researched, learners of English in other English teaching settings (e.g. high schools or primary schools) in Vietnam have no opportunity to work with the peers they prefer. In these settings, members in groups or pairs are assigned by teachers, or teachers tend to have learners keep interacting with the same ones whose seats are close to them. Based on what is found in the present study, working with peers with whom a learner feels junior or lacking in confidence for a long time can be extremely detrimental to his or her language learning. As a consequence of this, collaboration does more harm than good for English learners. In this case, teachers may ask for learners’ opinions on pair work and group work through informal conversation with each student, and this could be conducted at times during the course. For classes with large numbers of students in
one class, which is common in the English teaching context of Vietnam, learners may be encouraged to speak their mind on their favourite group mates to the teacher via written feedback. If such an attempt is made, teachers could take proper measures to handle the issues related to the relationship among group members.

In addition to community, teachers should pay attention to other social factors such as rules, division of labour, objects and tools. Teachers may talk to students to understand whether the regulations related to classroom, the course or the task are beneficial for learners’ task engagement. Indeed, time limitation may be disadvantageous for some learners in properly conducting a given task. Concerning the element of division of labour, pre-course interviews with students may reveal learners’ like or dislike of the collaborative work with others. However, as mentioned above, teachers may show learners the advantages of collaboration in learning a language (e.g. rehearsal of the task, or lesson memorisation) to foster their cooperation with other classmates. As revealed in the study, one reason for a learner’s disapproval of collaborative work related to the unfairness of the teacher’s evaluation given to each group member, and the waste of time in arguments made by members. In this sense, teachers may more carefully reconsider their methods for evaluating collaborative task outcomes among members. Each group may have a secretary to remind each member to contribute to the task. In terms of object, the objectives of the learning course being opposed to that of a learner may discourage him or her from engaging in a given task. Accordingly, a better understanding of the learners’ learning objectives could be useful for teachers to revise their teaching objectives. With regard to tools in relation to learners’ task performance, the adoption of a certain tool may facilitate or limit a learner’s task completion. As mentioned in the discussion section, learners use various types of tools during the completion of a given task. The use of these mediating instruments is embedded at a given point during the task engagement. That is, multiple tools are employed to regulate learners’ thoughts at that moment, and some tools are invisible for teachers, such as background knowledge. Hence, when examining learners’ task performance in classes, teachers need to attend to such invisible tools. It is critical for teachers of English to understand that the mere provision of physical aids is still insufficient, since the required schemata knowledge, the relationship with partners, and even the teacher’s teaching beliefs, also influence the way learners perform a task. These
forms of mediating tools are often unobserved, so teachers may be more likely to ignore them. Generally speaking, under the activity theory, learners’ language performance should be considered as multi-directional in the learning context. Since learners have agency in such a complex and dynamic process, they would negotiate their individual factors with contextual factors in the learning context, which may offer potential affordances for learning opportunities as well constrain learning. Özdemir (2011) makes the point that “the appropriate designation of the agent is not the individual in isolation but the combination of individual or a group of individuals together with mediational means” (p. 303). Seen from this view, the evaluation of learner resistance in language classrooms must be considered by teachers, as discussed below.

*Reconsideration of evaluating learner resistance in language classroom*

Learners may appear to be silent or disconforming with classroom norms, due to the attribution of social factors in the learning context, not merely because of their own personal factors. Accordingly, evaluating such learner performance should not only be on the basis of “their control of a wider variety of linguistic forms or meaning than their peers” (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 310). Instead, the just cited authors draw teachers’ attention to the examination of the learning community and practices in such a community. In application to pedagogical implications, teachers should first take into account the elements in the learning context by which learners could be constrained or supported in gaining access to linguistic resources. That is to say, contextual factors in interaction with learners’ personal factors may result in a failure to create favourable conditions for them to exercise their agency. Accordingly, teachers may adjust these social elements of the learning context in accordance with learners’ personal factors.

Furthermore, the present study shows that being silent in the language class may present another form of language learning. That is, learners may learn English via observation or attentive listening to classmates and teachers. In relation to the language classroom, teachers may prefer learners who often raise their voices (e.g. volunteering answers, asking questions, or contributing to discussions) more than others. However, teachers may take the notion of intent participation into consideration when giving evaluations of silent learners.
On the whole, under the activity theory, the process of language learning is developed through the mediation in the learning context. Therefore, teachers need to create opportunities where learners are supplied with appropriate scaffolding and support. In addition, learners are the agents central to making the learning activity occur in that learning process. This view advises language teachers to consider learning about their learners, as a prerequisite for teaching. With a better understanding of language learners, teachers could adjust elements in the learning context (e.g. task or classroom rules, teaching methods, teaching objectives) in order to comply with those of learners. Under the sociocultural view, second language and foreign language learning is regarded as social interaction, which is an integral process, and human cognition is formed through social activity. According to this view, learning a second or foreign language is understood as a semiotic process attributable to participation in social activities rather than an internal mental process enacted solely by the individual (Block, 2003; Lantolf & Thorne 2006). Internalization occurs more effectively when there is social interaction. On the social plane, learners negotiate in social interaction, so their learning is determined by both personal and social factors. Thus, in terms of task design, task designers should consider these factors. That is, the task as a blueprint and could be responded differently by different learners at different occasions. Similarly, learners’ task performance is the result from the negotiation between personal and social elements in the learning context. Thus, in order to increase learners’ task engagement, teachers should adjust social factors (e.g., classroom rules, the course rules, or course objective). Furthermore, the task should be clear and understandable for learners, so it then semiotically mediates learners’ completion of the task. Also in this sense, learners’ background knowledge should be taken into consideration prior to task design. Teachers need to include activities that help provide or activate learners’ prior knowledge about a given topic as the knowledge then serve as semiotic tool, which could improve learners’ engagement in the task.

7.4. Conclusion
With the adoption of activity theory as a theoretical framework, the present study has provided a sociocultural view on college learners’ task engagement in the English teaching and learning context of Vietnam. Firstly, the study shows that learners make use of various resources to mediate their cognitive process during the completion of
tasks, ranging across semiotic tools, material tools and human tools. In terms of semiotic tools, Vietnamese appears to be a central instrument used by learners to communicate with others throughout their task engagement. The present study is distinctive from others in that it demonstrates the use of learners’ background knowledge or experience, and the employment of assigned tasks, as devices providing semiotic mediation to their task accomplishment. Also in the sense of semiotic mediation, learners in the present study performed private speech to manage their thoughts on the challenges they faced at a given time during the task engagement. Viewing self-talk as a tool to mediate learners’ thinking process, private speech in this study functions as self-regulation to assist learners to deal with challenges emerging while conducting the tasks. Apart from this, private speech was produced to externalise learners’ already existing knowledge onto a language problem they encountered. This function of private speech during the mediation of learners’ consciousness is novel compared with other studies in the literature.

Regarding human tools, both teachers and peers were shown to support learners’ task completion. Interestingly, peer scaffolding appears to have played a more substantial role than teacher mediation. Teachers failed to support learners at the beginning of the task or during the learners’ task engagement. Thus, learners appear to have been more likely to resort to assistance from partners to complete a given task. In this sense, not only do learners in the same group help to teach other, but learners may also ask for help from peers who are not their immediate partners. Unlike in other research, the pattern of group dynamics of learners in this study is shown to be “semi-solitary”, describing the process where group members complete an assigned task in isolation. Each member would like to come up with their own task outcome (e.g. a talk in English) in spite of consultation with each other at some points.

In material mediation terms, dictionaries are shown to be a central tool useful for learners to handle language problems, such as word meanings or word types. In particular, there was the presence of dictionary apps installed on mobiles among some learners. This is in tune with the development of technology in English language teaching as a modern tendency. The study also indicates a technological trend in English learning in that learners used their cell phones as mini-computer to access online learning resources which supported their task accomplishment.
Secondly, the study reveals that the same task could be associated with different activities when being conducted by different groups. That is, learner agency from the “we” perspective contributes to this. Namely, groups with various goals may result in different activities. Moreover, the task conditions in each group would define various activities among groups. Also from the view of learner agency but from the “I” perspective, the task performance of an individual is determined by both his or her personal elements and contextual factors. That is to say, these factors lead to the level of a learner’s task participation, such as active, reticent or resistant. Furthermore, some pedagogical implications have been drawn upon these findings in the present study, as previously discussed above.

Apart from the practical implications, the study makes certain other contributions. The study provides a sociocultural perspective on English learners’ task engagement from within the Vietnamese context. The present study takes an activity theory perspective, which is a new perspective, on English learners’ task engagement in Vietnam. In fact, taking a sociocultural view appears to still be novel for Vietnamese SLA researchers, who tend to isolate the learner mind from the sociocultural factors of the learning context. Thus, the use of activity theory as a theoretical framework could widen understanding of the research topic related to ESL learners’ engagement in a specific task or activity in class. Teachers of English from different settings in the same context could apply sociocultural views to learn about problems in their teaching practice. Through a sociocultural lens, learners are integrated with the social context of the learning community. Thus, this offers a holistic view on problems related to English teaching and learning, which are not just from the learners but from internal factors arising from the context. Teachers should treat learners as people who have right to decide their level of participation in the context. In order to improve learners’ participation, social and cultural elements need adjusting in line with personal factors of the learners. In addition, these factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating learners’ learning. In this regard, teachers should take an integral examination of how learners are constrained or supported by linguistic resources in the learning community, rather than a mere examination into the contents of her or his brain (Jamali & Gheisari, 2014; Norton & Toohey, 2001; van Lier, 2000).
In spite of the substantial findings outlined above, the present study is not free from some limitations which are discussed as follows.

7.5. Limitations of the study
The study was conducted in a relatively short timeframe, involving only speaking tasks and reading tasks in two classes. Other task types may have revealed different findings related to mediating tools or learner agency. Furthermore, the interpretation of the research results could be biased by the researcher, who used to be an English learner and a teacher of English in the same context. By employing triangulation and providing in-depth descriptions, the researcher has hoped to reduce any such bias on the study. Another limitation is that this study has not been linked to learners’ language development. The purpose of the study pertained to examining learners’ task engagement to enlighten the mediated process and learner agency. From this perspective, the study revolved around the findings on the mediating tools in use by the learners, the same task with different activities, and the factors affecting learners’ task performance. Thus, the study did not focus on learners’ language development.

7.6. Suggestions for further studies
Further studies related to task engagement should involve more task types so that other constructs could be revealed. In addition, further research in this line should identify the connection of task engagement and learners’ English learning outcomes. In particular, there should be more research on English learning in the context of Vietnam that adopts the framework of activity theory, since such research could help indicate issues in language and teaching in the context so that proper measures could be taken to improve teaching and learning practice (Bernat, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Accordingly, further research in the context may utilise this theory to conduct research on other settings, such as English learning at primary, secondary or high school levels. Furthermore, the research could be conducted in other kinds of English learning environments. For example, activity theory could be used to obtain fuller insight into the reasons for and solutions to the low quality of English language learning in distance learning courses.


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APPENDIX A: A LETTER TO THE SCHOOL

SOC TRANG COMMUNITY COLLEGE

400, LE HONG PHONG, WARD 3, SOC TRANG, VIETNAM

To whom it may concern,

At Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen’s request, I would like to confirm my permission for her to conduct the research project titled “Understanding College English Learners’ Task Engagement in the Vietnamese Context: An Investigation from the Perspective of Activity Theory” at the School of Foreign Language Studies, Soc Trang community college, Vietnam.

I am aware that she will conduct her research at our faculty during a semester (November 2014 – February 2015). During this project, two English teachers and their students will be participants at their willingness. The procedures anticipated for each teacher are:

- Informal conversation with the class teachers before and after the class

Regarding the students, the procedures anticipated are:

- Classroom observations
- Stimulated recall sessions/ Informal talks with some students
- Interviews: at the end of the project, students who appear active, silent or resistant to engaging in language tasks will be invited to have an interview about their perceptions of task and task activity.

All information will be confidential and the names of all participants will be pseudonyms. The tapes and transcripts will be securely stored in the researcher’s office and destroyed after five years. The teachers and students will be invited to participate in this project on the basis of their willingness, and they can withdraw out of the project any time. I am aware that this project must be reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If I have any concerns, I can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au. For further information I can contact Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen at...
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR THE CLASS TEACHERS

Project title: “Understanding College English Learners’ Task Engagement in the Vietnamese Context: An Investigation from the Perspective of Activity Theory”

I have been given information about the above research inquiry and been provided with the opportunity to discuss this project with the researcher who is conducting this research.

By ticking the following boxes I would like to indicate my agreement to let the researcher do the following tasks of the project:

☐ Observe and video-audio tape my lessons in the classroom.
☐ Conduct stimulated recall sections with my students.
☐ Conduct one interview my students at the end of the project.

I understand that the interviews will be recorded and transcribed and that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality.

I have been advised of the potential burdens associated with this research and have had an opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with my college.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen by mobile phone or via her email address (tkdn242@uowmail.edu.au), or any researcher listed in the Information Sheet. If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Office, University of Wollongong on (61) 2 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research entitled “Exploring learners’ English language task performance – an Investigation from an activity theory Perspective” as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for the preparation of a report and possible journal publications and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

Date
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS

Project title: “College English Learners’ Task Engagement in the Vietnamese Context: An Investigation from the Perspective of Activity Theory”

I have been given information about the above research inquiry and been provided with the opportunity to discuss this project with the researcher who is conducting this research.

By ticking the following boxes I would like to indicate my agreement to be a participant in the following tasks of the project:

☐ Some lessons of my classroom learning with my teacher will be observed and video and audio-taped.

☐ Some observed lessons will be used to conduct stimulated recall in which I will watch parts of those video-taped lessons to recall my thoughts during those parts.

☐ I may be invited to one interview at the end of the project

I understand that the interviews and stimulated recall sessions will be recorded and transcribed and that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality.

I have been advised of the potential burdens associated with this research and have had an opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my study.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen by mobile phone or via her email address (tkdn242@uowmail.edu.au), or any researcher listed in the Information Sheet. If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Office, University of Wollongong on (61) 2 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research entitled “Exploring learners’ English language task performance – an Investigation from an activity theory Perspective” as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for the preparation of a report and possible journal publications and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signed

Date

……/....../……..
This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to explore college learners’ English language task engagement in the Vietnamese context from an activity theory perspective. This project will lead to a better understanding of English language learners’ task engagement in the Vietnamese context and therefore enhance the teaching and learning quality.

If you choose to be included, you will be asked to allow the researcher to observe and video-audio record your English classroom lessons with your teacher of English. Also, you will be invited to stimulated recall sessions where you will watch two video-taped lessons and answered some questions. The typical questions are: What were you thinking at this point? Do you remember what you were thinking while you did this task? Why did you perform the task in this way at this point? Then, you will be invited to a semi-structured interview at the end of the project about your perceptions of task and tasks activities and how these relate to language learning outcomes. Typical questions are: What tasks do you like the most? Why? When engaging in English tasks, do you attempt to demonstrate knowledge by saying what the teacher expects to hear or doing what the teacher expects to see? Why (not) The interview and stimulated recall will be tape-recorded. All information will be confidential.

You are free to refuse to participate and even if you agree to participate, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. Refusal or withdrawing will not in any way affect your study and your relationship with the university.

The data will be coded and transcribed and no names will be used in any written report. Videos will not be used for any public viewings (e.g. conferences). Audio and video records will be kept locked in the researcher’s office and destroyed after five years. The data collected from your participation may be used for the preparation of a report and possible journal publications.

For further information please contact either of us at the following numbers:

Dr Barbra McKenzie
Dr Steven Pickford
Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen,
MA
(Principal Investigator)
(Second investigator)
(Research student)
Faculty of Education
Faculty of Education
Faculty of Education
bmckenz@uow.edu.au
spickfor@uow.edu.au
tkdn242@uowmail.edu.au

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Thank you for your interest in this study.
This is an invitation to participate in a study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong. The purpose of the research is to explore learners’ English language task engagement from an Activity theory perspective. This project will lead to a better understanding of English language learners’ task engagement in the Vietnamese context and therefore enhance the teaching and learning quality.

If you choose to be included, you will be asked to allow the researcher to observe and video-audio record your lessons of your classroom teaching. Then, you will be invited to informal talk at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. Typical questions are: What is the object of this lesson? Why did the student conduct the task that way? You are free to refuse to participate and even if you agree to participate, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. Refusal or withdrawing will not in any way affect your relationship with the university.

All information will be confidential. Observed lessons will be video-taped; informal talks may be recorded. The data will be coded and transcribed and no names will be used in any written report. Videos will not be used for any public viewings (e.g. conferences). Audio and video records will be kept locked in the researcher’s office and destroyed after five years. The data collected from your participation will be used for the preparation of a report and possible journal publications.

For further information please contact either of us at the following numbers:
Dr Barbra McKenzie Dr Steven Pickford Thi Khanh Doan Nguyen, MA (Principal Investigator) (Second investigator) (Research student)
Faculty of Education Faculty of Education Faculty of Education
bmckenz@uow.edu.au spickfor@uow.edu.au tkdn242@uowmail.edu.au

This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the UoW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.
APPENDIX F: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW AND STIMULATED RECALL/ INFORMAL CONVERSTATION FOR PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Due to the nature of the “semi-structured interview process” it is impossible to state beforehand the exact nature and wording of the questions. The following questions are a guide and are framed to elicit further information from the respondents.

*In interviews:

For students:
- What is your name?
- How long have you been learning English?
- Do you like learning English?
- It’s noted that you are usually silent/ active/ disconforming during task completion/ class activities. Why did you engage in the language task that way until its completion? In your opinion, what would make you/ students deal with the task better? What make you change the way you complete the tasks?

- Stimulated recall sessions or informal conversation when students watch video-recorded parts of their lessons:
  - What are you thinking at this point?
  - Could you recall your thoughts while doing this?
  - Why are you doing this at this time?
  - Why are you perform the task this way at this point (appear active, silent, or resistant to the task)?

*Questions for informal conversation with teacher

- During the task (say the name of the task), I’ve seen that you………Why did you behave this way to the student/ groups of students? Do you think that you would do it in an opposite way? Why/ Why not?
- The student (say the name of the student) What’s your opinion on his/ her task performance? Why did he/ she perform the task this way?
APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

*(text)* the bold, italic text enclosed in brackets indicates the English translation of the previous speech in Vietnamese

*(trans)* it is provided right after a text in either English or Vietnamese to refer that the text is the equivalent translation of the previous speech provided by the speaker.

*(…)* Bold and italic dots enclosed in brackets indicate the Vietnamese words in quotation marks.

*Text…text…* This indicates the speech provided in a broken voice.

(0.5) Number in brackets indicates a time gap in second.

(.) A dot enclosed in brackets indicates a pause in the talk representing silent thinking

= *‘Equals’ sign indicates ‘latching’ between utterances.*

[[ Double left-hand brackets indicate utterances starting up simultaneously.

(( )) A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity of the researcher’s description.

- A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior sound or word.

:: Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter.

(inaudible) Indicates speech that is difficult to make out.

(?unclear) Indicates speech that is unclear

. A full stop indicates the end of a sentence.

, A comma indicates the separation of phrases

? A question mark indicates a rising inflection which refers to a question.

Under Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.

CAPITALS Words in capitals mark a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.

° ° Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken to themselves
APPENDIX H: THE READING TASKS

1. The True/False task

UNIT 6: LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Introduction
This lesson looks at what makes a good leader and how you can develop your own leadership skills in the professional world.

Activity 1: 10 mins
Decide whether you agree (✓) or disagree (x) with these statements about leadership.

1.01 All managers are good leaders.  
1.02 All leaders are good managers.  
1.03 Effective leaders need to focus on the future.  
1.04 Good leaders have to be good public speakers.  
1.05 The best leaders do not ask their staff to do anything they are not prepared to do themselves.  
1.06 An effective leader always makes autonomous decisions.  
1.07 Good leaders try to keep everyone happy.  
1.08 True leaders do not care about other people’s opinions.  

Activity 2: 20 mins
Read the article about leadership in the modern professional world then look back at your answers to Activity 1. Do you want to change any of them?

Leaders recognise the importance of keeping their staff motivated and involved. It’s important to be able to sell the company’s philosophy and objectives. However, empty statements and empty gestures will be recognised quickly by staff and might prove to be counter-productive.

There are a number of strategies that can be used to promote genuine motivation.

1. Be aware of the physical environment your staff is working in. Take the lead on creating space and a more productive environment. Don’t just accept the idea of ‘hotdesking’ just because it’s the latest thing – it may not be the most appropriate solution for your staff group.
2. Speak to your staff and listen to them – actively.
3. Recognise the importance of delegation. Don’t, however, just give the less interesting tasks to subordinates. Instead, you should delegate as a way of allowing staff to take on more responsibility, to develop professionally and to challenge themselves. A great motivator as long as you then listen to the opinions of the people you have delegated tasks to.
4. Welcome feedback, in fact actively seek it, not just because your organisation requires it as part of its performance management system, but because you want to continue to develop as a professional.
5. Recognise how individual staff members work best, which means getting to know the people who work with you. Individuality is important, don’t be afraid of it as some of the best and most creative ideas come from those with different ways of doing things from the normal company culture.
6. When you say you’re going to do something by a particular date/time, make sure you keep your promise. It’s difficult to get people to meet deadlines if you don’t do it yourself.

Don’t be afraid to make unpopular decisions. Often you will have information that is not shared with other staff members which makes you decide on a course of action that might seem strange to those without that information.
2. The Matching Task

UNIT 7: TEAMBUILDING

Introduction
This lesson looks at some of the issues surrounding establishing and developing teams. You will look at what makes a team successful and also analyse some of the different personalities that make up an effective team.

Activity 1. 15 mins

What is a team?
Use these key words to fill the gaps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>talented</th>
<th>objective</th>
<th>talent</th>
<th>complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.01 I need training in order to learn the __________ required in my new job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.02 We need to know what we want to achieve – what our __________ are.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.03 Her ideas are new and exciting. She is a very __________ designer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.04 Her creative genius and his practical business mind is a great combination – they __________ each other perfectly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.05 Although he is young and new to the business, he has a lot of __________. We must help him develop it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.06 Read the definitions and decide which one best describes a team. Put a tick (✓) in the box next to the best answer.
A. A team is a collection of talented individuals doing what one individual cannot do alone.
B. A team is the same as a group.
C. A team is a collection of individuals whose skills complement each other’s and who work together to achieve common objectives.
D. A team consists of a group of individuals each with a similar talent working together towards a common objective.
E. A team is a group of people which uses its skills to get results to benefit the group.

Activity 2. 15 mins

What makes a good team? This activity looks at the components of a successful team.

Let’s start by looking at a successful football team, perhaps the biggest name in football around the world – Manchester United. Manchester United are an extremely successful football team having dominated English football during the 90s and early 2000s. They have massive global support and are also a highly successful business. So, what makes them so successful as a team?

Look at the checklist and match the bullet points to the explanations below.

A. Talented individuals
B. Team players
C. Versatility
D. Continuity
E. Strong leadership
F. Success breeds success
G. Strength in depth
H. Clearly defined objectives
I. Learning process
J. Working techniques
K. New members – integration
2.01. A team needs diversity - a range of different skills within the team group. Different members offer different knowledge, experience and skills.

2.02. Commitment to the team's goals not just personal glory.

2.03. People with the necessary individual skills.

2.04. Staff turnover is inevitable – and often desirable. It is important that the team accepts new people and makes it as easy as possible for them to perform to the best of their ability. This way the team benefits.

2.05. The team needs to know what it is aiming for. Everyone in the team needs to be working towards the same goal.

2.06. Confidence comes from making progress and getting results. When a team starts getting good results, it normally goes from strength to strength and achieves even more.

2.07. When people are unavailable or they leave the team, a replacement is not readily available, a good team will have the right people able to step in and take over the role of the absent person.

2.08. This may come from a dynamic individual with a clear sense of direction or it may come from a group within the team.

2.09. Mistakes will be made. Use what you learn from these mistakes and move on. The experience is valuable.

2.10. Research, training, developing, refining – build on your skills to improve your ability to perform.

2.11. The team needs to be able to perform consistently well. To do this it needs to be able to replace members without upsetting the overall direction, atmosphere or team spirit.

Major football teams like Manchester United and Real Madrid have the luxury of being able to attract and shift some of the best players in the world. They are extremely successful and they are able to pay top of the range salaries. Many footballers dream of playing for such teams. However, buying the best players does not guarantee the best team. You need the right ingredients in the right mix to create a recipe for success. You need fast skilful players, hard physical players and defenders as well as attacking players.

This content transfers to the business world as well. The best teams are not necessarily the ones made up of the brightest, cleverest individuals. A balance of skills, abilities and personalities is usually needed to make the team effective.

This activity looks at the different roles that different team members play in making a team effective in the professional world.

Choose the words and expressions in the box to complete the notes below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>specialist</th>
<th>co-ordinator</th>
<th>home grown</th>
<th>imported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>creative minds</td>
<td>team workers</td>
<td>experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.01. a blend of and young players benefit from the experience of the older team members.

3.02. and talent – finding talent from within the organisation and developing it is just as important as recruiting from outside.

3.03. teams often need someone who has expert knowledge or skills that other team members do not have.

3.04. All teams need people with ideas – often these individuals find routine work boring and are more interested in developing ideas than playing the team game. The team also needs more practical as a balance.

3.05. Having the right mix of skills and qualities in the team is not the end of the story – someone has to pull it all together to make it work properly i.e. someone has to play the role of and give the team direction.
3. The Discussion Task

UNIT 9: ACTIVE LISTENING

Introduction

Listening is not a passive skill. It requires active thought and responses. When we listen to someone talking to us we are involved in the communication and it is important that we signal to the speaker that we are listening and that we have understood what is being said. Equally if we are not sure of the meaning of what is being said, we need to show that this is the case. By doing so, the speaker is able to continue appropriately and get the message across effectively.

Activity 1: 15 mins

This activity looks at what we do and what we say when we listen actively.

Match the following categories with the correct definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>signals</th>
<th>echo response</th>
<th>questioning</th>
<th>action points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>asking for more information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>stating that you will do something or you expect something to be done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>short expressions or sounds that indicate you are listening and understand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>repeating key words or ideas to show you are listening and thinking about the message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now group the expressions with the correct categories.

Signals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I see ✓</th>
<th>So, the boxes weigh 10 kg each ✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Echo/response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OK</th>
<th>How heavy did you say they were?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'll ring you when they arrive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>how much will that cost</th>
<th>If they don't arrive by 10am I'll call to find out where they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>Uh huh, yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Action points

If you are not sure of the meaning of what is being said, you can:

- Repeat the main points of the speaker.
- Ask for clarification.
- Repeating key words or ideas to show you are listening and thinking about the message.

Now add two more examples to each column.
APPENDIX I: EXCERPTS ILLUSTRATING MEDIATING TOOLS IN CASE 1

Material mediation

Excerpt 5.2.1.6

17 My: nè, talented là tính từ, nghĩa là có tài (here, talented is an adjective, means being with talent or skills) ((shows the word in her dictionary))

19 Han: từ điển của may trieu roi do. Talented là ting tu va cùng là verb nhu (your dictionary is insufficient. Talented is an adjective and also a verb.) ((to My))

21 My: Khong, talented là adjective thôi (no, talented is an adjective only)

22 Han: nó là verb và duoc them ED. Nó thanh adjective and dang tu qua khu (it’s a verb and we add ED in the end. So it becomes an adjective and a simple past verb)

23 My: tao khong biết (no ideas)

24 Han: °a VERB°, °Talented°

25 Hoang: talent is a noun? ((rising voice)) ((Talks to My))

26 My: uh

27 Han: khoan, khoan, de toi kiem tra (hold on, hold on, let me check) ((checks with her dictionary))

Semiotic mediation

L1 used to translate L2 in order to decode L2 meaning

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.1

12 Muoi: Ê, cai câu bón là dùng hay sai chú tao thấy nhầm người có khả năng quản lý những không có khả năng nói trước công chúng ((talks to Nguyen)) (hey, sentence 4 is True or False? Since I see that some people may be able to manage but not able to speak in front of public places)

14 Public, public speaking nghĩa là nói trước công chúng đúng không? (public speaking means speaking in front of others?)

15 Nguyen: ((both looks at the sentence)) mét người lãnh đạo giới phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt (a good leader has to be good at public speaking)

17 Muoi: “have to” là phải hà? (have to means being forced to?) ((asks Nguyen))

18 Nguyen: một người lãnh đạo giới phải phát biểu trước công chúng tốt (a good leader has to be good at public speaking)
19 Muoi: Không, đâu có cần đâu (No, it's not always necessary)

……..

35 Nguyen: “Effective leaders always make (?inaudible) decision” ((reads the sixth statement)).

37 Autonomous decision là gì? (what does autonomous decision mean?)

38 Muoi: tự quyết (self-decide) ((looks at her dictionary))

39 Nguyen: tự quyết định hà? ((raises her voice)) (make decision by himself?)

40 Muoi: chắc vậy (maybe)

41 (40.0)

42 Nguyen: cô gang làm cho người khác vui (try to make everyone happy)

43 Muoi: Đâu có cần đâu (it’s not necessary)

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.2

132 Quyen: Versatility?

133 Lien: Tinh linh hoat, thao vac (the quality of being able to change or be changed easily according to the situation)

134 Dien: thoi qua kia doc di (please move to the next page), dịch hoai vai trong (why keeps translating)

135 Quyen: tra dum tao chuy process (help me to look up the word process please)

136 Lien: Process ha? (Process?) [[ti’en bo (movement to a more developed stage)

137 Dien: [[ti’en bo (movement to a more developed stated)

………………

167 Dien: technique ((rising voice)) nghia gi may? (What does it mean?)

168 Quyen: Tra di, nhiem vu cua may do ((talks to Lien)) (look it up! It’s your responsibility)

169 Lien: kỹ thuật ((provides the meaning of technique in Vietnamese))

171 Dien: Tao nghé câu này là versatility (I think this sentence is versatility) Bôi vi (Because) (. important (. accepts (. as easy as ((?unclear)) ((shows the key words))

173 Quyen: No, no. Minh xem nê chấp nhận các cá nhân mới, vi vậy nó phải là (Here you see accept new people, so it must be) [[new members

175 Lien and Dien: [[ new members, yeah, right ((laugh))
176 Lien: The team needs to know nghĩa là một đội cần phải biết cái gì là mục đích chính của họ và của đội là gì (A team needs to know what the team goal is)

178 ((the group keep silent for 20 seconds))

179 Dien: à, đây phải là B (Ah, this must be B). A team needs diversity, different members nè (it's different members) different members. Thú nhất là đa dạng team players (The first thing the diversity of team members)

182 Lien: vậy là B (so it is B)

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.3

35 Han: từ nào? (What words?) Versatility, versatility ((looks at My’s book))

36 My: linh hoạt (flexibility) ((says the meaning in Vietnamese))

37 Hoang: linh hoạt (flexibility) ((notes the meaning of versatility in her notebook))

38 My: kết nối với nhau (connect together)

39 Hoang: continuity là tính liên tục? (Does continuity mean continuing for a long period of time?)

40 My: không chắc (not sure), để tra lại coi (let check again) ((open her dictionary to check)) ư, là noun (Yes, it does. It is a noun)

42 Han: Một đội phải cần những thành viên khác nhau, với những kiến thức khác nhau (A team involves individuals who have different knowledge and skills) Tôi nghĩ là tài năng cá nhân (So I think it is talented individuals) Nó nghĩa là tài năng cá nhân (It refers to talent of every single person)

45 My and Hoang: ((write the phrase next to 2.01))

46 Han: Rồi câu thứ hai đi (the second statement please)

47 My: the goal=

48 Han: = The goal of a group (.) commitment to the team goals (.) not just personal glory.

50 My: Mục [[dịch (the goal)

51 Han: [[ Mục dịch của nhóm chữ không chỉ là mục đích cá nhân (the goal of a group not the goal of an individual)

52 Hoang: hay nó là tính liên tục? (it is continuity?)

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.6

48 Han: Uh, huh (.). [[còn cái gì mà (something like)

49 Huy: ["interview"]

50 Han: buổi họp báo đó (a press release)
The use of L1 to refocus partners’ attention

Excerpt 5.2.2.1.13

83 Huong: Tớ câu tiếp (the next sentence)

84 Huy: A good leader has to be a good public speaker ((reads the fourth statement)).

I agree because good leaders are always, are always, always give speech to other membership to make the plan to do something, to do some plans so they have to be a good speaker to enforce or or to persuade others to do and and to do what they think.

88 Huong: ((takes notes))

Private speech

1 Huy: Ai cùng lật unit four hết (Every one turns to unit four) ((looks around the class))

3 All managers are good leaders ((reads the first statement from the book))

4 Huong: ((reads from the book)) All managers are good leaders

(10.0)

6 Huy: *leadership skills* . "leadership skills" ((reads to self then seems to think))

(30.0)

7 Huong: "Decide whether you agree or disagree* . *true or false* ((reads the requirement in a soft voice)) (20.0)

9 Huy: Ok, I read and then you correct, Ok? ((talks to Huong))

…………………..

20 Huy: Agree (2.0) ((reads the next statement)) Best leaders do not ask their staff to do anything they are not prepared to themselves (5.0) Agree or disagree? ((to Huong))

22 Huong: Agree

22 Huy: *Best leaders do not ask their staff, that means their workers, their employees* ((explains the word “staff” in a soft voice and then keeps reading the rest of the sentence)) to do anything (10.0) they are not prepared to (3.0) themselves, themselves °I think disagree °=
26 Huong: =Agree

27 Huy: ° Agree, agree [[or disagree°

28 Huong: An effective [[leader always makes autonomous assistance.

29 ° Autonomous°

30 Huy: Agree, right? ((to Huong))

31 Huong: ° Autonomous, Autonomous, Autonomous °

32 What does it [[mean? ((to Huy))

33 Huy: [[Good leaders try to keep anyone happy ((reads statement 7))

..................

47 Huy: ° All managers are good leaders° (10.0) ° All managers are good leaders° ((in a soft voice)) I think you should agree with this statement because... ((to Huong))

49 Huong: but uhm... uhm... uhm ((to Huy))

50 Huy: I think, all managers are good leaders because they can (.) divide work equally with other members in the group ((to Huong))

52 Huong: But some managers uhm, er, uhm, they don’t have, they don’t have enough ability to... to... ((to Huong))

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.2

10 Nguyen: ((read to self)) ° All managers are good leaders°

11 ° True? ° (. ) ° False? ° ((raises her voice))

..................

21 Muoi: The best leaders do not ask their staff to do (.) anything (.) they are not (.) prepare to do ((reads the fifth statement aloud))

23 ° Autonomous là gì ta?° (what does autonomous mean?)

24 ° Autonomy°

25 ((opens her dictionary and looks up the word))

............

30 Muoi: ° Good leaders (.) try to keep everyone happy° ((reads the sixth statement)). Không cái này không có đâu ((talks to Nguyen)) (No, it’s not right)

............

78 Nguyen: all managers are good leaders ((reads aloud to self))

79 ° Manager ° (.) ° manager °
Excerpt 5.2.2.2.4

103 Han: (keeps reading to self) ° (inaudible) Tự tin đến từ những thành quả ° ("confidence comes from making progress °)

104 My: Successful, đúng không? (right?)

105 Han: °vậy câu trả lời là G? ° ("so the answer is G ?") °hay là ép ta° ("or F °") °(in a soft voice) thời là F (it is F)

…………………………

114 Han: "khí một người không còn khả dụng và° (when people are unavailable and)

115 Hoang: ((looks at her book and reads to self)) ° (?inaudible) °

116 My: ((looks at her book))

117 Han: (keeps translating) "trong một nhóm sẽ có những người có khả năng làm° ("a good team will have the right people") °and in a team there will have people able to step in°

120 My: Vậy, vậy là flexible (So, so it is flexible) ((to Hoang))

121 Hoang: °hay là cái gì ta °? ("or what °?)

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.5

8 Han: Khoan, coi chừng! (Hang on, be careful!) Talented có thể là động từ quá khứ

đó (Talented may be a simple past form)

10 My: không, nó là tính từ mà (No, It’s an adjective)

11 Han: chắc không đó? (Sure?)

12 My: chắc, tao tra rồi (Sure, I’ve already checked in the dictionary)

13 Han: °là tính từ, trạng từ° (.)"trạng từ bổ nghĩa cho tính từ° ((in a soft voice)) ("it is an adjective", an adverb° (.) "adverbs modifies adjectives")

………………

22 Han: Nó là verb và được thêm ED. Nó thành adjective and động từ quá khứ (it’s a verb and we add ED in the end. So it becomes an adjective and a simple past verb)

23 My: tao không biết (no ideas)

24 Han: °a VERB°, °Talented°

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.6

191 Han: °, câu này may có nghĩa là (.) là (hey, this sentence do you think that it may be (.) may be). Có khi nào không nghĩ tôi lợi ích cá nhân là team
players không? (maybe that no thoughts to individual goals refers to team players?)

193 My: khoan, de tao kiem tra tu cuoi canh ((talks to Hoang)) (wait, let me check the meaning of the last word) "Vai trò của cả nhân hậu?" ("the role of individuals?") ((opens her dictionary))

.........

218 Hoang: hay hỏi cô đi (Let's ask the teacher)
219 My: ((calls the teacher)) cô ơi, cô (teacher, teacher)
220 T: yes? ((approaches them))
221 Han: Cô ơi, chử team players nghĩa là gì? (Teacher, what does team players mean?)
222 T: ((talks to the group)) Team players? It depends on the situation.
223 Han: depends on the situation
224 T: yes ((The teacher walks away))
225 My: °depends on the situation° ((in a soft voice))
226 Han: °còn tùy thuộc vào tình huống ° (it depends on the situation)
227 My: °vậy trong ngữ cảnh này có nghĩa gì °? ("so what does it mean in this context?")

Excerpt 5.2.2.2.9

31 Huy: when when you [[listen to::
32 Han: [[when ah when you want to know ah
33 Huy: ((in a soft voice)) °when (. ) listen (. ) listen to uhm, uhm°
34 Han: ((in a soft voice)) ° you (. ) want to know uhm, uhm°
35 Huy: Uhm, uhm, when you make presentation ((to Han))
36 Han: Yeah ((nods her head))
37 Huy: a cuộc họp (meeting) a:: a:: a meeting
38 Han: meeting?
39 Huy: a meeting (. ) a presentation::
40 Han: so a meeting and presentation ((takes notes))
41 Huy: ((repeats to self in a soft voice)) °meeting and presentation::: °
42 (60.0)
43 Huy: what else?
44 Han: “meeting (.) presentation° (.) uhm, uhm, uhm an, an INTERVIEW
45 Huy: an interview (.) uhm?
46 Han: ừ (right), interview

Excerpt 5.2.2.10

98 Han: HOW?
99 Huy: How?
100 Han: nó quan trọng như thế nào? (How is it important?) (.) Làm sao để nghe chủ động? (How to listen actively?) nghe chủ động như thế nào? ((to Huy)) (how is active listening?)
102 Huy: ((looks at the board))
(7.0)
104 Han: “Active listening, how, how is active listening is important?” (.) nó quan trọng như thế nào? (how is it important?) “Nó giống như là why rồi” (it is similar to why) (.). “How to listen actively? làm thế nào để nghe chủ động” (trans) (5.0)
107 Vậy là trong quá trình nghe mình phải hỏi lại (so should make questions while listening) ((to Huy))

The use of the given task

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.1

37 Quyen: Tao nghĩ đây là research, training (I think this is research training) ((talks to Lien)) (?inaudible)
39 Dien: nghĩa là có mục đích rõ ràng? ((questioning voice)) (this means having clear objectives?)
40 Quyen: ừ, xem nè research, training and developing ((points to the words)) (yes, look, research and training and developing)
41 Dien: nghĩa gì? (what does it mean?)
42 Quyen: nghiên cứu, xây dựng và phát triển (research, training and developing)
43 Lien: cái này tạo này nghĩa là có mục đích rõ ràng (I think this means clearly defined objectives)
44 Quyen: Research, training, develop=
45 Dien: = Có nghĩa là sao? (What does it mean?)
46 Quyen: thì máy nghiên cứu máy phát triển thành một cái kỹ năng của máy để máy cái thiện nó (so you research, and develop your skills so you can improve) (5.0) (?unclear) mục đích (objectives)
49 Lien: ((writes the phrase next to statement 2.10))
The use of another exercise of the same lesson to deal with the given task

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.6

33 Thi: 1.02 là echo response \textit{(1.02 is echo response)}. 1.03 là signals \textit{(1.03 is signals)} 1.04 là action points \textit{(1.04 is action points)}, nhưng cái điểm mấu chốt quan trọng \textit{(the important points)}

35 Ha: uh ((looks at the pair next to them and then looks at the board)) Không, làm bài tập trên bảng mà không phải bài này đâu. \textit{(No, do the exercise on the board not this one)}

37 Thi: cái gì? À, tao biết, nhưng làm bài này trước \textit{(what? Ah, I know but I want to do this first)}

38 Ha: what is active listening? Active listening là cái gì \textit{(trans)} ((looks at the board and says))

40 Thi: Bài này, xem nè, cung cấp ý cho mình \textit{(This exercise, see, provides us ideas)}

The employment of English grammar background knowledge

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.7

5 Han: talented (. ) talented

6 My: talented là tính từ còn đây là danh từ \textit{(talented is an adjective while this is a noun)} ((points to the word “individuals” in the checklist in her book))

8 Han: Khoan, coi chừng! \textit{(Hang on, be careful!)} Talented có thể là động từ quá khứ đó \textit{(Talented may be a simple past form)}

10 My: không, nó là tính từ mà \textit{(No, It’s an adjective)}

11 Han: chắc không dơ? \textit{(Sure?)}

12 My: chắc, tao tra rồi \textit{(Sure, I’ve already checked in the dictionary)}

13 Han: “là tính từ, trạng từ” (. ) “trạng từ bổ nghĩa cho tính từ” ((in a soft voice)) \textit{“it is an adjective, an adverb” (. ) “adverbs modifies adjectives”}

Excerpt 5.2.2.3.8

12 Muoi: Ê, câu bốn là đúng hay sai chứ tao thấy nhầm người có khả năng quản lý nhưng không có khả năng nói trước công chúng \textit{(talks to Nguyen)}

14 Public, public speaking nghĩa là nói trước công chúng đúng không? \textit{(public speaking means speaking in front of others?)}

15 Nguyễn: ((both looks at the sentence)) một người lãnh đạo giải pháp phát biểu trước công chúng tốt \textit{(a good leader has to be good at public speaking)}
17 Muoi: “have to” là phải hà? *(have to means being forced to?)* ((asks Nguyen))

*The use of learners’ life knowledge*

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.11**

102 Huy: Câu một phải là disagree mỗi dùng *(The first statement must be disagree)*

103 Huong: thi nhầm người đâu có giới nhưng người ta có mỗi quan hệ nên họ vẫn làm quản lý *(so some people are not good but they can be managers due to their relations)*

*The use of word sound*

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.12**

1 Quyen: Minh làm cái này đi *(we do this)*. Minh đi trước thời đại đi *(we must be ahead of others)*. Xem nào, làm câu đề trước đi tự bây *(let see, we do the sentences that look easy first)* ((turns to the next page))

4 Dien: talented individuals nghĩa là gì? *(what does it mean?)* ((Lien and Quyen look at the phrase))

6 Lien: talented là tài năng *(talented is being with talent)* Giống như Vietnam’s got talent á *(Like Vietnam’s got talent)*

.........

24 Lien: đây nè *(no, here it is)* Commitment to the team’s goal not just personal glory ((reads)) Nên ta nghĩ là H *(So I think it’s H)*.

26 Quyen: Glo::ry, glo::ry *(.) what does it mean?*

27 Lien: Hồng biết *(I don’t know)*

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.13**

110 Quyen: Nê, cái câu này nè *(Here, this sentence)*, working techniques

111 Dien: *((looks at Quyen’s book))*

112 *(15.0)*

113 Quyen: to be able to perform

114 Dien: Khó quá hà *(so difficult)*

**Excerpt 5.2.2.3.14**

135 Quyen: tra dìm tao chữ process *(help me to look up the word process please)*

136 Lien: Process hà? *(Process?) [tiên bộ (movement to a more developed stage]*
Excerpt 5.2.2.3.15

1 My: Đây là danh từ (this is a noun) ((points to the word individuals)) đây là tính từ (this is an adjective) ((points to the word “talented”))

3 Hoang: talented là noun hay? (is talented a noun?) ((looks at My’s book))

4 My: ADJECTIVE ((says the word aloud and emphasises it))

Human mediation

Teacher mediation

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.2

10 Teacher: And about active listening ((squares the word active listening))

11 Active listening is very important for you, and helps you in many areas. For example, in training. Uhm, think about the classroom. OK, I’m a teacher and all of you are learners and you, you can see that, in Vietnamese education they are affected by traditional education, uhm, so in the class the teacher says and the learners only listen. But in other societies or other classrooms, the teacher says and the students not only listen but also questions. You LISTEN and you REFLECT on the the teacher performance about something. TWO ways. And it is very important for you. Ok, right now, I want you to work in pairs to share some information related to active listening. And I will give you ((writes 5W+1H on the board)) think about 5W+1H, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, WHO and HOW ((writes each on the board))

21 Yes. It’s very important when you say about something and you use 5W+1H.

22 For example when I ask you to share your opinion about active listening, you can think of WHAT, it means the definition, the definition of active listening,

24 (5.0) ((the class is a bit noisy))

25 Ok WHERE (?unclear) it means that you use active listening in what situations, yah. And WHEN?

27 Students: time

28 Teacher: yes, the time. I think in this situation the time is not important. WHY? Why is very important. WHY? Why do we need to listen actively? Or we can talk about the benefit of listening actively, very important. And WHO,
who in this situation, I think it’s not important. WHAT, WHERE and WHY, and HOW. HOW, for example, how to become an active listener. Ok, now, work in pairs to discuss

33 ((The students find their partners to work with))

34 Teacher: Start working every one. Share the definition, the situation you use active listening, and WHAT and HOW, how to become an active listener

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.3

58 T: ((talks to the whole class)) you can think about the relationship between ACTIVE LISTENING and COMMUNICATION

60 ((Both Han and Huy listen to the teacher))

61 Han: ((nods her head and bites her lips)) uhm, a communication °

62 Huy: ((nods his head)) yeah, uhm, uhm ((writes the word down))

63 Han: so communication ((writes it down)) Còn gì nữa không? (What else?) ((asks Huy))

65 Huy: conversation °conversation:: °

66 Han: ((seems to think)) conversation cùng vậy thôi (conversation is the same)

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.4

1 Teacher: Ok, you’ve just said some characteristics of a good leader. Open your book, please ((Then she writes the name of the lesson “leadership skills” on the board))

3 Ok, apart from the characteristics of a good leader that you’ve just made. Now you can talk about some more qualities about a good leader. Ok, yeah, activity 1, definition. Now you look at the activity in the book which defines a good leader

6 Students: ((open their textbook))

7 Teacher: This is a very interesting activity because you can compare a manager and a leader, a manager and a leader.

9 And in your opinion, a manager is different from a leader or the same? A manager and a leader

11 Huy: the same ((keeps seated and speaks up))

12 Teacher: the same or different?

13 Another student: the same

14 Huy: I think the same

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.5
Think about a situation when you are a leader and a manager, or you are a manager but not a leader, and vice versa. Think carefully about the situation.

Students: (no responses)

Teacher: Think carefully about the situation

Students: (no responses)

Teacher: Ok, now discuss step by step. Do the activity 1. The requirement is that decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements. The first sentence relates to a manager and leader

Ok, First “All managers are good leaders” and in your opinion, the statement is True or False, and explain.

Please focus on the word ALL ((emphasises the word “all”)), all managers are good leaders. Unit 6, leadership skills.

Excerpt 5.2.3.1.6

Hoang and My: không biết (no ideas) (10.0)

Hoang: hay hỏi cô đi (Let’s ask the teacher)

My: (calls the teacher)) cô ơi, cô (teacher, teacher)

T: yes? (approaches them)

Han: Cô ơi, câu team players nghĩa là gì? (Teacher, what does team players mean?)

T: ((talks to the group)) Team players? It depends on the situation.

Han: depends on the situation

T: yes ((The teacher walks away))

My: ° depends on the situation° (in a soft voice)

Peer mediation

Excerpt 5.2.3.2.2

Nguyen: “Effective leaders always make decision” (reads the sixth statement)).

Autonomous decision là gì? (what does autonomous decision mean?) (to Muoi))

Muoi: tự quyết (self-decide) (looks at her dictionary))

Nguyen: tự quyết định hà? (raises her voice) (make decision by himself?)
Material mediation

Excerpt 6.2.1.1

22 Tam: devast (.) devast (.) devastated
23 Hoa: Là khó chịu phải không? (It is being uncomfortable, isn’t it?)
24 Tam: Õ (Ok)

(30) ((Hoa keeps turning her dictionary))
26 Hoa: Từ này cũng có nghĩa là khó chịu nè ((Hoa shows the word in her dictionary))
(this word has the same meaning as being uncomfortable)
27 Tam: Thời tự dó lạ quá, dùng từ nào đơn giản hơn đi (this word sounds strange, please use a word that is simple)

…………………..

55 Tam: Vậy là hold? “Tôi chức” là chữ này mà. Nè organise nè ((shows a word in her dictionary)). (Is it hold? “Tôi chức” is this word. Here organise) Dùng từ này mới thích hợp hơn đó. Organise là động từ phải không? (This word is more appropriate. Organise is a verb?)
58 Hoa: Cái này nó thích hợp hơn hả? ((looks up the dictionary)) (is this word more appropriate?)
59 Tam: hỏi não đến giờ tôi chức người ta dùng chữ organise thôi (so far people have only used organise)

…………………..

144 Hoa: tính tự (adjective)
145 Tam: dùng từ sickness được rồi (please use sickness)
146 Hoa: là danh từ, không phải tính từ (is a noun, not an adjective) nè là tính từ nè (here, this word is an adjective) ((shows Tam the word “sick” in her dictionary))
148 Tam: get sick, headache, flu.

Semiotic mediation

The use of L1 to search for English words or expressions in producing their own English talks

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.1

20 Hoa: Because today (.) the weather (.) is too hot. I’m feeling ((writes down the statement)) (.) khó chịu là gì ta? (what is being uncomfortable ?)
22 Tam: devast (.) devast (.) devastated
........................................
41 Tam: Từ việc bắt đầu mùa hè nên tao khuyên mọi nên đi swimming (because beginning of the summer, I suggest you go swimming)
42 Hoa: I think I think you can (.) you should swim (.) camp
43 Tam: Không, mọi nói là nên tổ chức những hoạt động ngoài trời (No, at first you should say that we should have some outdoor activities)
44 Hoa: Beginning uhm, uhm, uhm ((writes it down))
45 Tam: “mùa hè” là summer, “bắt đầu” là beginning in, in hay of ta, bắt đầu mùa hè? (… is summer, … is beginning, but beginning in or of summer?)
46 Hoa: ((no responses))
47 Tam: I think we should “tổ chức” là cái gì? (… is what?) quên mất rồi đây? (I forget this word) tao quên mất rồi? (I forget it)
49 Hoa: you should hold (.) hold (.) should held or should hold ((she is unsure of the verb))
51 Tam: từ này có nghĩa là “tổ chức” à? sao nghe lạ quá vậy (this word means “…”? it sounds strange)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.2

123 Phuong: I think, uh, ý muốn nói là thời tiết nào cũng được miễn là mình thấy thời mai là được rồi (I mean that whatever type of weather is as long as you feel comfortable)
125 Tran: It’s not important uhm
126 Phuong: that is Ok
127 Tran: không biết đường diễn tả, ý ta là đang như… (.)(I don’t know how to express it, I mean that…(.))

.........

174 Tran: Thời tiết nào không quan trọng (whatever type of weather is not important), miễn là thấy thời mai là được rồi (as long as you feel comfortable), đang như vậy đó (something like this)
176 Cool is Ok, cold is Ok. It just needs you feel better.
177 Phuong: vậy là xong bây? (so it finishes?)
178 Tran: Tùy thuộc vào bạn thân mình (depending on yourself)
179 Phuong: It’s up to you

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.3
31 Phuong: ((asks Minh)) bong bóng là gì? (*What is a small, thin rubber bag blown air into until it is round in shape, used for decoration at parties?*)

32 Thao: balloon

33 Phuong: balloon? ((rises her voice))

34 Thao: balloon nè, có hai chữ "o" (*balloon, with double O*) ((writes the word down on her notes))

………..

54 Tien: ((asks the group behind)) Gấu là gì? (*what is a soft toy bear?*)

55 Phuong: ((answers Huy)) teddy

56 Thao: teddy, gấu (*trans*)

57 Tien: ((writes it down to complete an English sentence))

…………

63 The group behind: ((talks to Tien)) Đặt bánh sinh nhật là gì? (*how to say ordering a birthday cake in advance*)

64 Tien: order

65 Thao: ((talks to the group)) book

66 Tien: book hay hơn order (*book sounds better than order*)


68 Tien: book, cuốn sách đó (*a set of written texts*)

69 Thao: re re reservation cũng được (*is still fine*)

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.4**

35 Nhu: Để chúc mừng sinh nhật, chúc mừng là gì? (*to celebrate birthday, what is praising a party?*) Congratulations? ((rises her voice))

37 Van: Chúc mừng hà? (*Congratulations?*)

38 Lam: ((reads from her online dictionary)) Động từ của nó là “congratulate” (*its verb form is congratulate*)

………………

59 Nhu: quên mặt chữ đó rồi, có định (*I forget the word, unable to change*)

60 Lam: có định hà? ((questioning voice)) (*unable to change?*)

61 Van: chữ gì mà có chữ f mà quên rồi (*a word with "f" but I forget*)

62 Nhu: ngày có định (*a fixed day*)

63 T: ((Talks to the class)) Finish, everyone?
Nhu: chưa xong cô ơi (Not yet, teacher)

Van: cố gắng làm sao? May mắn tổ chức cố định hàng năm hà? (What do you mean by "unable to change"? Do you mean on the same date every year?)

Nhu: Ừ, đúng rồi, tiệc sinh nhật hàng năm có một lần mà (Right, birthday party happens once a year)

À, nó nè, (Here, it is) fix

Lam: Ừ, tao nhớ rồi, hôm trước ta có gặp từ này, cố định hay không cố định (Uhm, I got it, I saw this word last time, fixed or unfixed)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.5

Thao: ° yesterday° ° I couldn’t go° ° so I gave you a present° , a letter đi

Have you, nhận là gì? (to Sang and Van))

Sang: nhận?

Van: receive

Sang: ừ (ok)

Thao: Have you received? I uhm uhm

…………………..

Thao: My last birthday (?inaudible). Rồi Van nói mới là là (then Van says that…) are we…? Đi ăn uống cái gì nói thế nào? (How to say that you invite someone to eat something?)

Sang: Would you like to drink?

Thao: Anyone would like to=

Sang:= would you like to drink or eat something? Mời là would you like (Would you like means inviting someone)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.6

Nhi: (5.0) cái người trong ngân hàng là gì? (A person who works in a bank, how to say?)

Tien: bank clerk

Quan: bank clerk

Tien: bank teller cũng đợc (Bank teller is also fine)

Nhi: teller ((she chooses bank teller))

……………………

Nhi: what else?
159 Quan: thêm Ok (add Ok)

160 Nhi: uhm, bạn có muốn mời ca sỹ không? (you want to invite some singers?)

161 Tien: right, mời là sao ta? (how to ask someone to an event?)

162 Tram: invite

163 Nhi: invite

164 Tien: invite

165 Tram: singer

166 Tien: uh, invite a singer (.) for the party, for the party birthday

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.7**

21 Vy: I need to take take rút tiền (withdraw money)

22 Quan: withdraw

23 Tien: withdraw

...................

70 Quan : Bạn nên (You should)

71 Tien : bạn nên điền vào cái đơn này (you should fill in this form)

72 ((Quan takes the paper from Vy and starts to write down))

73 Quan : you should fill-in the form ((writes it down))

*The use of L1 to define the correct English word spelling*

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.9**

16 Quan: Yes, of course

17 Vy: Cái gì? (What?) Of course? (writes down) LÔ-E (L-E)

18 Quan: Cái gì LÔ (What L?)

19 Vy: CÔ-O-U-RÔ-SÔ-E (C-O-U-R-S-E) of course,

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.10**

47 Tran: Ú (right), my eye is so blurry.

48 Phuong: Cái gì? (what?)

54 Tran: Mắt bị mờ đơ (eyes are not able to see clearly).

49 Phuong: My eyes are so blurry. B::LUR::RY (.) °B-o-l-o-u-r-o-y°("B-l-u-r-y")

((soft voice to herself))
The use of L1 to recommend English word use

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.14
55 Tam: Vây là hold? “Tôi chắc” là chữ này mà. Nè organize nè ((shows a word in her dictionary)). (Is it hold? …is this word. Here organize) Dùng từ này mới thích hợp hơn đó. Organise là đúng từ phải không? (This word is more appropriate. Organise is a verb?)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.15
150 Quan: = I want to celebrate… for my mom

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.20
106 Phuong: Xong rồi tao hỏi mấy là what kind of weather is perfect for you? (Then I ask you what kind of weather is perfect for you?)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.22
183 Hoa: exciting than (.) Nó là tính từ dài há? (It’s a long adjective, isn’t it?)
185 Hoa: More (.) than, more exciting than

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.23**

112 Tran: I can travel (.) to many places so good

113 Phuong: many hay much? *(many or much?)*

114 Tran: many places

*The use of L1 to discuss the procedure or strategy to deal with given tasks*

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.28**

1 Tam: Hi, I’m from group 1

2 Hoa: Khoan, khoan, mình làm đo ạ n хотя thôi ạ

3 Tam: Tao sẽ nói là tạo lanh. Mùa hè di vi nó để làm cho mình bị noi câu chủ mùa đông lanh muốn chết mà câu gì nói.(I will say that I’m cold. Let say summer because it makes us irritated while winter is too cold so people won’t be irritated)

4 Hoa: Mùa hè và mùa đông có nhiều hoạt động, chỉ có mùa xuân và mùa thu là ít hoạt động. Mùa hè mình có thể đi camping còn mùa đông thì có thể leo núi. (*Summer and winter have lots of activities, spring and autumn do not. In summer we can go camping or climbing*)

5 Tam: Vây là làm giọng máy cải này (*so do as same as these*)

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.30**

130 Tran: Câu chốt mà. Minh bay tờ ý kiến của mình xong thì mình cùng phải bay tờ ý kiến khác quan một chút (*It’s a concluding sentence. We’ve stated our own ideas so we need to present objective ideas*)

132 Phuong: “All of weather is Ok. Just” (.)

133 Tran: Trời oi, tao tức quá. (**My God, I’m so frustrated**). Thôi, câu kết là của bạn đó (*Ok, the concluding sentence is yours*), “it’s so good”, rồi bạn nói thêm đi (*you add more information*)

135 Phuong: “I come from English class. I want to share about perfect weather, our, our” (*looks at the note and reads*)

137 Tran: vây nên nói là là (*so should say that that*) “we come from English class. Today,we want to share the effects of weather to show you about the effect of weather”

139 Phuong: cái nào cũng được (*either is fine*)

140 Tran: cái câu cuối tình sau nhé (*let deal with the last sentence later*).

*The use of L1 to make the task clear*
Excerpt 6.2.2.1.34

1 Vy: Gì vậy? (What?)
2 Quan: Viết một đoạn văn dùng sau từ trong này (Write a paragraph using 6 words)
3 Tien: Biết làm mà. Vũ này đảm dưới đây bạn (Got it, it must be so hard)
4 Quan: Đoạn văn (Paragraph)
5 Tien: cái gì mà đoạn văn? (Paragraph?)
6 Quan: hội thoại (Dialogue)
7 Vy: hội thoại hay là nguyên đoạn văn có? (A dialogue or a paragraph, teacher?)
8 Teacher: a dialogue

The use of L1 to assign the role of each member when completing collaborative tasks

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.38

6 Sang: Con Tram hello người làm trong ngân hàng (Tram will say hello to the person working in that bank)
7 Tram: (?inaudible)
8 Sang: Ú, không hiểu hà (Right, you don’t understand?)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.39

3 Vy: I want to want to rút tiền (withdraw money)
14 Excuse me
15 Tien:Đứa nào làm bank clerk đi. Tao làm customer cho (Who plays a bank clerk, and I will be the customer)

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.41

76 Tran: ừ, thì cold là lạnh, cool là mát(Right, cold means very low temperature, cool means relaxed and windy). Đứa thích cái này đứa thích cái kia phải không? Mây thích lạnh tao thích mát chứ tao đâu thích lạnh. (One likes this and one likes that? You like cold weather, I like cool weather since I don’t like the cold one)
79 Phuong: Ú, thì ta nên (Right, it’s me)
80 Tran: Mày thích lạnh tao thích mát (You like cold, I like cool)
81 Phuong: Ú, mát (Right, cool)
82 Tran: Sao may nói thích lạnh (But you’ve said that you like cold)
83 Phuong: Ú, nhưng giờ tao thích mát được chưa? (right, but now I like cool, Ok?)
84 Tran: Rồi, nhưng dễ tao thích mát cho vì tao không thích lạnh nên tao sẽ bất bạo. Lạnh tao bị cảm và bằng chứng là bây giờ đó (Ok, but let me say that I like cool)
because I don’t like cold so I will refute cold. In the cold weather, I have flu and this is what you see now)

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.43**

4 Van: con nhỏ này mở đi ((points at Nhu)), mở nhỏ này đở sinh nhật ((points at Lam)) (you invite, you participate in the birthday party)

6 Lam: Mày sẽ nói nhà nên mày ghi đi (You will speak so you must write) ((talks to Nhu))

8 Nhu: sao tao nói? (why me?)

9 Van: không mà thì ai? (not you so who?) Thoir hi sinh đi, ghi đi cho nhà nói (Please sacrify for us, write so you will remember)

The use of L1 to discuss the content of their possible talk or conversation

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.46**

191 Quan: rõi, nói nó rồi đi (Ok, say it’s cheap then)

192 Nhi: sao không hỏi ăn món gì? (why don’t we ask for what food?)

193 Tram: Đâu có liên quan?(It does not suit our talk)

194 Nhi: uh

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.49**

14 Hoa: I feel so hot, nghĩa là nóng đó (it means hot)

15 Tam: ừ, tao sẽ nói là Are you so tired?(Ok, I will say that are you so tired?)

16 Hoa: Xong cái này hỏi why (then ask why)

17 Tam: Why?

18 Hoa: Why are you so tired?

19 Tam: Because the weather is so hot

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.51**

151 Phuong: I’m feeling so hot, my eyes so blurry.

152 Tran: oh, my god, you should take medicine. I’m so tired too. I don’t like this weather. It’s too hot. What kind of weather is good for you?

154 Phuong: Sao tao thấy nó sám sảm mà (it sounds strange to me)

155 Tran: Sao mà sảm (why so?) Tao nói xong tao mới hỏi dằng như thời tiết nào tốt cho mày (I finish then I will ask you what type of weather is good for you)

157 Phuong: So, what do you think?

158 Tran: What kind of weather

**Excerpt 6.2.2.1.52**
67 Hoa: ((writes down the statements provided by Tam)) Cái này mình nói một hồi qua tôi cảm thấy, bởi lỗi luôn rồi. Hình nhưblick đặc đề rồi đó (We are talking about camping, swimming. It seems off topic)

69 Tam: Khỏng, mình cứ nói như vậy đi. Hai đứa quyết định đi cắm trại vào ngày nào đó. Xong rồi ta nói nói là sau khi có một buổi đi ra ngoài đấy ngày vậy thì sẽ giúp cho bạn cảm thấy thoải mái hơn. Cái này nói là chúng nên đi cắm trại gì đó (No, keep saying this. We decide to go camping on a day. Then, I say that after such a picnic you will feel much better. Then you will say that we should go camping)

The use of L1 to define the manner to perform the conversation

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.54

13 Tran: Mời đầu vào phải nói là (At first must say that)

14 Phuong: Uh

15 Tran: Hello, we are (. ) what’s going what’s going?

16 Phuong: How’s it going?

17 Tran: Bạn có khỏe không? (Do you feel well?) ((the meaning of “how is it going?”))

18 Phuong: Hãy nói là đã quá lâu không gặp đi (May say that we haven’t seen each other for a long time). Uhm, you look so tired.

20 Tran: Yes, because the weather here is so hot. Sau đó may hỏi tao là what kind of weather is perfect for you (Then you may ask me that what kind of weather is perfect for you). According to you, what kind of weather is perfect?

23 Phuong: Mày nói đằng như miễm cư ngỡ. So-so phải không? (You say in a reluctant way. Is it so so?). You look so tired ((writes the utterances down on a paper)).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1.56

167 Thao: ê, mày nhớ lên giọng xuống giọng cho giọng nói chuyên nghiêm nha ((talks to Sang and Van)) (Hey, remember to rise and fall your tone so that it sounds natural)

169 Sang: I’m glad ((rises his voice)) that you like it ((falls his voice))

Private speech

Excerpt 6.2.2.2.1

47 Tam: I think we should “tó chức” là cái gì? (... is what?) quên mất rồi may? (I forget this word) tao quên mất rồi? (I forget it)

49 Hoa: you should held (. ) hold (. ) should held or should hold ((she is unsure of the verb))
51 Tam: từ này có nghĩa là “tổ chức” hà? sao nghe lạ quá vậy (this word means “…”? it sounds strange)

52 Hoa: đúng rồi (That’s right), ° held hold hold hold° held hold hold° (.).° hold held held° (very soft to herself)). Uma mà, held lâu hay hold lâu tạo không nhớ nữa (held hold hold or hold held hold, I forgot) Hold

............... 

135 Hoa: I know. It can (.). make (.). you

136 Tam: Sick

137 Hoa: Sick là danh từ? Tình từ?(sick is a noun ? an adjective ?)

138 Tam: °danh từ hay tính từ? °(noun or adjective?)° ((in a soft voice))

**Sequence 6.2.2.2.3**

17 Tien: ((to self)) °to (.) to (.) graduate to hà°? (is it “graduate to”?). Graduate , e giới tự di với graduate là gì (hey, what preposition comes after graduate?) ((asks Thao))

18 Thao: ((No responses))

19 Tien: ((turns back to the group behind)) e giới tự của graduate là gì? (hey, what preposition comes after graduate?) ((no responses from the group and he backs to his group))

22 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) relationship là bà con hà (relation refers to family relatives?)

23 Thao: ¨, ủa relationship? (yes, hang on, relationship?) .º relation, relation¨((in a soft voice and different intonation)) noun dò (it’s a noun)

.....

70 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) é mà, sao chữ organization cuối tao thiếu chữ gì đó (it seems that organization lacks some letters)

71 Thao: thiếu chữ “g” rồi (you lack the letter “g”) ((writes the word down on her book))

73 °Coi thử mình làm gì nè, đặt nhà hàng, mời bạn bè ° (“Let see what we do, book the restaurant, invite friends °)

74 Phuong: mình tổ chức hà (we hold the party?) ((to Thao))

.......... 

83 Tien: ¨a (hold on) °feel feel felt hay là (or) feel felt felt °\ 
feel feel felt hay là feel felt felt (feel feel or feel felt felt) ((asks Thao))

**Excerpt 6.2.2.2.4**

137 Sang: That’s a good idea, but I have not enough cash money. (2.) I have NOT ENOUGH CASH, không đủ tiền (trans)
Thao: Ok, I’ll pay for you.

°I have not enough cash money °

Sang: °I have not enough cash°

Thao: °cash money°

Sang: ° Cash money°

………………

Thao: but I don’t…Hình như cái câu trước này mà ghi nó bị sai (It seems that this sentence is wrong)

Sang: °I have not enough, have not enough, have not enough° °Chủ từ, động từ công not, tính từ, danh từ, tính danh động trạng dùng qui tác rồi° (Subject, verb added not, adjective, noun, adjective-noun-verb- adverb so it is grammatically correct)

Thao: I have not enough

The use of the task requirement

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.1

Nhí: Trong đây có chữ nhà hàng không? (is there the word “restaurant” here?)

Quan: tôi chủ taxi driver chưa? (using the word taxi driver ?)

Nhí : Hai, ba mới có bốn chủ thẻ, còn bốn chủ thẻ nữa mới được (two, three, just 4 words, four more words to go) ((counts))

……

Tien: vậy hà? Bạn có muốn mời ca sỹ, ca sỹ cho buổi tiệc không?

(Ok, Do you want to invite singers, singer for the party)

Tram: Được năm chủ rồi (five words already done)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.2

Sang: chỉ cần nói hello bank teller là được rồi, không cần phải nói thêm câu nó đang ở trong ngân hàng nữa. (just say “hello bank teller”, don’t need to say that she’s at the bank)

Tram: Nó không đủ chủ nè (it won’t be enough words)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.3

Tran: Làm đoạn hội thoại về ảnh hưởng của thời tiết, làm sao đây?(Make a conversation about the effect of the weather, what should we do?)

Phuong: mát mẻ, có gió (cool, windy)

Tran: spring

Phuong: thời tiết mà (it’s weather)
Excerpt 6.2.2.3.4
85 Tam: Ok, cái gì nữa? (what else?)
86 Hoa: when (.) do (.) we go?
87 Tam: khi nào chúng ta đi? when do we go? (trans)
88 Hoa: Right now ((joking)), this weekend. (5.0) Lạc đề rồi đó (off the task)
89 Tam: Kệ, phải kéo dài đoạn hỏi thoai
(No worries, just make the dialogue longer)
90 Hoa: ý tao là mình phải tập trung vở cái ảnh hưởng của thời tiết
(I mean we should zero in on the effect of the weather)

................
186 Tam: “ảnh hưởng của thời tiết tôi”=“the effect of weather”
187 Hoa: =mentality thể trạng tâm lý (trans)
188 Tam: “tôi cảm giác của mình, tâm trạng của chúng ta” (to our feeling, our mood)
Happier than
190 Hoa: vui hơn (happier than) (5.0) Nó tốt hơn (It’s better)
191 Tam: exciting, thú vị hơn (trans), đừng nói tinh thần gì hết (Don’t say anything like mental and so on)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.5
9 Thao: tổ chức sinh nhật để tưởng niệm (have the party to commemorate) ((talks to Nieu and laughs))
11 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) Hay là đê…(Or to…)
12 Tien: tui bây chuẩn bị lễ đê hỏi cô kêu, biết đường nói (let prepare quickly, so in case the teacher calls our group we can speak)

........
74 Phuong: mình tổ chức hà (we hold the party?)
75 Thao: ừ (right)
76 Phuong: mình miêu tả thì, describe mà, mình chỉ là người quan sát (((talks to Thao and points to the word “describe”))) (we just describe, describe here, we are just observers)
78 Thao: û há, mình là người quan sát thôi mà (uh, we’re just observers) (((then she reviews her note paper)) decorate không phải decorating (decorate not decorating) ((erases and corrects the word in her notes))

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.6

372
19 Van: một buổi tiệc thân mật chứ không phải serious. Buổi tiệc này không mang tính chất nghiêm trọng (a friendly party not a serious party. This party must not be formal) (treads from the handout)

22 Lam: nghiêm trọng thôi, chứ nghiêm túc thì phải có (not serious but must be formal)

(20.0) miêu tả lại luôn chút đầu phải làm đoạn hội thoại (describe it not make a conversation) (looks at the handout)

The employment of English grammar background knowledge

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.7

93 Tien: Bạn muốn rút bao nhiêu? (How much money do you want to withdraw?)
94 Vy: Bạn muốn rút bao nhiêu tiền?
95 Tien: Do you want
96 Quan: How
97 Vy: How mỗi dùng chủ (it must be how)
98 Quan: How many hay (or) how much?
99 Vy: Tiền là phải dùng how much chủ (money so it must be must be used)
100 Quan: How much do you want to withdraw?

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.8

108 Tran: Therefore, I can
109 Phuong: You can go everywhere in that weather
110 Tran: Therefore, I can
111 Phuong: Đi bất cứ nơi đâu mà không cần phải lo lắng (Go wherever without worries)
112 Tran: I can travel (. ) to many places so good
113 Phuong: many hay much? (many or much?)
114 Tran: many places
115 Phuong: It’s very comfortable and I can travel to many places.

Excerpt  6.2.2.3.9

182 Tam: exciting, thú vị hơn (trans), đừng nói tinh thần gì hết (Don’t say anything like mental and so on)
183 Hoa: exciting than (. ) Nó là tính từ dài hay? (It’s a long adjective, isn’t it?)
184 Tam: nó là tính từ dài đó (it’s a long adjective)
185 Hoa: More (.) than, more exciting than

…………

203 Hoa: Harmful ((writes it down))

204 Tam: Harmful. It is very harmful. Harmful là danh từ hay sao đó? là ảnh hưởng
(Harmful is a noun? means the effect)

205 Hoa: Harmful là tính từ, là ảnh hưởng rất xấu (Harmful is an adjective, means a very bad effect)

206 Tam: cái này là có hại (this is bad)

207 Hoa: có ảnh hưởng xấu cho ai?(harmful for whom)

208 Tam: for your health

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.10

42 Phuong: It’s so terrible. How do you feel now hả? (is it how do you feel?)

43 Tran: Ú (Right), hoặc là are you OK cũng được (or Are you OK is still fine)

44 Phuong: I feel so headache.

45 Tran:  I’m feeling chử, now mà (must be I’m feeling, now here)

46 Phuong: Có một chử l phải không?(only one l?)

47 Tran: Ú (right), my eye is so blurry.

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.11

175 Thao: but I don’t…Hình như cái câu trúc này mình ghi nó bị sai (It seems that this sentence is wrong)

176 Sang:  "I have not enough, have not enough, have not enough " Chữ tử, động tử
công not, tính tử, danh tử, tính-danhd-đông- thương, đúng quí tác rồi (Subject, verb
added not, adjective, noun, adjective-noun-verb- adverb, so it is grammatically
correct)

178 Thao: I have not enough

Knowledge of structuring an English speech

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.12

1 Tam: Hi, I’m from group 1

2 Hoa: Khoan, khoan, mình làm đoạn hỏi thoải trước còn cái phần này mình sẽ làm sau (Wait, wait, we make the body of the conversation first, then we make it) Mói vừa
cái tạo hỏi may “hello, may khỏe không” (At the beginning, I may ask you “hello, how are you”)

………………

374
150 Tam: Ê, trở lại khúc đầu, hồi này tính nói cái gì đó quên mất tiêu rồi. Thời, quên mất rồi (Hey, please back to the beginning, we just want to talk about what. Oops, I forget)

152 Hoa: Lúc đâu chỉ giới thiệu thời mà (At the beginning we just introduce)

153 Tam: uh,

154 Hoa: Our group including Tam and Hoa ((writes it down))

155 Tam: We are Tam and Hoa. Today we will talk about the effect of the weather, uh, um ảnh hưởng của thời tiết đến chúng ta (the effect of the weather on us)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.13

7 Phuong: đứa nào giới thiệu? (who will introduce?)

8 Tran: Hi everybody, I’m Tran something like this uhm today uhm we talk about uhm uhm=

10 Phuong: =The kind of weather is perfect for me. Then, hello, we (3.0) Hey, mỗi đầu vào phải là (at first you must say that) we are we are Phuong and Tran and we are talking about the kind of weather is perfect for you.

Knowledge of making an argumentative talk

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.14

188 Tam: có lẽ bao nhiêu ý này đủ rồi, cũng nhiều rồi (5.0) (maybe there are enough ideas, quite a few). Cuối cùng hai đứa cũng không đưa ra ý chung (5.0) (in the end two of us haven’t had any general ideas)

190 Hoa: Although

191 Tam: Tao định nói however, cái này nói although (I’m saying however, and you’re saying although)

192 Hoa: Although it makes our mentality more exciting

…………………..

236 Tam: ừa, mình nói những thân lý và bất lợi những mình không đưa ra được kết luận chung ha? (Ok, so we’ve mentioned the advantages and disadvantages but we’ve not stated the concluding ideas?)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.15

123 Phuong: I think, uh, ý tạo muốn nói là thời tiết nào cũng được miễn là mình thấy thoải mái là được rồi (I mean that whatever type of weather is as long as you feel comfortable)

125 Tran: It’s not important uhm

126 Phuong: that is Ok

127 Tran: không biết đường diễn tã, ý tạo là đang như… (.) (I don’t know how to express it, I mean that… (.)

375
Phuong: Thợ Dict nào cũng được (Whatever type of weather is fine) Nhưng mà mình nói rất nhiều thứ rồi bây giờ nói thời tiết nào cũng không quan trọng được không? (But we’ve argued a lot and now we say that whatever type of weather is not important, so does it make sense?)

Tran: Câu chổ. Mình bày tỏ nghĩa khách quan một chút (It’s a concluding sentence. We’ve stated our own ideas so we need to present objective ideas)

The employment of learners’ life background knowledge

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.16

Quan: can I meet, tôi có thể gặp quản lý của anh được không? (can I see your manager?)

Nhí: Cái gì vậy? (what?)

Tien: chủ mày muốn tổ chức sinh nhật ở nhà hàng, mày không muốn gặp quản lý thì mày muốn gặp ai? (You want to hold a birthday party in a restaurant, you should see the manager. Do you think who you want to see?)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.17

Tien: Bạn di mun tiền tôi đi ((talks to Vy)) (You will borrow my money)

Vy: Do you have a debit card?

Quan: thẻ ngân hàng thì phải có debit card rồi (a bank card must include “debit card”)

Vy: mình hỏi phải chờ debit card đó trong bao lâu (let ask how long we wait for the debit card)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.18

Tam: Tao sẽ nói là ta o la. Mùa hè di vi nó dễ làm cho mình bị hơi lâu đọng lắm muốn chết mà câu gi nói. (I will say that I’m cold. Let say summer because it makes us irritated while winter is too cold so people won’t be irritated)

Hoa: Mùa hè và mùa đông có nhiều hoạt động, chỉ có mùa xuân và mùa thu là ít hoạt động. Mùa hè mình có thể đi camping còn mùa đông thì có thể leo núi. (Summer and winter have lots of activities, spring and autumn do not. In summer we can go camping or climbing)

Tam: Vây là làm giống mấy cái này (so do as same as these)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.19

Phuong: you look so tired vi thời tiết cũng ảnh hưởng làm cho mệt nữa (because weather effects and makes people tired). Trời nóng quá cũng mệt nữa hà? (Hot weather makes you feel tired?)

Tran: uh, trời nóng quá làm mấy đứa luôn đó (hot weather makes you feel exhausted). Bụa nào mấy mấy thấy nhức đầu là bụi do trời nóng đó (A hot day usually makes you feel headache).
**Excerpt 6.2.2.3.20**

59 Phuong: I think cold.
60 Tran: cool
61 Phuong: cool hà? *(Is it cool?)*
62 Tran: ừ, mát mẻ và có gió *(Right, relaxed and windy)*
63 Phuong: Cold? *(rises her voice)*
64 Tran: Cold là lạnh như Đà Lạt đó là cold *(cold is like being in as such low temperature as that in Dalat)*
65: Phuong: I like cool weather

**Excerpt 6.2.2.3.21**

39 Tien: Tặng quà sinh nhật mà *(it’s for a birthday party)* *(then asks Thao)* è. Đi sinh nhật tặng quà gì? *(Hey, what presents brought to the birthday party)*
41 Thao: tặng gấu bông *(giving teddy bears)*
42 Tien: Ú hm *(Uhm)*
43 Thao: À, tặng tiền *(ah, giving money)*
44 Tien: thường bây giờ tiền không hà *(they now prefer money)*
45 Phuong: Tặng tiền cho người ta làm sinh nhật *(giving money so people can use the money to hold the party)* *(talks to Thao while Tien turns back to his work)*

*The use of word sound*

**Excerpt 6.2.2.3.22**

47 Tran: Ú *(right)*, my eye is so blurry.
48 Phuong: Cái gì? *(what?)*
49 Tran: Mắt bị mờ đồ *(eyes are not able to see clearly).*
50 Phuong: My eyes are so blurry. B::LUR::RY *(.)*

**Excerpt 6.2.2.3.23**

93 Tien: dùng tử after that di *(Let use after that)* *(talks to Nhi)* After that she calls a taxi, and talk *(.)* talk to the taxi driver. *(4.0)* She wants to
95 Nhi: she want
96 Tien: wants to
97 Nhi: wants to

**Excerpt 6.2.2.3.24**
Sang: That’s a good idea, but I have not enough cash money (2.0) I have NOT ENOUGH CASH, không đủ tiền (trans)

Thao: Ok, I’ll pay for you.

I “have not enough cash money” ((to self))

….

Thao: but I don’t…Hình như cái câu trúc này mày ghi nó bị sai (It seems that this sentence is wrong)

Sang: “I have not enough, have not enough, have not enough” ((to self)) Chủ từ, động từ cộng not, tính từ, danh từ, tính danh động trạng dùng qui tác rồi (Subject, verb added not, adjective, noun, adjective-noun-verb- adverb so it is grammatically correct)

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.25

Tam: I think we should “tổ chức” là cái gì? (... is what?) quên mật rồi mày? (I forget this word) tao quên mật rồi? (I forget it)

Hoa: you should held (.) should held or should hold ((she is unsure of the correct verb form))

Tam: từ này có nghĩa là “tổ chức” há? sao nghe lạ quá vậy (this word means “…”? it sounds strange)

Hoa: đúng rồi (That’s right), ° held hold hold° held hold hold° (.)° held held held° (very soft to herself). Ừ mà, held đầu hay hold đầu tao không nhớ nữa (held hold hold or hold held held, I forgot) Hold

Excerpt 6.2.2.3.26

Thao: feel feel felt hay là feel felt felt ° ((to self))

feel feel felt hay là feel felt felt (feel feel felt or feel felt felt) ((asks Thao))

Thao: Feel nào (what feel?)

Tien: cảm thấy do có (it’s about feeling, teacher) ((gets the teacher involved))

Thao: feel felt

Tien: coi chừng lơn nha fall felt felt (be careful otherwise you may confused with fall felt felt)

Human mediation

Teacher mediation

Excerpt 6.2.3.1.1

Teacher: so the first word is bank statement, bank statement

SS: ((writes down the definition of the word))
12 Teacher: bank statement and then bring your answer here. You are not allowed to look at your book.

14 SS: ((keeps working on the first word))

15 Teacher: so you write the definition down and you bring it to me.

16 SS ((brings the answer to the teacher))

17 Teacher: Ok (.) so what happens (.) Ok, if you get the answer you get one point, if you are the first team, you get two points. So does it make sense? If you get the right answer you get one point, if you are the first you get two. Then you get your paper back.

**Excerpt 6.2.3.1.2**

1 T: I’d like you to talk about the effect of weather on people ((writes “the effects of weather on people” on the board)).

3 For example I could say about spring, yes, the atmosphere is very fresh, and the activities, yes, there are a lot of activities and talk about the the feeling. Ok, it may make you feel happy. Ok, ten minutes for you to work with your partner to make a conversation about this.

**Excerpt 6.2.3.1.3**

1 Teacher: OK, let talk about topic …about the party ((gives the handouts to students)

(0.5)

3 OK… and there are four guiding questions for you to prepare for your speech . Ok Question number 1 “WHAT was the party?”, number 2 “WHY was the party held”, NUMBER 3 “Who attended THE PARTY “ and…the last one “what did you do for that party” and you have to prepare the speech in 2 minutes… you have to work in groups ((looks at her handout))

8 Students: ((look at their handout and listen attentively to the teacher))

Teacher: Each group has to prepare the speech in two minutes and after you finish…you have…one …person to present in two minutes ((looks at the students and slow down her voice))

12 and you just have…OK…I’ll give you TWO minutes to prepare…but for the IELTS test you just have one minute…but….now I…let you prepare in two minutes…and now you can…can…discuss OK

15 Students: ((find their partners to work in groups))

16 Teacher: Now…TWO minutes

17 Students: ((start work in groups, they decide the party they are going to talk about ))

18 Teacher: ((approaches and asks group 1)) what party do your group choose?

19 Group 1: Birthday ((to the teacher))
Excerpt 6.2.3.1.4

1 Vy: Gì vậy? (What?)

2 Quan: Viết một đoạn văn đúng sau từ trong này (Write a paragraph using 6 words)

3 Tien: Biết làm mà. Vụ này đảm đâu đây bạn (Got it, it must be so hard)

4 Quan: Đoạn văn (Paragraph)

5 Tien: cái gì mà đoạn văn (Paragraph?)

6 Quan: hội thoại (dialogue)

7 Vy: hội thoại hay là nguyên đoạn văn có? (A dialogue or a paragraph, teacher?)

8 Teacher: a dialogue

Excerpt 6.2.3.1.5

27 Teacher: you may talk to the bank teller to give your bank statement which tells
you the amount of money you have. After you withdraw your money, the bank teller
will tell you your balance ((approaches and talks to the group and then walks away)).

30 Vy: sao mày không cảm ơn người ta ((to Quan)) (Why don’t say thank you?)

31 Quan: Hello

32 Vy: Hello, vậy cái kia bỏ hà (Hello, so cancel that one?)

33 Quan: ừ, cái kia sảm quá (Right, that is awkward) Can you give my bank
statement?

35 Tien: Bạn nói tiếng Việt đi cái nào tôi biết tôi sẽ nói bằng tiếng Anh. Ý bạn là
sao? (Please say in Vietnamese, and then I may help to say in English. What do you
mean?)

36 Quan: Can you give my bank statement?

Excerpt 6.2.3.1.6

21 Sang: gửi tiền (deposit money)

22 Tram: (?inaudible)

23 Sang: deposit nè (deposit here)

24 Dừa không muốn nói chuyện còn đứa nói chuyện nhỏ xìu (One does not want
to talk, one talks too soft) ((shows his anger))

26 T: To your friend, you can ask them to borrow money and then go to the bank or
something ((talks to the group))

28 ((long pause))

………….  

380
53 Sang: hỏi nào giờ có đi đâu mà biệt (3.0) Mà tao học ngữ anh văn nưa (I've not ever deposited money. Moreover, I am so bad at English)

54 T: so you two have a lot of money, and you donot want to keep at your house and you talk to Tram and she says you could go to the bank and put it there. And you go to the bank ((comes and sits with the group))

57 Sang: tao ghét làm detr hoặc sự làm mà không có ý nghĩa gì (I hate making conversation. It's so annoyed and meaningless) ((leaves the group discussion))

58 Teacher: now, I want to deposit. How much?

59 Thu: two thousand (.) dollars

60 Teacher: I want to deposit two thousand dollars

61 Tram: ((writes the sentence just read by the teacher down))

62 Teacher: and Tram can say “yes, do you want to save (?inaudible”).

63 What’s next? Do you understand?

64 The group: ((silent))

65 Teacher: you may say my bank account is at, what bank?

66 Thu and Tram: ((think about the answer))

67 Teacher: Agribank or Vietcombank

68 Tram: uhm Agribank

69 Teacher: so your bank account is at Agribank, so you go to the bank, you go inside. Yes, let say how are you.

71 Tram: ((writes down))

Excerpt 6.2.3.1.7

83 Tien: úa (hold on) “feel feel felt hay là (or) feel felt felt ᵇ (to self))

feel feel felt hay là feel felt felt (feel feel felt or feel felt felt) ((asks Thao))

85 Thao: Feel nào (what feel?)

((the teacher passes the group))

87 Tien: cảm thấy đó có (it’s about feeling, teacher) ((to the teacher but she walks away)) cảm thấy (it’s about feeling) ((to Thao))

89 Thao: feel felt felt

90 Tien: coi chúng lớn nha fall fell fallen (be careful otherwise you may be confused with fall fell felt)

91 Thao: phải không cô? (is that right, teacher?) ((to the teacher but she says nothing and keeps walking away from the group))
93 Tien: fall fell fallen, còn chưa feel (*how about feel?*)
94 Thao: feel felt felt

*Peer mediation*

**Excerpt 6.2.3.2.1**

4 Quan: I decide to go, go to the bank and…
5 Tien: celebrate
6 Nhi: celebrate viết thế nào? (*How to write celebrate?*)
7 Tien: celebrate (. ) celebrate (. ) celebrate (2.0)
8 E-BỌ-LỌ-E= (E-B-L-E=) ((spells the word out))
9 Tram: =TỌ-E (=T-E)

……

136 Nhi: tao không biết viết từ đó ((manager)) (*I do not know the spelling of the word*)
138 Quan: Right, manager

**Excerpt 6.2.3.2.2**

1 Tien: ((writes something down on his note paper and then asks Thao)) chữ "prepare" ghi làm sao mạ? (how to write ".....")
3 Thao: ((write the word down on her paper and then talks to Nieu)): happy, chúc mừng (*congratulations*)

………………

71 Phuong: ((talks to Thao)) em mà, sao chữ organiztion của tao thiếu chữ gì đó (*it seems that organization lacks some letters*)
72 Thao: thiếu chữ “g” rồi (you lack the letter “g” ) ((writes the word down on her book))

**Excerpt 6.2.3.2.3**

24 Thao: ° yesterday° ° I couldn’t go° ° so I gave you a present° , a letter di (let say a letter) and ° and a package°
26 Have you, nhận là gì? (*What is “to be given something”?*)
27 Sang: nhận? (to be given something?)
28 Van: receive
29 Sang: ừ (ok)
30 Thao: Have you received? I uhm uhm
Excerpt 6.2.3.2.4

30 Nhi: celebrate party birthday

31 Tien: now, Hana=

32 Quan:= birthday party mới đúng, birthday party (it must be birthday party)

33 Nhi: rồi (Ok) ((writes down))

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.5

175 Thao: but I don’t…Hình như câu cấu trúc này mày ghi nó bị sai (It seems that this sentence is wrong)

176 Sang: "I have not enough, have not enough, have not enough" ((to self)) Chủ tự, động từ cộng not, tính tự, danh tự, tính danh động trang đúng quí tác rõi (Subject, verb added not, adjective, noun, adjective-noun-verb-adverb so it is grammatically correct)

178 Thao: I have not enough

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.6

112 Tran: I can travel (.) to many places so good

113 Phuong: many hay much? (many or much?)

114 Tran: many places

115 Phuong: It’s very comfortable and I can travel to many places.

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.7

51 Tien: Bạn đi muốn tiền tôi đi ((talks to Vy)) (You will borrow my money)

52 Vy: Do you have a debit card?

53 Quan: the ngân hàng thì phải có debit card rõi (a bank card must include “debit card”)

54 Vy: mình hỏi phải có debit card đó trong bao lâu (let ask how long we wait for the debit card)

Excerpt 6.2.3.2.8

63 Tam: ((talks to the neighbour students)) Hey hai máy làm sao? xong chưa? Ể, “tổ chức” là hold hay organise? (Hey guys, how are you going? finished? Hey, ....is hold or organise?)

65 The student: từ nào cũng được (either of them is fine)

66 Tam: ủ (yes), organise outdoor activities. That’s a good idea.
67 Hoa: ((writes down the statements provided by Tam)) Cái này mình nói một hồi qua tôi cảm thấy, bởi lỗi luôn rồi. Hình như bị lạc đề rồi đó (We are talking about camping, swimming. It seems off topic)

............... 

221 Hoa: mỗi mùa ghi làm sao? (how to write the word meaning every individual season?) (20.0) Hội Tham coi mỗi mùa ghi làm sao (Please ask Tham for help with that)

223 Tam: Ê, mỗi mùa nói làm sao? (Hey, how do you say every individual season?) ((talks to Tham, a student in another group))

225 Tham: in each season

226 Tam: đây (here), biết rồi (I got it) in each season

227 Hoa: ((keeps writing the conversation))

**Excerpt 6.2.3.2.9**

37 Tien: °Tặng quà gì? ° (what presents should be given?) ((to self))

((then asks the group behind)) tăng quà gì? (what presents should be given?)

39 The group : (?unclear)

**Excerpt 6.2.3.2.10**

73 Quan : you should fill-in the form ((writes it down))

74 Vy: cho mượn coi ý tưởng coi ((talks to the neighbour group)) (let me see your work to get some ideas)

75 A student in the group: thì may đi vô ngân hàng, may muốn rút tiền hay làm gì đó (You go to the bank, you want to withdraw money or do something like that)

76 Tien: Đọc my từ rồi? may viết nhanh chót được không ((talks to Quan)) (How many words have been done? Could you please write more quickly)
APPENDIX K: EXCERPTS ILLUSTRATING LEARNER AGENCY
IN CASE 1

Learner agency at the collective level

Excerpt 5.3.1.2

69 Huy: Because good leaders do not have to be a good manager because depend on the effectiveness of work they did, they did and depend on the...the... (2.0) depend on many things throughout the the process they work as a leader.

72 Effective leaders need to focus on the future ((reads the next statement)).

73 Huong: I agree with this because (4.0) if ah...ah...because I think the leader has to focus similar ah...ah...

75 Huy: I think so

76 Huong: leaders have to focus or (inaudible?) to organise (4.0) thôi nói tiếng Việt dĩ (Let's speak Vietnamese) ((laughs)) to organise, organise

78 Ý tôi nói là người làm lãnh đạo cần phải có suy nghĩ xa để tổ chức....tổ chức một kế hoạch nào đó (I mean leaders need to think of the future so that he can well organise a plan in the future)

80 Huy: Kế hoạch cho tương lai xa này hà? (A plan in the far future?)

81 Huong: ừ (right)

Excerpt 5.3.1.3

28 Huong: An effective leader always makes autonomous ((wrong pronunciation)) assistance. Autonomous? ((wrong pronunciation))

30 Huy: Agree

31 Huong: °Autonomous°°Autonomous°°Autonomous °((to self))

What does it [mean? ((asks Huy))

Excerpt 5.3.1.5

33 Muoi: °True leaders do not care about (...) other people’s opinions° ((reads the last statement))

35 Nguyen: °Effective leaders always make (?inaudible) decision° ((reads the sixth statement)).

37 Autonomous decision là gì? (what does autonomous decision mean?)

38 Muoi: tự trì (self-decide)
39 Nguyen: tự quyết định ha? ((raises her voice)) (*make decision by himself?*)

40 Muoi: chắc vậy (*maybe*)

**Excerpt 5.3.1.6**

63 Nguyen: chắc vậy á may ôi (*maybe it is*). Còn câu bốn tao nghĩ là không cần thiết (*Sentence four I think it’s not necessary*)

64 Muoi: Không cần thiết đâu, tao làm là sai vì may đâu nhất thiết phải nói trước Công đồng (*not necessary, I’ve marked it as False because you do not need to speak in front of the community*). Máy làm việc trong nhóm thôi (*No, you just work in group*) Máy đâu cần phải giới public speaking (*you do not need to be good at public speaking*). Máy chỉ cần nói trong nhóm máy là được rồi (*you just need to speak well in your group*).

69 Nguyen: Đó có thể là điểm yếu của họ thì sao (*It may be his weakness*). Trước nhân viên tức là trước công chúng (*In front of the staff may be referred as public speaking*)

**Excerpt 5.3.1.8**

103 Quyen: tập trung vô (*be concentrated*), tao nghĩ là một đứa chịu trách nhiệm trả tự dì, có máy từ không hiểu (*I think one of us should be in charge of looking vocabulary up in the dictionary since there are some words that I don’t understand the meaning*)

105 Lien: Ok

106 Quyen: cái versatility nghĩa là gì? (*what does versatility mean?*)

107 Dien: và tự continuity nữa (*and also continuity*). Móc điện thoại ra coi (*take your mobile phone out*) (*talks to Lien*)

109 Lien: ((turning on her cell phone))

**Excerpt 5.3.1.10**

150 Lien (*looks at Quyen’s book*): Ê, máy ghi chữ này giống chữ F hoa quá (*Hey, you’ve written this letter which looks like an F*)

151 Quyen: sao giống F hoa được (*why looks like an F*). Chữ F hoa phải ghi thế này (*The F must be like this*) (*writes on Dien’s book*)

153 Dien: Ê máy (*Hey you*), sách của tao may (*my book*) (*to Quyen*)

154 Quyen: Thị sách máy nên tao mới ghi (*since it’s your book so I write on it*) (*to Dien*)

156 Lien, Dien and Quyen: (*Laugh*)

**Excerpt 5.3.1.11**

80 My: hay là kỹ thuật làm việc? (*or working techniques?*) (*rising voice*)
81 Han: không, bỏ qua câu này đi (no, just pass this sentence) Team players nghĩa là gì? (What does team players mean?)

83 My: Bỏ qua câu này (Pass this sentence) Team players nghĩa là gì hà? (What does team players mean?)

84 Hoang: đồng đội (individuals in the same team) (looks at her dictionary)

85 Han: (checks in her dictionary) Ok, xem câu kết tiếp đi (look at the next sentence) (treads from the book) people with the necessary individual skills, người ta phải có những kỹ năng cá nhân cần thiết (trans).

88 My: hay nó là kỹ thuật làm việc? (it is working techniques?)

Excerpt 5.3.1.12

68 Huy: uhm, uhm, WHEN ((rising his tone))

69 Han: when đâu có quan trọng đâu (when is not important)

70 Huy: uhm, when ở đây thì cùng như WHERE vậy bỏ qua (when here is as same as WHERE so let’s pass it)

Excerpt 5.3.1.15

51 Thi: [[what is active listening? Minh hiểu active listening là cái gì? (what do we know about active listening?)

52 Ha: là mình chủ động (means that we must be active)

53 Thi: Không, nghĩa là lắng nghe tích cực. (No, it means we listen positively)

54 Ha: giống như mình hỏi người ta câu hỏi phải không? (is it like we make questions to people?)

55 Thi: giống như ta nói chuyện với máy, thì máy cũng phải có gì đó để đáp trả lại (it’s like when I talk to you and you must do something to respond to me). Nếu không tạo cự nói hỏi, thì ta đâu có hứng nói nữa (Otherwise, it seem like I keep talking to myself so I’m not interesting in talking anymore). Mày có thể giải đầu đề cho thấy máy hiểu ta nói (You may nod your head to show that you understand what I’m talking). Đó là active listening (It is active listening)

61 Ha: Ú (Ok)

((the discussion stops for about one minute))

63 Thi: Where, chúng ta sử dụng active listening nhiều ở đâu? (where do we often use active listening?)

64 Ha: Interview

65 Thi: interview hoặc là (or)
**Excerpt 5.3.1.16**

25 Huy: WHERE

26 Han: tình huống nào (*in what situations?*)

27 Huy: ừ (uh). (5.0) uhm uhm when [[you listen

28 Han: [[when you want to know

29 Huy: ((ignores Han’s idea)) when [[ you listen, to, to

30 Han: [[when you want to (. ) want to, know

31 Huy: when when you [[listen to::

32 Han: [[when ah when you want to know ah

33 Huy: ((in a soft voice)) °when (. ) listen (. ) listen to uhm, uhm°

34 Han: ((in a soft voice)) ° you (. ) want to know uhm, uhm°

35 Huy: Uhm, uhm, when you make presentation ((to Han))

36 Han: Yeah ((nods her head))

**Excerpt 5.3.1.17**

139 Han: ((uses her cell phone to ‘Google’ “what is active listening?”)) active listening (. ) What is nè (*here*), is a communication to (?inaudible). Ê (*Hey*), Huy, active listening nè (*here*), active music listening.

142 Huy: ((looks at Han’s phone screen)) thôi bỏ đi (*ignore it*). Kéo xuống nè, when nè. (*Scroll down, when here*)

144 Han: tướng tự (*slow down*) using in public ((keeps reading from her phone))

145 Huy: WHEN ((asks Han to look for the information related to when))

146 Han: Ê, when nè (*Hey, when here*)

147 Huy: ((leans towards Han))

148 Han: (? inaudible) medical worker

149 Huy: Yes ((nods his head and writes down something on his notebook))

150 Han: ((reads from the phone)) (?inaudible) trong y tế với bệnh nhân nè (*in medical field with patients*)

**Excerpt 5.3.1.18**

33 Thi: 1.02 là echo response (*1.02 is echo response*). 1.03 là signals (*1.03 is signals*) 1.04 là action points (*1.04 is action points*), những cái điểm màu chốt quan trọng (*the important points*)
35 Ha: uh ((looks at the pair next to them and then looks at the board)) Không, làm bài tập trên bảng mà không phải bài này đâu. *(No, do the exercise on the board not this one)*

37 Thi: cái gì? À, tao biết, nhưng làm bài này trước *(what? Ah, I know but I want to do this first)*

38 Ha: what is active listening? Active listening là cái gì *(trans)* ((looks at the board and says))

**Excerpt 5.3.1.19**

4 Huy: Active listening ((raises his voice)) (.) What trước di ha *(So, what first, Ok?)*

5 Han: Uhm, what is active listening?

6 Huy: I think:: active listening is:: (.) you listen and (.) you can (.) response more questions ((writes it down while saying it))

8 Han: <you, you want to listen>

9 Huy: No ((shakes his head))

10 Han: you want to listen (.) more

11 Huy: NO, you listen and you can question.

**Excerpt 5.3.1.20**

51 Thi: [[what is active listening? Minh hiểu active listening là cái gì? *(what do we know about active listening?)*

52 Ha: là mình chủ động *(means that we must be active)*

53 Thi: Không, nghĩa là lắng nghe tích cực. *(No, it means we listen positively)*

54 Ha: giống như mình hỏi người ta câu hỏi phải không? *(is it like we make questions to people?)*

55 Thi: giống như tao nói nói chuyện với may, thì may cũng phải có gì đó để đáp trả lại *(it’s like when I talk to you and you must do something to respond to me)*. Nếu không tao cú nói hỏi, thì tao đâu có hứng nói nữa *(Otherwise, it seem like I keep talking to myself so I’m not interesting in talking anymore). Mày có thể gật đầu để cho thấy mày hiểu tao nói *(You may nod your head to show that you understand what I’m talking)*. Đó là active listening *(It is active listening)*

*Learner agency at the individual level*

**Excerpt 5.3.2.1**

88 Ha: How?

89 Thi: How, bằng cách nào *(trans)*

90 Ha: bằng đầu hiệu hoặc là gật đầu *(by signals or nodding your head)*
91 Thi: Ó (Right), how can we recognize active listening?

92 Ha: How? ((confused))

93 Thi: Làm thế nào để bạn có thể nhận biết được active listening? (How can we recognize active listening?) (20.0) Questioning

95 Ha: conferring

Excerpt 5.3.2.2

17 My: nè, cho mày xem nè (Ok, let me show you) ((My shows Han the explanation in her dictionary))

19 Han: Talent, đánh vào đi! Sai rồi, e (.) l (.) t (type it in, spelling mistake e (.) l (.) t)

20 My: nè, talented là tính từ, nghĩa là có tài (here, talented is an adjective, means being with talent or skills) ((shows Han the meaning of the word in her dictionary))

23 Han: từ điển của mày thiếu rồi đó. Talented là tính từ và cũng là verb nữa (your dictionary is insufficient. Talented is an adjective and also a verb)

25 My: Không, talented là adjective thôi (no, talented is an adjective only)

26 Han: nó là verb và được thêm ED. Nó thành adjective và động từ quá khứ (it’s a verb and we add ED in the end. So it becomes an adjective and a simple past verb)

Excerpt 5.3.2.3

6 Huy: I think:: active listening is:: (.) you listen and (.) you can (.) response more questions ((writes it down while saying it))

8 Han: <you, you want to listen>

9 Huy: No ((shakes his head))

10 Han: you want to listen (. ) more

11 Huy: NO, you listen and you can question.

.....

17 Huy: Uhm, not only question ((link the final sound of “not to” “only”))

18 Uhm, uhm, []where

19 Han: [] ask for information

20 Huy: ((Give no responses))

Excerpt 5.3.2.4
21 Teacher: Ok, now discuss step by step. Do the activity 1. The requirement is that decide whether you agree or disagree with the statements. The first sentence relates to a manager and leader

24 Ok, First “All managers are good leaders” ((reads the sentence from the book)) and in your opinion, the statement is true or false? and explain Ok?

26 Please focus on the word ALL ((emphasises the word “all”)), all managers are good leaders. Unit 6, leadership skills.
APPENDIX L: EXCERPTS ILLUSTRATING LEARNER AGENCY IN CASE 2

Learner agency at the collective level

Excerpt 6.3.1.1

2 Sang: Hỏi cái gì? (What to ask?)

3 Tram: (?inaudible)

4 T: ((approaches the group)) everyone should have a role. For example, you are a bank teller ((points at Sang)) and you are customers ((points at Tram and Tran))

6 Sang: Con Tram rót ngư lì làm trong ngân hàng (Tram will say hello to the person working in that bank)

7 Tram: (?inaudible)

8 Sang: Ú, không hiểu hà? ((shouts at Tram)) (Right, you don’t understand?)

Excerpt 6.3.1.2

11 Tram: Giới thiệu là mình đang ở ngân hàng ((talks to her group members)) (introduce that we are in a bank)

12 Sang: chỉ cần nói hello bank teller là được rồi, không cần phải nói thêm câu nói đang ở trong ngân hàng nữa. (just say “hello bank teller”, don’t need to say that she’s at the bank)

14 Tram: Nó không đủ chữ nè (it won’t be enough words)

15 Sang: vừa vở hello (just start the conversation with “hello”)

16 ((long pause))

17 Sang: nè, máy nói trước (Here, you speak first) ((to Tram))

18 Tram: ((seems to write down something))

19 Sang: hello nó một cái, cũng không dám ghi nữa (please say hello to her, why don’t you write it) ((looks at the notes written by Tram and shows his scowl))

20 Tram: ((writes “hello” down))

Excerpt 6.3.1.3

34 Sang: how can, I, lend money to my friend?

35 How can I lend money to ((reads it to Tram who is writing it down))

36 Tram: ((writes down and then wait for Sang))
37 Sang: to my, không lẽ “to me” hà (you think “to me?”) ((shouts at Tram))
38 Tram: ((looks at the notes))
39 Sang: nhìn hoài luôn, cho ai muốn tiền? “to me hà”? (What are you keeping looking at? Who borrows money? “to me” right?)

Excerpt 6.3.1.4

7 Vy: Cái gì? (What?) Of course? ((writes down)) LŒ-E (L-E)
18 Quan: Cái gì LŒ (What L?)
19 Vy: CÔ-O-U-RÖ-SÖ-E (C-O-U-R-S-E) of course,
20 Tien: bạn suy nghĩ gì, bạn nói tiếng Việt ra đi, tôi đóng góp cho (Please says what you think in Vietnamese so I can make contribution)((talks to Quan))
21 Vy: I need to take take rút tiền (withdraw money)
22 Quan: withdraw
23 Tien: withdraw
24 Quan: Sao? nộp tiền hay rút tiền? (What? Deposit money or withdraw money?)
25 y: Rút tiền (withdraw money)

Excerpt 6.3.1.5

7 Phuong: đau nào giới thiếu? (who will introduce?)
8 Tran: Hi everybody, I’m Tran gì gì đó (something like this) uhm today uhm we talk about uhm uhm=
10 Phuong: =The kind of weather is perfect for me. Then, hello, we (3.0) Hey, mới đầu vào phải là (at first you must say that ) we are we are Phuong and Tran and we are talking about the kind of weather is perfect for you.

Excerpt 6.3.1.6

60 Phuong: take medicine () I’m too tired, too. Đứa nhức đầu, đứa thì mêt nè. Hai đứa ngồi bàn tán (One has headache, one feels tired. We two are in discussion).
62 Tran: Weather, and what kind of the weather is good for you đi, hỏi sau mình mới nói perfect. Rồi, trả lời đi (Let say and what kind of weather is good for you, then we say perfect later (Done, please answer)
64 Phuong: I think cold.
Excerpt 6.3.1.7

123 Thao: rồi chưa? (ready?) Giờ mình làm thêm một lần nữa đi (we now practice it again). Cho thật treści nha (try to be fluent) ((they practice the dialogue again and they use their notes, too))

126 Van: hi Thao. How was your birthday?

127 Thao: Hi Van. Yeah, it’s very fun. Why didn’t you come?

Excerpt 6.3.1.8

115 Thao: Chúng ta phải làm trước nếu không bị trùng ý với máy nhóm khác. (We should present first otherwise our ideas will be overlapped with other groups)

116 Sang: Ú (right)

Excerpt 6.3.1.9

73 Sang: Cheap, expensive, birthday, letter, package, bank, (?inaudible) ((Thao and Sang write on their own notes))

(10.0)

76 Thao: Nói thêm một câu nữa đi (let add one more sentence) Chính từ luôn đi cho nó là (let use nine words so our talk will be unique) Ghi lại hết chưa? (Have you finished taking notes?) ((to Van))

Excerpt 6.3.1.10

167 Thao: ê, mày lên giọng xướng giọng cho giọng nói chuyển thiệt nha ((talks to Sang and Van)) (Hey, remember to rise and fall your tone so that it sounds natural)

169 Sang: I’m glad ((rises his voice)) that you like it ((falls his voice))

Excerpt 6.3.1.11

99 Sang: That’s a good idea. I have not cash money.

100 Thao: I’ll pay for you. Let’s go!

101 Sang: thấy cái câu này đổi lại hay hơn (I think this sentence should be changed) I cannot get to your birthday yesterday (.) I cannot get to your birthday yesterday.

103 Thao: ((no responses))

104 Sang: còn không muốn đổi thì để vậy cũng không sao (if not changed, it’s still fine).
Thao: Thêm vô chỗ này (let add this) “Hi Sang”.

Tao và Van đứng một chỗ và Sang lại (I and Van stand and Sang comes), tụi tôi sẽ nói (we’ll say) Hi Sang, sau đó (then) Sang mới nói (will say) yesterday I could not go.

Sang: Ú (OK)

**Excerpt 6.3.1.12**

Tien: °Tằng quà gì? ° (what presents should be given?) ((to self))

((then asks the group behind)) tặng quà gì? (what presents should be given?)

The group: (?unclear)

Tien: Tằng quà sinh nhật mà (it’s for a birthday party) ((then asks Thao)) eh. Di sinh nhật tặng quà gì? (Hey, what presents brought to the birthday party)

Thao: Tằng gấu bông (giving teddy bears)

**Excerpt 6.3.1.13**

Nhu: Lấy vào ra ghi đi (take out your notebook)

Van: con nhở này mới đi ((points at Nhu)), mọi nhở này dự sinh nhật ((points at Lam)) (you invite, you participate in the birthday party)

Lam: Mày sẽ nói nhà nên mày ghi đi (You will speak so you must write) ((talks to Nhu))

Nhu: sao tao nói? (why me?)

Van: không mày thi ai? (not you so who?) Thời hi sinh di, ghi di cho nhở mà nói (Please sacrifice for us, write so you will remember)

**Learner agency at the individual level**

**Excerpt 6.3.2.1**

Teacher: good, what does it mean? ((asks the whole class))

SS: a person who works in a bank.

Teacher: how about insurance?

SS: ((shows their answer))

Teacher: Sang, what is insurance?

Sang: ((gives no responses))

**Excerpt 6.3.2.2**
124 Tien: welcome to the restaurant
125 Quan: mày bước vào may kêu bàn "waiter", vậy mà có thêm một chữ nữa

*(you enter the restaurant, then you call the waiter “waiter”, so you use an other word)*

126 Tien: Ê, ra biểu ((joking)) *(hey, come here)*

**Excerpt 6.3.2.3**

21 Sang: gửi tiền*(deposit money)*
22 Tram: *(inaudible)*
23 Sang: deposit nê*(deposit here)*
24 Đưa không muốn nói chuyện, còn đưa nói chuyện nhỏ xíu *(One does not want to talk, one talks too soft)* ((shows his anger))

**Excerpt 6.3.2.4**

45 Sang: = would you like to drink or eat something? Mồi là would you like *(Would you like means inviting someone)*
46 Thao: mê ai mê được *(invite whom?)*
47 Sang: you
48 Thao: you là ai? *(what do “you” refer to?)*
49 Sang: one, two ((point to Van and himself))
50 Thao: mày phải nói thế nào để người ta hiểu là mồi cả hai đứa cùng một lúc *(you must say in another way so listeners understand that you invite two people)*
51 Sang: you two
52 Thao: Chúng ta, chúng ta đi ăn cái gì đi *(We, we eat something)*
53 Sang: would you like
54 Thao: nữa *(again)* ((sounds angry with erratic and high-pitched voice))
55 Sang: Will we go
56 Thao: mình phải nói là tôi cảm thấy đói *(must say I’m hungry)*
57 Sang: I’m hungry

**Excerpt 6.3.2.5**

101 Sang: thấy cái câu này đổi lại hay hơn *(I think this sentence should be changed)* I cannot get to your birthday yesterday (. ) I cannot get to your birthday yesterday.
103 Thao: *(no responses)*

396
104 Sang: còn không muốn đổi thi để vậy cũng không sao (if not changed, it's still fine).

Excerpt 6.3.2.6

151 Tien: a birthday for my mom (3.0) For my mother được không? (For my mother is ok?)
152 Tram: cũng được vậy (still fine)

…..

160 Nhi: uhm, bạn có muốn mời ça sỹ không? (you want to invite some singers?)
161 Tien: right, mời là sao ta? (how to ask someone to an event?)
162 Tram: invite
163 Nhi: invite
164 Tien: invite
165 Tram: singer

Excerpt 6.3.2.7

76 Thao: Nói thêm một câu nữa đi (let add one more sentence) Chính từ luôn đi cho nó là (let use nine words so our talk will be unique) Ghi lại hết chưa? (Have you finished taking notes?) ((to Van))
79 Van: chưa (not yet) ((Van is copying Thao’s notes))
80 Thao: Nhìn vô đây đọc cái đi (look at this and read). Vân nói trước (Van first) ((Start to rehearse the dialogue and each looks at their notes when practising the dialogue))
83 Van: Hi Thao ((looks at her notes))
84 Thao: Nó lớn lên (to Van) (speak louder)
85 Van: Hi Thao. How was your birthday? ((looks at her notes))

Excerpt 6.3.2.8

1 Van: Làm đoạn hỏi Thảo hà? ((talks to her group)) (make a conversation?)
2 Lam: Ú, chắc vậy (maybe)
3 Nhu: Lấy vở ra ghi đi (take out your notebook)
4 Van: con nhờ này mời đi ((points at Nhu)), mời nhờ này dự sinh nhật ((points at Lam)) (you invite, you participate in the birthday party)

Excerpt 6.3.2.9

167 Thao: ê, mày nhờ lên giọng xuống giọng cho giọng nói chuyên thêt nha ((talks to Sang and Van)) (hey, remember to rise and fall your tone so that it sounds natural)
169 Sang: I’m glad ((rises his voice)) that you like it ((falls his voice))