
RESEARCH/NGHIÊN CỨU

The Development of the Ten-Year English Textbook Series for Vietnamese Schools under the National Foreign Language 2020 Project: A Cross-Cultural Collaborative Experience¹

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Abstract: This paper attempts to give an account of the cross-cultural collaborative project between Vietnamese textbook writers and those of MacMillan Education and Pearson Education – two leading international second/foreign language textbook publishers – in producing the ten-year English textbook series for Vietnamese schools under the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. The paper is organized around three parts. Part one provides backgrounds to and bases for developing the textbook series. Part two describes in some detail the cross-cultural textbook development process the Vietnamese textbook writers and their collaborative colleagues of MacMillan Education and Pearson Education have been undertaking in developing the textbook series. Part three gives a résumé of what has been discussed, points out the advantages of the cross-cultural collaboration in producing the textbook series, and argues for a close collaboration between local textbook writers and writers who speak English as their mother tongue in producing high quality English textbooks that are suited to the general educational system of Vietnam.

Keywords: Cross-cultural collaborative experience, textbook development, 2020 Project, three pilot English curricula, VNFLPF, CEFR, 20-step workflow.

1. Introduction

I came into textbook writing in mid 2000 with a sufficient foundation of functional

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linguistics gained from Australia, particularly from the renowned British-born Australian systemic functional linguist Professor Michael Halliday and his wife, the late Professor Ruqaiya Hasan. By that time, I was appointed by the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training as chief author of the English textbook series for Vietnamese upper secondary schools which is currently used throughout Vietnam.

In 2010, I was again appointed by the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training as chief author of the ten-year English textbook

series for Vietnamese schools under the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. My task was, and now still is, to lead three teams (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary) of 15 Vietnamese textbook writers to collaborate with English textbook writers of MacMillan Education and Pearson Education – two leading international second/foreign language textbook publishers – to produce the ten-year English textbook series (from grade 3 to grade 12) for Vietnamese schools. Textbook development, particularly the development of a long series of English textbooks like ours, is so complex that it is impossible to provide a full account of what we have been doing in a paper of this length. So in what follows, I shall be selective, focusing my paper on the points which may highlight the main features of our cross-cultural collaborative development project. My paper will fall into three parts. Part one provides backgrounds to and bases for developing the textbook series. Part two describes in some detail the actual textbook development project we, Vietnamese textbook writers and our collaborative colleagues of MacMillan and Pearson, have been undertaking in developing the textbook series. Part three gives a résumé of what has been discussed, points out the advantages of the cross-cultural collaboration in producing the textbook series, and argues for a close collaboration between local textbook writers and writers who speak English as their mother tongue in producing high quality English textbooks that are suited to the general educational system of Vietnam.

2. Backgrounds to and Bases for the Development of the Ten-year English Textbook Series for Vietnamese Schools

Three important documents and one institution have provided legal backgrounds to

and academic bases for our cross-cultural textbook development project; they are: (i) The National Foreign Language 2020 Project; (ii) MOET'S Three Pilot English Curricula for Vietnamese Schools; (iii) MOET's Six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam; and (iv) Vietnam Education Publishing House.

2.1. The National Foreign Language 2020 Project

Foreign language teaching and learning have always received deep concerns from the Vietnamese Government. If one attempts to look into the history of foreign language teaching (FLT) in Vietnam, one may realize that since the 1960s, foreign languages have always entered into the language policy of Vietnam as a compulsory subject from general education level up to graduate level. One may also realize that due to the Government's constant concerns FLT in Vietnam has made encouraging progress. From the period in which English was taught without an explicit curriculum and textbooks in the early 1970s to the period in which English was taught for 3 years in the North and 7 years in the South with the curricula implicitly incorporated in the contents of the two respective textbook series in late 1970s and early 1980s, to the period in which English was taught for 7 years throughout the country in which the curriculum was explicitly designed and the two categories of English textbooks (the standard category and the advanced one) were developed based on the guidelines and contents provided in the curriculum (for detail, see Bộ giáo dục và Đào tạo [1]; Viện khoa học Giáo dục Việt Nam [2-3]).

Along with the advances in curriculum design and textbook development, the

qualifications and communication skills of the teachers of English in Vietnam have made praiseworthy progress. Some school teachers of English could conduct a lesson entirely in English. However, in the world in which internationalization and integration were becoming an inevitable trend, the need to have highly qualified people who could communicate effectively in English has become a pressing demand for Vietnam. This pressing demand – political and economic – was making it difficult to maintain the existing standards in teaching and use. Increasingly it was being realized in the decision-making bodies (governmental and ministerial) that without major changes and sizeable inputs into curricular, textbooks, teaching methodology, and assessment, FLT in general and ELT in particular in Vietnam would cease to effectively serve the demands being made on it. Being aware of the importance of foreign languages, on the 30th of September, 2008, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed Decision N^o 1400/QĐ-TTg to promulgate the National Project entitled *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System, Period 2008-2020* (henceforth 2020 Project) [4]. For reasons of space, I will not go into great detail about the 2020 Project. What I will do is to present its goal and some of its main points. The aim is to show that our cross-cultural textbook development project has a proper place in the 2020 Project.

The goal of the 2020 Project is

To renovate thoroughly the tasks of teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system, to implement a new foreign languages programme at all educational levels and training degrees, so that by 2015 there will be an obvious progress in qualification and use

of foreign languages of the Vietnamese human resources, especially in some prioritized sectors; and by 2020 most Vietnamese young people graduating from secondary vocational schools, colleges and universities will be able to use a foreign language confidently in their daily communication, their study and work in an integrated, multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment, making foreign languages a competitive advantage of the Vietnamese people to serve the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country.²

The 2020 Project is composed of three phases. The first phase extends from 2008 to 2010; the second phase, from 2011 to 2015; and the third phase, from 2016 to 2020. In the first phase, top priority is given to the development and perfection of the 10-year foreign language curricula for general education, focusing particularly on the development of English curriculum; writing foreign language textbooks; preparing necessary conditions for trying out the 10-year foreign language programme. In the second phase, the focus is on introducing the 10-year foreign language programme into the whole general education system. And in the third phase, the focus is on perfecting the 10-year foreign language programme throughout the general education system and on developing intensive foreign language programmes for secondary vocational schools, colleges and universities. The 2020 Project even encourages Vietnamese educational institutions to actively develop and carry out bilingual programmes.

In terms of standard, the 2020 Project explicitly adopts the 6 language proficiency level framework as developed in *Common European Framework of Reference for*

² Unless otherwise stated, I am responsible for all Vietnamese-English translations in this article.

Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) [5] as the standards for curriculum design, textbook development, teaching methodology development and assessment (for more detail, see Hoang Van Van [6], [7]).

2.2. MOET's Three Pilot English Curricula for Vietnamese Schools

In implementing the Prime Minister's Decision, on the 8th of December, 2010, the Minister of Education and Training signed Decision N⁰ 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT on the Approval of *Chương trình tiếng Anh thí điểm tiểu học* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Primary Schools) [8]; on the 3rd of January, 2012 the Minister of Education and Training signed Decision N⁰ 1/QĐ-BGDĐT on the Approval of *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học cơ sở* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Lower Secondary Schools) [9]; and on the 23rd November, 2012, the Minister of Education and Training signed Decision 5209/QĐ-BGDĐT on the Approval of *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học phổ thông* (Pilot English Curriculum for Vietnamese Upper Secondary Schools) [10].

It should be noted that although designed separately, the three pilot English curricula for Vietnamese schools follow the same format: they are all organized around two main parts: (i) Curriculum Framework and (ii) Syllabus. The Curriculum Framework provides general orientations such as principles of curriculum design, objectives of the curriculum which includes general objectives, specific objectives, and performance objectives, curriculum content which provides four macro-themes, definition of communicative competences, linguistic knowledge and skills, teaching methodology,

assessment, and conditions for effective curriculum implementation.

Two important things should be noted here. The first is that all the three pilot curricula show a high degree of continuity, coherence and integration. This can be seen in the fact that the level of proficiency required for the higher level is developed on the level of ability that students have gained at the lower level. Further, in terms of performance objectives, there is a continuum running from primary to lower secondary and to upper secondary level so that on finishing primary level students will have reached the equivalent of CEFR level A1, on finishing lower secondary level students will have reached the equivalent of CEFR level A2, and on finishing upper secondary level students will have reached the equivalent of CEFR level B1. The second thing to note is that in all three pilot English curricula, performance objectives are consistently and coherently related to the four communicative language areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing which, in a continuum, cover all 10 grades of the three educational levels.

The Syllabus provides contents for textbook and teaching methodology development at each level and each grade of the general education. This part consists of 4 components: (i) 4 macro-themes, (ii) a list of topics derived from the 4 macro-themes, (iii) a list of language functions and notions that run parallel to each topic, and (iv) an inventory of (new and revised) phonological and lexical items related to the topics, and grammatical structures realizing the functions and notions.

2.3. MOET's Six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam

In order to provide unified proficiency requirements for the foreign languages taught in

the national education system, a unified set of criteria for foreign language textbook evaluation, test design, and teaching methodology development, and a legal basis for recognizing academic degrees and transferring credits in the countries that recognize or use CEFR's 6 language proficiency level framework, on the 24th of January, 2014, the Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training signed Circular N^o 01/2014/TT-BGDĐT to promulgate *Khung năng lực ngoại ngữ 6 bậc dành cho Việt Nam* (Six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam) (henceforth VNFLPF) [11].

VNFLPF is based mainly on CEFR. This framework consists of three proficiency levels which are referred to respectively as *Sơ cấp* (Elementary Level = CEFR Basic User), *Trung cấp* (Intermediate Level = CEFR Independent User), and *Cao cấp* (Advanced Level = CEFR Proficient User). Each level is broken down into two sublevels, making it a 6-level proficiency framework. In order to orient users in the educational system to some practical purposes, VNFLPF provides a list of descriptors of each proficiency level and presents detailed statements of what the learner can do at each proficiency level in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.4. Vietnam Education Publishing House

Among the many factors that can contribute to the success of the 2020 Project at general education level, textbooks play a central role. Realizing the importance of this factor, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has assigned Vietnam Education Publishing House (VEPH) with the task of organizing and coordinating the cross-cultural textbook development project which I will describe in some detail in the sections that follow.

3. The Cross-cultural Collaborative Textbook Development Project

3.1. Collaboration with MacMillan Education and Pearson Education

The idea of collaborating with international publishers in producing the ten-year English textbooks for Vietnamese schools under the 2020 Project had germinated as early as 2010. But it was not until 2012 and 2013 that this idea could be translated into reality.

Our work on the textbook development project began intraculturally (with limited help from the British Council in Hanoi and MacMillan MPC) in the second half of 2010 with the production of *Tiếng Anh 3* (English 3) which included 2 student's books, 2 teacher's books, 2 workbooks and 2 audio-CDs. We completed writing *Tiếng Anh 4* (English 4) in 2011 and *Tiếng Anh 5* (English 5) in 2012. When these textbooks were tried out in selected schools, it was realized that their quality, particularly the quality of the audio-CDs, could not reach the standards as expected. In face of this, MOET demanded that VEPH seek to collaborate with one or two international publishers specializing in English textbooks development. The result was that collaboration between VEPH and Pearson Education was established in 2012, and that between VEPH and MacMillan Education was established in 2013. In what follows, I shall provide a brief account of what we have been doing with our colleagues of the two collaborative publishers in producing the ten-year English textbook series for Vietnamese schools. To make the task manageable, the account is organized around three stages: (i) pre-writing stage, (ii) while-writing stage, and (iii) post-writing stage.

3.2. The Pre-writing Stage

3.2.1. Tasks that should be Done

According to the contract between VEPH and MacMillan Education and that between VEPH and Pearson Education, we collaborate with authors of MacMillan Education in producing primary English textbooks (from grade 3 to grade 5) and with those of Pearson Education in producing lower secondary and upper secondary English textbooks (from grade 6 to grade 12). For the collaborative project to get started we had to do two things. The first was to provide our collaborative authors and editors with basic information about the Vietnamese school system, Vietnamese school students, Vietnamese school teachers of English, the foreign languages being taught in Vietnamese schools, and the Vietnamese school students' needs to use English to communicate in the Vietnamese context. The second thing to do was to identify the tasks that should be done by all collaborative parties and those that should be done by each of the collaborative parties. Several meetings (both face-to-face and non-face-to-face) were held to identify the tasks. Below is a list of the main tasks set for the collaborative authors to do in the pre-writing stage:

1. Studying MOET's three pilot English curricula for Vietnamese schools.
2. Setting basic principles for developing the textbook series.
3. Deciding on the path of proficiency development for the textbook series.
4. Allocating time for teaching and time for reviews, time tests, and time for reserves for the textbook of each grade.
5. Deciding on the structure of the textbooks of each level and the structure of a unit.

6. Providing detailed specifications of the whole textbook series.

7. Designing the book map of each textbook

3.2.2. Studying MOET's Three Pilot English Curricula

The first task the collaborative authors had to do was to look into MOET's three pilot English curricula for the guidelines in terms of time allocation for the whole ten-year programme, for each level and each grade; language proficiency levels required for the whole ten-year programme, for each level and each grade; language contents (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar); communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); and cultural contents for the whole ten-year textbook series, for each level and each grade.

3.2.3. Setting Basic Principles for Developing the Textbook Series

It was agreed by the collaborative authors that the textbook series is designed to develop students' communicative competences through communicative activities which provide opportunities to practise skills in meaningful contexts and which encourage students to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. To ensure that this goal is achieved, the authors of the collaborative project set for themselves the following guiding principles:

1. to ensure that the textbook series conforms to the guidelines and the learning outcomes should be aligned with those prescribed in MOET's three pilot English curricula and MOET's VNFLPF.
2. to ensure that communicative language teaching and interactive learning are promoted.
3. to meet the English language learning needs of students of three different age

- ranges (primary [aged from 8-10], lower secondary [aged from 11-14], and upper secondary [aged from 15-17]) as well as their cognitive, social and affective needs.
4. to ensure that communicative competences are developed: focusing on the ability to communicate successfully using the lexical, phonological and grammatical language systems of English in meaningful contexts.
 5. to ensure that the four communicative skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are all developed in harmony and in appropriate proportion throughout primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels and that cross-cultural issues are adequately incorporated into the contents of the textbooks.
 6. to ensure that the whole textbook series is developed through coherent macro-themes and topics which are meaningful and relevant to Vietnamese school students' worlds and their future needs. These macro-themes and topics, when appropriate and possible, should be revisited throughout the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary grades to enable learning to be consolidated and to ensure the spiral nature of the textbook series.
 7. to ensure that there is complete integration and articulation between the English textbooks for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. This will include an integration of cross-curricular themes and topics whenever appropriate and possible.
 8. to ensure that the textbooks should reflect cross-cultural values (Vietnamese, regional and Anglo-American) across a wide range of contexts in Vietnam, in South-East Asia and in some main English-speaking countries.

3.2.4. Deciding on the Path of Proficiency Development of the Textbook Series

In any foreign language programme, especially in one that is comprised of a number of levels like the current textbook project, there is danger that the learning contents could be broken, fragmented, incoherent, and unsystematic. In order to overcome these problems and to systematically move students along the path towards the level of proficiency required for upper secondary school leavers, the overall perspective of the development path from grade 3 through to grade 12 needs to be specified. Based on the guidelines from MOET's three pilot English curricula for Vietnamese schools and MOET's VNFLPF, the collaborative authors discussed to define levels of English proficiency at 3 points along the path from zero to Trung cấp bậc 3 (equivalent to CEFR level B1). Then based on the structure of the Vietnamese general education system (i.e. the number of grades of each level), each level point was broken down into smaller levels for further definitions. The definitions provide some detailed descriptions of language knowledge, language skills and cross-cultural features to allow the textbook writers to perceive how a textbook at each grade and those at a particular level fit into the total pattern of proficiency development. Thus in our textbook series, three sets of specifications are developed spanning the three levels from level zero to level Sơ cấp bậc 1 (equivalent to CEFR level A1) which includes level 1-1 for grade 3, level 1-2 for grade 4 and level 1-3 for grade 5, to level Sơ cấp bậc 2 (equivalent to CEFR level

A2) which includes level 2-1 for grade 6, level 2-2 for grade 7, level 2-3 for grade 8, and level 2-4 for grade 9, and to level Trung cấp bậc 3 (equivalent to CEFR level B1) which includes level 3-1 for grade 10, level 3-2 for grade 11, and level 3-3 for grade 12.

3.2.5. Allocating Time for Teaching, Time for Reviews, Time for Tests, and Time for Reserves

It should be emphasized that our textbook series development is curriculum-governed in terms of both contents and time allocation. In other words, in developing the textbook series we must use as much as possible the contents as

prescribed in MOET's three pilot English curricula and must comply with the time frame as allocated in these curricula. According to these three pilot curricula, the total time frame allocated for English in Vietnamese general education is 1155 periods³ of which 420 are allocated for primary level (140 for each grade), 420 for lower secondary level (105 for each grade), and 315 for upper secondary level (105 for each grade). Based on the time allocated for each level, we break it down into time for teaching, time for reviews, time for tests, and time for reserves. Details of these are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Time allocated for teaching and time for reviews, for tests and for reserves at each level

	Time for each level	Time for teaching	Time for reviews, for tests, and for reserves
Primary	420	360	60
Lower secondary	420	336	84
Upper secondary	315	264	51
Total	1155	960	195

3.2.6. Structure of the Textbooks and Structure of a Unit in the Textbook Series

In our textbook series, primary textbooks differ from lower secondary and upper secondary ones in textbook structure, unit structure, the number of components of each unit, and how a unit begins and ends.

In terms of textbook structure, each of the primary textbooks is organized around 20 units and 4 reviews, each of the lower secondary textbooks is organized around 12 units and 4 reviews, and each of the upper secondary textbooks consists of 10 units and 4 reviews.

In terms of unit structure, a unit of primary English textbooks is composed of three two-period lessons, a unit of lower secondary textbooks is composed of seven periods/lessons, and a unit of upper secondary textbooks consists of eight periods/lessons.

In terms of the number of components, each unit in primary textbooks contains three simple headings: **Lesson 1**, **Lesson 2**, and **Lesson three**; each unit in lower secondary textbooks contains seven headings: **Getting Started**, **A Closer Look 1**, **A Closer Look 2**, **Communication & Culture**, **Skills 1** (Reading and Speaking), **Skills 2** (Listening and Writing), and **Looking Back**; and each unit in upper secondary textbooks consists of eight headings: **Getting Started**, **Language** (Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Grammar),

³ A period at primary level lasts for 35 minutes and a period at lower secondary and upper secondary levels lasts for 45 minutes.

Skills (Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing), Communication & Culture, and Looking Back & Project.

With regard to how a unit begins and ends, depending on grade, length of text and the degree of language difficulty and complexity, a unit of grade 3 to grade 5 begins with a dialogue of 2 to 4 exchanges about the topic accompanied by pictures for pupils to look, listen and repeat, and ends with a project for them to do simple real communicative work in real contexts. In each unit, the contents are carefully sequenced from easy to difficult, from controlled practice to semi-controlled practice to freer practice. In the same way, a unit of grade 6 through to grade 12 also begins with a dialogue about the topic which incorporates

phonological and lexical items related to the topic, specific functions and notions, and grammatical structures realizing them. These language elements and language functions and notions are then practised and expanded in one or two lessons that follow before students are taught four macro-skills (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) and some cultural contents related to the topic of the unit. The unit ends with a project which provides students with an opportunity to use the language and skills they have learned to perform communicative tasks in real contexts. The unit structure and the teaching period(s) allocated for each component/heading in the unit are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Book structure, unit structure, component headings and time allocated for each heading

	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
Number of unit	20	12	10
Number of components per unit	3	7	8
Component heading	Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3	Getting Started A Closer Look 1 A Closer Look 2 Communication & Culture Skills 1 (Reading & Speaking) Skills 2 (Listening & Writing) Looking Back & Project	Getting Started Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Grammar Reading Speaking Listening Writing Communication & Culture Looking Back & Project
Time allocated for each heading	2 periods	1 period	1 period

3.2.7. Detailed Specifications of the Textbooks Series

For the textbook series to be consistent and coherent in both content and design from grade 3 through to grade 12, detailed specifications of the whole series need to be explicitly stated. This task involves not only the participation of the authors, editors, and art designers, but also

the administrators of the collaborative publishers as it encompasses not only the development of book contents but many other problems which cannot be solved by the collaborative authors. Below are the detailed specifications of the textbook series proposed by the collaborative authors and approved by the collaborative publishers.

Primary Level

Starting point:	False beginning
Ending point:	Level 1/CEFR A1 which includes level 1-1 for grade 3, level 1-2 for grade 4; and level 1-3 for grade 5
Extent:	160 pages (80 for each book)
Colours:	4
Trim:	19 x 26cm
Textbook components:	Student's Book, Teacher's Book, Workbook, and audio-CDs
Unit contents:	<i>Topic, competences, sentence patterns, vocabulary, phonics.</i> These components are incorporated across titles such as <i>Look, listen and repeat, Point and say, Let's talk, Listen and number, Read and complete, Let's write, Listen and repeat, Listen and write, Let's chant, Read and match, Read and write, Project.</i> Each of these titles contains varying communicative activities such as exercise, game, song, chant, and crossword puzzle which require individual work, pair work, group work, class discussion, and different patterns of interaction such as teacher ↔ student, student ↔ student, etc.

Length of texts (based on number of words):

Grade	Reading	Listening	Writing
3	30-40	20-30	15-20
4	40-50	30-45	25-35
5	60-80	45-60	35-50

Art:	Mostly drawings
Time per period:	35 minutes
Number of pages per period:	1
Number of units:	20
Number of reviews:	4
Number of pages per unit:	6
Variety of English for audio-CD recording:	British English
Balance of skills:	35% listening, 35% speaking, 15% reading, 15% writing
Try-out:	Compulsory

Lower Secondary Level

Starting point:	Level 1/CEFR A1
Ending point:	Level 2/CEFR A2 which includes level 2-1 for grade 6, level 2-2 for grade 7, level 2-3 for grade 8, and level 2-4 for grade 9
Extent:	140 pages (70 for each book)
Colours:	4
Trim:	20 x 28.5cm
Textbook components:	Student's Book, Teacher's Book, Workbook, and audio-CDs
Unit contents:	<i>Topic, reading, listening, speaking, writing, and language focus.</i> These components are incorporated across period/lesson titles such as <i>Getting started, A closer look 1, A closer look 2, Communication & Culture, Skills 1</i> (Reading and Speaking), <i>Skills 2</i> (Listening and Writing), and <i>Looking back & project.</i> Each of the titles contains varying exercises and communicative activities which require individual work, pair work, group work, class discussion, and different patterns of interaction such as teacher ↔ student, student ↔ student, etc.

Length of texts:

Grade	Reading	Listening	Writing
6	100-120	80-100	60-80
7	120-150	120-140	80-90
8	150-180	140-160	90-110
9	180-200	160-180	110-130

Art:**Time per period:**

Mix of drawings and photos

Number of pages per period:

45 minutes

Number of units:

1 – 1.2

Number of reviews:

12

Number of pages per unit:

4

Variety of English for audio-

10

CD recording:

British English

Balance of skills:

30% listening, 30% speaking, 20% reading, 20% writing

Try-out:

Compulsory

Upper Secondary Level**Starting point:**

Level 2/CEFR A2

Ending point:

Level 3/CEFR B1 which includes level 3-1 for grade 10, level 3-2 for grade 11, and level 3-3 for grade 12

Extent:

140 pages (70 for each book)

Colours:

4

Trim:

20 x 28.5cm

Textbook Components:

Student's Book, Teacher's Book, Workbook, and audio-CDs

Unit contents:

Topic, language focus (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar), *reading, speaking, listening, writing, communication & culture* and *project* incorporated across period/lesson titles such as *Getting started, Language* (Vocabulary, Pronunciation, Grammar), *Skills* (Reading, Speaking, Listening, Writing), *Communication & Culture, Looking back & project*. Each of the titles consists of varying exercises and communicative tasks/activities which require individual work, pair work, group work, class discussion, and different patterns of interaction such as teacher ↔ student, student ↔ student, etc.

Length of texts:

Grade	Reading	Listening	Writing
10	220-250	180-200	130-150
11	250-280	200-230	150-180
12	280-300	230-250	180-220

Art:

Mix of drawings and photos

Time per period:

45 minutes

Number of pages per period:

1 – 1.2

Number of units:

10

Number of reviews:

4

Number of pages per unit:

10

Variety of English for audio-

British English

CD recording:

25% listening, 25% speaking, 25% reading, 25% writing

Balance of skills:**Try-out:**

Compulsory

3.2.8. Designing the Book Map

Of all the tasks I have mentioned above, the selection and sequence of contents for 960 teaching periods at three levels of the general education turn out to be the most difficult. The selection of topics, language functions and notions, phonological and lexical items related to the topic, and grammatical structures realizing the functions and notions, and cross-cultural contents for the textbook of each grade, the textbooks of each level, and the textbooks of the whole series are first undertaken by the Vietnamese chief series author and chief grade authors. These contents are then presented in the Book Map or Scope & Sequence of the textbook for intragroup discussion and revision. Then the Book Map is sent to the MacMillan or Pearson authors for more comments and revisions. Only after the final version of the Book Map of the textbook has been approved by the collaborative authors, can the actual writing of the textbook begin.

3.3. The While-writing Stage

1. VEPH authors write first draft.
2. VEPH sends first draft to MacMillan or Pearson authors for comment.
3. VEPH revises the draft and sends it to MacMillan or Pearson.
4. MacMillan or Pearson does final editing of the draft, signs off and sends it to VEPH for signing off final draft.
5. VEPH creates layout and sends manuscript to MacMillan or Pearson.
6. MacMillan or Pearson checks layout and sends it back to VEPH.
7. VEPH does first proofs and sends it to MacMillan or Pearson.
8. MacMillan or Pearson checks first proofs and sends it back to VEPH.
9. VEPH does second proofs and sends it to MacMillan or Pearson.
10. MacMillan or Pearson checks second proofs and sends it back to VEPH.
11. VEPH does third proofs and sends it to MacMillan or Pearson.
12. MacMillan or Pearson checks third proofs and sends it back to VEPH.
13. VEPH checks final proofs.
14. Final proofs signed off by VEPH, MacMillan or Pearson, Vietnamese chief series author and MacMillan or Pearson chief author and editor.
15. MOET's assessment.

3.3.1. Writing the Sample Unit

For primary level, MacMillan authors proposed the sample unit, and then sent it to the Vietnamese authors for discussion before arriving at the final structure of the unit that is being used throughout the primary level. And for lower secondary and upper secondary levels, Pearson authors proposed the sample units, and then sent them to the Vietnamese respective authors for discussion before arriving at the final structures of the units that are being used throughout the lower secondary and upper secondary levels.

3.3.2. The Writing Process: From the First Draft to Printing

Work from the first draft to printing in the while-writing stage is an extremely complex process. It involves the participation of not only the collaborative authors, textual editors, and art designers of the collaborative parties but also the decisions of the collaborative publishers' leaders. Several discussions were held and the result was that a 20-step workflow was established for all the collaborative parties to follow.

16. VEPH corrects and revises manuscript after MOET's assessment.
17. MOET's approval.
18. VEPH/Macmillan or Pearson check final proofs.
19. Sign-off by MOET.
20. Printing process.

3.3.3. Audio-CD Production and the Choice of the Variety of English for Recording

I present this section here because it is only when the manuscript of the textbook is sent for printing can the audio-CD be produced. It is agreed that MacMillan authors are responsible for producing audio-CDs for primary textbooks and Pearson authors are responsible for producing audio-CDs for lower secondary and upper secondary textbooks.

One problem arises concerning the choice of the variety of English for the audio-CD recordings of the textbook series. Nowadays most of the teachers of English as a foreign language are aware of the existence of many varieties of English in the world. They know that there is a variety of English called British English; they also know that there are varieties of English called American English, Australian English, Canadian English, and so on. If one conducts an opinion poll on what variety of English should be chosen for the audio-CD recordings of our textbook series, one may get diverse opinions: some people will be in favour of British English, some others of American English, and some others still of Australian English. What should we do in this situation? We are all aware that because English has become an international language, the aim of teaching English is to help our students to acquire a variety of English that is "intelligible" (cf. McKay [12]). But, what is an intelligible variety of English does not seem to have an identity while British English, American English, and Australian English all have

established themselves as distinct varieties of English. We raised the problem to our MacMillan and Pearson colleagues for discussion and finally we decided to choose British English. The reason for the choice is that British English is the "parent variety" (Preston & Shuy [13: 3]) of English; it is the variety from which all other varieties are derived (Stevens [14]). Furthermore, it is our belief that no matter how diverse and open it is in the modern world, education in general and general education in particular of any country must teach its pupils things which are standard.

3.3.4. What We have Done

The collaborative teams must produce 54 books (including 20 student's books [two for each grade], 17 teacher's books, and 17 workbooks) and 20 audio-CDs (two for each grade). Up till now we have completed writing:

- *Tiếng Anh 3* (English 3): Student's Books 1 and 2, Teacher's Book, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 4* (English 4): Student's Books 1 and 2, Teacher's Book, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 6* (English 6): Student's Books 1 and 2; Teacher's Books 1 and 2, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 7* (English 7): Student's Books 1 and 2; Teacher's Books 1 and 2, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 8* (English 8): Student's Books 1 and 2; Teacher's Books 1 and 2, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs

- *Tiếng Anh 9* (English 9): Student's Book 1, Teacher's Book 1, Workbook 1, an audio-CD
- *Tiếng Anh 10* (English 10): Student's Books 1 and 2; Teacher's Books 1 and 2, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 11* (English 11): Student's Books 1 and 2; Teacher's Book 1 and 2, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 12* (English 12): Student's Book 1, Teacher's Book 1, Workbook 1, an audio-CD

3.3. 5. What We are Doing

We are now working on

- *Tiếng Anh 5* (English 5): Student's Books 1 and 2, Teacher's Book, Workbook, 2 audio-CDs
- *Tiếng Anh 9* (English 9): Student's Book 2, Teacher's Book 2, Workbook 2, an audio-CD
- *Tiếng Anh 12* (English 12): Student's Book 2, Teacher's Book 2, Workbook 2, an audio-CD

Our collaborative project is expected to complete by 2016.

3.4. The Post-writing Stage

Jack C. Richards, one of the prominent textbook writers in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language, once wrote:

Successful materials have clear goals and procedures, produce the kind of learning outcomes they were designed to teach, are at an appropriate level of difficulty, and have 'values' for both teachers and learners in terms of interest, usefulness, or relevance. These qualities can seldom be achieved with the first draft, and are attained through gradual process

of revision and improvement (Richards [15: 109]).

Our textbook series is no exception. After the textbooks are printed, they will be tried out in selected schools to get feedback from teachers and students who use them. Then further corrections and revisions will be made to perfect the materials. This is and will be our task in the post-writing stage.

Successful textbooks, according to Gonzales [16: 7], must be propagated through intensive practical workshops to familiarize the teachers with the paradigm behind the textbooks, the rationale, the techniques and practices, and to help them demonstrate their actual classroom use in simulated or live classes. This is what we are doing and will continue to do in the post-writing stage.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided a brief account of the cross-cultural collaboration between Vietnamese textbook writers and those of the two world leading international publishers: MacMillan Education and Pearson Education in producing the ten-year English textbook series for Vietnamese schools under the National 2020 Project. I began by presenting the backgrounds to and bases for the implementation of the collaborative project. As can be seen, the National 2020 Project and the Six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam provide us with legal bases and guidelines for developing the textbook series: they help us to locate our project in the 2020 Project space, what proficiency levels the students who use our textbooks will have achieved as they move from grade 3 to grade 12; the three pilot English

curricula provide us with an inventory of macro-themes, topics derived from these macro-themes, competences (functions and notions), phonological and lexical items related to the topics, and grammatical structures realizing these functions and notions incorporated in the topics; and VEPH provides us with logistic and administrative resources needed for developing the textbook series such as venues for holding meetings and reference materials for looking up, and helps to coordinate the collaborative activities with our MacMillan and Pearson colleagues.

As can be seen from my account, we began our textbook development project first intraculturally and then interculturally. In our intercultural collaboration we moved from initial conception to the textbooks being published for use. In this collaborative process, there were cultural crossovers: values (ideas) of one culture crossed over the other, and as a result our intercultural collaboration has become a cross-cultural one. This kind of collaboration has enriched our textbook writing experience on the one hand and has fertilized the quality of our textbooks on the other. It has given us, Vietnamese authors, the opportunity to rise above the narrow national standpoint. It has given our collaborative authors the opportunity to understand more about Vietnam and its educational culture. And, more importantly, it has given all of us the opportunity to understand that in the world that is flooded with English textbooks written free from the curriculum of any education system, **the best and most appropriate foreign language textbook(s) written exclusively for the general educational system of a country should be the one(s) developed cross-culturally by local authors and the authors who speak the foreign language as their**

mother tongue. We have also benefited much from this cross-cultural collaboration: we have learned to become patient, to accept and even to adopt ideas and opinions of others. And above all we have learned to understand more deeply that **“many of us are better than some of us, and some of us are better than one of us”**.

What I have presented in this paper has already shown the complexity of the textbook development process. In our actual work, the complexity is compounded. This is because “the devil lies in the detail”, and in textbook writing, it is often “easier said than done” (Richards [15: 95]). In our actual textbook development process, there occurred arguments and different, contradicting, and even conflicting ideas (both intraculturally and interculturally), which were sometimes frustrating and discouraging. These require a great deal of patience, flexibility, negotiations and compromise. Experience from our collaboration has shown that if one accepts that the ultimate goal is to develop a series of textbooks that is best that one is capable of producing, the sometimes frustrating path a collaborative project takes from planning to completion can be seen as an essential part in the process of developing successful and high quality textbooks for his students. Experience from our collaboration has also shown that if a writer is willing to submit the things he writes for critical review and feels comfortable in handling frank comments and suggestions of his collaborators and reviewers, he is sure to produce a high quality product. In contrast, if he becomes defensive and feels unhappy to make revisions of what he writes, he will find textbook writing a stressful experience, and the quality of his product is sure to be poor.

It is here that I end my paper. My hope before rounding it off is that in sharing parts of

this imperfect but real-world experience with those who intend to become textbook writers or will be assigned with the task to write foreign language textbooks in collaboration with textbook writers of another culture and, in particular, within the constraints prescribed by the state-level curriculum, I have offered a few insights which will enable them to make their way through different, drudgery and not-easy-to-overcome steps in producing textbooks suited to the educational system and schools of their country.

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Phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh 10 năm dùng cho các trường phổ thông Việt Nam trong khuôn khổ của Đề án Ngoại ngữ Quốc gia 2020: Một kinh nghiệm hợp tác giao văn hóa

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết này thuật lại công trình hợp tác giao văn hoá giữa các tác giả sách giáo khoa Việt Nam với các tác giả sách giáo khoa của MacMillan Education và Pearson Education - hai nhà xuất bản viết sách giáo khoa ngôn ngữ thứ hai / ngoại ngữ hàng đầu thế giới – trong việc phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh hệ 10 năm dùng cho các trường phổ thông Việt Nam trong khuôn khổ của Đề án Ngoại ngữ Quốc gia 2020. Bài viết gồm ba phần. Phần một cung cấp bối cảnh và cơ sở cho việc phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa. Phần hai mô tả chi tiết quá trình phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa mà các tác giả sách giáo khoa Việt Nam và các đồng nghiệp của họ ở MacMillan Education và Pearson Education thực hiện trong việc phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa. Phần thứ ba tóm tắt lại những nội dung đã được thảo luận, chỉ ra những ưu điểm của sự hợp tác giao văn hóa trong phát triển bộ sách giáo khoa, và lập luận ủng hộ cho một sự hợp tác chặt chẽ giữa các tác giả viết sách giáo khoa trong nước với các tác giả nói tiếng Anh bản ngữ để tạo ra những cuốn sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh có chất lượng cao phù hợp với hệ thống giáo dục phổ thông của Việt Nam.

Từ khoá: Kinh nghiệm hợp tác giao văn hoá, phát triển sách giáo khoa, Đề án 2020, ba chương trình tiếng Anh thí điểm, Khung năng lực ngoại ngữ 6 bậc dành cho Việt Nam, Khung tham chiếu chung châu Âu, quy trình làm việc 20 bước.