PARTNERSHIP
AND
INTERACTION

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Finally, we would like to thank the contributors for bearing with us as this volume has slowly been pieced together. The collection of papers is dedicated to teachers, like yourselves, working to accomplish diverse development goals in Vietnam, and in diverse contexts throughout the world.
Preface

The Language and Development series of conferences has its origins at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand in 1993. That conference led to the publication of a book called Language and Development — Teachers in a Changing World (Kenny and Savage, 1997), and to subsequent conferences in Bali, Indonesia (Crooks and Crewes, 1995) and in Langkawi, Malaysia (INTAN, 1998). The Hanoi conference was first proposed at the end of the 1993 conference, so this event, and the publication of these proceedings, is in one sense the culmination of a seven-year journey for those of us, including Vietnamese colleagues, involved in both conferences.

The conference theme of ‘interaction and partnership’ was predicated on the assumption that professionals working in various capacities in development have perspectives and competencies which are valuable to others working within the same field, and that we need to find ways of listening to and learning from each other.

The stated aims of this conference were:

- To strengthen and broaden networks of practitioners and researchers involved with language teaching and learning in development projects.
- To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and dissemination of information on practical applications of language learning and teaching research in development contexts.
- To promote partnerships and interaction between development professionals and language education specialists.

Like previous conferences, this one was co-sponsored by several organizations. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) Vietnam was the main host; the organization was the work of AIT’s Center in Vietnam (AITCV) and the Center for Language and Educational Technology (CLET) at AIT organized the conference, and the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) provided partial sponsorship. This collaborative endeavor embodied the conference theme; as is not uncommon in such partnerships, it was a learning experience for those involved — would we have embarked on this venture had we known at the outset what it entailed? The answer is yes — we think.

That we were able to hold what was by common consent a very successful conference is a source of pride. That more than 70 Vietnamese scholars attended, and that most of those were teacher educators at universities throughout Vietnam, ensures that the conference will have an effect well beyond those three days.

What will that effect be? The emergent field of language and development, which looks at language policy and planning issues against a background of cultural, economic, political and social concerns on national and international stages, and from a diversity of intellectual perspectives, is relatively new to Vietnam. This was reflected in the relatively small numbers of local colleagues presenting. A majority of Vietnamese presenters worked with non-Vietnamese co-presenters, typically working within the context of English language teaching development projects. What was most striking for us, however, was the level of engagement by all Vietnamese scholars in discussions in all fora throughout the conference. Networks were built and
augmented, and as one colleague noted, perhaps a discourse community is starting to emerge, one in which Vietnamese scholars will also be playing an important role.

Who participated? Of the 220 registered participants, almost a third were Vietnamese; more than 100 came from countries in the region, notably Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia (although, perplexingly, not Thailand, which has been underrepresented throughout the series). Well over three-quarters were working in the region. Twenty-five participants were American, with approximately equal numbers from the UK and Australia: many of the participants from these countries have been working long-term in the region, and have attended one or more of the previous conferences. Altogether, 25 countries were represented, including Cambodia, Laos, Uzbekistan, Albania, Japan, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

As at previous conferences, these participants represented a diversity of organizations: most local colleagues were affiliated to local universities, but many also worked for development projects in various capacities (interpreters, translators, teachers, human resource managers, or negotiators); volunteer organizations, like World University Services of Canada, VSO and New Zealand’s Volunteer Service Abroad, were well represented, as were organizations such as the British Council, the Centre for British Teachers, the Bell Educational Trust, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the Indonesia Australia Language Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and universities around the world.

The four conferences have shared common concerns that are represented in the papers in this volume. However, each conference has reflected the singular contextual characteristics and interests of the host organizations, and especially the countries in which they took place. The first conference was perhaps the most international, befitting the nature of its host, AIT, an institute with a longstanding mandate for regional development. The three subsequent conferences have each reflected national concerns and interpretations of what “language and development” means. The defining issues emerging from the Hanoi conference grouped around a concern that for many language professionals working in Vietnam is the critical issue: the transferability of language teaching approaches and techniques from predominantly Anglo-American contexts to Vietnamese (and other Asian) contexts.

In focusing on these issues, participants went some way towards identifying the problematic notion of educational transfer, arguably the goal of most language development projects. For Western professionals like ourselves, our expertise in working to effect change in countries such as Vietnam is partially predicated on our knowledge of development contexts. But, as Markee (1986) noted in his own experience in Sudan, it is precisely this contextual knowledge that outsiders rarely have, and local participants in the processes of development have in spades. The recognition of the centrality of context, and the concomitant rejection of universal solutions, marks an emerging maturity of language teaching in general. Many participants in this conference have made significant contributions to this work over the past decade and a half (Pennycook, 1989, 1994, 1998b; Tollefson, 1991, 1995; Markee, 1986, 1997; Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Coleman, 1996b; Kenny and Savage, 1997).

At the same time, however, language development projects (ambiguity intended) continue to be defined implicitly in terms of traditional development theory. This is true of most development projects, but whereas the proponents of technological advance often still argue that technological or economic progress is value-neutral,
language-and-development professionals are now more than likely to be aware of the ethical dimensions of promoting the use of a metropolitan language over a local language, or the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) over apparently more teacher-centered pedagogies.

Thus, language development projects promote the use of CLT, fashionable notions of collaborative learning and autonomy, and techniques such as groupwork, dialogue journals, portfolios and peer assessment, all of which have largely been developed and theorized in Western universities (again, by many of the participants at this conference) and diffused through projects. For me, one of the present fascinations of working in this field is the creative tension between this dominant Research and Development (R&D) or Center-Periphery model of change (see Rogers, 1995; Markee 1997; Lewin, 1990, for further illumination of this and other change models) and the awareness of ethical and contextual issues in socio-cultural change.

Vietnam has a long tradition of taking foreign educational ideas and melding them to its own purposes; indeed, its educational history in the 20th century reads as a refutation of theories of dependency and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Kelly’s (1975) doctoral dissertation is a landmark study on Vietnamese teachers resistance to a national curriculum during the period of French colonial rule. More recently, Sullivan (1996) has shown how the key concepts of CLT have acquired distinctly local meanings when transferred to Vietnamese contexts, to the extent that they describe practice Western practitioners would not recognize as CLT; in other words, meanings have been appropriated. In this volume, Le Van Canh presents a strong argument for such appropriation to Vietnamese contexts.

This volume takes its name from the conference theme of ‘partnership and interaction’. This theme was settled upon, because like Chambers (1997a, 1997b), we understand development to be a collaborative process, in which players are partners, rather than donors and recipients, who bring particular qualities to change processes that perhaps complement those of the other players. Categories of partnership which we attempted to include in Hanoi included partnership with development specialists, development theorists and funding agencies. Although we were able to bring in players in all three of these categories, our success was limited, arguably because we are still working to establish a common discourse between the disciplines. Several papers included here draw on the broader literatures of development, but generally speaking there remains a gulf between the various discourse communities. The dimension of partnership is better reflected in the large number of papers that are co-authored, with a large majority of these being collaborations between local and expatriate partners.

These proceedings comprise less than a third of the papers presented at the Hanoi conference. As far as possible, it is intended to be representative of the broad range of concerns. As with previous conferences, we sought proposals under a broad range of categories, and the presentations at the conference reflected that diversity. The categories were broad, and not intended to be restrictive, and in grouping papers we intended to enable participants to follow particular themes throughout the conference. These themes have been reviewed for the purpose of this volume.

The first section comprises five papers which together define the scope of “the field”. If indeed there is such a field as “language and development” (Candlin, 1997), it is clear that it is still very much an emergent one, embracing a greater diversity of concerns and perspectives than earlier envisaged (Savage, 1997). Alastair
Pennycook’s paper problematizes both language and development, and culture, arguing not for appropriateness, but for appropriability as the ethical response to questions posed by contextual dilemmas. Harvey Smith’s short paper reviews a CfBT-funded study on the causal links between education and development, concluding that if the goal is poverty alleviation, the case for funding language education projects has yet to be made. Do Huy Thin’s study draws on his doctoral dissertation, presenting a survey of Vietnamese attitudes towards use of different foreign languages. James Tollefson uses the context of immigrant language education in the US to critique what he calls standard language ideology, arguing the case for participatory educational approaches. The final paper in the section by Thomas Perry and Jerold Edmondson represents what, for me, was the most significant development at this conference, namely the large number of presenters addressing issues of local languages and literacy. Perry and Edmondson propose that in development contexts, care needs to be taken to adapt literacy training to local language ecologies. They argue for an equitable bilingualism, limiting instruction in other languages to a need-to-know basis. Again, throughout these papers, the common theme is the need for greater awareness of contextual variation, and for teaching and research methodologies which account for such variation and attempt to explain it.

The second section focuses more explicitly on issues of method. Papers by two of the five plenary speakers offer diverse perspectives on this issue. Larsen-Freeman argues against the export of ready-made pedagogical practices, drawing extensively on evidence from Vietnam that concepts of particular methods — notably CLT — change their meanings when transferred, reflecting a contextual instantiation. Le Van Canh appears to take a different stance in arguing against the communicative method by defining eloquently the characteristics of the local educational culture which militate against the wholesale adoption of communicative language teaching. But he also argues for contextual sensitivity, as much as for a more contestable cultural sensitivity. Shawn Golinowski and Robert Raab’s paper was one of the disappointingly few that looked at applications of technology, describing the development of a CD-ROM for use with agriculture students. In a complementary paper, Jeremy Jones explores the reasons for a general lack of interest on the part of language-and-development professionals in technology. He concludes with a call for preserving the human dimensions of technology application. The final paper in the section by Steven Lim, Anna Strutt, Basheba Beckmann and John Askwith, all with the Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen, Thailand, describes the application of a language-sensitive pedagogy by teachers of economics and social sciences working in close collaboration with language teaching colleagues.

The third section examines issues in language development projects. Hywel Coleman and Cyril Edirisinghe examine empirically the impact of work in the British-funded Primary English Language Project in Sri Lanka. Identifying significant regional variation in the impact of the project, they argue that even in a small country like Sri Lanka there are hierarchies of centers and peripheries. Nguyen Be and David Crabbe examine the principles underpinning the development of a new series of textbooks for Vietnamese secondary schools. Their paper sets out questions for the analysis of materials such as these, building on existing frameworks for materials analysis. The next paper, by Psyche Kennett, looks at the problematic assumptions underlying development project design, which all too frequently involves donors putting together teams based on CVs and buying in services from universities. Arguing that implementation of projects requires much more than this, she presents a set of tasks
for examining the fit of the team to the project. The final paper in this section by David Hayes returns to the PELP in Sri Lanka. Complementing Coleman and Edirisinghe's analysis, Hayes argues that meaningful educational change means genuine change for the most disadvantaged sections of the population, and that this is unlikely to happen without significant shifts in the balance of power.

The next section on organizational change examines complementary and closely related issues. Martin Lamb and Syahrial, from the perspective of partners in a project to develop a new language center in Indonesian universities, argue the need for language centers to be socialized if such centers are to be integrated into existing university organizational structures. What socialization means in the Indonesian context is explored from the perspectives of all the stakeholders in the process. The paper by Richmond Stroupe, Saykham Thammanosouth and Yap Kioe Sheng describes the emergence of a language support component for an institution-building project in Laos. Where such projects involve training or education for long periods of time, there is a need to identify appropriate moments for language interventions. As in the previous paper, this can only emerge through collaborative teamwork by all partners. Pham Hoa Hiep's paper examines actual change in teaching practice in Vietnamese universities, setting out in detail the various constraints militating against the adoption of CLT. Despite the weight of these constraints, Hiep believes that incremental change is possible, but that this needs to start with teachers themselves. In the last paper in the section, Phan Van Hoa and Leigh Faulkner offer a case study of educational change in the English Department at Danang University.

The final section looks at teacher training and teacher development. Jane Jackson's paper outlines the use of case studies as a means of developing an understanding of teaching's complexity and ambiguity. These 'reality-base teacher training materials' are illustrated with a case of a teacher struggling to implement cooperative learning techniques into her class. Fiona McCook's paper describes the use of reflective teaching methods in in-service teacher training (INSET) work in Binh Dinh province. In a qualitative study using dialogue journals, she concludes, _inter alia_, that such work requires teacher educators to be working with teachers in their local environments in order to come to a sufficient understanding of teachers' world views. The final paper in the collection summarizes the difficult circumstances of teacher training in Cambodia. In a paper that provides an important reminder to all of us of the real meaning of language-and-development educational change (to borrow Michael Fullan's phrase), Kao Sophal, Chhun Sovanne and Som Sophara describe the context of their work in Cambodia.

So what was the purpose of our meeting like this to talk about these matters? An instantiation of Pennycook's interests in the ethics of language and development was to have been addressed by Denley Pike and Leon Devine, whose paper was withdrawn before the conference. Pike and Devine argued that Development conferences, like development projects, also may have questionable outcomes, because they have a tendency to develop lives of their own serving internal realities rather than effecting change in the world outside themselves, this despite logical frameworks, rational designs, clearly specified aims and good intentions. This separate-world status is achieved through creating their own common sense and taken-for-grantedness. In Fairclough's terms, they construct a tacitly
accepted "natural" world of shared but implicit assumptions and expectations, which are rarely explicitly examined or questioned.

This challenge, apparently mischievous, was serious, and goes to the heart of the dilemmas Pennycook raised. How could we talk about development whilst charging a conference fee of $225, a fee which appeared to exclude most local participants? (The event operated on a break-even basis. CfBT provided fee waivers for 40 participants, with international participants effectively subsidizing other local colleagues) Could we justify using such a luxurious venue? (We think so — the International Convention Center had been built for the Francophone Summit, but was owned by the government) What relevance did this event have to teachers in schools in the Central Highlands of Vietnam? Was it simply another opportunity for a bunch of old friends to meet again? These questions make us uncomfortable, despite our reasonable, reasoned responses. In the end, however, the conference was perhaps worth holding because the people who came were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. Most importantly, these were teacher educators, project managers and staff, participants with the potential to effect educational change through their work at different levels in local and regional educational systems.

The next conference will be held in Phnom Penh in September 2001, to be hosted by local and international partners, including IDP of Australia and the University of Phnom Penh. We understand that there will be a strong focus on teacher training, leading on nicely from the paper by our Cambodian colleagues, Sophal, Sovanne and Sophara. A commitment was also made to holding the sixth conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the first time the conference will have been held outside Southeast Asia.

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1. THE SCOPE OF LANGUAGE AND DEVELOPMENT