FACTORS AFFECTING THE MOTIVATION
OF VIETNAMESE TECHNICAL ENGLISH MAJORS
IN THEIR ENGLISH STUDIES

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Abstract

Drawing from self-determination theory as the main theoretical framework, this study investigated the motivation of Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies and the influences that impacted on their motivation. The topic germinated from the researcher’s personal experiences as an English major and EFL teacher in Vietnam, and from the scant research on Vietnamese EFL learners’ motivation in learning the English language.

The thesis addresses three research questions:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?

(2) What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?

(3) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?

The thesis data were collected from seven Vietnamese technical English majors, and eight of their teachers of English over the course of ten months. From the perspective of a qualitative case study approach, several data collection methods were utilized: semi-structured interviews, and students’ weekly diaries. Semi-structured interviews were conducted four times with students and once with their teachers. Students’ diary-writing activities were conducted over the course of a three-month semester. The thesis data were further enriched by extensive email exchanges with both students and their teachers. Using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the process of data analysis identified three main sources of influence on students’ motivation to learn the English language: Influence of the perceived values of English knowledge; influence related to the English educational environment; and influence of family and social networks.

The main arguments were centred around several points: (a) Vietnamese technical English majors were intrinsically motivated to learn the English language; (b) Most of the time, other types of motivation overrode the students’ intrinsic motivation; (c) Students’ motivation was influenced by inter-cultural contact with the target language and its communities, and specific Vietnamese cultural practices.
The study findings imply that simply applying a Western-designed theory of motivation to the Vietnamese context, without taking into account the social and cultural values practised in that context, would most likely lead to an inappropriate application, and even misinterpretation of, the motivation and learning approaches of Vietnamese students. The findings also suggest some pedagogical recommendations for the students’ teachers. For example, teachers should create opportunities in which students’ need for autonomy, competence and relatedness are met. Finally, the study also suggests directions for future research, for example research on the impact of cultural values on Vietnamese students’ motivation.
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List of Abbreviations

AMTB: Attitudinal/Motivational Test Battery
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN: Cable News Network
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
ESP: English for Specific Purposes
IELTS: International English Language Testing System.
IT: Information Technology
L2/SL: Second language
MoET: Ministry of Education and Training
TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language
WTC: Willingness to Communicate
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Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter aims to set the context for this study. The chapter is organized into five sections. It begins with telling the readers what inspired me as a researcher and a Vietnamese teacher of English to initiate a study on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language. Then, it lays the background for the study by providing some brief information on the role of English in Vietnam’s current social context. It follows by presenting the definition of motivation to learn a second language adopted for this research study, the research aims and research questions that the study seeks to answer. Finally, it outlines the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Hang’s Inspiration to Start This Study

The story of how I was inspired to study the motivations of Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies originated from my own experiences as an English major and later, as a teacher of English in Vietnam.

I started to learn English at grade 6, and I can still recall my excitement when my sister taught me a few greetings in English to prepare for the first formal English lesson at intermediate school. In that very first encounter, I found speaking in another language stimulating, especially when I could reply to my sister. Now I cannot recall how I felt in the first formal English lesson at school, but I remember being the best student at English in intermediate school. In all of the English lessons, we learnt basic English grammar and new words by heart, but I did not feel bored because they were easy for me. At that time, I just tried to learn as well as possible to be always the best student in my class at all school subjects, including English, to please my parents.

Two critical turns in my English studies came at the end of grade 8, and grade 11. At the end of grade 8, I passed the entrance exam into a newly-opened English-specialized class of the gifted secondary school in my province. Due to my parents’ wishes and expectations, I started to seriously major in English because my parents advised that being an English major would surely warrant a place in a university and later a bright future job prospect. At grade 9, I faced the first failure in my student life. I was not selected as one of the 10 members of the gifted team who would take part in the
national English contest, though I considered myself as being among the top 10 in my class. I was very depressed about this. However, my parents encouraged me greatly, saying I would try harder next time. From that time, I tried to study English very hard to be one of the top five in my class, and I was. At grade 11, I was selected onto the gifted team for the national English contest and won the third prize. When it was time to choose a university, my parents advised me to choose the College of Foreign Languages-Hanoi National University so that I could become a teacher of English. I followed my parents’ advice to please them, even though at that time I dreamt of becoming a tourist guide. During my time at university, I always tried my best to study both for my future and to please my parents, although many times I really felt bored with studying English at that university. After graduation, once again I followed my parents’ advice to become a teacher even though there were many other career options available to me. However, I have never felt regretful about this because being a teacher has brought me a lot of opportunities, including coming to New Zealand to pursue this PhD degree.

When I was a teacher of English at university and language centres, I was disappointed many times by my students. As I always prepared careful lesson plans with lots of activities, including games, pairwork, and groupwork, I did not know why many students were not interested in the activities. One class would be excited about those activities, but others were not. At that time, I blamed myself for not preparing better activities and sometimes blamed the laziness of the students. I did not know anything about the existence of the term “motivation.” While doing my master’s degree in Australia, I came across this term but did not have a chance to do a study about it. Consequently, I did not understand its origin or the ways to motivate students properly. When I went back to Vietnam to continue my teaching career, I encountered the same problems with my students, thereby continuously suffering from disappointment with my teaching performance.

Thinking back on my own experiences as an English major, I thought that I might not have had any real enjoyment with my English studies. My English studies at school and university consisted of a series of attempts to learn to please my parents. My enjoyment might have only germinated from my parents’ pride in my achievements. As a teacher of English, I did not have many happy memories because my failure to motivate students to take part actively in the lectures left me depressed for a long time.
Taken collectively, these memories stimulated me to conduct this study on what may motivate Vietnamese students to learn the English language. However, I am aware that I should not interpret the students’ accounts via my personal experiences. My personal experiences function as only a source of motivation for me, and may help to inform the study.

In the following sections, I will discuss the role of English in Vietnam and the government’s policies to encourage its popularity.

1.2 The role of English in Vietnam

Among the four popular foreign languages in Vietnam: English, Chinese, Russian, and French, English has been the most popular since 1989 in political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of Vietnam (Denham, 1992). One reason for its popularity lies in Vietnam’s establishment of diplomatic relationships with 174 countries, and economic and trade ties with almost all countries and territories in the world (Vietnam Communist Party, 2007a). Evidently, English competence enhances the presence of Vietnamese because English is used as a means of communication in these organizations. In addition, the current popularity of English in Vietnam arises from common demand because English is “the key to science, technology and commerce” (Denham, 1992, p. 64). In terms of cultural influences, it is believed that English will bring Vietnam into the world and bring the world to Vietnam. For example, most online newspapers in Vietnam have both Vietnamese and English versions, and nearly 20 journals and newspapers are published in English (Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, [http://www.cinet.gov.vn](http://www.cinet.gov.vn), n.d.). English newspapers imported from other countries and English textbooks are available everywhere. These suggest that English has affected nearly all aspects of life, and the Vietnamese are aware of its importance.

In terms of how the popularity of English has influenced common Vietnamese, the processes of modernization, industrialization, integration, and globalization provide the Vietnamese with more opportunity to improve their study, work, and living conditions. However, these processes and opportunities also force them to work harder to be better prepared for social demands. In particular, Vietnamese more and more are required to be able to communicate in English and even be fluent in English for work and study in an international environment.
With regard to the importance of English in employment opportunities, knowledge of English is a requirement in both the domestic and international labour markets, and in the sectors that provide high-paying jobs. For example, to obtain an Australian visa entry, workers need to obtain IELTS 4.5 (International English Language Testing System) points out of a possible 9.0, which represents halfway to being a moderate user of English (L. T. Nguyen, 2007). In the domestic labour market, apart from good skills, one important requirement to work in a foreign company or a joint venture is English proficiency, especially for positions like secretaries, assistants, or engineers. These employees are required to do research, attend meetings, and do other clerical work in which English is an important vehicle. Therefore, mastering English is a requirement (see T. T. H. Phan, 2009 for a review on the role of English in employment in Vietnam).

In addition to the importance of English competence in seeking employment, English has become an essential requirement for Vietnamese learners and professionals in their studies, either overseas or at home. To study abroad, on either a self-funded or sponsored program, the prerequisite to obtaining an entry visa is English competence, and university entrance. English also plays a very important role in the potential for being granted a scholarship. For example, to study at the University of Otago, New Zealand, the English requirement is IELTS 6.0 for undergraduate and 6.5 for postgraduate level on an academic module (University of Otago, www.otago.ac.nz, n.d.). Furthermore, with education and training as a priority, the government, based on annual agreements and cooperation programs with other governments or by spending the state budget, provides Vietnamese learners and professionals hundreds of overseas scholarships to study at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels, or to gain short-term training. To obtain what are considered precious scholarships, the most difficult requirement is achieving good proficiency in a foreign language, predominantly English. For example, to study at the master’s or doctoral levels in India based on the Vietnamese-Indian cultural exchange programme, the English proficiency level for admission is IELTS 6.0 or TOEFL 500 (Test of English as a Foreign Language) (Ministry of Education and Training-MoET, http://www.edu.net.vn, n.d.). Another annual valuable source of scholarships is from foreign universities, organizations, or governments. These are more competitive than those granted by the Vietnamese government and require very high proficiency levels of English. When studying in
Vietnam, English, or occasionally another foreign language like Chinese or French is a requirement in the curriculum at all educational levels.

As a result of foreseeing such importance of English in Vietnam, the government issued two strategic plans, one for the period 1991-2000, the other for 2001-2010, specifying how Vietnam would aim for the targets of integration and globalization. In these plans, learning foreign languages, especially English, has been recommended as a means to achieve the aims of industrialization and integration. As a result, the MoET has implemented policies to promote the teaching and learning of English at all educational levels. First and the foremost, English has been introduced into primary schools. As part of this, an emphasis has been put on teaching speaking and listening skills for young beginners (MoET, Decision No 50/2003/QĐ-BGD&ĐT, 2003b, MoET, 2010). The MoET has also attempted to improve English language learning at higher educational levels. For instance, learners at professional secondary schools are required to learn English so that they can communicate and do simple research in their fields (MoET, Decision No 06/2003/QD-BGDDT, 2003a).

However, the situation is much more complicated at the tertiary level. A sample curriculum has been constructed, specifying that foreign languages will be taught within 10 credits out of approximately 200 credits of the whole curriculum (MoET, 2003a). However, after completing the 10 credits within the first and second years of study, very few training branches are allowed to provide further English training for students. Most universities do not have policies or regulations to encourage their learners to continue learning a foreign language. Consequently, it is questionable whether students can use their English in the workplace and for communication, as Decision No 201/2001/QD-TTg (Prime Minister, 2001) and Decision No 1400/QD-TTg (Prime Minister, 2008) stated. In reality, Vietnamese graduates’ inability to communicate in English has been open to criticism. Meanwhile, after joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), a lack of English proficiency may have lowered the competitiveness of Vietnamese graduates as compared with that of foreigners who come to Vietnam to find jobs (Ho Chi Minh City Labour League, 2006). Given better English proficiency, these foreigners will definitely have more opportunities than the Vietnamese. It seems necessary that policies are put in place to encourage Vietnamese students to study foreign languages by themselves and achieve high levels of communicative ability.
Under such circumstances, it may well be that developing students’ motivation will be one of the possible solutions to inspiring students to learn English on a lifelong basis.

In addition to the sample curriculum, since 2005 advanced programs taught in English have been piloted in nine universities. In these programs, the content, methods, management, and evaluation of United States universities are applied. The number of universities applying those advanced programs will be 27 by 2010 (T. N Nguyen, 2007). Most importantly, the MoET already promulgated a project on how to plan the development of educational socialization in the period of 2005-2010. Based on this project, all Vietnamese universities, colleges, and professional secondary schools have been encouraged to cooperate with international high-quality educational institutions to provide joint educational programs. Foreign experts, managers, and talented people will be invited to work in Vietnamese educational institutions. Furthermore, foreign universities and international educational institutions will be allowed to open branches in Vietnam (MoET, Decision No 20/2005/QD-BGD&DT, 2005). In short, the Vietnamese government hopes to establish more internationally recognized universities and colleges. This implies that English will be crucial in Vietnam when education and training enter an international context.

1.3 Definition of Motivation to Learn a Second/Foreign Language in this Study

This section describes a conceptualization of motivation to learn a second language that is relevant to the current study. It begins with discussing some of the extant definitions of second language motivation. Then, it presents the definition that may fit the context and research aims of this current study.

Dörnyei (2001b) has observed that although researchers have not reached a consensus on the definition of motivation, they agree that motivation pertains to “the choice of a particular action,” “the persistence with it,” and “the effort expended on it” (p. 8, original emphasis). Dörnyei emphasized that the difficulty with providing a universal definition of motivation stems from six challenges that motivation theorists have to face. These challenges are “consciousness vs unconsciousness,” “cognition vs affect,” “reduction vs comprehensiveness,” “parallel multiplicity,” “context,” and “time” (pp. 7-8, original emphasis). The first challenge, consciousness vs unconsciousness, pertains to whether human motivated behaviour is always regulated by conscious thoughts. The second challenge, cognition vs affect, concerns the role of both cognitive
and affective factors in motivating human behaviour. The third challenge, reduction vs comprehensiveness, relates to the quest for a model that can combine all motivational influences on human behaviour. The fourth challenge, parallel multiplicity, concerns how to address the interplay of various goals and actions that a person may simultaneously pursue. The fifth challenge, context, addresses the combination of the roles of both the individual and the context in a motivational model to explain motivated human behaviour. The last challenge, time, concerns the changes of motivation over time.

There have been numerous definitions of motivation to learn a second language. One of the most popular definitions of motivation to learn a second language was proposed by Gardner (1985), as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language” (p. 10). Clearly, motivation in Gardner’s perspective consists of three aspects: effort, desire, and attitudes. It seems that this definition is mainly concerned with the individualistic aspect of motivation, in that motivation seems to spring from within the individual. However, this definition does not take into account that a student’s attempt to study a second language may be underpinned by a desire to please a teacher or parents, or to achieve good study results to gain entrance for university or to win a scholarship. These may be motivations in some Asian countries like Vietnam.

Another definition of motivation to learn a second language put forth by Williams and Burden (1997) concerns:

- a state of cognitive and emotional arousal
- which leads to a conscious decision to act, and
- which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort
- in order to attain a previously set goal/goals (p. 120).

Williams and Burden furthered that motivation of an individual is influenced by contextual factors. As such, they considered the roles of both the individual and the context in motivating human behaviour. Williams and Burden also took into account the temporal aspect of motivation in that the motivational process consists of three non-linear stages: reasons for initiating an action, decisions for doing that action, and persistence in expending effort to complete the goal.
In this thesis, motivation concerns both the individual and the social, historical, and cultural influences on the individual’s motivation to learn a foreign language. Therefore, I adopted Ushioda’s (2003) conceptualization of motivation as a, “socially mediated process” (p. 90). Based on the notions that “learning is constructive rather than reproductive,” and “learning is a social, cultural and interpersonal as well as intrapersonal process” (p. 91), Ushioda posited:

If learning is a process of constructing knowledge, the active contribution of the learner as agent in this process is critical. By implication, the motivation to be actively involved must come from within the learner…. Put simply, the learner must want to learn. … [If learning] is a culturally-rooted, socially mediated process that takes place through the interaction between the child (or learner) and more competent others in meaningful activities, and entails the shared construction of meaning and understanding…. the motivation to learn is also in this sense socially and culturally mediated…. Although the impetus to learn comes from within the learner, it develops as a function of the child’s (or learner’s) engagement in a particular activity with motivated and motivationally supportive others (pp. 91-92).

As such, in a foreign language classroom, there exists an interplay among the individual student’s expectations, desires, and wishes in learning a foreign language; the teacher’s requirements and expectations; and, the dynamics of the class as a group that consists of, for example, the group goals and norms. Furthermore, the student’s expectations, desires, and wishes (and the teacher’s expectations and requirements, and class dynamics) interact with the broader school requirements, and the social expectations and demands in which parental influences may play a prominent role. Put more concisely, the interactions among individual factors and contextual factors impact on student motivation to learn a foreign language.

1.4 Research Aims and Questions

This section serves to present the purposes of this study and the research questions that it seeks to answer.

1.4.1 Research Aims

This study aims to:
(1) investigate the types of motivation that the Vietnamese technical English majors experience in their English studies.

(2) explore the influences of Vietnam’s social and cultural context on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language.

1.4.2 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?

(2) What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?

(3) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the context of the research, in which I present my personal experiences as a former English major and an EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher, which led to my interest in the topic of the thesis. The chapter then discusses how the socioeconomic milieu in Vietnam affects teaching and learning English in Vietnam, and what policies the Vietnamese government and the MoET issued in regard to teaching and learning English. Then it presents the research aims and questions of this study.

Chapter Two critically reviews the theories of motivation in both education and second/foreign language learning. In particular, it discusses self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which is bounded within the Vietnamese social and cultural context as the theoretical framework for the thesis.

Chapter Three presents the research methods that I employed to conduct this study. The research methods are located within a qualitative case study approach. The data were collected by means of a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews over the course of 10 months comprising both face-to-face and phone interviews with seven female Vietnamese technical English majors, and one round of phone interviews with the students’ teachers of English; diary entries written by the students over the course of
three months; and email exchanges with both students and teachers. The data were
coded and analyzed based on grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss &
Cobin, 1998) and framed within mainly the self-determination and the sociocultural
context of Vietnam but also within a variety of other theories of motivation.

Chapter Four presents the study findings, organized in terms of three sources of
influence on the students’ English studies: influence from the perceived values of
English knowledge, influence related to the English educational environment, and
influence of family and social networks.

Chapter Five discusses the findings to the research questions raised in Chapter
One and Three in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, mainly within the
framework of self-determination theory and the social and cultural practices in Vietnam.
Moreover, to make up for the limitations of the self-determination theory, the results are
also analyzed in light of the other relevant theories of motivation reviewed in Chapter
Two.

The last chapter, Chapter Six, summarizes the main findings and arguments
presented in the thesis, the limitations of the thesis, and makes suggestions for future
research directions. It also recommends some theoretical and pedagogical implications
and concludes the study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will present and discuss aspects of the theories of motivation underpinning this study. The chapter includes three sections. First, I will briefly review the theories of motivation in education that informed my study. Second, I will discuss the theories of motivation in second and foreign language learning relevant to this research. Third, I will discuss the theoretical framework of the study, which combines aspects of the self-determination theory of motivation with the cultural values in Vietnam that are purported to influence the English language learning process and motivation of Vietnamese students. Also in this section, I will discuss the applicability of the self-determination theory to Vietnamese EFL context.

2.1. Theories of Motivation in Education

In this section, I will briefly review some theories of motivation in education that are relevant to my study. These theories include expectancy-value, goal, self-determination, and sociocultural theories. Among the expectancy-value theories (e.g., Eccles et al., 1983; Pekrun, 1993; Rheinberg, Vollmeyer & Rollett, 2000), I chose to review Eccles et al.’s (1983) expectancy-value theory because as Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2008) stated, this theory inspired a multitude of research on academic achievement motivation. Moreover, I think that how the students value English learning activities and materials as Eccles et al. (1983) describe below would influence their motivation to learn the English language.

2.1.1 Eccles et al.’s (1983) Expectancy-value Theory

Influenced by Atkinson’s (1964, as cited in Eccles et al.,1983) expectancy x value model, Eccles et al. (1983) extended Atkinson’s theory, in particular with regard to placing perceptions of expectancy and task values under the influences of various socio-cultural factors. They claimed that their model focussed more on cognitive constructs like “causal attributions, subjective expectancies, self-concepts of abilities, perceptions of task difficulty, and subjective task values” (p. 79) rather than motivational ones. The following section will report on this theory.
2.1.1.1 Major terms in the model.

Eccles et al. (1983) defined expectancy as “individuals’ beliefs about how well they will do on upcoming tasks, either in the immediate or longer-term future” (as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 119). Eccles et al. proposed that “the value of a task is determined by both the characteristics of the task and by the needs, goals, and values” of the task performer (p. 89). That is, the task is only meaningful to its performer when the task helps the performer to fulfill one’s needs, to reach one’s goals, or to affirm personal values. Eccles et al. (1983) categorized task values into attainment, utility, and intrinsic values. Attainment value refers to “the importance of doing well on the task” (p. 89) that may help to enhance an individual’s ideal self-concept. Utility value is associated with the importance of the task in helping an individual to gain goals that might be not related to the task. For example, students of accounting may learn English so that they could work in a multinational company in future. Intrinsic value is “the inherent, immediate enjoyment one gets from engaging in an activity” (p. 89).

2.1.1.2 The model.

Eccles and her associates’ expectancy-value model (Eccles et al., 1983) was originally designed to investigate engagement and sex differences in learning mathematics. The model consisted of two basic parts: “a psychological component, in which the interrelations of psychological constructs at one point in time and within each individual are specified” (p. 135), and a developmental component in which factors contributing to the development of individual differences are listed.

In the model (Eccles et al., 1983), task values and expectancy of a particular task directly influence students’ choice, persistence, and performance in that task. Both task values and expectancy are directly influenced by students’ goals, task- specific self-concepts, and task perceptions. These goals, self-concepts, and perceptions are directly influenced by students’ interpretations of past successes and failures, by other socializers like parents and teachers, and by the cultural milieu. In this expectancy-value model, task choice is affected by both negative and positive characteristics of a task. The choice of a task is determined by the probability of success (expectancy) and task values. If an individual decides to choose one task after evaluating the values of that task and chance to do the task successfully, it means that options for other tasks are eliminated. Also, the model showed that parents and teachers influenced students’
academic behaviours via at least three mechanisms: role modelling, expectations and beliefs, and provision of experiences and reinforcement.

The results from several studies (e.g., Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold & Blumenfeld, 1993; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Wigfield et al., 1997) supported the model in that students’ achievement behaviours were shown to be influenced by task values, expectancy, students’ goals, task-specific self-concepts and perceptions of task difficulty, interpretations of parents and teachers’ behaviours, attitudes and expectations, and cultural stereotypes.

Although the purpose of this expectancy-value model was to investigate students’ engagement in maths, it may also provide insight into how EFL learners’ perceptions of the values of the foreign language influence their motivation and engagement in learning that language.

2.1.2 Goal Theories

The main tenet underlying goal theories is that human behaviour is energized by goals, and when goals are modified, “the quality and intensity” of human behaviour also changes (Covington, 2000, p. 174). Wentzel (1991a) defined goals as “what individuals see themselves as trying to accomplish” (p. 1070). Midgley, Kaplan and Middleton (2001) contended that achievement goals are “the purposes for behaviour that are perceived or pursued in a competence-relevant setting” (p. 77).

Traditionally, goal theorists have examined the relationships among academic achievement goals, students’ cognition, and academic competence (see e.g., Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984; Simons, Dewitte & Lens, 2004). However, researchers have recently also examined social goals, as they affirmed that both social and academic goals, albeit distinct, are concurrently pursued by students, and therefore are complementary (Wentzel, 1991a, 1991b, 1993). The following discussion will look into academic and social goals in greater detail.

2.1.2.1 Academic goals.

Academic goals have been described as learning versus performance goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Elliott & Harackiewicz, 1996), mastery versus performance goals (Ames, 1992; Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007; Pintrich, 1999) or task-involvement versus ego-involvement goals (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984,
1987; Nicholls, 1984) or task versus ego goals (Simons et al., 2004). Seifert and O’Keefe (2001) argued that academic goals can be categorized into two main groups: learning/mastery/task-involvement/task/self-enhancing goals, and performance/ego-involvement/ego/self-defeating goals. However, an individual’s goal selection is not innately fixed, because one may pursue different goals across situations based on the situational cues that one perceives (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Simons et al., 2004). For example, in a situation, if the participants in that situation perceive the cue that the situation favours the learning goal, they might select the learning goal.

Students who espouse learning goals focus on developing their task skills and competence, thereby being willing to persist at difficult tasks, to seek challenges, and take risks. They employ effective problem-solving strategies like metacognitive, active learning, and deep processing strategies. They autonomously seek help but above all, they insist on completing the tasks themselves. Most importantly, they associate high effort and effective learning strategies with success but not ability. For them, ability is not fixed but malleable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; see also Elliott & Dweck, 1988). As they do not focus on outperforming other students in ability or competence, they experience positive affects about school and learning like intrinsic motivation, interest, and pleasure (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Research with both early adolescence and college students has demonstrated that those with learning goals did not make causal attributions for failures, nor express negative affects of the tasks. Despite the possibility that they might make public mistakes, they insisted on taking risks to enhance their competence (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Those students with learning goals equated effort with competence, and experienced increasing positive affects and fewer negative affects like guilt and embarrassment than performance-oriented students (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984). Moreover, learning goals have been correlated positively and strongly with self-regulatory strategies (Patrick et al., 2007; Pintrich, 1999; Simons et al., 2004) and engagement (Elliott & Harakiewicz, 1996; Patrick et al., 2007; Simons et al., 2004), and moderately with actual performance like task interaction (Patrick et al., 2007; Pintrich, 1999; Simons et al., 2004). Learning goals were also found to mediate between internally regulated future goals and deep level learning strategies, persistence, positive affects, and performance (Simons et al., 2004). They also mediated among factors in the classroom environment consisting of teacher academic and emotional support, peer
academic and emotional support, and student engagement (Patrick et al., 2007). It must be also noted although social comparison does not normally affect learning-oriented students emotionally, Jagacinski and Nicholls (1987) found that the emphasis of social comparison might make these students judge their ability as low and experience negative affects. It was also reported that students might be induced to follow learning goals in the environments in which they concurrently find their work meaningful, or have a sense of competence and control over their own learning (Seifert & O’Keefe, 2001; see also Ames, 1992).

In contrast with learning goals, students with performance goals desire to outperform others to demonstrate their superior ability. These tend to favour positive evaluations of their competence and thereby avoid the situations in which they may show their incompetence. They may also choose to participate in the tasks in which they may not have had the opportunity to sharpen their ability but may just be able to show their ability (e.g., Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984, 1987). Dweck and Leggett (1988) stated that for these students, ability is unmalleable and fixed, and that high effort would indicate low ability. Students with performance goals ascribe their failures to uncontrollable causes like luck, powerful others, or difficulty of tasks, and express negative affects like shame or anxiety. They also cease seeking alternative strategies to complete tasks if they are unsuccessful.

Researchers have demonstrated widely the nature of performance goals. Consistently, students with performance goals and low perceived ability have attributed their failures to a lack of effort, have expressed negative affects, and have ceased persistence on tasks (Elliott & Dweck, 1988; see also Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984). Performance goals are associated with external regulation, less interest and motivation, use of surface-level strategies, and lower academic outcomes (Simons et al., 2004). The presence of social comparison may also critically influence students pursuing performance goals (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987). In the absence of social comparison, performance-oriented students consider high effort as an effective means to achieve high competence, and experience positive affects like pride and self-competence. However, in the presence, and especially with any emphasis, of social comparison, performance-oriented students who spent lower effort than others would still feel proud of their achievements and self-efficacious, but those expending higher effort would feel guilty and less self-competent (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984).
Some researchers have further divided performance goals into performance approach and performance avoidance goals (Elliott & Harackiewicz, 1996; Nicholls, 1984), self-enhancing ego and self-defeating ego goals (Skaalvik, 1997), or approach ego and avoidance ego goals (Simons et al., 2004). Students who are guided by performance approach/self-enhancing ego goals are self-confident in their ability. They are concerned with performing better than others and demonstrating their superior ability and performance. However, they avoid taking risks in situations in which they may make public mistakes. This goal is positively associated with intrinsic motivation and task involvement (Elliott & Harackiewicz, 1996), self-efficacy, self-concept and academic outcomes (Skaalvik, 1997), effective cognitive (i.e., analysis, comparison, inference/interpretation) and metacognitive strategies, and negatively associated with anxiety. On the other hand, learners with performance-avoidance goals seek to avoid looking stupid and incompetent or being negatively judged by others. Consequently, they avoid expending much effort or persistence while doing a task to avoid any resultant negative feelings. Study results have found that performance avoidance goals are closely related to undermined intrinsic motivation and less task involvement (Elliott & Harakewicz, 1996), negatively related to self-efficacy, self-concept, and academic achievement (Skaalvik, 1997). In sum, between the two subtypes of performance goals, approach ego goals have been found to be less maladaptive, even though avoiding any demonstration of incompetence is the ultimate aim of both.

In addition to learning and performance goals, work avoidance goals have been described as the third type of academic goals. Students with work avoidance goals are defined as those who “consistently avoid putting in effort to do well, do only the minimum necessary to get by and avoid challenging tasks” (Seifert & O’Keefe, 2001, p. 82). Students were found to choose this type of goal when they found work meaningless or irrelevant even if their sense of self-competence is high (Jarvis & Seifert, 2002; Seifert & O’Keefe, 2001). The selection of work avoidance goals may also be derived from a sense of incompetence or a lack of control over learning, or because of hostility to their teachers or a lack of interest in their study.

As discussed above, academic goals play an important role in students’ learning processes as they determine “students’ behavioural, cognitive and affective patterns in achievement situations” (Patrick et al., 2007, p. 10). Nevertheless, not only students’ motives and cognition but also other learning environmental factors are critical to their
perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. The next section will discuss social
goals.

2.1.2.2. Social goals.

Social goals focus on how students manage their interpersonal relationships in the
classroom by pursuing social responsibility, peer acceptance and respectability
(Covington, 2000; Wentzel, 1991b). Wentzel (1991b) defined social responsibility as,
“adherence to social rules and role expectations” (p. 2). People feel socially responsible
when they are committed to the rules designed by groups with which they identify, or as
they feel responsible to others. Social responsibility might facilitate academic learning
in that responsible students can get more peer cooperation and more teacher instruction
than other students, thereby having more help with learning and positive affects toward
school than socially irresponsible students (Wentzel, 1991b). She contended that if the
social goals are pursued simultaneously with learning goals, social responsibility can
enhance study. However, if social responsibility represents the ultimate goal that
students have to pursue, it will be detrimental to their learning.

Wentzel and her associates further divided social goals into prosocial, antisocial,
Students who follow prosocial goals are cooperative and tend to share with, and give
help to their peers; meanwhile, antisocial students fight, break the rules, and do things
that they are not supposed to do. Students who espouse compliance goals exert effort to
commit to social expectations for behaviour as required by social rules and norms, or by
personal commitments.

Studies (Wentzel, 1991a, 1991b, 1993; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997) found that
students with prosocial goals achieved higher academic outcomes, exercised positive
academic behaviour, and were preferred by teachers. Peer acceptance also influenced
students’ social responsibility and academic outcomes. Peer relationships, group
membership in particular, were found to be significant predictors of students’ grades
concurrently and over time. Wentzel (1991a, 1991b) concluded that social and academic
goals are separate but concurrent outcomes that students pursue at school.

In sum, academic goal theorists seemed to believe that “depending on their
subjective purposes, achievement goals differentially influence school achievement via
variations in the quality of cognitive self-regulation processes” (Covington, 2000, p.
174). That is, cognitive self-regulation processes with their “quality, timing, and appropriateness” (p. 174) mediate between goals and academic competence. In terms of the current study, it is important to see what goals, including both academic and social goals, the participants were pursuing in their English studies and how these goals influenced their motivation to learn the English language.

2.1.3 Self-determination Theory

The self-determination theory concerns “how people’s inherent growth tendencies and psychological needs interact with sociocultural conditions that nurture versus hinder these inner resources, resulting in varying levels of effective functioning and well-being” (Reeve, Deci & Ryan, 2004). This theory comprises four mini-theories: basic needs, cognitive evaluation, organismic integration, and causal orientations theories (see also Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Basic needs theory describes three psychological needs that underlie people’s motivation to act: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy is conceptualized as “the need to have choice about whether to be in control” (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 31). Competence is “the capacity for effective interactions with the environment that ensure the organism’s maintenance” (p. 27). Relatedness is the need to have close relationships with others, to feel secure, protected, and supported (Reeve et al., 2004).

Cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve et al., 2004) describes how external influences and intrapersonal events influence the existence of intrinsic motivation. This theory proposes that an event has three aspects: informational, controlling, and amotivating that might be interpreted according to individual experiences. The informational aspect relates to self-determination and perceived competence, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation. The controlling aspect concerns external locus of causality, thereby undermining intrinsic motivation and fostering external motivation. The amotivating aspect involves perceived incompetence, thereby undermining intrinsic motivation and promoting amotivation. It must be added that for self-competence to promote intrinsic motivation, it must be bounded within the context of some self-determination.

In the organismic integration theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) theorized that one has to go through an internalization process to take external values in and incorporate these into one’s internal structure, to more successfully cope with the environment and
achieve a higher level of autonomy/choice (see also Reeve, 1996). Deci and Ryan (1985) defined the process of internalization as “the process through which an individual acquires an attitude, belief, or behavioural regulation and progressively transforms it into a personal value, goal, or organization. It is the developmental process by which a child integrates the demands and values of the socializing environment” (p. 130). They contended that “internalization is an active process” (p. 130) because one attempts to change, for example, one’s values or internal structures, in accordance with environmental requirements so that one can promote or maximize autonomy and competence ability.

Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that the internalization process consisted of five stages: non-regulation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. Non-regulation involves one’s lack of internal ability to respond to external demands; responses are totally controlled by others. In terms of external regulation, a person acts in accordance with the environmental requirements to avoid bad consequences or obtain good results controlled by others. For example, a boy may try to finish all of the assigned homework to avoid his teacher’s punishment. Then, in the process of introjected regulation, a representation of the external sanction on personal actions is present inside the person; the person acts in accordance with this internal representation and exercises approval and disapproval of behaviours. In this process, the person undergoes emotional conflict, and the common affective outcomes are shame and guilt. The next stage on the continuum of internalization is identified regulation, in which a person “accepts the regulation as his or her own” (p. 137). The individual undergoes less conflict, and values the outcomes and the regulation to obtain the outcomes, rather than paying attention to others who administer the regulation and control the outcomes. The last stage on the continuum of internalization is integrated regulation, in which the person has completely incorporated the regulation into his or her existing structure. The person feels free to act and make choices of when to exercise behaviours to obtain certain outcomes. The person also takes personal responsibility for the outcomes of his or her behaviours. The person is free of conflicts and no longer suffers from socially sanctioned pressures on behaviours.

The causality orientations theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve et al., 2004) describes how people are different in the ways they interpret, and act in accordance with, motivational forces. There are three causality orientations: autonomy, control, and
impersonal orientations that help people to regulate their behaviour in agreement with the ways they interpret the environment as informational, controlling, or amotivating. In terms of the autonomy orientation, individuals have the choice of when to initiate behaviours to attain self-selected goals based on their interpretations of the environment as informational. Deci and Ryan (1985) contended that an autonomous person also knows how to “accommodate the situation” (p. 157) to take advantage of the conditions available in the environment to set realistic and attainable goals based on those conditions. A control-oriented person regulates his or her behaviours in accordance with external forces or with an internal representation of those forces. Deci and Ryan added that a control-oriented person also tries to “accommodate to the situation” (p. 159), but the accommodation is an attempt to respond to the external demands or to an internal representation of those demands; it is not in response to self-arising needs. A person exhibits an impersonal orientation when the person feels incompetent to cope with the external or internal controls based on an interpretation that the environment is uncontrollable and the desired outcomes are unattainable.

Self-determination theory was first applied successfully in educational contexts by Vallerand (1997; see also Vallerand et al., 1992, 1993). Based on the tenets proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), Vallerand and his colleagues extended the research on perceptions of intrinsic motivation, and conducted empirical studies with students to test the existence and relationships among self-determined motivational types with other related factors in students’ learning processes.

Among the types of extrinsic motivation, Vallerand and his associates (1992, 1993) and Vallerand (1997) contended that integrated regulation as proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) was not applicable in educational research, as it was not differentiated from identified regulation. In terms of intrinsic motivation, Vallerand and his colleagues categorized intrinsic motivation (IM) into three subtypes: knowledge or IM-to know, accomplishment or IM-to accomplish things, and stimulation or IM-to experience stimulation. IM-to know emphasizes the satisfaction and pleasure attained from doing an activity to explore new ideas and enrich knowledge. Vallerand et al. claimed that this type of IM was associated with other constructs like exploration, curiosity, learning goals, intrinsic intellectuality, and the IM to learn as proposed by Gottfried (1985, 1990) and Harter (1981). IM-to accomplish refers to the good feelings associated with mastering or achieving a goal, or creating something new. Vallerand et al. (1992)
associated this IM with the construct of mastery motivation by Harter (1981) and achievement motivation. IM-to-experience stimulation refers to good feelings, such as fun or enjoyment, simply brought by performing an activity. The Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975/2000) notion of flow, which is described as enjoyment accompanied by one’s full engagement in an activity (as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985), is subsumed under this type of IM.

However, self-determined motivations, albeit internalized or intrinsic, can only be nurtured in environments with appropriate amounts of social support of autonomy, competence, and relatedness from important others (see e.g., Reeve, 1996; Legault, Demers & Pelletier, 2006) (see 2.3.1.3 & 2.3.1.4 for a thorough discussion on this). Empirical studies have supported the existence of the relationships between self-determined motivations and social support. Intrinsic motivation has been found to be significantly and positively correlated with study interest and self-competence (Fazey & Fazey, 2001; Gottfried, 1985, 1990; Muller & Louw, 2004), but negatively with anxiety (Gottfried, 1985, 1990). However, the relationships between intrinsic motivation and autonomy and social relatedness have not been consistently strong (Fazey & Fazey, 2001; Muller & Louw, 2004). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation has been positively and significantly correlated with quality of instruction and transparency of requirements (Gottfried, 1985, 1990; Muller & Louw, 2004), and has mediated between teacher’s autonomy support and students’ perceived competence (Guay, Boggiano & Vallerand, 2001). To sum up, it is clear that social support plays a crucial role in enhancing students’ self-determined motivation and notably, intrinsic motivation.

Research has also demonstrated that different motivational types co-exist. For example, intrinsic motivation has been shown to co-cluster with identified motivation, with some students also experiencing introjected motivation (Muller & Louw, 2004). Lin, McKeachie and Kim (2003) found the simultaneous existence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations with students’ achievement. Gottfried (1985, 1990) reported that intrinsic motivation might exist both as a general academic orientation and as a situational specificity depending upon contextual factors. Specifically, Gottfried (1985) found that intrinsic motivation, competence, and anxiety were differentiated into different school subjects. He attributed this differentiation to the difference in levels of anxiety and perceived academic competence each student had in school subjects. In addition, he found that other cognitive and noncognitive factors like, “ability, time spent
on instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, and home stimulation” (p. 644) mediated between academic intrinsic motivation and achievement.

In general, the application of self-determination theory in educational contexts supports the tenets put forth by Deci and Ryan (1985). It is evident that there exist different motivational subtypes that can be arranged along a self-determination continuum from non-self-determined to self-determined orientations. These orientations may co-exist in one student, and due to the influences of the environmental factors, one type might be salient at a given point in time. The factors that are found to be crucial to the protection of self-determined motivation are supports for self-competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Section 2.3 will further discuss self-determination theory in detail within the foreign language context.

2.1.4 Sociocultural Perspectives on Motivation

The origin of sociocultural theory has been ascribed to Vygotsky, a Russian researcher. Basically, this theory views knowledge and learning as socially rooted (Walker, Pressick-Kilborn, Arnold & Sainsbury, 2004). Lave and Wenger (1991, as cited in Hickey, 2003, p. 408) affirmed that “knowledge [originated] in the interaction of social and material worlds and [resided] in socially defined tools and ways of interacting.” Stated differently, knowledge does not reside in the individual’s minds or out in the environment for the individual to acquire. Instead, knowledge is constituted by the participation of all individuals in the context, and their use of cultural tools and signs such as language and numbers. As such, learning is the internalization and creative transformation of socially defined knowledge (Hickey, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

Some researchers (see e.g., Hickey, 2003; Walker et al., 2004) have claimed that sociocultural theories in motivation have not been well-established in both theoretical and empirical aspects as there has been scant research applying this theory in motivation. Motivation in the perspective of sociocultural theory is “socially negotiated,” “socially distributed,” and “context specific” (Rueda & Moll, 1994, p. 122; see also Sivan, 1986). As a result, investigations of motivation must take into account the role of interpersonal interaction, knowledge practices and norms, and cultural tools.
2.1.4.1 Sociocultural theories of motivation in education.

Although consensus on the social nature of educational motivation has led to a call for redefinition of motivational concepts, sociocultural researchers have advanced different theoretical conceptualizations of motivation and motivation-related concepts.

Sivan (1986) suggested that motivation be considered as a “cultural norm” (p. 217) in educational contexts. She explains that since sociocultural theory investigates “how culture shapes and transmits what people think, feel, and do,… motivation, as a way people think, feel, and act can be seen as a product of the culture” (p. 217). Furthermore, motivated behaviour should be considered as motivated behaviour norms. Sivan (1986) strongly believed that the classroom should be considered as a community with its own culture, cultural practices and norms, and social interactions that are based on those of a larger community (maybe school) and the society. Hence, students’ success in the classroom culture will be judged in terms of three factors: classroom social interactions, academic content, and motivational norms. In terms of motivation as norms in the context of the classroom, what motivation is and how it is displayed will be negotiated and shaped in the interpersonal interactions of people participating in the classroom contexts (Sivan, 1986). Interpersonal communication helps to integrate motivation and instruction in that teachers and students share an understanding of goals, motives, and rewards of the activity so that both students and teachers will desire the same outcomes.

In a similar vein, Walker et al. (2004) called for the redefinition of classrooms as “communities… engaged in the enculturation of academic practices” (p. 247). They suggested using the Valsiner’s (1992) concepts of “canalization,” “self-canalization,” and “intersubjectivity” (as cited in Walker et al., 2004) to explore how “[classroom] social and individual practices interact to channel individual and group activities and subsequently their interests” in learning (p. 247). Canalization of motivation is defined as that motivation “fostered and constrained …by the sociocultural-historical context, including interpersonal relations” (Valsiner, 1992, as cited in Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999); self-canalization as “the developing person’s construction of ‘his or her own psychological functions in the process of social experiencing’” (Valsiner, 1992, as cited in Pressick-Kilborn & Walker, 1999); and intersubjectivity as a shared “understanding of objects and events in the task” (Sivan, 1986, p. 223).
Other sociocultural theorists (Hickey, 2003; Paris & Turner, 1994; Turner & Patrick, 2008) also attempted to reconceptualise motivation within sociocultural theory. Based on the social nature of the standards and values that motivate the learner, Hickey (2003) conceptualized motivation as, “engaged participation in knowledge practices” (p. 411). He argued that in the classroom context, students had to fight among “multiple and potentially competing communities” (p. 416) with their own knowledge practices. Consequently, the knowledge practices in which students ended up engaging might be totally different from those practices indicated by the curriculum. Hickey then suggested that achievement motivation involved the “reconciliation of participation in the knowledge practices of multiple and potentially competing communities” (p. 416). Paris and Turner (1994) acknowledged that meaning was co-constructed by people in a context, so motivation did not originate from either the context alone or the individual. Turner and Patrick (2008) posited that a situated approach would provide better opportunity to understand “how students’ motivation is contextualized in particular activities, persons, discourse, and materials at specific places and times, and why it changes” (p. 123, original emphasis). This approach addresses motivation as dynamic and socially situated, and both cognitive and social factors are treated holistically. They contended that to understand students’ behaviours, causes of these behaviours and the ways these behaviours change over time, it is necessary to understand classroom culture with its all constraints and affordances of cultural norms and interpersonal relationships. They stated that “students’ classroom participation is not a manifestation of their (existing) beliefs; rather, students’ classroom participation changes as beliefs develop and change in concert with opportunities that are made available to, or required of, students by other classroom participants” (p.120). Generally, the development of motivation can only be explained by looking at “how individuals change in response to their context, and how contexts change in response to individuals’ actions” (p. 121).

### 2.1.4.2 Research methods employed to study motivation in light of sociocultural theories.

In this section, I review the research methods that sociocultural theorists recommend for studying motivation.

Following the contention that motivation is socially rooted, Turner and Patrick (2008) asserted that the unit of analysis for research should be an activity or event, to
take into account the combination of individuals and the environment. Walker et al. (2004) asserted that investigating sociocultural motivation needed to be conducted in authentic classroom contexts utilizing qualitative or mixed methods approaches to have a rich analysis. Sivan (1986) suggested using ethnographic methodology, to examine the relationships between the setting and persons, which would help to understand the factors in the setting that help the individual to interpret the environmental cues.

In summary, based on the tenets of seeing knowledge and learning as socially constructed, sociocultural theorists view motivation as having a shared nature, arising from interpersonal interactions. They advocate for the reconceptualisation of motivation-related concepts to reflect that social nature of motivation.

2.1.5 Conclusion

In this section, I have reviewed several theories of motivation in education that I found helpful for the current research. These were the expectancy-value, goal, self-determination, and sociocultural theories. Each theory is believed to contribute to the explanation and understanding of this sample of Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language in Vietnamese social and cultural context in a different way, as will be shown in the results and discussion.

In the next section, I will review relevant theories of motivation in second and foreign language learning.

2.2 Theories of Motivation in Second/Foreign Language Learning

In this section, I will review a number of theories of motivation that are considered to be relevant to understanding Vietnamese students’ motivations to learn the English language. These theories are Gardner’s motivation theory, Dörnyei and his associates’ process-oriented approach, L2 (second language) Motivational Self-System, Ushioda’s motivational studies, Norton’s conceptualization of motivation as investment, cultural influences on motivation, along with conceptual issues including motivation and group dynamics, demotivation, and motivation, self-confidence and Willingness to Communicate (WTC).
2. 2.1 Gardner’s Motivation Theory

Gardner’s theory of motivation in L2 learning was attributed with being the first systematic research in L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001b). Gardner and his associates were initially concerned with explaining how the success of L2 learners was influenced by attitudes toward the L2-speaking communities (Gardner, 1985, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Gardner claimed that the motivation to learn a second language was derived from a desire to have cross-cultural contact with the L2-speaking communities and to identify with them (Gardner, 1985, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Moreover, Gardner and Lambert (1972) regarded an integrative orientation as more effective than an instrumental one in making students sustain effort over a long time.

Gardner’s (1985) motivation theory was centred on three main aspects: the integrative motive/motivation, the Attitudinal/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB), and the socio-educational model. I will discuss these in turn as follows.

2.2.1.1 The integrative motive.

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) posited that the integrative motive subsumed three components: integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, and motivation. Integrativeness is conceptualized as:

an openness to, and respect for other cultural groups and ways of life. In the extreme, this might involve complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one’s original group), but more commonly, it might well involve integration within both communities (Gardner, 2001, p. 5).

Integrativeness comprises integrative orientation, interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward L2 community. Attitudes toward the learning situation consist of evaluation of the L2 teacher and evaluation of the L2 course. These two components directly affect motivation, which is composed of effort, desire, and attitudes toward learning the second language. Gardner emphasized that L2 learners with integrative orientations tend to show positive attitudes toward the L2 community with a desire to converse with the community members. Moreover, they might want to identify with the target community completely (Gardner, 1985, 2001).
2. 2.1.2 The Attitudinal/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB).

The AMTB was designed to “assess what appeared to be the major affective factors involved in the learning of a second language” (Gardner, 2001, p. 7). The battery items test the components in the socio-educational model and were organized in several formats (see Gardner, 1985). For example, ten items in Linkert form were designed to test students’ attitudes toward French Canadians, and ten items in multiple choice formats were for motivational intensity. The AMTB has demonstrated its validity and reliability across a number of studies done by Gardner and his associates (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant & Mihic, 2004.)

2. 2.1.3 The socio-educational model.

The socio-educational model in Gardner’s motivation theory was modified several times (Gardner, 1985, 2006; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). However, basically, the model has “four classes of variables: the social milieu, individual differences, language acquisition contexts and outcomes” (Gardner, 1985, p. 146). The social milieu comprises the cultural contexts and educational setting that influence the learner’s individual difference variables (Gardner, 2006). Individual difference variables entail, for example, motivation, language aptitude, intelligence, and situational anxiety (Gardner, 1985), and strategies, language attitudes, and language anxiety (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). These individual differences play different roles in the language acquisition contexts, which include both formal and informal contexts. For example, language aptitude is important in the language learning process in the formal setting but less so in informal contexts; whereas, motivation is important in both contexts (Gardner, 1985). Both contexts have an impact on the linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of the language learning process (see Figure 2.1). Gardner (2006) considered incorporating the dimension Instrumentality, defined as “conditions where the language is studied for practical or utilitarian purposes” (p. 249) into his socio-educational model. However, he held that instrumentality had much less impact on motivation than did integrativeness (Gardner, 2006). Overall, Gardner (2006) claimed that the learning process shown in the model was “a dynamic on-going process, capable of change at any point given in time” (p. 241).
2.2.1.4 Criticism of Gardner’s theory of motivation.

There has been a great deal of criticism of several aspects of Gardner’s motivation theory, namely the concepts employed, the socioeducational model, and generalizability of the integrative orientation, integrativeness across different contexts. The following discussion will attempt to provide insight into these criticisms.

2.2.1.4.1. Criticism of the concepts employed in Gardner’s motivation theory.

Dörnyei (1994b, 2005) raised concerns about the problems related to the ‘integrative motivation’ construct. The first problem relates to Gardner’s use of the term integrative at three different levels in the construct, which easily causes confusion and leads to ambiguity (Dörnyei, 1994b, 2005). Second, motivation in Gardner’s model is considered as a subcomponent of the integrative motivation, and Gardner often discusses this subcomponent motivation as L2 motivation but not the overall integrative motivation (Dörnyei, 1994b). Meanwhile, researchers commonly view motivation as an umbrella term. This clash between the two uses of the term motivation further confuses the interpretation and applicability of Gardner’s motivation theory. In addition, although Gardner differentiated the concept of orientation from that of motivation, they are commonly used interchangeably in L2 literature (Dörnyei, 1994b).

Another problematic issue addressed by Dörnyei (2005) is linked to Gardner’s (2001, 2006) attempt to officially incorporate instrumentality into the socio-educational model. Gardner (2001, 2006b) stated that in the integrative motive construct, instrumentality could be combined with motivation to form instrumental motivation. Dörnyei (2005) pointed out that Gardner did not provide any empirical foundation for this incorporation. Dörnyei also doubted whether the component “attitudes towards the learning situation” embedded in integrative motivation could be combined with instrumental motivation, especially in case instrumental orientations of the learner are more prevalent than integrative ones (p. 70).
2. 2.1.4.2. Criticism of the socio-educational model.

Gardner (2006) claimed that the learning process shown in his proposed socio-educational model is “a dynamic on-going process, capable of change at any point given in time” (p. 241). However, it seems that Gardner conceptualized the dynamic nature of this process as only being able to change over time, because he denied the importance of the back influences of the outcomes on any other variables in the model, stating that “influences back in time are not meaningful” (p. 241). As such, it seems that Gardner underestimates the complexity of the motivational processes underlying the language learner’s learning process because he only considers motivation as the cause of success, while some researchers (R. Ellis, 1994; Skehan, 1989) postulated that some learners expend more effort and persistence on learning after gaining successes. In this latter view, motivation should be considered as both the consequence and cause of success.

Furthermore, the socio-educational model seems not to be able to show the intricate inter-relationships among the factors/variables that may have an impact on the learner’s motivation and outcomes. For example, it lacks a link between how the cultural values influence educational practices and how these, in turn, influence the learner’s motivation.

2.2.1.4.3. Generalizability of the integrative orientation and integrativeness

Aside from the well-known integrative orientation and motivation, Gardner and his associates (Gardner, 1985, 2001, 2006; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner et al., 2004) also discussed instrumental orientation and conducted research on it. Most of Gardner’s research has been conducted in Canada, where the French and English speaking communities co-exist, and learning either French or English is considered as a means to identify with the target language community (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Gardner and his colleagues (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959) have found the integrative orientation more important than the instrumental orientation in the language learning process of Canadian language learners. Therefore, Gardner and his associates claimed that the integrative orientation was more powerful than the instrumental one in predicting the success of the L2 learner in learning a second language.

However, studies conducted both in Canada and elsewhere have obtained different results on the existence of the integrative orientation. For example, neither
Belmechri and Hummel (1998) nor Clément and Kruidenier (1983) identified an integrative orientation among Canadian L2 learners. Warden and Lin (2000) only found instrumental and required motivation in the Taiwanese EFL context. J. F. Chen, Warden, and Chang (2005) concluded that integrative motivation did not play an important role in the Chinese EFL context. The results of other studies found that an integrative orientation merged with other orientations, even with instrumental orientation (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Oruç, 2010; Dörnyei, 1990; Lamb, 2004b; Yashima, 2002). Yashima (2002) even named the new construct which “included interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and … openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures” as “international posture” (p 57). As such, research has found that the integrative and instrumental dimensions are “broad tendencies” and subsume “context-specific clusters of loosely related components” (Dörnyei, 1990, p. 70). That means, “the exact nature of the social and pragmatic dimensions of L2 motivation is always dependent on who learns what language where” (Dörnyei, 1994a, p. 275, original emphasis).

Such controversy over the existence and predictive power of the integrative orientation across contexts has led researchers to consider reconceptualising the term “integrativeness”. Many researchers argue that as a result of the globalization process, English may not be considered as solely associated with its native speakers but rather with a global community (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Oruç, 2010; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006; Lamb, 2004b; Yashima, 2002). Yashima (2002) suggested using the term “international posture” to capture the changing nature of the motivational orientations in EFL students. Dörnyei (2006) also stated that “integrativeness” should be reinterpreted to fit into the context of global English, where the idea of who “owns” English is not clear (p. 52). As a result, he lent support to reappraising the term integrativeness as the English learner’s “identification… with a non-parochial, cosmopolitan, globalized world citizen identity” (pp. 52-53) but not with a specific L2 community. He insisted that in this case, the notion “imagined community” (Norton, 2001; see 2.2.5 for a review on Norton’s contribution on motivation) associated with an “imagined identity” fits perfectly because it indicates “the desired integration into an imagined L2 community” (p. 53) while this imagined L2 community is associated with the global English community.
It is undeniable that the Vietnamese EFL learners are constrained by a variety of social changes due to the process of globalization and modernization (T. T. H. Phan, 2009). Meanwhile, it is hypothesized that English majors are often motivated by integrative motivations to learn English, for example favourable attitudes toward the English-speaking communities, and the desire to attain a native-like accent. As such, there exists a need to conduct empirical research on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivations to see whether their integrative motivation exists, and whether it exists independently of other motivations or if it is also combined with other orientations, such as a result of the influence of the status of English as a global language. Moreover, with the exception of Lamb (2004b), most of the research investigating the existence of the integrative orientation across contexts has been conducted using quantitative methods with EFL non-majors. Therefore, this qualitative study will provide a more emic insight into the integrative motivation of English majors in an EFL context.

2.2.1.5 Concluding remarks.

Taken collectively, despite some problems and criticisms with his theory of motivation, Gardner’s (1985) theory has contributed to the L2 motivation research. The influential role of his theory in L2 motivation research has been demonstrated in the wide application of the AMTB in investigating the integrative and instrumental orientations of language learners around the world. Moreover, Gardner and his colleagues “established scientific research procedures and introduced standardized assessment techniques and instruments, thus setting high research standards” (Dörnyei, 1994a, p. 273).

However, Gardner’s (1985) theory focuses on the integrative aspects of the language learning process in a bilingual context where the learner desires to have real-life contact with L2 communities. Meanwhile in other second and foreign language contexts, the language learner mainly comes into contact with the target language in the classroom and is influenced by various factors and relationships in the classroom. As such, a call for a new approach in L2 motivation research was advanced by Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Skehan (1991), and Oxford and Shearin (1994). Crookes and Schmidt (1991), who were the pioneers in calling for such an approach, claimed that “SL learning is an extended process, often taking place both inside and outside the
classroom over a number of years; and above all, as one in which the learner takes an active role at many levels of the process” (p. 483). They added that the new perspective should take into account how teachers view students as being motivated in the classroom. Skehan (1991) stated that the new approach must embrace at least two aspects: influences of “the instructional context” and “psychological influences within the individual” (p. 281) on student motivation. Oxford and Shearin (1994) recommended that the new approach address “complicated changes over time” (p. 14) and the “individualistic and multifaceted” nature (p. 16) of a student’s motivation to learn an L2. Generally, these researchers called for a more extensive approach with a focus on the L2 learning process in the classroom and which addresses the cognitive-related motivational issues discussed in the current motivation research (Dörnyei, 2005).

In response to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Skehan (1991), and Oxford and Shearin (1994), L2 motivation researchers have incorporated “cognitive and situation-specific variables” into their theoretical motivation frameworks, thereby bringing L2 motivation research more in line with the mainstream motivation research (Dörnyei, 2001b). The new perspectives also investigate the dynamic nature of L2 motivation and its changes over time (Dörnyei, 2001b, 2005; Ushioda, 1994, 2001). Researchers also employ more sophisticated quantitative research methods, like Structural Equal Modelling (SEM), and qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews (Dörnyei, 2001b).

In the next section, I will discuss several theories of motivation that attempt to address these issues. These theories comprise Dörnyei and his associates’ process-oriented approach, Ushioda’s empirical qualitative research, Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self-system, and Norton’s notion of motivation as investment. In addition, I will also briefly review studies on cultural influences on motivation, and other motivational constructs related to the current study. I will leave self-determination theory until section 2.3, as it provides the main theoretical framework for this study. In section 2.3, I will discuss why the self-determination theory is considered to be applicable to my study and how it can be employed in light of cultural contexts in Vietnam.

**2.2.2 Dörnyei and his colleagues’ Process-oriented Approach**

In an attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of all of the motivational influences in the L2 learning process, Dörnyei and Otto (1998) proposed the process-
oriented motivation theory (see figure 2.2). As they stated, the theory was built upon the theory of volition by Heckhausen and Kuhl (see Kuhl, 1985, 1992, 1994).

**Figure 2.2**: A simplified schematic presentation of the process-oriented model of L2 motivation by Dörnyei and Otto (1998)

The process-oriented model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001b, 2005; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998) contains two dimensions:

- **Preactional Phase**: Goal setting, Intention formation, Initiation of intention enactment
- **Actional Phase**: Subtask generation and implementation, Appraisal, Action control
- **Postactional Phase**: Outcome evaluation, Elaborating standards and strategies, Dismiss initial intention and initiated a new action plan

The first dimension, Action Sequence, represents the behavioural process whereby initial wishes, hopes, and desires are first transformed into goals, then into intentions, leading eventually to action and, hopefully, to the accomplishment of the goals, after which the process is submitted to final evaluation. The second dimension of the model, Motivational Influences, include all of the energy sources and motivational forces that underlie and fuel the behavioural process (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998, p. 47).

Generally, the process-oriented model of L2 motivation seems to be a non-reductionist model because it is successful in incorporating a variety of motivational influences and strategies that underlie the L2 learning process. The model is also able to demonstrate the dynamic nature of motivation and how it changes over time by showing how different influences act on motivation in the three phases of the model. Furthermore, the sequence in the model is not claimed to be always linear; for example, a learner who faces some challenges might reformulate goals and intentions from the preactional stage (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998).
However, the process-oriented model of L2 motivation has some weaknesses. First, it lacks an empirical foundation, as it was built only upon the theory of volition by Heckhausen and Kuhl (see Kuhl, 1985, 1992, 1994). Second, as Dörnyei and Otto (1998), and Dörnyei (2000, 2005) admitted, the model is not able to address the fact that the action sequence in the model is always accompanied by a series of other action sequences because an individual carries out many activities simultaneously. Third, the learner often has a “simultaneous focus on a number of different but interacting goals and activities” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 13). That is, these goals might converge, compensate for one another, or even sometimes conflict (Dowson & McInerney, 2003). As such, the model is not able to show how the goals are hierarchically organized, how they are inter-related, and how they are ordered in the action sequence (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998). Last, in the model, it seems that Dörnyei and Otto assigned certain types of motivational influences to each stage of the action sequence. However, as Bowen (2008) found in her study with Chinese students, parental influences might have an impact on every stage of the students’ English language learning process, in particular, not only on the pre-actional phase, but also on the actional phase. Therefore, there exists a need for more empirical research employing the process model so that the role of specific cultural values is more clearly identified.

2.2.3 The L2 Motivational Self System

The L2 Motivational Self System theory originated from the results obtained from two surveys that Dörnyei and his colleagues in Hungary conducted in 1993 and 1999 with pupils aged 13 to 14 years (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) employed SEM that specified integrativeness as the most important factor influencing the language learner’s effort and language choice. Instrumentality and attitudes toward L2 speakers also were found to indirectly impact on language choice and effort via integrativeness. Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) argued that the limited contact of the language learner in a foreign language context necessitated the interpretation of the term integrativeness in a broader sense than the meaning within which Gardner framed it (see 2.2.1). As such, they borrowed the terms “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and “ideal self” (Higgins, 1987, 1998) to interpret and explain the roles of integrativeness and instrumentality in the new model.
Markus and Nurius (1986) defined possible selves as a combination of three types of selves, namely “the ideal selves that we would very much like to become,” “the selves we could become,” and “the selves we are afraid of becoming” (p. 954). They argued that these possible selves were connected to the individual’s current selves but were still “different and separable” from these (p. 954). These possible selves represent the individual’s wishes, fears and fantasies, and act as motivational guide for the individual to initiate behaviour. Markus and Nurius stated that possible selves were influenced by “the individual’s particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual’s immediate social experiences” (p. 954).

Higgins (1987) categorized three domains of the self as follows:

(a) the actual self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you actually possess; (b) the ideal self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you, ideally, to possess (i.e., a representation of someone’s hopes, aspirations, or wishes for you); and (c) the ought self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you should or ought to possess (i.e., a representation of someone’s sense of your duty, obligations or responsibilities) (pp. 320-321, original emphasis).

Higgins believed that the ideal and ought selves acted as self-guides to motivate an individual to reduce the gap between one’s actual self and ideal self or ought self. A little over a decade later, Higgins (1998) refined the definition of the ideal self as having “the promotion focus [which] is concerned with accomplishments, hopes, and aspirations” while the ought self has “the prevention focus [which] is concerned with safety, responsibilities, and obligations” (p. 16, original emphasis). As such, the ideal self is associated with positive outcomes, whereas the ought self is connected with negative outcomes.

2.2.3.1 The L2 motivational self-system construct.

Based on these definitions of possible, ideal, and ought selves, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) interpreted integrativeness and the relationship between instrumentality and integrativeness as follows. Specifically, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) found that attitudes toward the L2 speakers were directly connected to integrativeness, which was similar to
Gardner’s (1985) conceptualization of integrativeness (see 2.2.1). Dörnyei (2005, 2009) further stated that L2 speakers represented the ideal L2 self that a language learner would often like to achieve. Therefore, he stated that integrativeness could be interpreted as the ideal L2 self. In terms of the direct relationship between instrumentality and integrativeness (see Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), Dörnyei said that instrumentality could comprise two aspects, the promotion focus (see Higgins, 1998) in that learning English could help a person to gain privileges in one’s job and study, and the prevention focus in that one learns English to meet course requirements, for example. The former aspect of instrumentality is linked to the ideal L2 self, and the latter is to the ought L2 self.

Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposed the following construct of the L2 motivational self system:

a. the ideal L2 self: this dimension represents the L2 learner’s hopes, aspirations and goals in learning the L2.

b. the ought-to L2 self: this dimension represents the L2 learner’s perceived duties, obligations and responsibilities in learning the L2.

c. L2 learning experience: this dimension is associated with the L2 learner’s motivational goals derived from one’s failures and successes in learning the L2 in the past and the immediate learning environment.

2.2.3.2 Strengths of the construct.

This section discusses some strengths of the L2 motivational self system. First, the L2 motivational self system is constructed based on empirical studies. Second, it is connected to mainstream psychology, as it is based on the self-theory, and to the previous L2 motivational constructs, for example, Gardner’s (1985, 2001, 2006) integrativeness, Norton’s (2001) concept of “imagined communities,” Noels’s (2003) L2 motivation construct, and Ushioda’s (2001) motivation construct (see Dörnyei, 2005). Third, the L2 motivational self system provides a broader explanation for the motivational goals in learning English of the language learners in various contexts than other theories of L2 motivation, especially in the context of English as a global language in which the English learner does not have any specific L2 reference groups (Dörnyei, 2005; MacIntyre, Mackinnon & Clément, 2009). Last, employing the L2 motivational self system helps to address a variety of simultaneous motivational goals.
involving the L2 learning process, which might include language-related goals and non-language-related goals (MacIntyre et al., 2009).

2.2.3.3 Limitations of the construct.

The L2 motivational self system is not without criticism. Dörnyei (2005) himself admitted that the L2 learning experience dimension was a component proposed in the construct but not empirically tested. MacIntyre et al. (2009) put forward several cautions against using the L2 motivational self-system in L2 motivation research. First, they stated that the research results on possible selves might be biased due to the participants’ need to present themselves positively, and due to the inconsistency in research methods to collect and analyze the data. Second, reconceptualising integrativeness as the ideal L2 self might cause difficulty and confusion as, in the mainstream psychology, there were a plethora of self-theories. Third, the concept of the self is culturally-determined, thereby being differently conceptualized in different cultures. Fourth, the construct needs to take into account the changing nature of possible selves over time. As such, more empirical studies are required to establish the validity of the L2 motivation self system construct.

2.2.4 Ushioda’s Motivation Studies

Ushioda (1994, 1998, 2001) employed a qualitative approach in researching L2 motivation to explore “the qualitative content of language learners’ motivational thinking” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 94). She examined the cognitive processes underlying student learning and motivation to learn. Moreover, she investigated how their motivation changed over time.

In researching L2 learning motivation of French language learners in Ireland, Ushioda (1994) used unstructured interviews in the first round of data collection in 1991 and semi-structured interviews in the second round in 1993. Using content analysis with the data from the first round, Ushioda (1994) found eight broad descriptive sources of motivation: academic interest, L2 learning enjoyment, past L2 learning experience, personal satisfaction, desired levels of L2 competence, personal goals, feelings about French-speaking countries/people, external/course-related pressures, and incentives (p. 90). Among these, Ushioda found that the pervasive motivational source for this sample was the attribution to past and present positive L2-learning and L2-related experiences, which resulted in feelings of self-efficacy. Moreover, Ushioda (1994, 2001) found that
more successful L2 learners were qualitatively different in their motivation from less successful learners. Specifically, more successful L2 learners attributed their motivation more to their positive learning experiences, whereas less successful learners ascribed their motivation to future personal goals.

Ushioda’s second round of data collection in 1993 continued with the same sample to explore the students’ change of motivation over the course of the data collection, along with the motivational thinking processes that underpinned these L2 students’ motivation (Ushioda, 1998, 2001). Again using content analysis, Ushioda identified the same categories of motivation as influencing these L2 learners’ studies. Moreover, when combining the results of the first round and the second round, Ushioda (2001) was able to track changes in L2 learners’ motivation on both global and qualitative scales. The global changes in degree of motivation were associated with L2-learning and L2-related experiences. The qualitative developments of L2 motivation were demonstrated in several aspects of L2 motivation, especially in the clearer shaping of L2-related learning goals. As such, generally motivation consisted of both “causal” and “teleological” dimensions (p. 117) in that it was influenced by positive L2 learning experiences and future goals. The findings further showed that various factors in the L2 learners’ environment other than those related to L2-learning and L2-related experiences influenced the learners’ motivation. The study also showed that students’ motivational thinking processes were attached to positive thinking regarding their ability, and attribution to effort. Their utility of motivational strategies were effective in “getting [their] motivation on line again” despite their failures in learning the L2 (Ushioda, 1998, p. 86).

Despite the limitations associated with qualitative methods using a small number of participants, Ushioda (1994, 1998, 2001) was able to show the intricate web of factors, including individual and sociohistorical ones, that had an impact on L2 learners’ motivation to learn a language. She was also able to show changes in the L2 learners’ motivation on both global and qualitative scales that were brought about by the various factors in the L2 learners’ environment. As such, the L2 learners’ motivation was a “socially mediated process” (Ushioda, 2003, p. 90) but not an individual phenomenon. In particular, goal orientation in her study was shown to be a “potentially evolving dimension which needs time to develop and assume motivational importance and clarity” (Ushioda, 2001, p. 117). Ushioda also claimed that the learners in her study had
“effective motivational thinking” (p. 120) because they knew what positive aspects of their learning experiences to focus on to motivate themselves while ignoring the negative aspects. Based on this, she concluded that the less successful L2 learners in the study might not be categorized as demotivated by their learning experiences; they seemed to conceptualize their motivation in a different way based on the specific goals that shaped their efforts to learn the L2.

In general, a qualitative approach in researching L2 motivation seems to be promising because it provides an emic perspective into the L2 learners’ motivation via the L2 learners’ accounts of their experiences. A qualitative approach also seems able to show the “multidimensional and multidirectional” nature of motivation (Ushioda, 2001, p. 119), and the dynamic nature of motivation in terms of change over time.

2.2.5 Norton’s Conceptualization of Motivation as Investment

Peirce (1995) and Norton (2000, 2001) investigated the relationship between the identity formation of immigrant women in Canada and their language learning experiences in their home, classes, and workplace. Based on Bourdieu’s (1977) metaphors of investment and cultural capital, Peirce (1995) argued that “if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world” (p. 17). In her study, the immigrant women invested in learning the English language because they believed that it would provide them with a passport into the social network in their host country (symbolic resources) and money (material resources). Peirce further argued that “[the] notion of investment…attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world” (p. 17). As such, she stated that the term investment described the language learner as “having a complex social identity and multiple desires” (p. 17-18). Peirce (1995) argued that the term motivation did not help to capture these aspects of the language learner’s identity as much as the notion of investment.

Peirce’s (1995) view of investment in place of motivation may be understood more clearly in relation to the way she employed the notions of imagination by Wenger’s (1998) and Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities in her study. Wenger (1998) defined imagination, which he considered to be a mode of belonging as, “a process of expanding ourselves by transcending our time and space and creating new
images of the world and ourselves” (p. 176). Anderson’s (1991) notion of imagined communities was attached to the national spirit that people from a country feel as a means of attaching themselves to a community (as cited in Norton, 2001). As such, Norton (2001) expanded on the meaning of the concept ‘imagined community’ to use in the context of language learning by her sample of immigrant women in Canada:

When Katarina and Felicia entered their language classrooms, they not only saw a classroom with four walls, but envisioned a community that transcended time and space. Thus these learners were engaged in their language classrooms, the realm of their community extended to the imagined world outside the classroom-their imagined communities (Norton, 2001, p. 164).

It is evident that the investment of the immigrant women in their language learning was closely connected to their imagined communities, in which they desired access to both material and symbolic resources with English as the passport. Norton (2001) further argued that the teacher did not acknowledge the existence of these imagined communities, thereby negatively influencing the participation of these women in class.

Though situated in an L2 learning context and within an intricate web of relationships among power, language, and identities, Norton’s (2000, 2001) study also offers some valuable meanings for the teaching and learning of the English language in a foreign language learning context, where the issue of the target language speaker’s power over the language learner is not so salient. Kanno and Norton (2003) defined imagined communities as “groups of people not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination” (p. 241). It is arguable that in the foreign language context, where direct contact with the native speakers is limited, the foreign language learner still has access to two communities of language learning: the classroom community and the global community of English speakers. The language learner’s non-participation in the classroom might result from a clash between the imagined community of a conducive language learning group and the actual community to which they belong, or from the teacher’s ignorance of their imagined community outside the classroom. In other words, their non-participation may result from the gap between their investment and expected outcomes. Generally, Norton’s conceptualization of investment as motivation may be useful in understanding how foreign language learners invest in their learning via their imagined participation in an imagined global community of English speakers. However, care should be taken when
applying this notion to the foreign language context. The notion of investment as described by Norton seemed to be bounded by the power relationship between the native speaker and the language learner in which the second language learner learns English to obtain access to the resources controlled by the native speaker. However, this desire is not important in the EFL context wherein learners learn English to have more privileges than those without English knowledge, but not to obtain the resources controlled by the native speaker.

2.2.6 Cultural Influences on Motivation in Foreign Language

This section reviews how cultural values influence motivation to learn a foreign language. First, I will investigate how research views the relationship between culture and learning.

A number of researchers have voiced their support for the importance of culture in student learning (e.g., Biggs, 1996a; Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Carson, 1998; Lee, 1996; Rueda & Chen, 2005; Salili & Hoosain, 2007). Salili and Hoosain (2007) stated that, to effectively stimulate students from various cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to gain an understanding of their culturally-defined characteristics. Other researchers (Biggs, 1996a; Biggs & Watkins, 1996; Carson, 1998; Lee, 1996) mainly expressed their concerns about students from the Confucian-heritage cultures, like China, Japan, and Korea, saying that these students were influenced by the Confucian tradition, and that interpreting their learning approaches as being only surface or categorizing these students as passive would be misleading. Carson (1998) stated:

[the] influence of the Confucian tradition in Asian cultures is strong…neglecting this influence leads to an incomplete understanding of students’ educational strategies and strengths (p. 737).

In terms of cultural influences on motivation, with specific reference to Asian students’ motivation to learn, Hawkins (1994) argued that certain Confucian ethics like filial piety, importance of hard work, and respect for order and authority underpinned student motivation and achievement, and helped to explain high levels of motivation in Asian students. Rueda and Chen (2005) found that cultural factors influenced the ways different groups of Chinese language students valued their learning. For example, Chinese heritage students claimed that they were motivated to learn Chinese for family-
related reasons, such as communicating with family members or understanding their own culture, while non-heritage students learnt it for instrumental reasons.

In the EFL learning context, the existence of certain motivations in the Asian context is determined by cultural values. Researchers (Warden & Lin, 2000; J. F. Chen et al., 2005) did not find any integrative motivation in Chinese EFL context, but required motivation put forth by Confucian values. Other researchers (e.g. Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Lamb, 2004b; Yashima, 2002) from other EFL contexts also claimed that the notion of the integrative motivation was not universally applicable (see also 2.2.1.4.3).

As such, it is important to observe whether Vietnamese technical English majors are influenced by Vietnamese cultural values in their English studies. It is expected that this study will provide an emic view into how the participants were motivated to learn the English language and whether their motivations were influenced by their cultural backgrounds (see 2.3.2 for a thorough discussion on Vietnamese culture).

2.2.7 Other Conceptual Issues in Motivation

In this section, I review three other conceptual issues related to motivation: motivation and group dynamics; demotivation; and motivation, self-confidence, and Willingness to Communicate (WTC). These concepts are found to contribute to the current study as discussed below.

2.2.7.1 Motivation and group dynamics.

Dörnyei and Malderez (1999) stated that “group processes are a fundamental factor in most learning contexts and can make all of the difference when it comes to successful learning experiences and outcomes” (p. 155). In a similar vein, Ushioda (2003) described the influences of the classroom as a “social unit” (p. 93) on student motivation in that positive classroom processes might help to facilitate student motivation to learn. As such, it is important to examine the literature in which group processes exist in the classroom and in what ways they affect students’ foreign language learning.

Drawing from mainstream social psychology, Dörnyei and Malderez (1997) defined a group as “the whole language class” (p. 66), and group dynamics as involving the dynamics of both in-class small groups and the whole class. Although Dörnyei and
Malderez (1997) discussed many characteristics of group dynamics, I have reviewed only those processes that are relevant to the current research. These group processes consist of group norms, group cohesiveness, and group goals.

Group norms concern the rules accepted and followed by the whole group to promote the effective performance of the whole group (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997, 1999; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). These norms help the group to create pressure on members who violate the rules, and in the case of positive group norms, facilitate each member’s learning. For example, positive norms, like participating actively in class learning activities or sharing learning materials, will make every member try their best to conform to these commonly accepted rules. Group cohesiveness involves how close the group members feel toward one another. This results in each member’s personal perceived responsibility for contributing to the group success (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999). Group goals refer to a shared purpose among group members (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999). However, Dörnyei and Malderez argued that in an educational context in which the educational purpose is selected and imposed by others, this purpose might not be shared by every group member. Therefore, upon deciding the common group goals, the group needs to take into account “individual goals,” “institutional constraints,” and “success criteria” (p. 162, original italics).

Despite limited research on group processes in the foreign language classroom, findings have shown positive influences of the group on student learning and motivation. Group cohesiveness was found to be associated with the perception that the classroom environment was conducive to learning (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994). Senior (1997) found that a “bonded class” (p. 3) provided a positive environment for members, including the teacher, to function effectively. Specifically, the teacher showed more devotion to teaching via selecting more interesting learning materials and activities, and students felt secure about practising in front of others. Chang (2007, 2010) found that group norms and cohesiveness could either positively or negatively influence the learner’s motivation and autonomous behaviours. For example, negative group norms, like spending as little effort on presentations as possible, demotivated some students, whereas encouragement from other group members motivated some to work diligently for exams. Heitzman (2009) found that group cohesion and common group goals in which members were willing to offer help and contribute to the success of a lesson motivated all group members, even the less active students, to get involved in the lesson.
Generally, it cannot be denied that the group processes in a class play an important role in facilitating and motivating its members to learn. In the current study, each participant will learn with the same classmates until the final year at university, so it may be said that classmates will, in one way or another, affect the participants’ study. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how the participants’ classmates and their class as a group influence these participants’ motivation to learn the English language.

2.2.7.2 Demotivation.

Dörnyei (2001) defined demotivation as, “those environmental stimuli and classroom events that cancel out even strong existing motivation in the students” (p. 3). Dörnyei argued that negative external forces such as “public humiliation, devastating test results, or conflicts with peers” (p. 141) lead to feelings of demotivation in students; however, the original positive motivational forces only go dormant and become operational again when the negative forces ceased to have any effect on the students.

In the foreign language learning context, research into student demotivation has been fairly recent (see e.g., Falout, Elwood & Hood, 2009; Keblawi, 2005; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Tran & Baldauf, 2007; Ushioda, 2001). At least half of these studies have been done in the EFL context in Japan (Falout et al., 2009; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). The studies conducted in Japan found that the most common demotivating factors among Japanese high school (secondary school) and university students were teacher-related factors, specifically, teachers’ competence and teaching styles, including teachers’ ability, ways of teaching, and attitudes. Some other serious demotivating factors were learning contents and materials, and test-related pressures. With specific reference to Japanese university students, Falout et al. (2009) found that several affective factors resulting from past failures like self-blame and reduced self-confidence might act as demotivators. However, Falout et al. specified that more proficient students were able to find suitable coping strategies to overcome their demotivation.

In addition to the teacher as a demotivating factor, Keblawi (2005) found that classmate behaviours such as lack of self-discipline, along with the textbooks used and test-related pressures were detrimental to Arabic learners’ English studies. In her qualitative study with Irish learners of French (see 2.2.4), Ushioda (1998, 2001) identified several negative motivational factors, from both the immediate language
learning environment and personal circumstances. The former group of factors included, teaching methods, coursework pressures, and institutional policies. The latter comprised a feeling of depression, and family-related matters like parental separation.

Only one study in the literature focused on Vietnamese student demotivation, as it affected students majoring in economics (Tran & Baldauf, 2007). The results reported that there were two overarching groups of demotivators. The first group, internal attributions, consisted of students’ attitudes toward English, experiences of failures or lack of success, and self-esteem. The second group, external attributions, comprised teacher-related factors like teachers’ behaviour, competence, teaching methods, and grading and assessment; along with learning environment demotivating factors including classroom atmosphere, opportunities to learn English, learning conditions, class time, and textbooks. This second group also included obligation-related factors which concerned pressures from family and social pressures. Like Dörnyei (2001), Tran and Baldauf found that students were able to employ suitable strategies to remotivate themselves.

Generally, the studies of student demotivation were able to identify demotivating factors in both the immediate learning environment and social and family networks, with the demotivators from the immediate English educational environment exerting more negative influences than all other factors. However, as these studies were conducted with non-English majors, it was supposed that these students might not experience as wide a range of demotivators as might English majors. The current study will inform the identification of demotivators in foreign language learning for students majoring in English.

2.2.7.3 Motivation, self-confidence, and Willingness to Communicate (WTC).

The model of WTC in a second language by MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998) was drawn on the work of WTC in a first language by McCroskey and Baer (1985). McCroskey and Baer (1985) defined WTC as “a personality-based, trait-like predisposition” (p. 6) to communicate in various situations with different people when the person has choice of whether to talk. As such, they considered WTC as a stable variable across situations. When MacIntyre and his associates extended the model to L2 contexts, they applied it to not only speaking, but also to writing, reading, and listening skills. They conceptualized the WTC in a second language as “a readiness to
enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (p. 547). They argued that a WTC in a second language was situational and was influenced by a hierarchy of both situational and stable influences. The situational variables were supposed to exert more immediate influences on WTC than stable ones. MacIntyre and his colleagues theorized that there were six layers in the model of influences on WTC, which were categorized into situational and stable variables. Three layers belonging to the situational group comprised communication behaviour (L2 use), behavioural intention (WTC), and situated antecedents (desire to communicate with a specific person, and state communicative self-confidence). Situated antecedents determine the level of WTC, which then leads the person to look for the opportunity to communicate and actually initiate communication. The three layers that belong to the stable group are motivational propensities (interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, and L2 self-confidence), affective-cognitive context (intergroup attitudes, social situation, and communicative competence), and social and individual context (intergroup climate, and personality). Social and individual context as the context of communication influences the affective-cognitive context, which denotes an individual’s personal history, attitudes, and motives. The affective-cognitive context then influences the individual’s motivational propensities which lead to that person’s situated antecedents.

The WTC construct has been applied to the foreign language learning context by several researchers (see e.g., Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004). Peng and Woodrow (2010) investigated Chinese students’ WTC in the classroom context using SEM and found interrelationships among WTC, communication confidence, motivation, learner beliefs, and classroom environment. Among these, communication confidence was found to be the most important predictor of WTC, and the classroom context was found to both directly impact on WTC and indirectly influence WTC via learner beliefs, motivation, and confidence. As such, Peng and Woodrow were able to show that both individual and contextual factors in a foreign language learning classroom influenced students’ WTC. Also in the Chinese classroom context, Wen and Clément (2003) theorized that several Chinese Confucian values, like other-directed self and a submissive way of learning, might influence and shape students’ WTC in the classroom. Around the same time, Yashima and his associates (Yashima, 2002; Yashima et al., 2004) found that international posture, “a general attitude toward the international community that
influences English learning and communication among Japanese learners” (Yashima, 2002), directly influenced WTC and motivation of Japanese students. Motivation indirectly influenced L2 communication confidence which then had an impact on WTC.

Taken together, the WTC construct proposed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) and contributed to by foreign language researchers “may help to orient theory and research toward the ultimate goal of language learning: authentic communication between persons of different languages and cultural backgrounds” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 559). Using the WTC construct seemed relevant to the current study because I investigated how motivation and self-confidence of seven participants influenced their willingness to use English in four English skills in class, and in their daily communication.

2.3. Self-determination Theory as the Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory was adopted as the main theoretical framework for this study as it shows below, employing this theory was appropriate to explore the motivations of the seven female Vietnamese technical English majors within the complexity of Vietnam’s social and cultural influences (see Reeve et al., 2004). In this section, I will review the application of the self-determination theory in second and foreign language learning contexts. Then I will discuss the cultural context in Vietnam and the application of the self-determination theory in Vietnam’s context.

2.3.1. Self-determination Theory

As discussed in section 2.1, self-determination theory was first proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), and then applied in the educational context by Vallerand and his associates (1997; Vallerand et al., 1992, 1993). Noels and her colleagues (2000) have made use of self-determination theory in the L2 learning context in Canada by developing reliable scales to measure intrinsic motivation and types of extrinsic motivation, and investigating the correlations among intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivations with Gardner’s (1985) integrative and instrumental motivation. Moreover, Noels and her colleagues also investigated the relationship among intrinsic and extrinsic motivations with the teachers’ communicative styles.

The following section will first look into Noels and her colleagues’ contribution, and then the application of this theory to the foreign language context.
2. 3.1.1 Noels and her associates’ contributions to the application of self-determination theory in the second language learning context.

The following sections will examine intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on a self-determination continuum; their correlations with instrumental and integrative motivation, and with Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) four orientations; and finally as they relate to teachers’ communicative styles.

2. 3.1.1.1 Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation on a self-determination continuum.

Based on empirical studies with Canadian L2 learners, Noels and her associates (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000; Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 2001) developed an instrument to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on a self-determination scale. They largely employed the scales to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivations designed by Vallerand et al. (1992, 1993) but also developed some items themselves. Noels and her colleagues (Noels et al., 2000, 2001) also investigated the relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations with antecedents and consequences of self-determination, which are autonomy, competence, anxiety and intention to continue studying the L2. Using repeated measures ANOVA (Noels et al., 2001), and exploratory factor analysis (Noels et al., 2000), they identified seven motivational constructs, which represent IM-knowledge, IM-accomplishment, IM-challenge, amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation and identified motivation. Noels and her colleagues (2000) found that three types of intrinsic motivation were highly correlated with one another, suggesting that these types belonged to the same construct. All of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were correlated in such a way that they formed a continuum of self-determined motivations ranging from amotivation (no self-determined motivation) to external and introjected regulation (less self-determined motivation) to identified and intrinsic motivations (more self-determined motivations). These motivations were also found to be correlated with antecedents and consequences of self-determination in such a way that more self-determined motivations were more closely linked with perceived competence, choice, and intention to continue to learn the L2, and less closely correlated with anxiety (see also Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 1999). This suggested that the motivations could be arranged on a continuum of self-determination ranging from less to more self-
determined types of motivation. Noels and her colleagues (2000) also noted that there were three unexpected results. First, the scale of introjected regulation was more closely linked with intrinsic motivation. Second, amotivation was more negatively correlated with identified motivation than intrinsic motivation. Third, identified motivation was more positively correlated with antecedents and consequences of self-determination than intrinsic motivation.

2.3.1.1.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in relation to instrumental and integrative motivations, and Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) four orientations.

To further validate the construct of self-determined motivations, Noels and her colleagues explored the relationships among the seven types of self-determined motivation with Gardner’s instrumental and integrative orientations as well as Clément and Kruidenier’s (1983) four orientations. Specifically, the integrative orientation was found to correlate more highly with more self-determined motivations and less closely with less self-determined motivations, and to be the most similar to intrinsic motivation in the way it correlated with autonomy, competence and language outcomes (Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 2001). In terms of the relationship among the self-determination construct of motivation and the four orientations, instrumental, travel, knowledge and friendship identified by Clément and Kruidenier (1983), Noels et al. (2000) found that external regulation and instrumental orientation were the most correlated, and linked to antecedents and consequences of self-determination in the same manner. The other three orientations were more highly correlated with more self-determined motivations and with autonomy, competence, and intention to continue learning the L2, and negatively linked with anxiety.

2.3.1.1.3 Relationships among types of motivation on the self-determination continuum and teacher’s communicative styles.

In addition to examining the applicability of the self-determination theory to the SL context, and the relationships among the self-determination construct of motivations and other well-known motivational orientations existing in the foreign language context, Noels and her associates (Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 1999) also investigated how the teachers’ communicative style influenced students’ motivations on a self-determination continuum. Noels et al. (1999) found that the teachers’ controlling style was positively related to amotivation, unrelated to less self-determined types of motivation and
negatively linked to more-determined types. Furthermore, perception of teachers’ controlling behaviours was also positively linked to anxiety, and negatively to effort and intention to continue to learn the L2 and perceived level of competence. Meanwhile, perceptions that the teacher provided informative feedback were more strongly correlated with higher motivational intensity and intention to continue learning the L2 than with anxiety or perceived competence (see also Noels, 2001). In addition, Noels (2001) did not find a correlation between teachers’ personal involvement (Teacher Congeniality) and students’ self-perceptions of autonomy and competence. In general, teachers’ communicative style was not significantly correlated with students’ self-perceptions.

2.3.1.1.4. Concluding remarks.

It is evident that Noels and her colleagues developed a reliable self-determination construct that is applicable in the second and foreign learning contexts based on empirical research. Using a variety of reliable analysis methods such as path analysis, SEM, Pearson-product moment correlation, and repeated measure ANOVA, consistent results were obtained across a number of studies and sample sizes of participants learning different languages in different L2 contexts.

The results of her studies indicated that there was a continuum from being less self-determined to being more self-determined extrinsic motivations, and the most self-determined intrinsic motivation. The types of motivation on the self-determination continuum were also found to correlate with students’ perceptions of their autonomy and self-competence (antecedents), language anxiety, effort and intention to continue learning the L2 (consequences). However, whether the teachers’ communicative style had significant influences on students’ self perceptions of autonomy and competence was still controversial. Noels (2001) predicted that this controversial result might originate from the fact that the student sample had already fully developed their sense of autonomy and competence that might not be influenced by others or that they did not have sufficient amount of contact with teachers to perceive the teachers’ influences.

Noels and her associates also found that there were correlations between their proposed constructs and other well-known constructs existing in L2 motivation research. That means their research was linked to not only the motivation research trend in psychology and education but also L2 motivation research.
However, the proposed construct by Noels and her associates was not without weaknesses. First, the construct was mainly explored and applied, albeit with different samples, using the quantitative approach. Therefore, other subtle underlying cultural practices and values that might affect, for example, the students’ sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness might have been hindered. Second, the relationship between perceived relatedness, and other factors was not yet explored, despite being found to be an important influence on students’ motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Third, it was assumed that students experience one type of motivation at a time, although students might experience many types of motivation at the same time (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The next section will look at the application of the self-determination motivation construct to the foreign language learning context.

2.3.1.2 The self-determination motivation construct in the foreign language learning context.

It seemed that the self-determination theory of motivation has been fairly widely applied in different foreign language contexts mainly through quantitative studies (e.g., Lucas et al., 2010; Pae, 2008; Ramage, 1990; Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1996; Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006; Wu, 2003). These studies attempted to explore the differentiation of intrinsic motivation into four English skills (Lucas et al., 2010); the relationship among types of motivation and English achievement (Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006); relationships between instrumental and integrative orientations with types of self-determined motivation (Pae, 2008); relationships among types of motivation and confidence, motivation, and achievement (Pae, 2008); the power of intrinsic motivation in forming the intention to continue studying the foreign language (Ramage, 1990); the positive relationship among intrinsic motivation and learning strategies (Schmidt et al., 1996); and influences of the immediate classroom environment on students’ self-perceptions of autonomy, competence, and types of intrinsic motivation (Wu, 2003).

Meanwhile, there has been little empirical research into Vietnamese English learners’ motivation (Dang, 2006; L. T. Tran, 2007; Phan & Phan, 2010), especially using the self-determination theory. However, despite being scant, extant empirical research in Vietnamese English students’ motivation reveals that Vietnamese students
are also intrinsically motivated, in addition to experiencing other types of motivation. L. T. Tran’s (2007) study with English majors found that even in a traditionally-considered boring writing class, Vietnamese English majors were intrinsically motivated by those activities that are relevant to their needs, interests and background knowledge. Phan and Phan (2010) found that information technology (IT) majors who studied English were not only intrinsically motivated to learn English because it was interesting to them but also because of their needs to know about English-speaking cultures. Additionally, they were motivated to learn English to improve their specialized knowledge of their major, IT, and to serve their future job as IT technicians. Though not framed within a self-determination theory, Dang (2006) found that successful Vietnamese English learners were motivated by their interest in learning the language. Collectively, there seems to be a big gap between the generalization that Vietnamese English students’ motivation to learn the English language is generated by their teachers and inspired by the students’ “will to succeed” (G. Ellis, 1996, p. 215; see also V. C. Le, 2001) and the results of empirical research on the students’ motivation to learn. Therefore, this current study aims to provide more insights into the motivation of Vietnamese English learners, particularly motivations of Vietnamese technical English majors. It is expected that using a qualitative approach will help me to gain an emic view into the students’ views of their own motivation to learn the English language.

Altogether, these studies demonstrated that different types of self-determined motivation existed in the foreign language context. Furthermore, these types of motivation had predictive power for language learning outcomes. However, as most studies were conducted in the quantitative approach, they were not able to investigate the emic perspective of the foreign language learner. Thus various factors in the language learning environment were not taken into account.

The following section will look at three important factors that were considered as important to the internalization of values associated with intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 1996): autonomy, competence and relatedness, and the main factors in the environment that might help to enhance students’ self-perceptions of autonomy, competence and relatedness, such as the role of teachers, classmates, and family members.
2. 3.1.3 Social support for the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Deci and Ryan (1985) theorized that a supportive learning environment needs to address three aspects: autonomy, competence and relatedness. In this section, I will discuss each aspect in turn. For each aspect, I will first review how different Western and Asian perspectives are in defining the concept. It follows by a review on how each of these aspects, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, influenced EFL students’ motivation.

2. 3.1.3.1 Autonomy.

The most oft-cited definition of autonomy by Holec (1981) describes it as the learner’s “ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). Holec expanded this definition by saying that an autonomous learner selected learning objectives, learning contents, learning strategies and methods, and monitored and evaluated learning progress (see also Dam, 2003). As such, the Western concept of autonomy presupposes the learner’s independence in learning. Consequently, when situated within the Western’s conception of individual autonomy, the Asian student seemed to be pictured as being passive, and lacking autonomy due to the constraints imposed by Confucianism. In this view, “passive” students appear to hardly ever ask questions, seek clarifications or give answers in class (see Ballard, 1987, Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Le, 2001; Samuelowicz, 1987). They are even attributed as lacking critical thinking and analytical reasoning (Ballard, 1987; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Samuelowicz, 1987).

However, Iyengar and DeVoe (2003) argued that members of collectivist societies, such as Asian students, preferred other-made choice as they value interrelatedness with other members in the groups they identify with. Being aware of this collectivist value and with specific regard to the notion of autonomy in the Asian context, Littlewood (1999) conceptualized autonomy as “involving students’ capacity to use their learning independently of their teachers” (p. 73, original emphasis). Littlewood claimed that there were two aspects of autonomy: proactive and reactive autonomy. Proactive autonomy means the student “regulates the direction of activity as well as the activity itself” (p. 75) by taking personal responsibility for learning through setting learning objectives, finding suitable learning strategies, and evaluating the outcomes. Reactive
autonomy means the student “regulates the activity once the direction has been set” (p. 75). Littlewood theorized that East Asian learners have more reactive autonomy than proactive autonomy due to three cultural values: the collectivist orientation, respect for power and authority, and attribution of success to effort and self-discipline. However, he underlined that they “have the same capacity for autonomy as other learners” (p. 88). He proposed that the notion of autonomy be connected to relatedness because the three cultural values mentioned above involve it. It may, therefore, present an opportunity for promoting autonomy in the East Asian context.

Several studies conducted in the Asian context lent support to Littlewood’s (1999) ideas about Asian language learners’ capacity for autonomy (e.g., Hyland, 2004; Lamb, 2004a; Spratt et al., 2002). These studies were conducted using mixed research methods or qualitative research. Hyland (2004) found that the Hong Kong student teachers who were considered as successful English learners in her study autonomously sought opportunities to improve English outside class, lending support to Littlewood’s (1999) idea that East Asian students demonstrate their proactive autonomy in the out-of-class learning context as they set learning objectives, find suitable learning strategies and evaluated learning outcomes.

Also in the Hong Kong context, Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) found that in the formal learning context, students expected the teacher to be responsible for setting learning objectives, evaluating students’ learning, and organizing and selecting learning activities and materials. However, in the out-of-class learning context, the students seemed to be aware of their personal responsibility for setting their own learning objectives and selecting their learning activities. Spratt et al. also found that students preferred to do those activities that they were motivated to do, but not those they were not interested in despite teacher encouragement, leading Spratt et al. to theorize that motivation might give rise to autonomous learning strategies.

Lamb (2004a) found that teenage Indonesians were also autonomous learners in both formal and informal English learning environments. In class, these young students employed different strategies to overcome their boredom, such as extending group discussions beyond the teacher’s requirement and seeking help from trainee teachers. Out-of class, despite their limited English proficiency, they watched TV and movies in English, listened to English music and even sought private classes to improve their perceived weak English skills.
Benson, Chik, and Lim’s (2003) study demonstrated that the two Asian learners were able to “negotiate” (p. 39) with their cultural influences to achieve their desired learning goals and become autonomous learners. Despite the cultural constraints on the requirements in the formal language learning context which encouraged memorization and earning good grades, both the participants were able to separate the goals that were set by the school from their personal goals in order to sustain their motivation and reach their own goals.

Moreover, Asian students in the study abroad context also demonstrated their ability to exercise autonomous learning strategies (Gieve & Clark, 2005). When required to participate in a self-directed learning programme and a group learning activity, Chinese students were able to exercise both proactive and reactive autonomy; they also indicated that they intended to sustain autonomous learning behaviour. Gieve and Clark suggest that under favourable learning conditions, culturally influenced learning approaches could be changed.

These studies show that the Asian student displays autonomy in both in-class and out-of-class learning environments. Some of these studies specifically show how “autonomy is now seen to develop out of interaction with others [within specific contexts]; it benefits from interdependence, and classrooms and teachers are no longer peripheral but at the centre-staged of practical concern” (Smith & Ushioda, 2009, p. 244). This suggests the socially and locally situated and relational nature of autonomy.

The relationship between student autonomy and motivation in foreign language learning has also been widely researched (e.g., Spratt et al. 2002; Ushioda, 1996, 2003). Spratt et al. (2002) suggested that motivation preceded autonomy. Ushioda (1996, 2003) stated that learner motivation was enhanced when autonomy was, and that “[autonomous] language learners are by definition motivated learners” (Ushioda, 1996, p. 2).

2. 3.1.3.2 Competence.

Competence refers to students’ feelings of “interacting effectively with the environment” (Vallerand, 1997). Legault et al. (2006) stated that parents, peers and teachers could provide competence support for students via feedback to make them maximize their sense of perceived competence. They found that the teacher was the most important source of competence support for students in academic contexts because
without it, students perceived themselves as having low ability, which was correlated with low academic performance and the intention to drop out. Several studies showed that self-perception of competence and study interest are positively correlated with intrinsic motivation (Fazey & Fazey, 2001; Gottfried, 1985, 1990; Muller & Louw, 2004).

In the context of foreign language learning, research has demonstrated that perceived competence resulting from teacher’s competence support predicted intrinsic motivation (e.g., Wu, 2003); and that the students’ personally perceived communication competence was correlated with WTC (e.g., Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima et al. 2004). These lend support to the conclusion that perceived competence is important in motivating students to learn.

2. 3.1.3.3 Relatedness.

Reeve (1996) stated that relatedness sets the context for internalization to occur. He said that the feeling of relatedness is the sense of belongingness and support with which the student feels supported, valued and secure. However, Reeve also theorized that relatedness only sets the necessary context for internalization, since the student must be able to “see the values, meaning and utility” (p. 46) of what others want the person to do for internalization to occur. In terms of the role of relatedness in a class, Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) echoed that group cohesiveness facilitated the group members’ responsibility to the group goals, thereby motivating their performance and the group’s work efficiency (see also 2.2.7.1). Students who found themselves belonged to their class felt self-efficacious, and were interested in and positively evaluated the class learning materials. The teacher’s warmth, enthusiasm and friendliness were found to facilitate students’ sense of belonging (Freeman, Anderman & Jensen, 2007; Goodenow, 1993). Furrer and Skinner (2003) looked at relatedness to parents as well as teachers and peers, and found that it predicted students’ engagement in school, which, in turn, predicted their motivation and perceived control over their study. Meanwhile, Legault et al. (2006) found that the lack of relatedness, especially to parents, could lead to negative behaviours, such as not valuing school and playing truant. They suggested that relatedness of parents and peers played a more important role than that of the teacher. Parental relatedness was also found to predict students’ mastery goal orientations and interest in learning (Wentzel, 1998). These studies suggest that social
relatedness with important others plays an important role in mediating students’ motivation to learn.

2.3.1.4 The role of important others in providing social support.

As discussed above, autonomy, competence and relatedness are important to the thriving of intrinsic motivation, and internalization of values. Studies showed that these can be supported by important others who are involved in the learner’s language learning process. These important others include the teacher, classmates and parents. The following sections will look more closely at their role in providing social support.

2.3.1.4.1 The teacher.

In the classroom, the teacher plays such an important role that “almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students (Dörnyei, 2001a, p. 32). In this section, I will review the ways a teacher provides autonomy, competence and relatedness for students to support the internalization of values associated with intrinsic motivation.

Reeve (1996) defined autonomy support as “the amount of freedom a teacher gives to a student so the student can connect his or her behaviour to personal goals, interests, and values” (p. 206). Dörnyei (2001a) stated that an autonomy-supportive teacher needs to adopt the role of a facilitator who “views him/herself as a helper and instructional designer who leads learners to discover and create their own meanings about the world” (p. 106). Dam (2003) added that an autonomy-supportive teacher attempts to maintain a learner-centred classroom. Thus teachers who support autonomy encourage and allow students to take personal responsibility for their learning.

In terms of competence support, Reeve (1996) stated that the teacher could create a competence-supportive class environment by providing optimal challenge for students via an array of activities that challenge students’ competence level, allowing a certain degree of error making, and encouraging risk-taking, and providing immediate constructive/positive feedback. Brophy (2010) stated that first and foremost, the teacher must provide activities that are relevant to students’ background knowledge and repertoire of skills. These activities should provide students with the chance to interact with the teacher and other classmates, sharpen their creative thinking, and apply what they have learnt, and receive feedback. Dörnyei (2001a) also provided some other
teaching strategies that enhance students’ perceived competence via enhancing their self-confidence and protecting their social image. Furthermore, the teacher should teach students learning strategies so that they can organize their learning process, and learn more effectively.

Last, the teacher should respond to the need for relatedness with students as both individuals and a group. Dörnyei (2001a) suggested the teacher address their personal relationship with students by recognizing students as individuals, by learning their names and getting to know them. The teacher also needs to establish the class as a cohesive, bonded group with appropriate group norms. Brophy (2010) added that the teacher can also increase students’ interdependence on other group members by structuring common group goals.

Several studies conducted in the foreign language context demonstrated that the teacher’s social support was conducive to student learning and motivation (e.g., Chan, 2010; Heitzman, 2009). Teacher’s competence support through allowing students a choice of tasks motivated students to learn (Heitzman, 2009). In Lamb’s (2004a) study a teacher was considered as motivating for providing students with practice opportunities, letting them share personal information, and encouraging them to speak English. Chan (2010) found that a socially supportive teacher created a computer-supported knowledge-building class that motivated learners. This kind of class “goes beyond focusing on tasks with a mere shift from teacher-centered to student-centred learning…to become members of a community creating and improving knowledge for the community” (p. 174, original emphasis).

2.3.1.4.2 Classmates.

As discussed in 2.2.7.1, group processes like group cohesion, goals and norms influence student motivation to learn. This section focuses on the ways group members motivate one another to learn by providing competence support for, and improving the sense of relatedness with, one another.

Wilkinson et al. (2000) reviewed the mechanisms and processes in which peers exerted influences on students’ learning outcomes. Some of these mechanisms and processes are provision of socio-emotional support, social facilitation in which a student works better under the observation of other peers, feedback, providing explanations, and co-construction via scaffolding.
Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) stated that some group norms could encourage students to learn better and work cooperatively with others. For example, encouragement and praise from group members, sharing of opinions, helping, respecting group members’ ideas, to name just a few, are effective in motivating students to learn. Wong (2008) found that peers influenced Hong Kong students’ motivation more than the teacher or parents. One example was the pleasant feelings of learning English with classmates. The students in Heitzmann’s (2009) study found help from a competent peer useful to their English improvement. Chang (2010) found that sharing learning materials among group members, being encouraged to learn by others and helping one another with homework greatly motivated students to work conscientiously in their English studies.

2.3.1.4.3 Family members.

Family members, especially parents, play an important role in giving support to students’ learning, thereby inspiring them to learn. However, there may exist some differences between Western and Asian parents in their ways of providing autonomy, competence and relatedness support to their children.

Grolnick, Deci and Ryan (1997) contended that for children to internalize the values, goals, and aspirations that their parents appreciate, parents needed to provide them with autonomy support, structure and involvement. For autonomy support, parents need to provide children with choice, and limit their control as much as possible. For structure, they need to provide feedback, guidelines for behaviours, and challenging opportunities. For involvement, they need to show affection and love, interest and spend time with children. Grolnick et al. emphasized that the more autonomy support parents provided, the more their children internalized the expected values. The study of Grolnick, Ryan and Deci (1991) demonstrated that parental autonomy support and involvement led to children’s higher perceived competence and autonomy, which, in turn, predicted their academic achievement and motivation (see also Guay & Vallerand, 1997). Similarly, Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) reported that children of autonomy-supportive parents demonstrated intrinsic motivation and high academic performance.

However, in Asian cultures, especially those under the influences of Confucianism and Buddhism like China, Japan, and Vietnam, different values may appear to be incompatible with autonomy support. For example, more emphasis is put
on parental control over children (Chao & Tseng, 2002). In these Confucian-heritage cultures, interdependence among family members is always highlighted. In the family, filial piety acts as a guiding principle for the younger family members to follow. Children are expected to respect, honour, show obedience toward elder members, and seek their guidance and advice. Also, children are expected to fulfil filial obligations to the family in return to support and care from their family members. Whatever they do, they have to take into account the benefits of the family (see also 2.3.2.3.2). Thus Asian parents have considerable authority and control over their children. However, parental authority is not always attached to emotional detachment from their children; Asian parenting also emphasizes love and caring (Chao, 1994). Chao (1994) found that Chinese parents exercised “democratic control” (p. 1118) over their children in that they exerted control over their children due to their concern about the children’s academic success, but they also showed closeness and positive emotion toward their children.

Parental control bound with parental provision of affection and love in the Asian context is associated with children’s positive outcomes, for example, relationship harmony (Chao, 1994), and higher academic results (Chao & Tseng, 2002; T. Phan, 2003, 2004, 2005). With specific regard to Vietnamese parents and children, T. Phan (2004) found that the Vietnamese parents used both control and affection to inculcate their children with the goal of high academic achievements. They pushed their children to do well at school by telling the children stories about the benefits of achieving academically and the responsibilities for making parents proud, and stories about Vietnamese cultural values and the parents’ sacrifices for their children’s happiness. They exercised their control over their children by monitoring their academic activities and peer relationships. In this way, the children of these Vietnamese families internalized their responsibilities to their parents and were motivated to do well at school (see also T. Phan, 2005).

In the context of second and foreign language learning, the research on parental support for children’s studies is limited, and mainly focuses on how parental attitudes influence the children’s motivation to learn (e.g., Bartram, 2006; Gao, 2006; Gardner, 1968, 1985; Lamb, 2007). Some of these studies also revealed the power of parental competence support, such as communicating expectations, encouraging and assisting with studies, and purchasing learning materials to stimulate learning (Gao, 2006; Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008; Lamb, 2007). However, these studies did not show how parental
control/autonomy support and relatedness together with competence support influenced the students’ motivation to learn the foreign language. As such, it is expected that the current study will bring new insights into how these three types of social support influenced the Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn.

The next section will look into the socio-cultural values in Vietnam which are supposed to influence the educational practices.

2.3.2 Vietnam’s Social and Cultural Values

In this section, I will review the cultural values emphasized in Vietnam. These cultural values are a result of Vietnamese indigenous culture, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, and have been reinforced by communism. First, I will provide an overview of Vietnamese culture, then the role of communism, and last the cultural values that are emphasized in Vietnam’s context.

2.3.2.1 An overview of Vietnamese culture.

Vietnamese culture is a combination of Vietnamese indigenous culture, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. However, despite the influences of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, Vietnamese indigenous culture still maintains its core values because it has been able to adapt the Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist values (N. T. Tran, 2006). Later, Communist ideologies and Western values came into contact with Vietnamese culture, but their influences have been adapted in a different way. Communist ideologies help to reinforce Vietnamese cultural values, whereas Western influences are suppressed by means of communist ideologies so that the core values of Vietnamese culture are still maintained (T. T. H. Phan, 2008). In this section, I will discuss the development and core values of Vietnamese culture that might underline the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam.
N. T. Tran (2006) stated that the development and values of Vietnamese culture are influenced and shaped by the living conditions which have led to an economy based on water-based rice-crop agriculture. As this type of economy depends on nature, Vietnamese have to cooperate with one another to protect their crops. Moreover, Vietnamese need to pay special attention to the many inter-related factors that may impact crop yields. These features of the economy, in turn, shape the features of Vietnam’s social organization, leading to the collectivist/community spirit, emotion-based lifestyle, flexibility in social interaction, and high adaptability to various situations and changes. In particular, Vietnamese always try to achieve harmony with nature, and with the community.

Furthermore, as Vietnam is at a crossroads of civilizations, its indigenous culture has been blended with Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings, and later with Western values and communist ideologies. Because of the way it adopted and incorporated foreign cultural values, however, it has maintained its own identity (N. T. Tran, 2006). Specifically, Vietnamese culture often adapts particular aspects of a foreign influence to suit its own conditions, thereby forming a new cultural system with different features. For example, filial piety in Chinese Confucianism is attached to father and the king, whereas filial piety in Vietnamese Confucianism also includes the mother. Vietnamese Confucianism emphasizes emotion much more than Chinese Confucianism in that Vietnamese value benevolence and righteousness (which traditionally refer to emotion). Vietnamese Confucianism highlights dignity and face because as Vietnamese live in communities, they want to be socially respected (N. T. Tran, 2006). Apart from some differences, some of the Vietnamese cultural values
resulting from a blend with Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist teachings are filial piety, respect for learning and knowledge, and respect for morality.

2.3.2.2. Vietnamese Communism and Western influences.

According to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, communist ideologies were the ideals guiding Vietnam’s successful revolutions to gain independence against foreign invaders from 1930 to 1975. Since 1975, these ideologies have become the guiding principle for reform to achieve industrialization and modernization in Vietnam (Vietnam Communist Party, Constitution, 1992). Vietnamese educational policy is aimed at developing communist/socialist citizens; for example, the Education Law (1998, 2005) stipulated that the aim of Vietnam’s education was to train the citizen to be “a patriot who loves manual labour, and know how to live and work for the harmony and benefits of the community” (Doan, 2005, p. 455). This reinforces the value of harmony found in the indigenous Vietnamese culture.

This differs from Western values. Western influences arrived in Vietnam through French domination that also brought science and the notions of democracy and individualism as well as personal freedom and responsibility (Jamieson, 1993; Smith, 1968). These seemed to go against Vietnamese tradition, which emphasizes collectivism and interdependence. Later, after the open-door policy and the market reforms, western culture has become popular through imported commodities which are considered as “markers of success” (Thomas & Drummond, 2003, p. 2; see also Marr, 2003). The availability of the internet as well as the impact of the market economy have brought Vietnamese youth the chance to acquire liberal and self-centred values as well as individualistic lifestyles (P. A. Nguyen, 2007). The Vietnamese government has expressed concerns about western influences as “[the] market economy...has encouraged individualism and made the people attach importance to individual interests while forgetting the interests of the community” (The Central Party Committee, Resolution of the Fifth Plenum, 2001). Gillespie (2005) also commented that imported values are blamed for making Vietnamese youth turn their back on the traditional Vietnamese culture to adopt “individualism and consumerism” (p. 62).

The Vietnamese government has attempted to reinforce Vietnamese national identity in relation to western values by “[maintaining] the good customs” and “[loving] one’s country and the socialist regime” (Article 31, Constitution, 1992). In education,
the government emphasizes that the goal is to train the socialist character (Education Law, 1998, 2005), and provide moral education at all levels (Doan, 2005).

The following section will discuss the core Vietnamese cultural values that are supposed to influence the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam and have been further reinforced by the Vietnamese communism.

2.3.2.3 Vietnamese cultural values.

The core Vietnamese cultural values under investigation are the sense of belonging; filial piety; respect for learning, knowledge and the teacher; and appreciation of effort.

2.3.2.3.1 The sense of belonging/ collectivist spirit.

As discussed in 2.3.2.1, Vietnamese sense of belonging originated from the water-based rice-crop culture in which people have to cooperate with one another to harness nature to yield the best crops (N. T. Tran, 2006; V. P. Tran, no date). As such, each Vietnamese is aware of the fact that they are responsible members of a community. The sense of belonging to a community has become increasingly salient and strong during more than a thousand years of fighting against foreign invaders. The strength of Vietnamese community spirit is portrayed in such folk songs as:

- Như Ý điề váy giã gương
  Người trong một nước thi thương nhau cùng
  As the rosy silk covers the mirror stand,
  Let’s a country’s people be united in the same affection

- Bầu ơi thương láy bí cùng,
  Tuy là khác giới nhưng chung một dân.
  Though of different species, you are in the same arbour (Duong, 1988).

Altogether, Vietnamese always considers community benefits before individual benefits. As a result, caring for others is a community rather than individual responsibility (N. T. Tran, 2006; V. P. Tran, no date). N.T. Tran (2006) stated that this was the typical feature of the ‘village culture’ in Vietnam. X. H. Le, Robert, Nguyen and Lilleleht
(2005) echoed that “human relationships as the foundation of ethics” (p. 4) were shown in the harmonious bonds that Vietnamese always attempt to maintain in their social interactions and relationships with other community members.

The Vietnamese government has always devoted a lot of effort in maintaining the community spirit of the common Vietnamese people, especially Vietnamese youth, via education and other means. For example, Article 4, Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stipulates that “the State applies a policy of equality, solidarity and mutual support among the various communities”. Also, the Education Law states that a socialist citizen “knows how to live and work for the harmony and benefits of the community” (Doan, 2005, p. 455). Moral education at all levels emphasizes teaching the love of community to students (Education Law, 1998, 2005). Social activities aim to foster the socialist character of loving manual work and support community members (Doan, 2005).

Generally, the community spirit is nurtured by means of not only the transmission of traditional cultural values but also the effort of the government.

2.3.2.3.2 Filial piety.

The notion of filial piety already existed in Vietnamese indigenous culture, and was later reinforced by Buddhist and Confucian teachings which were, however, adapted to be suitable to Vietnamese philosophy (N. T. Tran, 2006). Generally, in the perspective of Confucianism, “[filial] piety is the first virtue, and is the basis of human conduct” (T. L. Nguyen, 1999, p. 55; see also Vu, 2008). Filial piety, together with moral debt or gratitude, and merit, has governed Vietnamese family relationships (McLeod & Nguyen, 2001). Among these three values, filial piety is the most important guiding principle; it stipulates “the duties and obligations of children toward their parents” (McLeod & Nguyen, 2001, p. 136, see also Jamieson, 1993). Filial piety and other values are transmitted through folktales, sayings and proverbs, and folk songs such as these:

- Tu đâu cho bằng tu nhà
  Thờ cha kính mẹ ấy là chân tu.

*The best place to improve yourself is at home*

*True self-improvement is honouring father and respecting mother.*
Ru hơi, ru hơi, ru hơi,

Công cha như núi ngắt trời,

Nghĩa mẹ như nước ồ ngoài biên Dong.

Núi cao biên rộng mênh mông,

Cù lao chín chữ ghi lòng con ơi.

Sleep, my child,

Your father's kind acts can make a lofty mountain reach to the sky,

Your mother's are like water filling up the Eastern Sea.

As the mountain is lofty and the sea is immense,

Oh child, be engraved in your heart your parents’ kind acts (Duong, 1988)

McLeod and Nguyen stated that these literary works inculcate the gratitude of children toward their parents’ sacrifices to raise them (see also Vu, 2008).

Family traditions also play a role in transmitting values. In a traditional family, well-educated children know how to respect the elder and yield to the younger, live harmoniously, and achieve both academic successes and good conduct. The family is considered to be a cosy cradle where everyone is brought up, and emotion and righteousness are nurtured (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; Vu, 2008). Right after a child is born, one immediately receives the noble sacrifice of the mother, and of the other family members, which the child has to repay through their achievements, and attempts to meet parental expectations and follow parents’ wishes and aspirations. The family cultural traditions require the family generations to maintain these norms and values, and the family’s face/ honour and above all, to make the parents proud of one’s achievements. In modern times, despite changes in the relationship between the younger and older generations in the family in response to the social development, the core values of showing gratitude, respect, obedience, and caring remain unchanged (T. L. Nguyen, 1999). P. A. Nguyen (2004) found that together with personal successes, young graduates in present-day Vietnam still followed the traditions of paying filial obligations by obeying their parents’ opinions on their marriages and expending continuous effort to stay in harmony with parents and other family members.
The Vietnamese government also attempts to reinforce the notion of filial piety in Vietnamese youth through moral education at all levels. For example, first-grade students are taught how to create and maintain love within the family. Fourth-and fifth-grade students are taught how to take care of family members and make them happy (Education Law, 1998, 2005; Doan, 2005). The obligations of children are stipulated in Article 35 of the Marriage and Family Law of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam:

Children have the duty to love, respect, show gratitude and goodness to their parents, pay heed to the good advices of their parents, preserve the good traditions and prestige of their family. Children have the obligation and right to care for and support their parents. Children are strictly forbidden to ill-treat, persecute or hurt the honor of their parents.

Generally, despite changes in Vietnam, filial piety has still been considered as a crucial cultural value that guides Vietnamese family relationship.

2.3.2.3.3 Respect for learning, knowledge and the teacher.

The Vietnamese tradition of respecting learning and knowledge originally came from the Vietnamese indigenous culture (N. T. Tran, 2006), as found in proverbs such as these:

- Tôn sư trọng đạo
  *Respect the teacher, respect morality.*
- Môt kho vàng không bằng một nang chứa
  *Knowledge is power* (D. H. Nguyen, 2007).

It is also shown in the tradition of children doing some academic work on the first day of Lunar New Year for a new year full of academic achievements (Vu, 2008).

This value has its roots in the need for a harmonious relationship with other community members in order to maintain the rice-based economy. This need to maintain harmony led to respect for morality, education and knowledge. Later, when Confucianism came to Vietnam, it helped to reinforce this tradition, especially in the social position of educated people and the teacher. Hua et al. (2004) stated that in the feudal regime, the teacher was socially positioned just after the King and even before the father. N. T. Tran (2006) emphasized that Vietnamese all around the country tried
their best to study and take part in national civil service exams to obtain a chance to become mandarins for the royal courts. The existence of the Temple of Literature in Hanoi demonstrates the respect for doctors who contributed to building Vietnamese homeland into ‘one-thousand-year cultured nation’ (T. L. Nguyen, 1999). Pham and Fry (2004) emphasized the importance of the respect for learning and teachers that “[since] respect for learning and teachers have been enduring traits of the Vietnamese people through its civilization, these values have contributed fundamentally to the shaping of Vietnamese culture, history, and its people” (p. 201)

This tradition of respecting learning, knowledge and the teacher is further supported and reinforced by Vietnamese government’s policies. Articles 35 and 36, Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stipulate that “Education development is a primary national policy,” and “The State gives priority to investment in education.” Articles 10 and 12 in Education Law (1998, 2005) stipulate that “learning is the right and obligation of every citizen,” and “to develop education and to build a learning society are the responsibilities of the State and of the whole population.” Regarding the social position of the teacher, Decision No16/2008/QĐ-BGDĐT stipulated that the teaching career is socially respected and honoured. Articles 85 and 88, Education Law (1995, 2005) also stipulate that “students have to respect the teacher” and must not “disrespect honour, dignity or infringe physically upon teachers.” Moreover, in 1982, the Vietnamese government officially issued the Decision No 167-HĐBT on promulgating November 20th as Vietnamese Teachers’ day for students to show their respect for teachers.

Generally, it is evident that Vietnamese honour the teacher and respect learning and knowledge. This respect is reflected in Vietnamese tradition and policies of the government in education and training.

2.3.2.3.4 Appreciation of hard work.

Appreciating the role of hard work in attaining success is another important Vietnamese cultural value that originated from both Vietnamese indigenous cultural and Confucian teachings. Examples of how Vietnamese appreciate the role of effort can be found in the traditional proverbs:

- Kiến tha lâu cũng đầy tổ.

*By virtue of long work, the ant succeeds in filling up its nest.*
This important role of effort in gaining success can be seen in the example of Vietnamese water-based rice-crop farmers who have continuously attempted to find ways to harness natural forces to have good yields of crops (N. T. Tran, 2006; V. P. Tran, no date), or in the example of students under the feudal regime who continued to try to pass the national civil service exams despite every failure (Vu, 2008). This belief in the role of effort is also strongly manifested in Confucian teachings. Lee (1996) stated that Confucianists considered effort as very important in learning in that “education and learning are always associated with effort” (p. 31). C. S. Chen, Lee and Stevenson (1996) added that in Confucian teachings, effort but not ability determines the ultimate result of one’s action. In line with Vietnamese tradition of valuing the role of effort, the Vietnamese government also emphasizes teaching the love of hard work to students. Moral education, especially at lower grades, aims to cultivate the virtue of labour and hard work (Education Law, 1998, 2005; see also Doan, 2005). Students are encouraged to participate in various social activities so that the aim of training socialist citizens who love hard work can be achieved (Doan, 2005). The appreciation of effort in gaining ultimate achievement has been continuously encouraged in Vietnamese generations via transmission of traditions and government policies.

2.3.3 The Self-determination Theory of Motivation and its Possible Applicability in Vietnam’s EFL Learning Context

It has already been shown (Section 2.3.2) that Vietnamese students are influenced by specific cultural values and that their motivation to learn the English language may also be shaped by these forces. This suggests that looking at Vietnamese students’ motivations on a self-determination continuum will provide new insights into, for example, what types of motivations each student experienced under the influence of a specific value. This study, therefore, will draw on self-determination theory to investigate Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivations.
The theory of self-determination has been applied in the foreign language context using mainly the quantitative approach. However, it is difficult to see the interaction of different goals that students may simultaneously pursue, or the interaction of different factors that may simultaneously impact on students’ motivations. Therefore, this study aims to use a qualitative approach with interviews as the main data collection instrument in order to get an emic view of how students interpret the events that influence their English studies. Furthermore, the complex interactions of goals and factors in their English learning environment can be captured.

The studies conducted in the theory of self-determination have mainly investigated how the immediate English learning environment influences students’ motivation to learn but largely ignored the roles of other factors outside that environment, which might be due to the limitations of using a quantitative approach. Therefore, a qualitative approach using interviews that allows emergent understandings of influences to be pursued will allow me to also investigate these factors from the perspective of the students.

However, self-determination theory might not be able to provide sufficient insights into the intricate web of influences, motivation and affect. Consequently, other theories of motivation discussed in this chapter will be drawn on as needed.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed theories of motivation in both education and second/foreign learning context which are considered to be relevant to the study. I also presented the theory of self-determination as the main theoretical framework of the current study and framed it within Vietnamese cultural values.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the reasons why I chose the qualitative approach to guide this study, the ways I conducted the research, and how I analyzed the data.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms contribute to research. The chosen research paradigms determine the aims and methods of research because they are bound together (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, if the aim of a study is to understand the reasons for human behaviour rather than predict human behaviour, then it appears that the qualitative paradigm is more appropriate because its methods can generate richly detailed data that are based on the reality of an individual’s own experiences and interpretations (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For this reason, the qualitative paradigm has become increasingly popular in research on complex contextualized topics such as motivation (Dörnyei, 2007). Because there is no single qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), it is necessary to be clear about the procedures that make a particular study worthy of contributing to research.

In this chapter, I will present the qualitative methodological framework that I used in this research. The chapter is divided into five parts. The first part will address the reasons why the qualitative research approach is considered to be appropriate to this research, and the criteria to warrant its trustworthiness. Second, I will discuss the research design used in this study, which involves case study design and the research questions. Third, I will describe my position as a researcher. The fourth part will look into the ethical considerations of the research. The fifth part will describe the research procedure which concerns the research site, research participants, data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Qualitative Research Approach

3.1.1 Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs,
recordings and memos to the self…[Qualitative] research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

This definition describes some of the characteristics of qualitative research. These characteristics have been elaborated by a number of researchers. First, a qualitative study is conducted in a natural context, that is, it is “locally situated” (Richards, 2009, p. 149). Qualitative researchers believe that they are better able to understand the multiple realities constructed by participants when they observe and witness the myriad interactions in which the participants participate in their contexts, as well as the influences of other cultural and historical norms and values on these interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Second, the qualitative researcher often collects data from a combination of sources and does not rely on only one source. Data can be collected by means of interviews, observations, photographs, videos by the researcher, and also via texts or pictures produced by the participants that help portray how participants make sense of their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Third, the researcher is the main data collection instrument, deciding on the information to collect and the way to analyze and interpret the data (Lichtman, 2010). Fourth, the research process is “iterative, nonlinear” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 19), or “emergent” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39; see also Merriam, 1998; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In other words, the qualitative researcher does not follow a fixed, predesigned structure. The researcher may move from data collection to data analysis and then back to data collection (Lichtman, 2010). The research questions might be modified to better answer the research problems (Dörnyei, 2007). The researcher might also modify the data collection tools to suit the participants, the settings, and even the researcher’s emerging interest due to an increase in research skills and knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Fifth, the qualitative researcher investigates a phenomenon in a “holistic” rather than “reductionistic” manner (Lichtman, 2010, p.15; Richards, 2009, p. 149). This stems from a belief that a thorough and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon can only arise from looking at it as a whole, but not at its separate components. Therefore, a qualitative researcher also focuses on studying a small number of participants. Sixth, the qualitative researcher attempts to reconstruct the meanings that the participants make out of their world without letting his/her subjectivity influence this reconstruction.
(Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). In other words, the researcher attempts to gain an emic perspective of the phenomenon rather than an etic one. However, the researcher’s subjectivity may function as the “lens” through which the researcher looks into his or her research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.11), or as Lichtman (2010) posited, the data are “mediated” through the researcher (p. 16). Seventh, qualitative data is inductively analyzed with the researcher looking for patterns and themes in the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Lichtman, 2010; Richards, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Last, the qualitative researcher writes in “an active voice” using “the first person” which “leads to greater trust and accountability and is more forceful” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 18).

With regard to the field of second language research, the utility of qualitative research has become increasingly more popular (Duff, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dörnyei, 2001; Richards, 2009) and brought many new understandings into the language teaching and learning processes (Richards, 2009). Qualitative research has made considerable contributions to the understanding of learning processes and interactions in the language classroom and language learning experiences of learners at different age groups (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Richards, 2009). However, Dörnyei (2001) criticised research on motivation to learn a second language as having utilized a great deal of quantitative research by means of questionnaire surveys. This utility facilitates replicability, reliability, and generalizability, but is unable to uncover the “motivational dynamics” (p. 193) underlying a person’s actions. Employing a qualitative approach enables a researcher to interpret a participant’s motivated actions within his/her learning contexts based on that participant’s perspective.

Nevertheless, qualitative research faces challenges regarding its objectivity, generalizability, and reliability (Davis, 1995; Duff, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2010; Richards, 2009). The next section will provide a detailed discussion on how qualitative researchers have been warranting the trustworthiness of their research.

3.1.2 Criteria for Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness in doing research involves whether the outcomes of a study are believable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated that for a study to gain trustworthiness from its readers, it needs to address four issues: “truth value,” “applicability,” “consistency,” and “neutrality” (p. 290). Truth value concerns whether the findings from a study are able to adequately reflect reality. Applicability addresses
whether results from that study can be generalized across contexts and respondents. Consistency relates to whether the same findings will be found if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context or with similar participants in a similar context. Neutrality involves whether the researcher reconstructs events told by the participants without any bias. Lincoln and Guba stated that these four issues correspond to four criteria in quantitative research: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, respectively, and to four criteria in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this section, I will discuss how these criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed in this qualitative project.

3.1.2.1 Credibility.

To make a research study credible, it is important that the researcher demonstrates to the research community that the research results and interpretations adequately reflect how the participants actually responded to the research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve credibility, Lincoln and Guba suggested that the researcher employ several techniques, for example prolonged engagement in the research context, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. The research conducted for this thesis utilized some of these techniques to increase its credibility, each of which will be described in this section.

In terms of prolonged engagement in the research context, the data collection process lasted approximately 10 months, from the beginning of September 2008 to mid-July 2009. The process was divided into two stages, the first of which involved my presence at the research site, interviewing each of the student participants in person three times, having informal talks with them, and having them email their diaries to me. In the second stage, I maintained communication with these participants via email, and conducted a phone interview with each of them during June and July 2009 (see 3.5.3 for a discussion on the way I used these diaries in this study and the lengths of the interviews). It might be said that the length of this research relationship induced mutual understanding and trust between me and my student participants. Moreover, I was a lecturer of English at this faculty for six years, so I am well acquainted with the teaching and learning culture and have a good relationship with my former colleagues. Therefore, although I did only one round of phone interviews with the teacher
respondents, they were aware of this research from its inception, and doubtless, our long-term relationship helped establish my credibility as a researcher with them. It is also hoped that my prolonged engagement at the research site and my accepted membership in that context as a faculty member and as a Vietnamese also helped me to detect and avoid distortions that might have arisen. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that as an insider I may have missed alternative perspectives that an outsider might have observed. This dilemma confronts all researchers, and it can only be hoped that the disadvantages were outweighed by the advantages of my familiarity with the context.

Regarding triangulation, Berg (2004) defined this technique as “the use of multiple lines of sight [method]…to obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements” (p. 5). Denzin (1989) described four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In this study, I employed two types of triangulation, data and methodological triangulation. In terms of data triangulation, Denzin stated that the researcher might gather the data from a number of sources, such as different participants or different settings, or from a variety of points in time. With regard to methodological triangulation, Denzin described two types: “within-method triangulation” and “between-method triangulation” (p. 243). In the technique of within-method triangulation, “[the] investigator takes one method (the survey) and employs multiple strategies within that method to examine data. A survey questionnaire might be constructed that contains many different scales measuring the same empirical unit” (p. 243). In the technique of between-method triangulation, the researcher will employ “dissimilar methods to illuminate the same class of phenomenon… to achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies” (p. 244). In this study, I collected the responses from the seven student participants at different points in time over a period of 10 months. Therefore, the data collected were triangulated through time. Additionally, the data were collected from seven students and eight teachers who taught them, so the data were triangulated through different sources. Furthermore, I not only interviewed the participants but also asked the student participants to send me their diaries, and I exchanged email with both student and teacher participants to ask them to clarify the
points that I did not understand. This technique of “between-method” triangulation
helps to minimize the weakness of any one method used on its own.

With regard to checking the data, I sent the transcripts of the interviews to the
participants so that they could confirm accuracy before I proceeded with the data
analysis. I also asked them to clarify any points that were not clearly explained to avoid
misinterpretation.

3.1.2.2 Transferability.

The parameter of transferability in qualitative research involves whether the
findings of a study can be transferred to another study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued
that transferability can be achieved when the context of the original study is found to be
similar to that of a proposed study. Therefore, the task of the researcher is to describe
his/her context in as much detail as possible so that others can compare their proposed
contexts and find similarities. However, this comparison should be made by those in
other contexts rather than by the researcher(s) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, to achieve transferability, I provided a thick and detailed
description of my research site, participants, and research procedures (see 3.5). Given
that the student participants in this study are technical English majors within the
Vietnamese social and cultural context, it is possible that the study findings might be
applicable to other technical English majors in Vietnam. The findings might be also
applicable to other technical English majors who came from similar social and cultural
contexts in Asia. However, these findings might not apply to Vietnamese students or
other Asian students of other English majors, as the social needs for different English
majors might be different.

3.1.2.3 Dependability.

In qualitative research, the nature of reality is understood as changeable (Lincoln
& Guba, 1985). Because of this, it is important to consider how research might
contribute to changing reality. The parameter of dependability involves monitoring the
research process to keep track of any “instability and factors of phenomenal or design
induced change” (p. 299, original emphasis) that might lead to such changes.

In this research, I kept a detailed record of my research procedures. This record
included my University and Māori ethical application forms, and my interview and
diary guides. I had a diary in which details of interview times, places, and names of participants, as well as the changes to these were noted. For example, for the first interview, I had recruited 16 volunteer participants. However, in the first meeting in which I told them about the commitment to keeping a weekly diary over the course of three months, six chose not to continue with the study. Therefore, I conducted the first interview with 10 student participants. After the first interview, two others did not keep their commitment, so the second and third interviews were conducted with only eight participants. Another participant was not willing to participate in the last telephone interview, so I ended with having seven student participants in my research who completed all of the required four interviews and weekly diaries over the course of three months. Another change concerned the design of the study. Initially, the data collection process was to last only three months with three one-to-one interviews with each student participant and weekly diaries written by these students over the course of those three months. However, during the initial analysis of these data, I found that there were some additional issues that I wanted to explore more, so in late June and early July 2009, I conducted telephone interviews with these student participants along with eight teachers of English who taught them. The teachers were included at this point in time because I wanted to triangulate their responses with the interesting points that the student participants had made.

Moreover, to ensure the dependability of my findings and interpretations, I kept a careful record of my data coding process. As I employed inductive data coding, my codes were developed from the data. I coded all of my interviews three times; each time I kept a record of any changes in the use of the code names or definitions of the codes. I also compared the coded parts across each participant’s interviews and diaries as well as across all participants’, and found that they were consistent. When I summarized and interpreted the findings, I also checked the codes and themes repeatedly against their contexts in the diaries and interviews to avoid misinterpretation. An example is provided in 3.5.4.1.

3.1.2.4 Confirmability.

Confirmability is concerned with whether the findings and interpretations of findings are a true reconstruction of the participants’ responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be achieved by careful examination of the data, findings, interpretations, and
recommendations of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which also involves examining
the triangulation process and keeping a reflexive journal.

In this study, as discussed in 3.1.2.1 & 3.1.2.3, I triangulated the data from
different participants and from different sources of data. I also continuously checked the
findings and interpretations against the interview transcripts and kept a research diary in
which I noted any changes to the codes and their definitions, as well as the themes. My
data analysis techniques, based on grounded theory, also contributed to enhancing the
confirmability of the study because the codes were built gradually from the descriptive
level to the inferential level via a “continuous and iterative” process of data coding (see
Miller & Huberman, 1994, p. 12; Strauss & Cobin, 1998). Finally, I presented
quotations from interviews and email exchanges with the participants, as well as from
the diaries written by the student participants, in my findings and discussion as
“representative examples of general assertions” (Davis, 1995, p. 447). As a result,
others can see how I reconstructed my research participants’ interpretations of their
worlds.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Case Study Design

This study is organized as a case study of the seven technical English majors at
the English language and Translation Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, of a
technical university in Vietnam (see 3.5.1 & 3.5.2 for a more detailed discussion of the
setting and participants). A case study design was adopted for this research because a
qualitative case study approach would allow me to study the motivation to learn English
of these seven participants in depth and within the context of their English studies (see
Moreover, I also hoped that the “[use] of a recognized approach [like case study
approach] to research enhances the rigor and sophistication of the research design”
(Creswell, 2007, p. 45).

Yin (2009) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that

⊙ Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life
  context, especially when
The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

Much in line with Yin (2009), Creswell (2007), Merriam (1998), and Stakes (2000) shared the same view on the “boundedness” (see e.g., Stake, 2000, p. 436) of a case. The boundedness of a case involves the case being bounded by time, place, and number of participants. This research, as discussed in detail below, was conducted over the course of one academic year (approximately 10 months), on the campus of a technical university, with seven participants. Therefore, the case under study was a “bounded system” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Stakes (2000) added that a case has “behaviour patterns” (p. 436), which are coherently linked and sequentially repeated. This case study of seven female Vietnamese technical English majors demonstrated, for example, patterns of student behaviour such as the students’ negative reactions to the teachers’ lack of feedback or encouragement, or to the teachers’ insufficient technical knowledge. These, in turn, contributed to the students’ unmotivated behaviours in classes taught by such teachers. In addition, case study research requires multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Using face-to-face and phone interviews, email exchanges, and diaries from the students; and phone interviews with their teachers guaranteed that the data were rich and triangulated.

Merriam (1998) described three main strengths of case study research: “being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic” (p. 29). The first characteristic states that a case study always aims to explore only one phenomenon, so it is useful to investigate a practical problem. Second, a case study is descriptive in that it helps to provide a “rich” and “thick description” (p. 29) of a phenomenon in its real-life context, its variables, and the interaction of these variables, so the researcher can gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (see also Cohen et al., 2000; Yin, 2009). Third, a case study is heuristic in that it “can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Therefore, the adoption of a case study design for this research would be expected to provide a thorough, holistic understanding of the motivation to learn English of the seven participants, and dynamic interactions of various factors that impact on the participants’ motivation within their English learning context. It was also expected that using a case study design would help to expand understanding on Vietnamese learners’ motivation to learn English given the scant extant literature on that population.
However, case study research is not without weaknesses. It is often time-consuming. Critics have claimed that case studies lack rigor and are influenced by a researcher’s personal biases. Moreover, case study findings cannot be generalized to a larger population (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). With reference to the problem of generalization, van Lier (2005) argued that “particularization may be just as important—if not more so-than generalization” (p. 198, original emphasis).

Insights from a case study can inform, be adapted to, and provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account. Furthermore, if two cases provide apparently contradictory information about a certain issue…., this contrast can provide much food for thought and further research, thus being of great benefit to the field (van Lier, 2005, p. 198).

However, the findings from a qualitative case study can be credible when the researcher follows certain steps (see 3.1.2 for the criteria for trustworthiness). Merriam (1998) also suggested measures to overcome these weaknesses. She stated that the researcher as a data collection instrument should possess *tolerance for ambiguity* (p. 20, original emphasis). The researcher should be aware that the research is not “structured” and in the course of conducting the research, the researcher must be ready to “adapt to unforeseen events and change direction in pursuit of meaning” (pp. 20-21). In the following sections, I will discuss how my tolerance for ambiguity was shown in changing the research questions to better suit the nature of the data being collected, and how I expanded my length of data collection to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issues being studied. Furthermore, Merriam suggested the researcher be sensitive to the context, its variables, and the data, and also to the potential influences of one’s subjectivity on the study. I endeavoured always to be aware that my background and experiences may have been influencing my reconstruction of the meanings and interpretations that the participants ascribed to their world. Moreover, I tried to be “a good communicator” who knows how to listen and establish a good rapport with the participants (Merriam, 1998, p. 23).

To sum up, a case study design was adopted for this research because it was believed that I would be able to gain a thorough and holistic understanding of the participants’ motivation to learn English within their learning context. Care was taken in the course of conducting this case study so that trustworthiness was maintained.
3.2.2. Research Questions

Though research on Chinese and Japanese EFL students’ motivation is abundant, there is little research on Vietnamese EFL learners’ motivation. Of direct concern, despite the current social and economic needs of EFL majors, especially for technical English majors in Vietnam, virtually no research was found on Vietnamese speakers’ motivation to learn the English language. Therefore, this study aims to expand the literature on Vietnamese EFL learners’ motivation to learn the English language via a qualitative study conducted with technical English majors at a Vietnamese university.

This study originally aimed to investigate the types of motivation that Vietnamese technical English majors experienced in their English studies, the influences on their motivation, and the changes that these English majors might experience in their motivation to learn the English language across time. The original research questions were

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?
(2) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?
(3) How has the Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language changed over time?

However, during the data collection and analysis process, I found that intrinsic motivation accounted for only a small part of the participants’ motivations. Additionally, it was not possible to identify significant changes in the participants’ motivation over time, as expected. As such, the third question was deleted and one question was added, a change that may occur in qualitative studies (see Dörnyei, 2007, who states that these changes can occur in qualitative research studies). The final research questions are:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?
(2) What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?
(3) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?
This process shows the nonlinear (Lichtman, 2010) and emergent (Creswell, 2007) nature of this study as qualitative research.

3.3 Positioning the Researcher

In this study, I took an “indwelling” posture as suggested by Maykut and Morehouse (1994). Indwelling is defined as “being at one with the persons under investigation, walking a mile in the other person’s shoes, or understanding the person’s point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position” (p. 23). As such, in my research I attempted to look at the world in the same way as the participants. In fact, as I used to be an English major at secondary school and at university, I had had some learning experiences that were similar to my student participants. I had been a teacher of English at that university for seven years, so I also might have had some of the same teaching experiences as the teachers. However, I acknowledge that people construct different realities through their social interactions, and their constructions are unique, as they are influenced by personal experiences and knowledge. Therefore, I believe that although I attempted to gain an emic view, my reconstruction of the participants’ experiences may only “approximate” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 26) their realities.

I also considered myself as an active learner in the course of my research. I learnt to construct my understanding of the participants’ world via my research questions, interaction with the participants, their contexts, and my subjectivity. I used my personal experiences, knowledge, and skills as the lenses through which I worked toward co-constructing realities with the participants (see Rossman & Rallis, 2003). At the same time, I attempted to be “sensitive” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 33; see also Merriam, 1998) to my subjectivity and how it might influence my research. For example, I tried not to interpret the participants’ English learning experiences at schools in the light of my personal experiences, even though I had to admit that I had had such experiences. Additionally, I tried not to base my experiences as a Vietnamese to judge the influences of cultural values on the participants’ construction of their learning experiences. Rather, I strove to let the data speak for itself.

Generally, during the course of the study, I learnt “to reflect, to contemplate, to reason, to appreciate, to honor,” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 34) in addition to learning how to conduct qualitative research.
3.4. Ethical Considerations

3.4.1 General Ethical Considerations

Before this study was conducted, applications for University of Otago ethical approval and Māori Consultation were completed and granted in 2008. Ethical approval sent to the university consisted of a completed application form, sample information sheets and consent forms for participants, sample interview items, and an acceptance email from the Vice-Dean of the department in Vietnam where the data collection was to be conducted. The application form specified that participants would be paid with lunch coupons valued at four NZD. The application also explained clearly and fully how I would, along with my supervisors, protect the anonymity of participants and safety of the data. The information sheet explained to participants the purpose of the study, their required tasks in the interviews and writing of weekly diaries, protection of their personal information, and their benefits from participation as well as any potential risks associated with participating in the study. The consent form specified what the participants had to do and reiterated the information regarding the protection of their personal information (see Appendix A for samples of the ethics documents).

Along with the application form submitted to the Otago University ethical committee, my supervisors and I submitted a web-based application form to the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee for Māori Consultation. This application form described the title of my thesis study, proposed area of research and its potential outcome, and the names of the funding organizations. The submission aimed to seek advice from the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee as it might apply to Māori.

One week before the first round of interviews were conducted, invitation letters and information sheets were sent to first- and second-year English majors at the target university in Vietnam to help them to have a general idea of the study. In addition, I asked for permission from the teachers who would be in charge of first- and second-year English classes to visit each class to talk to the students about the study. I also conducted a trial interview with a volunteer student and checked the fluency, integrity, and wording of the interview questions to see whether any difficulties might arise. One week later, the first interviews for the study were conducted.
3.4.2 Ethical Considerations with Interviews

Following the suggestions made by Kvale (2007), ethical concerns on both macro and micro levels were considered during my research according to the following seven stages: thematizing, designing, interview situation, transcription, analysis, verification, and reporting. On a macro level, the purpose of my study is to contribute to the knowledge related to motivation of students learning English as a foreign language, especially in Vietnam; on a micro level, the results are intended to help to improve the learning and teaching of English at this specific university in Vietnam. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were of paramount concern at both levels. Therefore, throughout my research, care was always taken to protect the rights and confidentiality of all of the interviewees. Specifically, before the interviews were conducted, I sent letters and information sheets to inform the interview participants of possible risks and benefits in the research and obtained their consents to participate. These also told the potential interviewees that they would have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. While I was interviewing these participants, I paid special attention to their feelings, and I was always aware that their self-understanding might be changed during or after my interviews. Berg (2004) defined confidentiality as the researcher’s “attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects’ identities,” and anonymity as the subjects being nameless (p. 65). To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of my interview subjects, I used a pseudonym for each participant when transcribing, analyzing, and reporting the interviews. I was also very careful not to disclose the setting for the study by name.

3.5 The Research Procedure

3.5.1 The Research Site

Marshall and Rossman (2006) stated that the researcher should choose a research site that is familiar. They described several advantages brought about by this familiarity. For example, it is easier to find research participants and build relationships with them. Also, the researcher can access any necessary documentation easily. As a result, these might contribute to the quality and credibility of research data. The researcher may also avoid some of the difficulties associated with obtaining ethical approval from the authority of the research site, thereby accessing the research site more easily than otherwise. In addition, Marshall and Rossman also suggested that the researcher look at
unique and interesting features of the research site that makes it suitable for being chosen.

Based on the suggestions of Marshall and Rossman (2006), the research was conducted at a technical university in the capital of Vietnam where the researcher had been a teacher of English for seven years. This university is one of the top universities in Vietnam and has a variety of majors. It also provides training at tertiary levels for masters and doctoral candidates. The length of a training course at this university ranges from four and a half to five years. The university has a vast campus with modern teaching and training facilities, and a newly-built library.

The research was conducted in the department of English Languages and Translation, Faculty of Foreign Languages, of this university. The Technical English major has been in place for approximately 10 years, in response to Vietnam’s social and economic needs for technical English majors. To be selected into this major, secondary school graduates must pass a university entrance exam with a total result of approximately 26 out of 40 points. The entrance exam consists of three sub-exams: English, maths and literature; for the English exam the result is doubled. Completion of the course requires a minimum of four and a half years of study, with the last semester focusing on a one-month probationary period and a graduation exam. During the first two years, students study four basic skills of English along with a technical English reading class in which they learn basic scientific knowledge. In the second year, they learn English presentation skills and also take a class on the social and cultural context of Great Britain. In the third and fourth years, they learn English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as well as English translation skills. In addition, these technical English majors are trained in English grammar and phonology, and in the basics of doing research. The students can also attend a short course on teaching methodology in the ninth semester if they wish to become teachers of English. Upon graduation, the technical English majors from this programme are qualified to work as teachers of English, or English interpreters or translators.

The faculty has two labs with computers for students to learn pronunciation skills and listening skills during their first two years. Students can watch videos related to their ESP subjects or practise translation skills in the lab. The faculty also organizes extra-curricular activities for its students, like annual English Olympics and faculty-level research contests. Students organize their own English-speaking clubs, which meet
weekly in the student hostel hall, and some of the students also take part in teaching English to disabled children in the capital.

Every year, the department has two visiting American volunteer lecturers who teach pronunciation, speaking skills, and presentation skills to the first-year and second-year students. When the research was conducted, one American lecturer was also teaching technical English reading to first-year students. These native speakers are recruited for the faculty by a non-government organization; the faculty provides only accommodation and means of transport. Normally, the volunteer lecturers stay in the university hostel for international students. As volunteer lecturers, these native English-speakers often lack formal educational qualifications for teaching English to speakers of other languages. In contrast, most of the Vietnamese lecturers of English hold qualifications in teaching English, often at the masters’ level, and have been sent on short- or long-term training courses overseas.

3.5.2 Selection of Participants

3.5.2.1 Student participants.

As discussed in 3.4, one week before the study’s inception, I sent copies of the invitation letter to first- and second-year classes to inform students of my research. Then, I went to each class and spoke to the students about the objectives of my research. I reminded them of my contact email in case they showed interest in the study. Approximately 20 students showed interest and contacted me. I phoned them to organize initial meetings in which I showed them the consent forms and information sheets, and talked about the commitment to keeping a weekly English diary on their English studies. Half of these potential participants were hesitant about keeping a diary, and decided not to participate in the study. As a result, I had 10 student participants. These interviewees showed genuine interest in my study and they were also willing to write diaries. However, over the course of the data collection, from September 2008 to July 2009, three other students decided not to continue, so the data of only seven interviewees were used in this study. Table 3.1 describes these participants, using pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. It should be noted that all participants are female, with an age range of 18-20 years. A more full description of each participant is given following Table 3.1.
Table 3.1

Profiles of the student participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Length of Time Learning English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngoc</td>
<td>The capital</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>University hostel</td>
<td>Since grade 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hai</td>
<td>The capital</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td>Since grade 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tram</td>
<td>The province</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>University hostel</td>
<td>Since intermediate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuong</td>
<td>The province</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>University hostel</td>
<td>Since intermediate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan</td>
<td>The province</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rented room</td>
<td>Since intermediate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phan</td>
<td>The province</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>University hostel</td>
<td>Since intermediate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duyen</td>
<td>The capital</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td>Since grade 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ngoc

Ngoc comes from a family of four, consisting of her parents and her younger brother. Her parents have their own small business selling gas and gas cookers. She described her parents as being strict about their children’s study, often showing their expectations for their children’s high academic achievement. She started to learn English at primary school, and focused on English at intermediate school. However, she only started to officially major in English at a famous secondary school in the capital. She described herself as a science lover and an active person. At the end of the last interview, she was not as yet sure about what she would like to do in the future.

Hai

Hai comes from a family of four, comprising her parents and her younger brother. Her father runs his own business in telecommunications, and her mother is an editor at a publishing house. She has majored in English since intermediate school and was one of the top students in her class at both intermediate and secondary school. At intermediate school, she was often selected to participate in the district-level English contests for gifted students, and won prizes in those competitions. However, at secondary school, she was not successful in the exam to select a group of gifted students for the national English contest. She has attended many private English classes to improve her competence. She dreams of becoming a professional graphics designer. She described her parents, especially her mother, as quite strict and not understanding her, and often
having high expectations of her academic achievements. She is the monitor of her university class.

Tram

Tram comes from a family of five, with her parents and two sisters who studied information technology. She started to study English seriously in grade 9 and then became an English major at her province’s gifted secondary school. She was one of the best students in her class at secondary school and also won a prize in the national contest for gifted students of English. She loves the Foreign Trade University (FTU), another famous university which specializes in international business and trade, and dreams of becoming a businesswoman.

Thuong

Thuong comes from a family of five, with her parents and two younger sisters. She described her parents as understanding and supportive of her ideas and decisions. Her father works in a shipping company and her mother is a housewife. Thuong described herself as a person who is good at obeying and having discipline; she was rarely absent from class. She did not officially major in English at school and just made a decision to major in English at university when she was in the last year of secondary school. She dreams of becoming an English interpreter.

Ngan

Ngan comes from a family of five, with her parents and two younger brothers. Her parents have their own business. Ngan described her parents as understanding and supportive of her decisions and ideas. At secondary school she was selected into a group of gifted students for English contests but she was not chosen as an official contest participant. She loves reading English materials on archaeology and the history of Egypt. She described herself as a person who often thinks very carefully before doing anything and insists on attempting anything difficult. She has been the head of the youth union of her class since she was at secondary school. She dreams of becoming an English interpreter.
Phan

Phan is the youngest in a family of six, with three older sisters. Four of her family members, including her mother, are teachers. She loves engineering and blogging in English. She described herself as a person who only talks in class or feels self-confident when she is one of the top students. She dreams of being an interpreter working in her province. She offers tutoring in mathematics.

Duyen

Duyen is the youngest in her family of five, with one brother and one sister. Her mother is a primary school teacher and her father works at a military petrol company. She was the best student at English in her class at intermediate school and often tutored her friends in English. During intermediate and secondary schools, Duyen attended many private English classes to improve her competence. She did not officially major in English at school even though she had decided to major in English at the end of her intermediate school. She dreams of working in the field of marketing in the future. She also has a part-time job as a promotional girl, distributing promotional products to potential customers. She is the monitor of her university class.

3.5.2.2 Teacher participants.

As I was a teacher at this faculty for approximately seven years, it was fairly easy for me to obtain access to the teacher participants. Before conducting the phone interviews with the teachers, I sent an email to ten who were listed in the syllabi as teachers of my student participants. I also encouraged them to read the emailed information sheets and consent forms. Eight out of these teachers agreed to be interviewed on the phone. Table 3.2 provides a brief description of these teachers. It should be noted that the data provided by these teachers were only used to triangulate those of the student participants. Pseudonyms have been used to protect anonymity. All of the teachers were female and had a wide range of experience in terms of how long they had been teaching English.
Table 3.2

Profiles of the teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualifications and Training</th>
<th>Approx. Length of Time Teaching English</th>
<th>English skills taught (Which cohort)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hien</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA in education obtained overseas</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Writing (second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Doing her MA online with an overseas university</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Writing (first year) Presentation skills (second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Nga</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Just started doing her MA overseas</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Listening (first year) Presentation skills (second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BA in technical English, Certificate in teaching EFL</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Reading (second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quyen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BA in technical English, Certificate in teaching EFL</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Listening (first year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minh KIM Ngan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA in teaching EFL</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Writing (first year) Reading (first year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giao</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA in teaching EFL</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>Presentation skills (second year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 3. Data Collection Procedure

As the two first- and second-year cohorts of students at this university start their school year at different times, the pilot interview study was conducted with one volunteer second-year student before the official study. The purpose of the pilot interview was to check the wording of the interview questions and the flow of the interview. After the pilot interview, I modified some of the questions so that they would be more intelligible. The first round of one-to-one interviews was conducted with five second-year students and five first-year students in September 2008. At the end of October and early November 2008, the second round of one-to-one interviews were conducted with five second-year and three first-year students from the initial group. In mid December 2008, the third round of one-to-one interviews were conducted with the
same group of five second-year students and three first-year students. In late June to early July 2009, phone interviews were conducted with seven student participants who had agreed to continue participating in the research. At this time, phone interviews were also conducted with eight teachers of English who had been teaching these students (see Appendix A for the interview guides).

After the first interviews, all interviewees were asked to send their diaries via email each week up until their third interviews (see Figure 3.2 for the diary-writing schedule of the participants). Figure 3.1 on the following page shows how the data obtained from the interviews and diaries contributed to the final findings of the study.
Figure 3.1: The data collection process
3.5.3.1 Data collection methods.

As can be seen from Figure 3.1, the research data were collected by means of three face-to-face interviews, weekly diaries, and phone interviews. This section will explain why these methods were employed in this study and present the formats of the interview guides, along with a sample diary entry.

3.5.3.1.1 Interviews.

In this study, I employed semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method because I aimed to construct interpretations of the respondents’ life experiences from their own personal accounts.

In terms of the advantages of using interviewing as a data collection tool, Kvale (2007) stated:

In an interview conversation, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life (p. 1).

Much in line with Kvale (2007), Gillham (2000) emphasized the “richness and vividness” (p. 10; see also Rubin & Rubin, 2005) of the interview data. Listening to the interviewees, then listening to the recordings and reading their transcripts allow the researcher to read, understand, and explore interviewees’ responses in their contexts (Gillham, 2000; Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005), and reconstruct the participants’ interpretations of their worlds (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Moreover, interviews enable researchers to gather a large amount of data relatively quickly (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Unlike participating in a survey, interviewees can freely express their opinions, feelings, and beliefs about a phenomenon and receive appropriate feedback instantly (Berg, 2004). This means the interviewer can understand how the subjects make sense of their daily activities (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Furthermore, quantitative data derived from surveys are often not rich in information because they are not embedded in a context (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
Thus, the semi-structured interviews used in this study allowed me both to follow a prescribed sequence of themes and questions and to have the freedom to change the sequence of themes and order of questions to follow the participants’ narratives (see Berg, 2004; Kvale, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Berg (2004) stated that with semi-structured interviews, interviewers use probes and reword the questions to make them suitable to each specific interviewing context. The interviewer assumes that different subjects may interpret questions in various ways. Marshall and Rossman (2006) added that semi-structured interviews are used in the hope that subjects will have an opportunity and freedom to express their views in their own ways but still under control of the researcher (with a guide) so that the researcher will have more systematic sets of data for analysis and interpretation. Moreover, this type of interview also shows respect for how the subjects “frame and structure their responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101).

However, the interviewing method as a data collection tool is not without weaknesses. As interviewing involves personal interaction, the participants’ cooperation is essential. Interviewees might not be truthful or they might not be willing or feel comfortable to share their life activities (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Although I did not appear to have any difficulty establishing a good rapport with the students, I faced two challenges. In the first interview, due to my inexperience, I did not use many probes to encourage the participants to speak long enough to uncover their stories (see Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Moreover, as the students were offered the choice of responding in either Vietnamese or English, most of them chose to speak in English, so their limited English competence might have hindered the richness of the data (see Pavlenko, 2007 for a discussion of the issues surrounding language choices in research on multilingual speakers.) Consequently, after each of the three face-to-face interviews, I had to follow up with email exchanges with those participants to complete their data. The data collection became better as my interviewing skills improved, and the student participants were always willing to expand on the points for which I wanted them to elaborate.

Apart from face-to-face interviews, I also employed telephone interviewing as a data collection method for the last interview with the student participants. Telephone interviewing was necessary at that point in time, as I was back in New Zealand and the participants were in Vietnam (see Holt, 2010; Opdenakker, 2006 for justification of phone
interviewing with geographic differences). Though it is claimed that in a telephone
interview there is a risk of a lack of good rapport with the participant and of loss of
nonverbal and contextual cues providing additional data (Opdenakker, 2006; Holt, 2010),
Novick (2008) concluded that there has not been any empirical evidence for the existence
of such distortion. In fact, having already established rapport with the participants, I did not
have any difficulty conducting the phone interviews with the participants. Regarding the
teacher interviewees, I had been working with those teachers or even teaching them for
several years, so our relationship permitted the teacher participants to talk freely about their
point of views. In addition, based on the suggestions by Opdenakker (2006) and Sturges
and Hanrahan (2004), I referred to the participants’ intonation, hesitation, and even hurried
answers in the conversations as a source of nonverbal data to probe more, or to interpret the
data. I could also see that these telephone interviews allowed a degree of control over place
and time for the participants as well as the privacy of their conversation from the
interruption of others (see Holt, 2010). Overall, the data from these phone interviews were
found to be rich and detailed (see Holt, 2010; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

As also can be seen from Figure 3.1, despite having predesigned the questions for all
of the face-to-face interviews, after the first interviews I modified the questions for the
subsequent interviews based on the data from each previous interview. For example, the
predesigned questions for the second interview were amended based on the review of
findings from the first interview. The questions for the phone interview were redesigned
based on the findings of the three previous interviews. In addition, as I interviewed both
first- and second-year students, the first and second interview guides for the second-year
students were slightly modified from those of the first-year students. For example, I asked
the second-year students to describe their experiences of learning English during their first
year at university, and expectations about their English studies in the second year. The final
interview guides are shown in Appendix A.

The data from the interviews with the teachers of these students were used to
triangulate the data from the students’ interviews and diaries. The interviews with the
teachers focused on issues related to students’ motivation to major in technical English and
their motivated behaviours in class. It must be noted that each of the classes in this
department has from 15 to 20 students, so it was not difficult for these teachers to remember the individual student participants.

Furthermore, based on suggestions made by Gillham (2000) and Rubin and Rubin (2005), in the interview sessions I used several types of probes to facilitate the interviewees to answer, and expand on their responses. Rubin and Rubin (2005) defined probes as “techniques to make a discussion going while providing clarification” (p. 137). Probes were used to both manage the conversation and to obtain more information for responses. For example, this occurred in the fourth interview with Hai,

M: What factors influence your motivation to learn English?

Hai: My motivation to learn English is affected by both objective and subjective factors. Objective factors come from inside myself, while the subjective ones are from my parents and my extended family members. In fact, my motivation is also a little influenced by the formal English educational environment and society.

M: There are many factors influencing your motivation. Can you please talk more specifically about each of these factors?

The italicized sentence in the above extract was used to obtain more detailed response on the factors that influenced Hai’s motivation to learn English. Thereafter, she continued to talk about how her parents’ support, guidance and investment motivated her to learn English.

3.5.3.1.2 Diaries.

In addition to face-to-face and phone semi-structured interviews, I employed diary-writing as a complementary data collection tool. In this section, I will discuss how diary-writing can be used as a data collection instrument to explore the learner’s inner world, and the ways in which I employed it in my research.

Bailey and Ochsner (1983) define “[a] diary study in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching is an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal” (p.189). Diary writing as a method of collecting data has been increasingly employed in educational research, especially in second and foreign language research (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). One type of diary-keeping as a data collection tool
involves language learners and teacher trainees being given some guidelines on specific things they might report on, and these diaries might be counted toward the course assessment (McDonough & McDonough, 1997).

As a data collection research method, a diary has several distinct features compared to other methods. Diary data are collected in a naturalistic manner without intervention from the researcher (Bailey, 1991). Second, diaries provide “quantitatively…and qualitatively” (p. 124) “rich” and “thick” data (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 136) because the diarist may discuss several topics in just one entry. Third, diaries are both introspective and retrospective (Bailey, 1995; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; McDonough & McDonough, 1997) in that the diarist reflects on personal previous and current teaching or learning experiences and reports on thoughts, emotion, strategies, and constraints based on private observation of these experiences and the ways that these experiences influence one’s perspective. Fourth, analyzing diary data could reveal both “emic” and “etic” views (Bailey, 1991, pp. 70-71) into the learning/teaching situation. The language learner writes about his/her experiences, feelings, thoughts, or reactions, thereby describing the perspective of “an insider” (Bailey, 1991, p. 70) in that situation. Meanwhile, the researcher analyzes and makes sense of that insider’s perspective from her/his own etic perspective.

In my study, I faced several challenges in asking my participants to keep weekly diaries. First, although we negotiated to keep weekly diaries within a semester, half of my participants did not keep that commitment (see Bailey, 1991). Second, I had no means of knowing whether the participants were really reporting what had happened (see Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Hall, 2008). Therefore, I accept that the data represent “a’ truth” but not “the’ truth” (Parkinson, Benson & Jenkins, 2003, p. 61) and this truth had been chosen by the participants to construct reality with me and other readers (see Hall, 2008). I interpreted the participants’ perceptions of their world based on what they told me, and assumed these are what they think is important and relevant to their learning processes (see Bailey, 1995; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Hall, 2008; Parkinson et al., 2003). Third, I am aware that some of my participants followed the guide and reported what was asked in a minimal fashion; consequently, their diaries provided minimal data (see Bailey, 1991). Furthermore, a problem existed in having given a choice for the language for writing the diaries. The
participants who chose to write in English might have felt a burden, and that might also have influenced the quality of the data (Matsuda & Brown, 2004).

In my study, diaries are considered a complementary data collection tool to help triangulate the data from the interviews with the students. I pre-designed a diary format in which I asked the participants to write about their daily or weekly concerns in their English studies. I further explained that they might focus on their difficulties, their feelings, and their strategies to deal with these difficulties (see Appendix A). Generally, though the diary data were not entirely successfully collected, they still helped me to gain a deeper understanding of what participants said in their interviews. Figure 3.2 shows the log of when the students completed their diary entries over the course of the data collection for this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First interview</th>
<th>Second interview</th>
<th>Third interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ngoc</td>
<td>5/9 6/9 9/9 10/9 17/9 18/9 25/9 7/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hai</td>
<td>5/10 12/10 19/10 26/10</td>
<td></td>
<td>8/11 24/11 28/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tram</td>
<td>21/9 26/9 4/10 12/10 13/10</td>
<td>9/11 3/12</td>
<td>9/11 14/11 16/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thuong</td>
<td>17/9 19/9 22/9 24/9 1/10 9/10 13/10 23/10 (twice)</td>
<td>17/10 23/10 (twice)</td>
<td>18/11 24/11 3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan</td>
<td>6/10 13/10 19/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duyen</td>
<td>6/10 20/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.2: Log of diary-writing activities*
3.5.3.2 Administration of data collection.

As discussed previously, I collected data using one-to-one interviews, diaries, and phone interviews. This section will present in detail how these data collection methods were conducted.

In terms of the first one-to-one interview, because all of my student interviewees preferred to be contacted by cell phone, I phoned them at least one day before their proposed time for their interviews to remind them of the time and place to meet. Each interview was started with a briefing (Kvale, 2007), in which I reviewed the purpose of my study, the types of data I was looking for, confidentiality, and potential risks and benefits from participating in the research. I also reminded them that their conversations would be recorded and asked whether they had any questions before the interview started. I spent sometime talking about myself to help my interviewees get to know a little more about me, and then chatting with them about their families and their hobbies. All of the students showed understanding of the study and signed the consent forms. I also told the students that they could email or phone me whenever they wanted to (Berg, 2004) if they had any questions, concerns, or wanted to share additional thoughts. No student showed hesitation about being recorded. I also told them that they could choose whether to be interviewed in English or Vietnamese. Only one student chose to speak in Vietnamese because she was not confident about her spoken English; however, the others spoke in Vietnamese when they found it hard to express themselves in English.

The interview started with each participant introducing herself and then continued with my questions. For the second and third interviews, the same interview procedure was conducted. The participants seemed to be much more comfortable, possibly because they felt that they knew me and were acquainted with the process of being interviewed. During the second interviews, all participants chose to speak in English, and only switched to Vietnamese whenever they felt it difficult to express themselves in English. In the third interview, only one student chose to speak in Vietnamese. Unlike the student in the first round of the interview, the student who chose to speak in Vietnamese in this second round was concerned about the quality of the recording. Each of the interviews lasted approximately one hour. Most of these interviews were conducted in either a quiet classroom or in a quiet café that I got to know through my friends, and only two interviews were held in my accommodations. The interviews were organized after class hours or at the weekends, whenever it was convenient for them.
With regard to the writing of weekly diaries, as soon as the first one-to-one interview finished, I gave the students a sample diary entry format and explained to them how to write their entries in it. I reminded them to send me their diary entries every week during the semester and also told them that they could write in either Vietnamese or English according to their preferences. Being aware of students’ academic and social burdens, I did not ask them to write daily diaries. All of the diaries except the first one from Phan were written in English. Only Thuong preferred to give me her diary entries in person, half before the second interview and half before the third interview. The other participants emailed their entries to me almost every week. After I received a diary entry, I often reminded the participant to write the next one. Each week, upon receiving the diaries, I answered any questions without correcting their errors. I also kept emailing the participants to remind them of their commitment. Unfortunately, not all participants were committed to writing every week, as shown in their diary-keeping log (see Figure 3.2). The thickest and richest data were given by Hai and Thuong, who wrote regularly.

Last, the phone interview was conducted approximately seven months after the third face-to-face interview. At this time, both student participants and their teachers were contacted via email or phone to arrange a time to talk. Seven students were willing to continue, and most of the teachers whom I contacted (8 out of 10) agreed to participate. I also sent all of them an interview guide so that they could think about their answers beforehand (see Burke & Miller, 2001). All of the participants gave me their home phone numbers for the interviews. Before the first phone interview, I borrowed a device from the college to connect my recorder to the phone and tested the quality of the recording with one of my officemates. I also told my participants beforehand that the conversations were being recorded; everyone agreed to be recorded. Interestingly all of the participants were concerned about the quality of the recording, so they chose to speak in Vietnamese. All of the interviews, except for one from the teacher named Hien, had very good quality. All of the teachers’ interviews lasted approximately an hour. The student participants’ interviews lasted approximately two hours.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

The collected data for the thesis consisted of 21 face-to-face interviews with the students, seven phone interviews with the students, eight phone interviews with their
teachers, and weekly diary entries written by the students as well as email exchanges with students and teachers. The interview hours amounted to approximately 45 hours in total. The responses made in Vietnamese and interviews conducted in Vietnamese were translated into English by me and then checked by another Vietnamese teacher who has a Master’s degree in Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and works as a freelance translator (See Appendix C for the transcription conventions). Each interview transcript/diary entry/email exchange was coded using this convention: the first letter and last letter of the participant’s pseudonym + Ol1(Oral interview 1)/Pe (Phone interview)/D (diary)/Fp1 (Email exchange 1). For example, Hai’s third interview is referred to as HiOl3, and Duyen’s email exchange 3 as DnFp3 (See Appendix D for the data reference conventions).

### 3.5.4.1 Data analysis process.

Huberman and Miller (1998), and Miller and Huberman (1994) postulated that the data analysis process comprises three inter-related stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. These subprocesses help to reduce the data, and then find the links among them so that meaningful data interpretation is possible. The data analysis process is “continuous” and “iterative” (Miller & Huberman, 1994, p. 12).

“Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miller & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The codes consist of descriptive codes, interpretative codes, pattern codes, or as Miller and Huberman (1994) described, codes are ranked from being descriptive to being inferential. Cohen et al. (2000) defined coding as “the ascription of a category label to a piece of data, with the category label either decided in advance or in response to the data that have been collected” (p. 283). Cobin and Strauss (2008) described coding more specifically:

> [Coding] involves interacting with the data (analysis), using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions (p. 66).

Miller and Huberman (1994) further emphasized that the codes should resemble the original data to a certain extent so that when the researcher looks back at the codes, she or he could infer what the original piece of data was.
In this study, I followed the grounded theory coding process of Strauss and Cobin (1998). I began by perusing an interview transcript of a student participant line by line and assigning labels to each of the incidents or observations that might inform my research questions. It must be noted that although I paid special attention to those incidents that might inform my research questions, I was also aware that other codes might be useful as well. The advantage of this inductive coding technique, as described by Miller and Huberman (1994), is that the codes are more context-bounded, thereby better representing the data than predesigned codes. This also helped me to gain an emic view of the participants’ accounts. During the coding process, I mainly employed two analytic tools, asking myself questions about the data and making comparisons among incidents to find similarities and differences to establish connections (Cobin & Strauss, 2008). After I had assigned labels to the responses in that interview transcript, I revised the codes. During the process of revising, many codes were replaced by new ones, and some complex codes were divided into subcodes. Meanwhile, I also compared the codes to find similarities, and then assigned more overarching categories or pattern codes to groups of those codes that shared similarities (Miller & Huberman, 1994). The development of code definitions also contributed to making the categorization of codes into different groups more transparent. After coding the first interview, I had the first code list with definitions, for which I arranged the codes and more overarching categories into a hierarchical order. I then used this code list to code the other three interviews of the same student participant. One of my supervisors revised my first set of codes that I developed from this first set of interviews and made suggestions for changes. I revised the code list based on her suggestion and used it to code the rest of the interviews. During the process of coding these interviews, I kept refining the code list and definitions to accommodate the emerging results.

All of the face-to-face and phone interviews of the student participants were coded three times so that I could achieve cohesion among the codes and themes. Then, the codes of all of the interviews of each student participant were compared, and revised. All of the codes of the first interviews of all student participants were revised and compared and so were the second, third, and fourth interviews. The teachers’ phone interviews and students’ diary entries were coded only once based on the code list generated from the student participants’ interview data. The coding process in my thesis clearly reflected the three inter-related subprocesses of data analysis: data reduction,
data display, and conclusion verification described by Huberman and Miller (1998), and Miller and Huberman (1994). It also showed that the data coding process for this study is “continuous” and “iterative” (Miller & Huberman, 1994, p. 12).

This is an example of how I developed the subtheme called “influences of family members” from my data. In her first interview, Hai talked about her parents:

(1) parents’ pride in her winning an English prize at grade 7
(2) parents were against her dream to undertake her undergraduate study at an overseas university
(3) parents were against her dream to become a graphics designer
(4) parents were strict about her study
(5) parents supported her hosting an Australian exchange student in her home

Then in the first email exchange with Hai to elaborate on the information provided in her first interview, Hai continued to talk about her parents as follows:

(a) parents chose English as her major at intermediate school
(b) parents thought learning a foreign language was important
(c) parents considered majoring in English practical
(d) parents’ advice on practising the listening skills after she failed the selection test into the English gifted team at secondary school
(e) parents encouraged her to study when she had to work very hard at intermediate school
(f) parents took care of her meals when she had to study hard.
(g) parents took her to extra classes regardless of weather.
(h) parents found private English classes for her, and persuaded teachers to teach her
(i) parents cared about her grades (while she hated this)
(j) grandmother’s pride in her academic achievement at university and her title as class monitor (she was against this)
(k) relatives encouraged her to study when she took the entrance exam into a
gifted secondary school.

(l) relatives considered her as a bright mirror for all cousins (she thought they
overpraised her)

(m) relatives expected her to outperform other acquaintances (she thought this put
her under pressure)

(n) relatives praised her on her academic achievement

I then collapsed these codes into categories. Codes 1, j, l, and n refer to family members’
pride in English achievements. Codes b and c belong to parents’ positive attitudes
toward English. Codes 5, g, and h belong to parents’ investment in English studies.
Codes 4, m, and i belong to family members’ expectations of English achievements.
Codes d, e, and k belong to family members’ encouragement in English studies. Code a
belongs to parents’ orientation to learn English. Codes 2 and 3 belong to parents’
disapproval of academic and professional goals.

However, when I revised the codes, I found that some of these did not serve to
answer my research questions. My supervisor who acted as a second rater also agreed
with me and advised me to drop these codes. To answer my research questions, I looked
for the codes that would lead to the participant’s subsequent motivation to learn the
English language. Therefore, codes 2, 3, and 5 were deleted. These above mentioned
descriptive categories then were grouped into more overarching ones. For example, the
categories parents’ positive attitudes toward the importance of English and parents’
orientation to learn English were grouped under family members’ attitudes toward
English. I originally found it difficult to include parents’ orientation to learn English
under another category. I eventually recognized that this originated from Hai’s parents’
positive attitudes toward the importance of the English language, so I decided to group
it under family members’ attitudes toward English. This grouping was then confirmed
by other codes taken from Hai’s other interviews, and from Tram’s and Ngoc’s data.
The categories parents’ investment in English studies and family members’
encouragement in English studies were grouped under family members’ support for
English studies. The categories family members’ pride in English achievements and
family members’ expectations of English achievements were grouped under family
members’ expectations.
These higher-level categories were then informed by the codes from other interviews, email exchanges, and diary entries. For example, in the phone interview, the category parents’ investment in English studies was further informed by the codes (1) parents paid fees for private class and (2) parents drove her to private classes. The category family members’ encouragement in English studies was further informed by the codes (1) parents encouraged her to study hard before English exams and (2) extended family members encouraged her to study English hard. The category family members’ expectations of English achievements was further informed by the codes (1) parents told her that she had to gain some English achievements in return to their investment and (2) parents told her that she had to pass the entrance exam into a gifted secondary school in return to their investment. Another family-related category arose from the other three interviews and Hai’s email exchanges, which was parents’ disapproval of (academic and professional) goals. When this category was further informed by the codes from other participants’ data, it was obvious that it could fall under the more overarching category family members’ support for English studies. This is further exemplified by the codes from Phan’s fourth interview. Phan talked about how her parents influenced her English studies:

(1) parents expected her to have good English achievements
(2) parents respected her decision to major in English at university
(3) parents encouraged her to study English hard for a good future.
(4) parents considered English knowledge important for employment
(5) parents asked her about her study progress
(6) parents were happy about her passing the entrance university exam

It is clear that codes 1 and 6 fall under family members’ expectations; codes 2, 3, and 5 could be grouped under family members’ support for English studies and code 4 falls under family members’ attitudes toward English. Code 2 reflected Phan’s parents’ approval of academic goals. Last, after revising Hai’s three higher-level categories family members’ attitudes toward English, family members’ support for English studies, and family members’ expectations, I could see that all of these categories could be grouped under a family-related subtheme called “influences of family members.” This subtheme then was combined with another subtheme “influences of social
attitudes and expectations” under a theme called “Influences of Family and Social Networks.” This theme was then included as a section of my findings chapter.

After coding one set of interviews from a student participant, and comparing the codes from this set with those from one interview from two other participants, I developed a code list. I used this code list to code the rest of the data, but the process of revising the descriptive and overarching categories and the themes continued throughout the process of data analysis and interpretation (See Appendix B for samples of codes and definitions of categories and themes).

In the process of analysing the data, I found that my “background, knowledge, and experience” as a Vietnamese and a Vietnamese teacher of English helped me to be “more sensitive” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 33-34) with the data, seeing what was significant, and seeing the connections among these important concepts so that the answers to my research questions could be explored and discussed. However, I tried not to let my subjectivity influence the data but just to let it help me, “compare knowledge and experience against data, never losing sight of the data themselves” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 33).

3.5.4.2 Data triangulation.

During the analysis procedure, the thesis data from different sources were triangulated. The data from the students’ face-to-face and phone interviews were compared with and complemented by their email exchanges and diary entries. The students’ data were contrasted with the teachers’ verbal data. The same codes were used to code interviews and email exchanges and diary entries, so differences and similarities were easily identified.

Moreover, though the students Duyen and Ngan came from the same class, as did Thuong and Ngoc, they had differences in their perceptions of the learning environment in their English class. Moreover, although the seven student participants had different background English knowledge, they shared many similarities in their perceptions of influences on their learning motivation. This provided another useful means to triangulate the thesis data, because the data were explored in terms of both differences and similarities in students’ views of their learning environment. The data from the student participants were also triangulated with the data from eight teachers who taught them. It was found that the teachers’ data on how the teachers influenced students’
motivation corroborated with students’ views, whereas the teachers’ data on the motivating power of the values of English knowledge as perceived by the students in their English studies challenged most of students’ data. These similarities and differences between the teachers’ and the students’ views again acted as a source of meaningful triangulation.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed why I chose qualitative research as a framework for this study on motivation of Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies. The chapter also explained why I adopted a case study research design, and noted the changes in the process of constructing the thesis research questions. I also discussed the ethical consideration, details of the settings, participants, data collection, and analysis process, as well as my position as a researcher. The next chapter will demonstrate how the data analysis process was implemented for this study and will present the findings for the three research questions.
Chapter Four: Findings

This study aims to investigate the motivations of Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies and the influences on their motivations. The research questions as presented in Chapters One and Three are as follows:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?

(2) What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?

(3) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?

As such, this chapter presents findings about the influences on the motivation of seven female Vietnamese technical English majors in their English studies. The themes discussed in this chapter originate from three oral interviews, three email follow-ups, and one phone interview conducted over a period of approximately 10 months from September 2008 to July 2009, along with student participants’ weekly diaries during September to November 2008. Data from eight teachers’ interviews will be used to triangulate the students’ interviews. All of the data will be referenced where specifically cited in the chapter. All of the data originally spoken by the students in English will be written in italics (see Appendices C & D for the transcription conventions, and Data reference conventions).

Three main themes emerged from the data coding process (described in 3.5.4.1) as follows (Appendix B provides a complete list of codes, themes, definitions and examples of codes).

1. Influence of the perceived values of English knowledge
   - Influence of intrinsic values
   - Influence of utilitarian values

2. Influence related to the English educational environment
   - Influence of classmates
• Influence of the teacher of English
• Influence of the instructional materials
• Influence of the school requirements
• Influence of the English exams, learning progress and achievement

3. Influence of family and social networks
• Influence of family members
• Influence of social networks

These themes will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.1 Influence of the Perceived Values of English Knowledge

This theme concerns how the students’ perceptions of the values of English knowledge influenced their desire, effort, and strategies to learn English. These perceived values comprised the enjoyment brought by their English studies, the utilitarian values of English in their future job prospect, communicative needs, chances for overseas study, strengths of their technical English major, and the values brought by favourable attitudes toward English-speaking communities and their cultures (see Appendix B for the definitions of themes and coding exemplars).

4.1.1 Influences of the Intrinsic Values Brought by English Studies

With reference to the influence of the enjoyment brought by their English studies, most of the participants were excited about learning English at a young age when they started to study the English language. Later, at school (from primary school to secondary school) and university, they sometimes felt happy, excited and motivated to learn the English language, such as when participating in exciting English class activities or when they chose personally meaningful English activities to practise at home. At other times, they were not as engaged. Meanwhile, unlike the students, only three teacher participants briefly mentioned the role of intrinsic values in the students’ English studies, and they did not attach much importance to it.

Specifically, all of the participants, except for Hai, experienced a feeling of enjoyment driven by their curiosity in their first encounters with the English language, whether at primary school or the beginning of intermediate school. These participants
found the English language interesting, novel, and engaging, and they immediately wanted to explore it more. For example, Tram said that she practised pronouncing the English words and felt “very excited” when she “could read a conversation” (TmPe, p. 8). Duyen said that English was her “passion” at that time (DnOl1, p. 4). Ngan not only found listening to her teacher speaking English interesting but also:

At the first time I see the English books, I felt a very special feeling. It gives me a feeling, a special feeling as if I had been attached to it for long, a very special feeling that I had never had with any other subjects (NnOl1, p. 7).

As a result of these positive feelings, these participants developed some goals and expectations about their English studies. For instance, Ngan wanted to be good at English right away, and Ngoc wanted to know more about English. Meanwhile, Thuong had a desire to master English in a short time to be able to communicate with English speakers. However, except for Ngan, all of the participants contended that such enjoyment, especially in terms of curiosity, only existed in small children.

The findings showed that all of the participants were motivated to learn English in their classes when their teachers organized fun activities like games and debates, or provided them with interesting reading materials. For example, both Thuong and Ngoc recalled their positive experiences with their writing teacher in semester three, who taught students how to write a comparison essay after asking them to listen to two versions of a piece of music and share their feelings about it with their classmates. This teacher also motivated students to learn writing skills by analyzing interesting extracts from classic novels, horror stories, and amusing stories. Tram attributed her motivation in her reading classes in semester four to her teacher’s selection of interesting activities including music composing and class debates with the teacher’s personal involvement in those debates. She said:

Before starting a new lesson, she asked us a lot of questions. She would stand on one side against the whole class and answer very aggressive questions from us. Sometimes she won, and sometime we did, so we had a lot of fun (TmPe, pp. 30-31).

Moreover, the participants found themselves inspired to learn when the instructional materials were based on interesting and personally relevant topics. Because the topics were closely related to their interest and provided them with the chance to enrich their
English knowledge and skills, they were motivated. As an example, Ngoc was excited about the technical English reading classes in semester two because learning technical knowledge was her “passion” (NcPe, p. 25), and she found that these classes gave her a chance to improve her technical knowledge. Ngan also loved the technical English reading classes because the topics in the classes were varied, interesting, and triggered her curiosity. Ngan said that these classes brought her lots of new and interesting knowledge that “because foreign language majors just know a little about natural sciences, reading the topics on natural sciences makes students very engaged in the lectures” (NnOl2, pp. 8-9). Tram enjoyed her listening classes because they were filled with varied and interesting topics. She added that she was engaged in these classes because she discovered that she could also easily find more listening activities to practise at home. Hai was the only participant who explicitly mentioned her sense of accomplishment in being engaged in challenging activities provided by her teachers at secondary school. She said that she was motivated to prepare for the presentations because they were “exciting and practical and new and unique” (HiFp1, p. 14). For example, she recalled how happy she was when successfully completing a presentation in the form of a drama and voted “the best actress of the day” (HiFp1, p. 15). She also reported that she had enjoyed completing difficult tests and assignments.

*I think that fun is a part of the motivation because, I, myself, cannot do something well if I find no fun doing it. And it was getting more and more interesting as I could handle the challenges, or at least, I sensed that I could handle them* (HiFp1, p. 11).

With regard to the enjoyment in their out-of-class English studies, the findings showed that the participants were motivated to choose those English topics and activities relevant to their needs and interest. Some participants sought naturalistic opportunities to continue improving skills learnt in their favourite classes and subjects. For example, Ngoc and Phan continued to read online articles about technical knowledge, as they both desired to continue enriching their own knowledge in this area. Phan said:

* (...) the general engineer only bring me the skill of reading but broaden my knowledge about engineer, so I spend much time on it, on searching it in Internet to understand them clearly clearly of the reading* (PnOl3, p. 13).
Some others were stimulated by favourite aspects of the subjects they were studying at university. For example, although Hai did not find the technical knowledge and topics presented in the formal instructional material personally relevant and admitted that she did not explore these more at home, she continuously attempted to improve her knowledge related to information technology. She said that she was stimulated by this field, so she often spent time on the Internet, looking up the meanings of information-technology-related terms; even, “consulting materials in Vietnamese to understand the terms more thoroughly” (HiPe, p. 39). In a similar vein, Thuong was eager to explore more about technical topics that she found personally meaningful despite her lack of time due to heavy workload in the fourth semester:

However, sometime there was something interesting that I wanted to understand more, I searched for more information. I remembered once I studied about mobiles, I found it interesting and practical, so I looked up the new words to understand more (TgPe, p. 24).

She was also intrinsically motivated to outline or write about the topics in class that she found personally interesting. For instance, she enthusiastically searched for more information on the topic “Money is the root of cruelty,” which was taught in her presentation class, and made an outline of what she found. These students’ enjoyment was also triggered by the activities and topics that were chosen from their hobbies. Hai enthusiastically searched for the meanings of the strange but interesting English slang words and idioms that she heard when she listened to music or watched a movie. She said that at that time she was “motivated to find out what the words meant, how they were written, and in which contexts they were used” (HiPe, p. 34). Ngan enjoyed English articles on archaeology and found herself even more excited when she understood more about other cultures, and “was able to read and translate in [her] own way” (NnOL1, pp. 7-8). Similarly, Thuong became more intrinsically motivated when reading cultural materials on English-speaking countries and finding her cultural knowledge expanded. Finally, Tram was intrinsically motivated to read the English stories and newspapers that she collected. She sometimes found these challenging, because there were some difficult structures, but she enjoyed those challenges. She wrote notes about the structures and words she encountered that she found both interesting and useful. She noted that reading these stories and newspapers gave her,
“more things to learn, more thing to practise, and more thing to discover and explore about English” (TmOl 3, p.15).

It is worthy to add that in the out-of-class English learning context, all of the participants always attempted to vary the English learning materials and activities that they used to increase their engagement in their English studies. For example, Tram read a lot of newspapers and stories in English, watched movies without subtitles in English, joined online chat-rooms of English speaking clubs to practise speaking English, and even voice-chatted with her friends. Phan blogged in English and kept a diary to practise her writing skills, and found it interesting and useful to listen to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable News Network (CNN) radio programmes while she was “washing, cooking or taking a bath” (PnOI2, p. 3), and when she was bored with academic listening materials. Ngan practised her favourite reading skills more often than other skills, but still “followed a flexible timetable depending on [her] preferences” (NnPe, p. 12). Thuong and Ngoc used various ways to learn listening skills to avoid boredom, for example, watching different kinds of movies in English. Similarly, Hai often “[watched] TV shows and cartoons in English, and [listened] to English music” because she did not always like academic listening (HiPe, p. 35). Duyen practised speaking English with her neighbour to make herself more interested in learning English because she admitted that “speaking English to another person motivated [her] much more than talking to [herself]” (DnPe, p. 5).

In contrast to the student participants’ emphasis on the motivating role of interest and enjoyment in their English studies, most of the teachers denied this emphasis. Only three teachers mentioned interest as a source of motivation, but they did not consider it as important. For example, teachers Minh and Hien said that only a few students were motivated to learn English for the sake of personal interests. Teacher Kim Ngan claimed that some students chose to learn technical English as it was related to their interest in technology.

In sum, all of the student participants in the study were motivated to learn the English language by the enjoyment brought about by their engagement in interesting and meaningful activities. However, the circumstances under which they had such feelings were not necessarily pervasive in the formal classroom setting. Only in informal settings, when they had the chance to select what they really wanted to practise, did they have more chance to enjoy this feeling. Conversely, all of the interviewed
teachers, except for Ms Hien, Minh, and Kim Ngan, did not recognize the pleasurable feelings their students might experience in their English studies. It is also worthwhile to note that, despite their mention of students’ interest as motivation to learn English, Ms Hien, Minh, and Kim Ngan believed that only a few students actually had such feelings in their English studies.

4.1.2 Influence of the Utilitarian Values Brought by English Studies

This category describes the students’ perceptions of how the practical values of learning English knowledge motivated them to learn English. The values as pictured by the students related to the chance to get a good job, study overseas, and use English well as a communicative tool. They also discussed the strengths of their technical English major as compared with other English majors. In contrast to the students’ views, the teacher participants only emphasized two aspects of the values of English in motivating students to learn: future job prospects and chance to study overseas.

4.1.2.1 Influence of future jobs.

The findings showed that all participants were learning English for the opportunity to get a high-paying job in the future. Both Hai and Duyen stated that they were studying English conscientiously, because having good English knowledge had become a compulsory job selection criterion for a good job. Ngoc and Phan contended that learning English to get a good job was their strongest motivation. Duyen was motivated to practise her English as she believed:

As an English major, I will be able to choose among a variety of jobs. For example, I can work full-time in a job like other people, but I can also work part-time as an interpreter or a tourist guide. Generally, I can earn heaps of money (DnPe, p.1).

Tram was preparing to take an IELTS test to prepare for her part-time and future job applications. In addition, as a second-year student, Thuong experienced time pressure; she was trying to learn English translation skills well so that she could get a high-paying job. She considered these skills very important to obtain a job as a technical English graduate. She was also told by her teacher that “good translation skills could help [her] to earn lots of money easily” (TgPe, p. 15). Therefore, she was looking for, as well as practising, strategies to learn these skills as well as possible. Phan envisioned herself as
a good technical English graduate and employee, so she was practising as well as looking for ways to effectively improve her skills, to learn the technical English subjects well.

Sharing the same view with their students, all of the teacher participants contended that the most important motivating source for students to major in English, and in technical English in particular, was a bright future job prospect. For example, Ms Hong contended:

The most important motivation for students to major in English is their chance to choose among a variety of jobs in the future. For example, they can work in an office or a foreign-invested company, or work as a teacher of English, or have their own businesses… Students choose to major in technical English because the knowledge about this major has recently been in high demand (Individual interview, p. 2).

Ms Minh gave a very clear example about the high demand of technical English majors:

The companies that provide technical translation services often give priority to recruiting technical English majors from this university, and they specify this priority in their job ads. This greatly contributes to motivating students to learn (Individual interview, p. 3).

4.1.2.2 Influence of future chance for overseas study.

The findings also showed that four participants were motivated to learn English to study abroad in the future, and they expressed this desire in all of their interviews. Ngoc and Phan were practising English and IELTS test-taking skills to get a good test score so that they might get a scholarship to study overseas after graduation. Meanwhile, Hai was motivated to learn English for her highly valued dream of studying graphics design, her “passion,” abroad (HiO1, p. 12). The first step that she undertook to prepare for this dream was to take the university entrance exam into her current university to have more time to obtain English competence. During her first year at university, she attended an IELTS class, and took trial IELTS tests. She said that in the second semester, even though she was the best student at her private English class, and she had made considerable progress, she believed that she needed to practise English even harder because, “studying in an English-speaking environment will be much different from at home” (HiE dated 26th April, 2009). Similarly, Duyen was practising English diligently
so that she could get good results to obtain a scholarship to study abroad. Duyen highly appreciated a chance to study abroad because she could fulfil her dream to “pursue [her] passion,” a marketing major (DnPe, p. 2).

Only two teachers, Ms Quyen and Hien, supported the students’ view that another source of motivation for students to major in English at university concerned a chance to study abroad. Ms Quyen stated that “English is a passport to a chance to study successfully overseas” (Individual interview, p. 1). Ms Hien said that looking for a chance to get a scholarship to study abroad motivated students to learn English conscientiously.

4.1.2.3 Influence of the perceived values of English as a communicative tool.

The findings showed that all of the participants, except for Thuong, were learning English because they believed that English had become a personally necessary communication tool. For example, Hai was learning it to search for information online. Ngan was learning English because she thought it would be useful to search for learning materials for her second foreign language, Japanese. Only Ngoc stated that she was trying to learn English because of social requirements for English knowledge in the field of communication. She cited a specific example, that nowadays English is the main communication tool in media like TV, the Internet, and printed documents; she found it “compulsory to know English to understand these” (NcPe, pp. 2-3).

In addition, all of the participants were motivated to learn English because of their favourable attitudes toward English-speaking communities in the world and their cultures. They all thought that natives of English-speaking communities are friendly and approachable. For example, Tram was motivated to learn the English language because knowing English could help her explore English cultures, especially by reading English novels. She experienced “a feeling of freedom” (TmPe, p. 11) when she learnt English because she believed that she was then free to explore the English world. She loved the Western lifestyle as she thought Westerners were, “straightforward in their social communication,” and “very free and sociable” (TmPe, p. 11). She also thought that she was affected by this lifestyle when she learnt the English language. Duyen and Hai were a bit different from Tram because their affection and communicative needs really encouraged them to initiate real-life contact with the foreigners, especially with English natives. Specifically, Duyen said that she loved the Western lifestyle because it was not
as “old-fashioned” as the Vietnamese one, and that the Western lifestyle was “closer to the lifestyle of youth” (DnPe, p. 1). Furthermore, she expressed her desire to get married to a native English-speaker. Duyen stated that she wanted to learn English to explore English-speaking cultures, and to gain the natives’ affection when she could communicate with them, and make the conversations with them interesting in her travels to those countries. Therefore, in her part-time job as a promotional girl, Duyen seized every opportunity to communicate with foreigners in English. Hai described how, in grade 12, she was motivated to register to be a host for exchange students from Australia because she believed that being a host would give her the chance to communicate and make friends with a native English-speaker. Hai also said that being able to communicate with foreigners, especially English natives, was “one of the ultimate aims of [her] English studies” (HiPe, p. 33). Therefore, she participated in online community forums, chatted with her foreign friends, emailed friends in English, read online English news, listened to English music, and watched films in English. She also helped an American couple, her parents’ business partners, to settle down in Hanoi. Phan was practising English to be able to communicate with foreigners. She believed that “communicating with foreigners allowed [her] to be [herself], and be comfortable” (PnPe, p. 39). Ngoc initiated conversations with foreigners if she had a chance to speak to them, especially with her American teachers. Ngan also expressed very favourable attitudes toward foreigners, especially English-speaking communities. She believed

Having contact with foreigners allows me to learn their ways of thinking. Unlike Vietnamese, they often have liberal thinking. When I talk to them, I can enrich my knowledge about the world (…) They lead a very free life, so their thinking is also more liberal (NnPe, p. 13).

However, she admitted that she only dared to initiate conversations with her American teachers but not other foreigners because of a lack of confidence in her own communicative English competence.

Phan and Duyen valued their English studies because they considered English as a means for them to gain other personally important goals related to enhancing their English communication skills. Phan was motivated to learn English so that good English knowledge would enable her to enrich her technical knowledge, as well as her ability to understand world news broadcast in English. Both of these were repeatedly mentioned as her favourite activities. Phan was also practising English industriously so
that “after graduation [she] could use English as competently as [her] mother tongue” (PnPe, p.8). Duyen was motivated to practise English conscientiously to attain her “goal of being able to communicate in English as proficiently as a native English-speaker after four years at university” (DnPe, p. 13). She said that she was motivated to set specific goals so that she could achieve this because if her study continued like in her first year, her future would not be very optimistic.

4.1.2.4 Influence of perceptions of strengths of technical English as a major.

The findings showed that only Thuong was much influenced by her perceived strengths of being a technical English major. On one hand, she made a social comparison between her technical English major and other English majors and believed that hers was unique. She believed that her major would bring her advantages in finding a job in the future, as compared with other English majors. On the other hand, she made a social comparison between her English competence, the competence of an English major, and that of other English non-majors:

[We] are English majors, so there needs to have some differences between English majors and other English learners. Therefore, English majors need to study harder and harder to create some differences between their English competence and that of other English learners who just learn to use it as a tool (TgPe, p. 2)

She added that when she watched a TV program or a movie in English, as an English major, she felt embarrassed to look at the Vietnamese subtitles. Thuong also thought that as a technical English major, she would be embarrassed if she did not understand the technical knowledge. She insisted that it was her “duty” to explore and understand the technical knowledge in English (TgOl2, p. 23).

4.1.3 Concluding Remarks

In sum, the participants in this study were motivated to learn English by their perceptions of both intrinsic and utilitarian values brought by the English knowledge. They seemed to be more stimulated to learn English by the utilitarian values that they had been enjoying and were able to envision for their future. The interviewed teachers also put much more emphasis on the power of the practical gains, such as the chance to
get good jobs and scholarships to study overseas, in motivating their students to learn English at the expense of the intrinsic values.

4.2 Influence Related to the English Educational Environment

This theme discusses how the student participants’ perceptions of classmates, the teacher of English, instructional materials, school requirements and English exams, learning progress, and achievement influenced their desire, effort, and strategies to learn English. The subthemes embedded in this theme include: Influences of classmates; Influences of the teacher of English; Influences of the school requirements; Influences of instructional materials; and Influences of English exams, learning progress, and achievement (see Appendix B for the definitions of themes and coding exemplars).

4.2.1 Influence of Classmates

This section presents the findings on how the students perceived their classmates’ influences on their motivation to learn the English language. The categories include class integration, social comparison, and class support and relatedness (See Appendix B for the definitions of these categories). Only two teachers mentioned the role of classmates in motivating students to learn, and their concern was only about class integration.

4.2.1.1. Class integration.

The findings showed that all of the participants, except for Duyen, repeatedly mentioned how their classmates’ attitudes toward class English learning activities and goals in English studies influenced their effort and persistence in their English studies and adoption of English learning strategies.

Phan and Ngan always felt encouraged to learn English in class because of their classmates’ shared attitudes toward English learning activities and goals, whereas Tram and Ngoc only sometimes had this feeling. Phan claimed that she was trying very hard to study English partly because of her classmates’ positive attitudes toward English studies. All of her classmates were trying to study very hard to be the best in class, and this “[became] a driving force” for her to expend more effort in her English practice (PnOl3, p. 7). Similarly, Ngan contended that her classmates’ positive attitudes toward English studies and goals greatly influenced her. She described how her university
classmates were very excited about speaking English to improve their oral competence. During the first semester, they tried to “speak English anytime, anywhere” though their competence was still limited (NnOl1, p. 4). She said that these instances stimulated her to try to speak English “more naturally” because all of her classmates were “doing the same thing”, and she did not want to “feel like a fish out of water” (NnPe, p. 28). Ngoc and Tram sometimes experienced the same excitement when their classmates were actively engaged in English activities. Tram said

When my classmates are excited to learn, I cannot let myself be a fish out of water, I also have to take part in discussions actively (TmPe, p. 29).

However, not all of the students were satisfied with their classmates’ attitudes or efforts. Hai, Tram, Ngoc, and Thuong lost their interest in learning English in class because of a lack of class integration. Hai always found that there was a discrepancy between herself and her classmates in terms of their attitudes toward English learning activities and academic goals. Hai was interested in speaking English in breaks to improve her competence, but her classmates, especially the boys, were not:

I still spoke English till once one of my classmates spoke loudly in Vietnamese to me (but the whole class could hear him): ‘Monitor, speak Vietnamese please! Vietnamese please!’ Well so since then, I’ve been flexible between English and Vietnamese. Sometimes I speak Vietnamese as the others do, sometimes I just speak in English and ignore them (in such cases I was speaking to the teacher, so I let my myself have the right: Do not care whether my classmates can get what I’m speaking) (HiFp1, p. 25).

Furthermore, Hai was not interested in study results but rather in English improvement. However, her classmates persisted in calculating her final results for her.

I disliked the thought ‘the monitor should have the highest result’ and I really didn’t want my English study result to be the target of attention in my class! Competitiveness is good, but not for marks!! I did explain that many times to my classmates - that they should focus on practical purposes (as how to speak English fluently and correctly or gain good listening skills or improve their lexis, etc.). However, my speech apparently didn’t work! (HiFp3, p. 8).

She reported that some of her classmates cheated on exams, and tried to hide their efforts in their English studies. All of these things taken together made Hai feel a
widenning gap between herself and her classmates, leading to a gradually developed feeling of not wanting to learn English in her class. Similarly, Ngoc “lost [her] excitement” in learning English in class (NcO1, p. 16) because of her classmates’ uncooperative attitudes toward English learning activities, and a clash of academic goals with them. Ngoc claimed that during the second year, she always found her classmates quiet in class. For example, she observed that in presentation skills classes, she was the person who often volunteered to present in front of class. When she decided to give a turn to others, nobody wanted to take it. Worse still, despite the fact that students needed to speak English in a speaking class, they kept writing down their ideas without saying anything. As a consequence, she found her classes ineffective, and she decided to practise more at home to improve her skills. Additionally, Ngoc was negatively influenced by her group members’ lack of responsibility for, and lack of cooperation in, completing class assignments. She said that when the teacher assigned a group task, it was very difficult to organize group meetings to work on the task because of the other group members’ schedules. She recalled her negative experiences of working with one classmate on a series of midterm and final assignments and presentations:

In the first group presentation for writing skills, this classmate did not turn up any time in class, so another group member and I had to finish all of the tasks. We had to present everything and answer questions on the part that we did not know much (NgPe, p. 28).

Consequently, Ngoc was very frustrated. Like Ngoc, Tram and Thuong were discouraged in their formal class English studies because of their classmates’ quietness. Tram observed that during the first semester, the whole class “did not say anything”, so English classes were “very boring” (TmO1, p. 8). She described how, in the fourth semester, except for in hand-out reading and writing classes, only three students, including herself, kept answering the teacher’s questions. After three or four times of responding, she “didn’t want to answer anymore but be quiet like others” (TmPe, p. 31). Thuong added that her class lacked a competitive learning environment because her classmates seemed “not to care much about English studies or study results” (TgO1, p. 24).

Only two teachers, Ms Hong and Kim Ngan, shared the student participants’ perceptions that class integration influenced student motivation in learning English.
These teachers contended that the positive attitudes of the whole class toward class activities, especially of the best students in a class, could stimulate individuals to actively engage in those activities. Ms Hong recalled her experiences with one class of students in which, “the enthusiastic attitude toward English language learning of the best students in class, and especially that of the monitor, had made that class motivated to learn English,” until their last year at university. The teacher said that all of the students in this class were always active in English classes, and even “had arguments in English” (Individual interview, p. 18). Ms Kim Ngan used prompts when she found a class quiet, often by asking some of the competent students to say something in front of the class to motivate others.

4.2.1.2 Social comparison.

Social comparison concerns the student participant’s comparison of her English progress, achievement, and amount of expended effort, to other classmates’. The findings showed that social comparison with the classmates influenced all of the study participants. However, the teachers did not mention anything about the power of social comparison in the students’ English studies.

Both Phan and Hai experienced a loss of interest in formal class English studies brought about by social comparison at university; Ngoc underwent this experience at secondary school. Phan described how, at secondary school, she was the second best in her class, so she had been used to feeling self-competent. However, at university, where everyone was competent, she no longer had such feelings. She sometimes did not want to continue studying after comparing her achievement with her classmates’. She also suffered from her negative feelings from these comparisons and claimed that she often spent lots of time pondering over how bad she was compared with her classmates.

I always ask myself why my friends could study English well, but I can’t. At such times, I was so stuck and depressed that I did not want to continue my English studies (PnPe, p. 9).

Hai was demotivated to learn as a result of inadequate competition from her social comparisons. She said that many of her classmates were not able to understand English instruction and explanation, or to write grammatically correct simple sentences. Consequently, she wanted to stop studying because she said that she “did not have to try much” to be the top student in her class (HiFp2, p. 10). Conversely, Ngoc did not want
to continue studying English at secondary school, and in fact, abandoned it in the middle of grade 11 because of “too much competition from classmates” (NcPe, p. 5). She said that all of the students admitted into the gifted school were very good at English, while she was unable to pass even the selection test into the gifted team.

Nevertheless, social comparison with classmates and/or peers seemed to act as a very important and continual motivating source in all of the participants’ English studies since school.

For example, Ngoc repeatedly said that she was motivated to practise reading skills to be as good as her university classmates because she did not want to “stand behind someone” (NcD dated 6th 2008). Additionally, when she found that her study progress and achievement were not as good as her classmates’, she would work very hard to catch up and keep pace with them. In the case of Phan, social comparison with secondary-school classmates was totally different from that with her university classmates. At secondary school, this comparison simply acted as a source of motivation for her to work harder to keep up with and then surpass her classmates. However, at university, social comparison brought her disappointment, frustration, and even disbelief in herself when she could not increase her English achievement, but she repeatedly claimed that this also made her practise English harder to be as good as her classmates. Phan claimed that she started to feel the emotionally negative influences of being worse than others at English right in her first English class at university because she could observe a large gap immediately between her English competence and her classmates’, who she claimed were English gifted students at specialized schools. Her background at a normal secondary school taught with no English instruction made her feel inferior to her classmates. However, her sadness and disbelief in her seeming lack of ability to learn English did not stop her from trying to improve her competence.

After the first term, my GPA was 1.32… I was sad and wanted to take the entrance exam into another university because I thought, ‘this major might not be for me.’ When I decided to take the entrance exam again, there was only one month left, and then I thought, ‘others can learn, why can’t I?’ Then, I kept on trying. I think that after 5 years, I could have chance to learn another major, and then I tried to study hard (PnPe, p. 33).
As such, she was motivated to study hard, and was able to gradually improve both her English competence and results.

Both Duyen and Thuong were inspired to study English very hard at school because of their image as “the best student at English” in their classes. Specifically, Duyen said that at intermediate school, her classmates’ admiration of her English competence made her work harder to maintain their admiration as well as her top position in class. However, in her private and training English classes for gifted students, she was trying to work hard to outperform others because she needed to compete with them to be officially selected for the gifted team for English contests. At university, Duyen was motivated to learn English from a social comparison with her classmates in achievement, competence, and expended effort before exams. She considered those who were better than she as “bright mirrors” for her to keep pace with (DnOl3, p. 12). When her classmates were supporting one another and working hard, she was also motivated to work hard because she was afraid of being left behind.

When we are reviewing reading and writing skills for final exams, my classmates are online and their statuses say that they are studying this and that, so I am under pressure that my friends are studying, so I have to study hard so that I could be as good as them (DnPe, p. 46).

Similarly, Thuong recalled that at secondary school, she kept comparing herself with other classmates and then trying her best to maintain her top position in English. At university, in the first English lesson, she immediately compared her English pronunciation with her classmates when she listened to some of them introducing themselves in English. She found that they had better pronunciation, and this encouraged her to practise English much harder to be as good as they were. During the two years at university, Thuong claimed that the repeated comparison with her classmates in her study results and English skills, for example, note-taking listening skills, led her to change her English learning strategies to improve her study results to keep pace with friends. Additionally, Thuong admitted that she compared the amount of effort she expended on finishing English tasks with that of her classmates. When she compared her classmates’ competence and study results of the third semester with her own, she believed:
When I think when other people try best to study English, and they give good result, but when compared to me compared to me, I study not by my best, I think we are in the not equal competition, and I think I give the bad result not by my ability, it happens by my lazy (TgOl3, pp. 6-7).

Therefore, she tried to study much harder to catch up with them. Ngan also claimed that comparing her English competence, achievement, and effort with her classmates and identifying the gaps between them motivated her to work hard to keep pace with them.

I compared my ability and results. When I found myself worse than my friends, I was unhappy and determined to study to catch up with them. If I am better than them, it will be good. When I saw my friends getting better marks, I thought that I didn’t study hard enough, I thought I would have to work harder (NnPe, p. 29).

At secondary school, when Ngan was selected for the English gifted team, she stated that she had to work really hard because other team members were much more competent. When she entered university, social comparison, as she contended, was “a motive for [her] to work harder to improve [her] English” although sometime she felt “tired” (NnOl1, p. 17). She said that witnessing her classmates getting higher study results due to their greater efforts caused her to judge her own efforts and make a conscious decision to work harder to close the distance between her classmates and herself. She also held a desire to work hard in English to be better than her classmates so that she could gain social respect from them. She recalled her embarrassment when she was not able to answer the technical English reading teacher’s question correctly; she felt like she had lost face in front of her class. As a result, she practised her skills harder so that she would not make the same mistake again.

Tram and Hai were no exception to the influences of social comparison. However, they were a bit different from other participants; they sought sources of social comparison from the peers in their cohorts to motivate themselves when this was not much present in their university class. First, like Phan, Thuong and Ngan, Tram started to make social comparison with her classmates at secondary school. In grade 11, she said she was “very motivated” to learn English to compete with her classmates and other senior students to get a place on the selected team to participate in the national English contest (TmPe, p. 3). Tram added that she was always the best in the class and school selection contests, and came second in the provincial one. She was also one of
the four best students in her class. At university, Tram made social comparisons with her classmates and even other peers in the cohort. At the end of the third term, when she observed that some of her classmates had made considerable improvement in English due to their extensive efforts, Tram said:

> it also affect me because every like every student, I always like to get the highest mark in class, and also I wish that I so I know that I have to try maybe not keep up with them but to perform better and keep my position in the class. Yep, last semester I I got the highest mark of all our classmates, so I think that this semester if I don’t get the highest mark, I I will feel I will very disappointed about myself. So if they try a lot, I also have to try a lot (TmOl 3, pp. 11-12).

In addition to this comparison, Tram kept comparing her speaking skills with peers from other classes. She said that she observed them carefully, identified her weaknesses, and tried to learn from their performances. Tram decided that these peers had obviously expended more time and effort than she had on speaking skills. Hence, she was motivated to organizing time to practise speaking and record her speaking to check its quality.

Hai admitted that social comparison was important because that helped to make society advance. She noted that students faced competition as soon as they started school. Hai’s competition with her classmates began seriously at intermediate school because unlike other participants, she started to officially major in English at that time. However, social comparison led to a very interesting approach to learning English for Hai. She said that her classmates were very good at communicative English, but Hai was not motivated to practise communicative English. She practised grammar hard because she knew that grammar was her strength and that she was superior to her classmates in this area. She added that at intermediate school, “[speaking] wasn’t much necessary then” and that “[she] had nothing to do with speaking English” (HiFp1, pp. 2-3). Later, at secondary school, in a “demanding and competitive learning environment” with very competent classmates, Hai repeatedly said that she was always trying hard to get results as good as her classmates and to maintain her rank in English competence in her class (HiFp1, p. 6). Therefore, despite sometimes being demotivated after getting bad results, Hai was re-motivated very quickly. Additionally, during her time at secondary school, Hai was also motivated to learn harder at her private English class whenever there was a new student who seemed to be better at English than she
was. She enjoyed her position as the best student in her private English class, so the feeling of being worse than someone else worried her. Hai elaborated:

\[
I \text{ just didn’t want to lose my first position. Losing that position, in my opinion at that time, meant that my English was getting worse!! I used to think ‘if I can’t better it, at least I have to keep it static’ (HiFp1, p.15).}
\]

However, at university, as she did not find any source of motivation from social comparisons with her classmates, she looked for it from other competent peers in her cohort, and from her competent intermediate-school classmates. For example, she compared her listening skills results with other peers and was motivated to practise to be as good as they were and even to outperform them. When she compared her ability with her intermediate school classmates, she was motivated to look for a chance to study abroad like them because she believed that studying abroad would change one’s future and she did not want to be “inferior to them” (HiFp1, p.17). This comparison motivated Hai to practise IELTS test taking skills to get a good result so that she could get a scholarship to study abroad.

**4.2.1.3 Class support and relatedness.**

The findings showed that class support and relatedness influenced the English studies of all of the student participants except for Ngoc. Class support is described as encouragement and help provided by classmates, while relatedness concerns the comfortable feeling that the student participant had when socializing with classmates, perhaps from shared interests. However, none of the teachers mentioned the power of class support and relatedness in the students’ English studies.

Phan was the most influenced by her university classmates’ support in terms of encouragement and help. She said that her classmates were willing to help one another in their English studies. Phan claimed that she was too shy to speak English or voice her ideas in front of the class. However, during the second year, she was motivated to gradually become confident to speak English in class thanks to her classmates’ encouragement and willingness to listen to her. Phan repeatedly said that after class, whenever she went online, her classmates, especially the monitor, often encouraged her to speak English more in class, and invited her to join their groups. In addition, they also shared English learning materials and effective English learning strategies. In particular, she appreciated:
My classmates get on well together and help one another in our studies. That comfortable feeling makes me confident in my study... When I present in front of my class, even though they might not understand, they still nod their heads and smile with me (PnPe, pp. 5-6).

As a result, Phan contended that she had become more self-confident as a result of her classmates’ support and relatedness. Meanwhile, Thung was motivated to express her ideas in class by her classmates’ supportive attitudes toward her expression of her ideas. She felt responsible to express her ideas more clearly when supported by her classmates. However, even a lack of class support did not stop her from trying to be better in English. She said:

*Our friends like me we have studied, and when we don’t understand about anything we can ask other people to make clear it and I want to say that my (laugh) friends have enthusiastic to make it to me. Yes, of course sometime they don’t willing but when they don’t willing to make clear it to me, I feel I have more confidence to study it because when they know about it, and I don’t know, I have to ... come on, yes, to understand like them* (TgOl2, pp. 2-3).

Both Duyen and Ngan said that they were encouraged in their English studies by their classmates’ mutual support. Duyen observed that during the first term, groups of classmates often worked together and helped one another to correct pronunciation errors. In the second term, they worked together to practise their oral topics before final exams. As a result, Duyen said that she was motivated to work hard because she was afraid that she would be left behind. Ngan stated that her classmates were willing to assist her whenever she wanted their help. As a result, she was motivated to seek classmates’ help when she did not understand something in class.

All of these participants, except Hai, also stated that they felt connected with their classmates and felt comfortable socializing with them. For example, Ngan believed that a good interpersonal relationship with classmates motivated her to study better so that she could help her classmates and achieve what she wanted in her study more easily. She contended that after the first semester, the class social relationship had become better and better. As a result, she felt both comfortable and motivated to seek help from friends.
Hai was the only participant who did not find herself supported by or related to her classmates at university. However, she believed:

In a good English learning environment, classmates generally may not be very close to one another but need to make one another feel comfortable (HiPe, p. 41). Specifically, her first impression of her classmates as being friendly gradually disappeared toward the end of the first year. She claimed that she had nothing in common with her classmates. They started to dress more fashionably than before, and she found it hard to share her interests with them. This lack of closeness, together with a clash in attitudes toward English learning activities and academic goals and a lack of motivating power from social comparison in English competence, seriously demotivated Hai in her English studies toward the end of the first year.

4.2.1.4 Concluding remarks.

To sum up, all of the participants were influenced by their classmates in one way or another. Among the three sources of influences from the classmates, social comparison acted as the most influential impetus for motivation in their English studies both in the formal and informal contexts. However, the important roles of class integration, and support and relatedness cannot be ignored. These also served to stimulate learning in the formal context, especially as they seemed to give the students feelings of safety and belongingness to their class communities.

4.2.2 Influence of the Teacher of English

The findings showed that all of the participants’ English studies were influenced by their teachers of English. The influences came in the form of four categories: influence of teacher’s teaching performance, influence of teacher’s knowledge, influence of teacher’s support, and influence of teacher’s interpersonal bonds with students (See Appendix B for the definitions and sample codes of these categories).

4.2.2.1 Influence of the teacher’s teaching performance.

This category involves the impact of the students’ perceptions of their teachers’ performances in class on their motivation to learn English. The findings showed that all of the participants were both positively and negatively influenced by their teachers’ selection, explanation and instruction of class activities, assessments and monitoring of
students’ schoolwork, and ability to create a comfortable class environment. All of the teachers also emphasized the importance of teachers’ teaching performance in stimulating students to learn.

4.2.2.1 Influence of teachers’ teaching skills.

All of the participants described their teachers as motivating when the teachers taught by illustrating the lecture with a lot of practical examples, giving students lots of practice opportunities, organizing a variety of class activities, teaching students learning skills, expanding the knowledge beyond the instructional material, and explaining everything carefully. Each of them used different words and phrases to portray these teachers. For example, teachers were described as “really effective,” having “good” teaching techniques, “making learning challenging,” “creative,” “teaching very well” (Hai), “careful,” “good,” “active,” “in harmony with students” (Phan), “enthusiastic,” “teaching carefully,” having “very interesting and attractive” teaching skills, organizing “interesting and fun” classes (Tram), giving students “interesting” and “funny learning experiences” (Ngan), and teaching “enthusiastically” (Thuong).

In fact, all participants were motivated to learn and engage in the lessons when the teachers provided them with meaningful activities, and gave very clear examples and instruction. Only three participants, Hai, Ngoc, and Duyen, mentioned how they were motivated to learn by their teachers’ teaching skills at school, while all participants claimed that they had teachers with good teaching techniques at university.

When she was at school, Hai described how her first private English teacher had “really effective” teaching skills because she always gave a lot of examples when introducing a new grammar structure and then asked students to practise that structure again and again. Hai commented that the teacher’s teaching skills were really suitable for her, so she had progressed rapidly in English. Similarly, Hai was very motivated to study English at secondary school because she observed that the teachers employed different skills to make students work hard. They organized very challenging English tests in which she “had to try [her] best to gain every single 0.1 point for each test” (HiFp1, p. 6). They assigned students a lot of homework, including assignments and presentations. Hai said that she had to continuously expend lots of effort studying English at secondary school to gain the student titles that she wanted. She recalled her favourite teacher at that time, saying that she was “absolutely creative” (HiFp1, p.10).
She said that this English teacher challenged her students in an oral presentation by asking them to act a drama. Hai really enjoyed acting in the drama and was voted “the best actress.”

Other participants also mentioned their positive experiences of being motivated by teachers at school. Ngoc said that her private English teacher at intermediate school had “interesting” teaching skills. The teacher not only taught students new grammar but also held games to motivate students. The teacher had thoughtful teacher-student interaction, “paying attention to each student so that she was able to support each student to improve individual strengths” (NcPe, p. 43). Therefore, Ngoc had considerable improvement in English after she took this private English class. Meanwhile, Duyen was encouraged to learn by both her formal and private English teachers. Duyen recalled how she was excited about engaging in a class excursion to the museum in grade 6 that had been organized by her teacher of English. She described how she was “so excited to learn because the teacher explained everything in English” and she could see what the teacher was saying in person (DnPe, p. 55). She went on to say that Ms G., her teacher of English at secondary school, taught grammar and explained everything very carefully in addition to holding games in her lessons. Duyen also loved her exam trainer at an English exam training centre:

My exam-trainer taught very well. She taught grammar, then made sentences as examples. Generally, she could make us picture that in our mind and be able to memorize it right away. We could use it in exercises, and didn’t need to read it again and again to memorize it (DnFp1, p. 10).

In addition, Duyen was motivated to learn by native English-speakers at an English language centre. She stated that these teachers held a lot of games in class and maintained good individual teacher-student interactions. They were also very patient in explaining what students had not understood. They were successful at making students attempt to answer their questions. In fact, Duyen admitted that she was “forced” to learn because these native English-speakers “asked every student in class to answer their questions” (DnPe, p. 57).

In contrast to the fact that only a few participants mentioned how motivated they were with the presentation of activities of their teachers at school, all of them were motivated by good teaching techniques of teachers at university. Hai, for example, was
impressed and motivated by two teachers in the first semester: Ms D., her teacher of technical reading skills, and Ms. M., her teacher of listening skills. She portrayed Ms D. as teaching the content in the instructional material but “[teaching] really well” (HiPe, p. 28). Ms D. encouraged students to learn new technical terms by organizing a variety of interesting whole-class games and activities. Hai added that successful completion of these games and activities required students to memorize new terms, and as students had to represent their groups in front of class, they had to learn new terms to avoid their groups’ losses in the games and their own embarrassment in the case of failure to complete the game well. Meanwhile, Hai observed that Ms M. told students to take note of the words they could understand while they were listening to a recording, and always asked students to show evidence of their selected answers. When checking answers, the teacher always stopped the tape when the answers to the questions were mentioned. Hai said that she was always interested in these listening lessons. However, she was motivated in a different way to learn writing skills in semester one and reading skills in semester two by Ms Kim Ngan’s teaching techniques. Hai said that Ms Kim Ngan was very enthusiastic in teaching both skills. Specifically, in the writing classes, Ms Kim Ngan tried to make students feel “more relaxed, less sleepy and have fun with the lessons” (HiFp2, p. 1) by organizing mini-games, speaking in a loud voice and even giving nicknames to some of the students. Therefore, although Hai found writing in the coursebook uninteresting, she was motivated to study and complete homework due to the teacher’s enthusiasm. In the reading classes, Hai said that Ms Ngan found extra reading materials for her students and organized groupwork activities and games. Hai said that her group members were not enthusiastic in learning the reading skills, so:

Many times, I actually did not want to attend the class. However, when I saw the teacher’s effort and I felt sorry for her, I was motivated to come (HiPe, p. 22).

Phan recalled the listening lessons in semester one and presentations skills in her second year with Ms Phi Nga. Phan recalled that Ms Phi Nga “was also learning listening skills” with the class. She described how, while the students were listening to the recording, Ms Phi Nga also listened very “attentively, like a student” (PnPe, p. 42). As a result, she knew what the students found difficult to understand and rewound the tape. When she learnt the presentation skills with Ms Phi Nga in the second year, she was very motivated because Ms Phi Nga used Vietnamese to explain difficult words and important content in the instructional materials very carefully, never forgetting to give
illustrative examples. In addition, Phan said that Ms Phi Nga and the other teacher of presentation skills often gave students extra practice materials on how to make a presentation. This helped the students to understand more about how to present well in English, and motivated them to participate actively in the lesson. In the third semester, Phan also appreciated her reading teacher’s encouragement to students to discuss the news that they had read on the Internet or watched on television in their warm-up activities. Phan added that the teacher also employed discussion techniques to foster students’ critical thinking skills.

Like Hai and Phan, Tram was also greatly motivated by some of her teachers at university. For example, she said that in semester two, her speaking teacher organized lots of naturalistic practice opportunities for students and then asked them to take turns to present. She also stated that the writing teacher in semester two, Ms Chan, “taught steps in writing gradually and carefully” (TmPe, p. 36). She allowed students to choose their own topics, and gave students appropriate individual attention and feedback. The teacher also “collected interesting ideas from each student and shared these with the whole class” (TmPe, p. 37). As a result, Tram was very interested in these writing lessons. In the fourth semester, Tram reported that she was impressed by her writing and reading teachers. She emphasized that the writing teacher, Ms Hien, often organized discussions of writing topics in class and then each group would take turns to present. Other classmates then contributed comments about the presentations before the teacher summarized important points. Tram continued:

She didn’t transfer knowledge; she told us about her experience of how to write in English. She just sat there and spoke about that, and we wanted to listen to her very much because she told us a lot about her experience, strategies, how to select words or information that we could find (TmPe, p. 34).

In terms of her reading teacher, Tram was not only motivated to learn by the teacher’s vast array of class activities but also by her personal involvement with students in the lesson. Tram said that the teacher often held debates as warm-up activities in which the teacher “supported one side” and engaged in answering “very aggressive questions” from students (TmPe, p. 31). She allotted a certain time for students to finish exercises in the instructional materials, and employed a variety of activities and creative games in which students worked in groups and shared ideas with the whole class. She said that
the teacher’s “techniques were very interesting and attractive to students, made students more excited with classes and more motivated to study” (TmPe, pp. 30-31).

Both Ngoc and Thuong loved learning writing skills in semester three because of their teacher’s techniques. They said that the teacher employed a variety of interesting activities using songs, sample essays, and literary works to show how native English-speakers used certain structures in their written works. Thuong described a writing lesson:

I remember once we were learning how to write an essay and how to use connectors in an essay properly, the teacher did not ask us to read in the textbook. She asked us to read one paragraph quoted from the work *Wuthering Heights* and showed us how the author used the connectors (TgPe, p. 54).

The teacher not only let students read the samples but also explained very carefully the ways in which these essays were written, and words and structures used in the samples. When teaching students how to write an essay, the teacher explained very clearly to students what an essay included, so the students understood what they needed to write. Thuong added that the teacher employed an inductive learning strategy in that she let students read the samples, and infer the rules for themselves before she gave feedback. Ngoc recalled one creative and motivating writing activity in which students were asked to listen to two versions of a piece of music and discuss their feelings. She described how the activity involved all students in her class, and everyone was motivated to talk about their feelings. As a result, both Ngoc and Thuong were very motivated to participate actively in each writing lesson. Furthermore, Ngoc was motivated to learn the technical reading skills taught by Ms Quyen in the fourth semester because the teacher both finished teaching the instructional materials and organized a variety of activities for students to join. Ngoc added that the teacher often presented and explained important new words and provided phrases containing these new words before reading a technical text. As a result, Ngoc contended that “time in the classes elapsed quickly but effectively” (NcPe, p. 42) because both her vocabulary and comprehension of the technical texts improved. Similarly, Ngoc claimed that she was motivated in the native English-speaker’s presentation class in semester three because the teacher taught the instructional material but she “taught very well,” (NcPe, p. 40) and also organized motivating activities in class to interest all students in her lessons. Moreover, she accepted students’ ideas and the various ways students expressed their ideas. As a result,
students felt comfortable and motivated to attend her presentation classes. Also in the third semester, Thuong was encouraged to learn because:

It was the teacher’s teaching techniques this semester in which she said it’s not necessary to understand the content thoroughly, we just needed to learn the way scientific language was used in the text. As a result, we liked learning that subject and actively searched more information about that. This way of teaching makes us more interested in learning (TgPe, p. 24).

Duyen and Ngan shared some views on their teachers’ motivating teaching techniques. Both of them appreciated their teacher of writing skills in the first semester, Ms Minh. They observed that Ms Minh always explained everything in simple and comprehensible English, and was willing to explain carefully, clearly, and patiently until students could understand. Additionally, both Duyen and Ngan loved the teaching techniques of their Vietnamese teacher of pronunciation. Duyen said that the teacher taught more clearly than the teacher who was a native English-speaker and gave students more chances to practise, especially in groups. She also gave students a lot of individual teacher-student interactions by visiting each group, asking each student to read the words, and giving students feedback on their errors. Ngan added that this teacher used Vietnamese to explain to students how to pronounce correctly. Ngan said that as “the teacher showed students where to place their tongue, lips, and teeth” (NnPe, p. 37), it was very easy for students to picture how they could pronounce correctly. In addition, the teacher also used a lot of examples to make the lessons easier to understand. In semester two, both Duyen and Ngan were motivated by their listening teacher, Ms Quyen. Duyen said that Ms Quyen would “let [students] listen to something difficult again and again so that [they] could understand it” (DnPe, p. 35). She also presented new and difficult words and phrases before a listening activity so that students would be able to hear and understand them while they were listening to the recording. Ngan commented that aside from organizing a variety of fun class activities, “[Ms Quyen] required students to repeat each sentence” and “gave students tape scripts to help students listen better” (NnPe, p. 35). Duyen and Ngan also had some different teachers who were motivating. For example, Duyen said that in the first semester, she was also motivated in the technical English reading classes because the teacher often explained a new word using a game or a picture and explained it in English for the students to guess. The teacher also guided students on how to understand the technical
texts. In the semester two, Duyen stated that she was motivated to learn in reading classes because her reading teacher used games in warm-up activities to motivate students in learning reading skills. Moreover, in these games, the teacher had examples and visual aids so that students could find the lesson easier to understand. Meanwhile, in the first semester, Ngan was encouraged to learn pronunciation by her native English-speaking teacher. She observed how he organized a lot of activities and games, including teaching students songs to learn how to pronounce words:

*In my first semester at university, Mr. Carl is my most enthusiastic teacher, I liked him so much. He always gave us funny experiences in each class. In his class I found myself more active than other classes, I talked so much* (NnFp1, p. 1).

However, all of the participants, except for Phan, were also demotivated by some teachers because of their teaching techniques. They described these teachers as having “inflexible and boring” teaching skills (Thuong), not being able to help students to “create good impression on audience” (Duyen), “very boring” (Tram), and “amateur” (Ngan). They claimed that a lack of variety in class activities, the absence of careful and comprehensible explanation, no expansion of knowledge beyond the instructional material, few practice opportunities, unclear explanations of course objectives, lack of practical examples, and not actively teaching students learning skills made them lose their interest in their English studies.

For example, Hai expressed her disappointment with her reading teacher in the first semester:

*We can not say that we are studying while she is teaching us because actually she is not teaching. We have to do all of the exercises ourselves, and then she checks the answers, but she does not do it carefully. She just reads A, B, C, D and then also explains why, but the explanation is not persuasive* (HiOl3, p. 31).

Ngan called the native English-speaker an “amateur” teacher:

*She was just an amateur teacher. She strictly followed the instructional material, and didn’t tell us anything else. She didn’t teach us how to speak English or how to express ourselves. We just studied something very superficial. In her classes, we just learnt what she taught in the book, what she taught was just as effective as when I read the instructional material* (NnP, p. 36).
All of the teachers supported their students’ view that the teacher’s teaching skills played a very important part in motivating students in their English studies. Specifically, these teachers emphasized that the teachers’ selections of activities were very important. They explained that together with teaching the core knowledge in the instructional materials, teachers needed to vary their lectures by adding activities like discussions, or games. Most of the teachers said that discussions used both as warm-up and follow-up activities motivated both first- and second-year students very well. Only Ms Kim Ngan said that her first year students did not like discussions as they were not able to express themselves due to a lack of vocabulary. Ms Giao commented that personal involvement as a supporter of one side in discussions/debates further motivated students in the lectures. All of the teachers emphasized that to optimize the motivating force of activities, they should be varied, interesting, and selected based on students’ interests and needs, as well as competence levels. Furthermore, Ms Hien contended that activities that provided students with simulated experiences of their future jobs greatly inspired students. Meanwhile, Ms Phi Nga and Chan said that their students were driven to practise enthusiastically in those activities that gave them the chance to use their creativity.

4.2.2.1.2. Influence of teacher’s assessment and monitoring of students’ schoolwork.

All of the participants commented on how the teachers’ management of students’ schoolwork motivated their English studies. Specifically, this management by the English teacher encouraged some student participants to complete their English work well right from intermediate school. However, some others found this demotivating to their English language learning.

All of the participants, except for Phan, discussed how the English teacher’s monitoring of school work preparation and completion had an impact on their studies. Hai, Duyen, Ngan, Tram, and Thuong said that they were forced to finish their homework because their teachers checked students’ homework at the beginning of each class and threatened to give a penalty at the end of the semester to any students who did not complete their homework. Duyen and Ngan considered the teacher’s strictness toward students’ completion of homework as “pressure” (DnPe, p. 32) that motivated them to complete their work well. Therefore, in semester two, a lack of this monitoring
resulted in Duyen’s “gradually [losing her] habit of preparing for the next lectures” (DnPe, p. 14). In the case of Ngan, in semester two, a lack of an appropriate amount of homework led to her demotivation to practise writing skills more at home. Meanwhile, Tram described how in semester two, Ms Chan monitored students’ completion of writing homework:

She was also strict to those who didn’t finish homework, she didn’t say anything but forced that person to write in class and hand in, or hand in in the next morning. Because we studied in the afternoon, it would be a bad thing when you had to go to class in the afternoon but had to hand in your writing paper in the morning.

Consequently, few classmates didn’t do homework (TmPe, p. 37).

Tram contended that she was motivated to finish her home readings for the reading skills in semester four in a different way. Tram said that her reading skills teacher in semester four assigned students a lot of homework but her exercises were very interesting and motivating. The teacher also asked students whether they would like to do the exercises in the book and if not, she was willing to offer them other exercises. As a result, she spent lots of time reading and completing these very interesting readings. Tram was also motivated to prepare her presentations assigned by the teachers because she thought that “they would help [her] to improve speaking skills, be more self-confident, and get more constructive feedback from classmates and the teacher” (TmPe, p.12). Slightly different from other participants, teachers’ monitoring of Ngoc’s English schoolwork might either motivate or demotivate her. At intermediate school, Ngoc was selected to be on the team of English gifted students. She was motivated to complete all assigned homework despite her heavy workload because of the teachers’ strictness toward students’ completion of work. However, during the fourth semester, Ngoc also blamed her “loss of interest in learning writing skills” on the teacher’s “assigning students too much homework” (NcPe, p. 12). Similarly, Thuong was demotivated in learning reading skills in semester three because of the teacher’s strictness toward students’ completion of given homework:

And other reason is my reading teacher is quite strict, and she often force us to complete all of the exercise before going to class...so sometime there are many many new words in the unit we have to do complete, so it is sometime very heavy. And we sometime, I have spend all of the day to complete the exercise she gave
me, yes. And when we come to class, although we do all of the all of the exercise, she seem not happy (TgOl3, p. 10).

Tram also said that a lack of teacher’s monitoring of students’ learning new technical terms in semester three resulted in her laziness to learn these terms. She said she expected the teacher to “force students to learn new words or to learn the content of the last lesson,” but the teacher did not (TmOl2, p. 13).

In terms of the motivating power of teacher’s assessment techniques on students’ work, Phan, Ngoc, Duyen, and Thuong expressed their views on how these influenced their English studies. Phan confessed that she was motivated to prepare for oral presentations in class by the assessment technique of her native English-speaking teachers of speaking skills:

At the beginning of the class of the semester, she ask me to write down to tell about ourselves, and in one piece [of paper]. And before the class, they mix and find out one people to in front of class to present. It’s very fair, and it means that all we must prepare all time (PnOl2, p. 19).

Similarly, Ngoc and Duyen stated that they were motivated to learn English and to finish their work to the best of their abilities when the teacher graded their homework. In addition, Ngoc also complimented her native English-speaking teacher of presentation skills in semester three on her assessment techniques. She said that the teacher awarded students good marks for quality preparation for the task. The teacher also pointed out the errors for students to correct but she never deducted too many points from students’ results. This helped to build up students’ confidence, thereby motivating them to study. Thuong was motivated to learn and prepare for presentation skills in semester three “very seriously” because Ms Chan was very strict in assessing students’ presentations (TgFp2, p. 2). However, she was demotivated for a short time in presentation skills class in semester four because:

This semester, I felt annoyed as the teacher of speaking gave me a mark that I was not happy with. I tried a lot, and I felt very self-confident, but the mark I got didn’t reflect what I acted. Consequently, I didn’t want to study because I tried, but I got an unfair result (TgPe, p. 8).

Apart from Ms Hien, all of the teachers contended that the teacher had to be strict with their students to a certain extent, to make the class function properly. The
teacher needed to reach a consensus with students on certain class rules like punctuality and attendance, completion of assigned homework, submission of assignments, and in-class behaviour. Breaking these rules would lead to a penalty on students’ ongoing and final assessment results. Nevertheless, Ms Chan added that the teacher could still be flexible in exercising a penalty by reminding students of their agreement not to break the rules. Ms Quyen would communicate her disappointment to her students while giving them a penalty:

If students keep breaking the rules, this shows that they are not responsible for their study, and I will subtract their attendance mark. I will also tell them that I am very disappointed about their irresponsibility (Individual interview, p. 14).

4.2.2.1.3. Influence of teachers’ ability to create a comfortable class environment.

All of the participants, except for Duyen and Tram, contended that the class environment created by their English teachers affected their English studies. They claimed that when the teacher felt comfortable, the students would feel the same, and thereby be motivated to study. Conversely, a teacher’s anger or sadness with the class often prevented students from wanting to study.

Phan claimed that “easygoing” teachers inspired her to express her ideas in class. For example, she said that her native English-speaking teacher of presentation skills was very “easygoing,” so she was “encouraged to talk more” in class (PnOl2, p. 6). Similarly, the comfortable learning environment created by her listening teacher in the third semester motivated students to talk about their ideas in class. Phan also recalled a time on the English gifted team with her favourite teacher of English at intermediate school, saying that she had felt comfortable learning with him as he had “a good sense of humour” and “understood students’ feelings” (PnPe, p. 29). Similarly, Ngan observed that her native English-speaking teacher of speaking skills in semester one created a comfortable, motivating learning environment by his sense of humour and friendliness. She said that the teacher “considered students as friends,” and was able to make students “laugh a lot.” Therefore, she was motivated to be “daring” (NnPe, p. 14) to both ask and answer questions. She also credited her writing teacher in semester one with being able to make students feeling comfortable in her classes. She concluded:
When the teacher was comfortable in her lectures, we were also comfortable in her class. As a result, we understood her lectures and worked more effectively (NnPe, p. 5).

Conversely, Hai and Thuong did not want to study when the teacher got angry with students. Hai said that her lab listening teacher created an uncomfortable and unmotivating class environment because she always “looked serious” and “always shouted at students” who could not answer her questions (HiPe, p. 40). Ngoc was partially demotivated to learn the writing skills in the semester one because the teacher always looked very moody in class.

All of the teachers claimed that teachers’ mood could influence students’ English learning. They maintained that a teacher’s tiredness, “lack of self confidence,” or “prejudice against students,” cheerful attitudes in class, and creating a feeling of comfort all affected students’ learning. However, their consensus on how much a teacher’s mood influenced students’ learning varied. For example, Ms Hien believed that a teacher’s mood did not have much influence on that teacher’s quality of teaching; therefore, it did not have much effect on her students’ motivation to learn. She contended:

I am too busy managing class activities, and assessing students’ work to have any spare time to pay attention to my personal feelings (Individual interview, p. 11).

Meanwhile, Ms Phi Nga claimed that an experienced English teacher would know how to control her feelings in class. Ms Minh emphasized that a teacher’s mood might also result from students’ attitudes toward, and support for, the lesson:

If some students do not pay attention to the lecture, I will feel less comfortable and less devoted to teaching. When students work hard and participate actively in the lecture, I will teach more enthusiastically (Individual interview, p. 7).

4.2.2.1.4 Concluding remarks.

Collectively, the class performances of the English teachers in terms of their teaching skills, monitoring and assessing of students’ work, and their ability to create a comfortable class environment influenced the participants in their English studies. Among these three sources of influences, the teachers’ teaching skills influenced the participants the most. However, the way the teachers’ performances in classes affected
the students’ English studies depended on how each student perceived those performances. Generally, it seemed that the teachers’ in-class performances gave students more positive than negative experiences.

4.2.2.2 Influence of teacher’s knowledge.

This section presents the findings on how students’ perceptions of their teachers’ English competence and subject knowledge influenced their study. All participants shared the view that teacher’s superior knowledge motivated them in their English studies, but the majority of them agreed that a teacher’s knowledge, albeit important, was not as important as good teaching skills in motivating students to learn. All of the teachers also agreed with students that teachers’ knowledge also influenced students’ learning to a certain extent.

Hai, Phan, and Ngan commented on how a teacher’s good knowledge inspired them in their studies. Hai felt that teachers had to be good with their English skills. She claimed that she was motivated to learn listening skills in the first semester because “the teacher had very good English speaking and listening competence even though she is very young” (HiPe, p. 50). Phan said that her teacher of the English gifted team built up her motivation and success in her English in grade 8. She said that the teacher’s knowledge and experiences contributed to changing her from a student who was ignorant of English to one who won prizes in English contests after only one year of learning with that teacher. At university, she felt herself motivated to study for the IELTS listening strategies class because she said the teacher showed “her power to persuade students” (PnOl2, p. 13). Ngan described “good teachers” who motivated her to study English on the English gifted team as being able to teach students special, unpopular English knowledge and also as having good English competence. She recalled that one female teacher spoke English very well and had been travelling to many countries because of her competence. She also commented that her Vietnamese teacher of pronunciation class in semester one taught well as “she had very good English pronunciation” (NnPe, p. 37). Duyen contended that she “[cared] a lot about a teacher’s English competence,” and said that a teacher with good English pronunciation greatly motivated her to learn (DnPe, pp. 37-38). Thuong concurred:
A teacher who has good English knowledge could help students learn better. For example, learning with a writing teacher who has good English knowledge can help to build students’ self-confidence in writing (TgPe, p. 29).

Thuong added that she was motivated to study harder by her teachers’ academic success. Her teachers’ success in having been awarded good results at university motivated her to learn hard to be as good as they were. She also thought about her teachers’ success in being a lecturer at university, thereby motivating her to practise English more diligently so that she could also become a lecturer after graduation.

Conversely, all of the participants, except Ngan, commented on how a teacher’s lack of good English knowledge stopped them from wanting to study English. Hai seemed to be the most concerned about this:

If I consider a teacher to be bad because of that teacher’s incompetent knowledge, I will be demotivated in my study. When I think that I am better than my teacher, I cannot learn with that teacher, I will not respect that teacher. When I go to class, like other people, I want to enrich my knowledge. I want to study English more because I think that my competence is not good and I want to improve it. When I study with a teacher whose English knowledge is worse than mine, what can I study from that teacher? (HiPe, p. 40)

All of the participants observed that these ‘incompetent teachers’ had bad pronunciation. In addition, these teachers were portrayed as lacking self-confidence in checking students’ errors or sharing their ideas with students (Phan); originally being a teacher of Russian, thereby having limited English knowledge (Tram, Duyen); and making errors in teaching English (Thuong, Hai, Ngoc) but still imposing their ideas on students (Ngoc, Hai). Duyen recalled her technical reading teacher in semester two as not knowing more than the students:

Her classes were boring. Sometime when we asked her about some new technical terms, she told us she would go home and check. When she was lecturing, she had a sheet of paper full of new terms in her hand, and she even wrote the meaning of these terms on her hands because she couldn’t remember them (laugh). Her knowledge is not good, so she made students bored in her class (DnPe, p. 14).

However, it seemed that all of the participants considered the motivating power of a teacher’s knowledge as complementary to the teacher’s skill in using that knowledge.
as a tool to make that teacher’s teaching techniques more effective. Specifically, a teacher with good knowledge would be able to “give better examples,” and “expand knowledge beyond the textbooks” (PnPe, p. 18; TmPe, p. 33). Therefore, students would learn better and more effectively, thereby being more motivated to learn. Phan added that for her, having good teaching techniques was the most important quality of a teacher to help students to learn well in class. Having knowledge was not as important because “[she could] self-study to enrich her knowledge at home” (PnPe, p. 18). Hai and Tram did not pay attention to their teachers’ bad pronunciation when these teachers had good teaching skills. Hai even said:

When I have a chance to learn with a teacher who has good teaching techniques, and I find her techniques suitable for me, I am greatly motivated to learn. Such teachers not only teach me knowledge but also inspire me (HiPe, p. 39).

Tram stated that she was very motivated in learning the reading skills in semester four because the teacher had “very interesting techniques.” She did not feel demotivated at all when this teacher could not speak English as well as other teachers (TmPe, p. 30). Ngoc also said that “a teacher’s knowledge is not the most important” because for her, a feeling of closeness to that teacher was more important (NcPe, p. 32).

All teachers confirmed the importance of teacher’s knowledge in motivating students to learn English. Ms Hien said that the teacher’s self-confidence in class and thorough understanding of what she was going to teach drove students to learn harder. Ms Phi Nga, Hong, and Quyen all contended that a teacher’s English competence should be good so that the teacher could be able to give instruction in English. Ms Giao went even further, stating that a teacher of English, especially technical English, should not only be good at English but also at social knowledge and natural sciences, and should know current social news. However, Ms Phi Nga, Hong, and Quyen emphasized that the level of English competence of a teacher did not play as much of a motivating role as that teacher’s class performances. Ms Phi Nga elucidated:

When giving a lecture, the teacher should be able to show that she was competent in English and should be able to give instruction in English. However, it would not be necessary for a teacher of English to be ‘a champion’ in English. Instead, by using effective teaching techniques, that teacher could make her students to be
champions in the English language. I think students consider a teacher’s teaching skills more important than her English competence (individual interview, p. 12).

Ms Hien stated that teachers had been “more open” than before to students about what they knew and did not know (individual interview, p. 12). She believed that “students of the current generation were more empathetic with teachers when teachers did not have good knowledge about some fields because these students had had more life experiences and more knowledge than the previous generations of students” (individual interview, p. 12). These teachers’ view corresponded with the participants’ that teaching techniques were more important than a teacher’s English competence.

4.2.2.3 Influence of teacher’s support.

This category describes how the student participants’ perceptions of their English teachers’ support in terms of teacher’s encouragement, feedback, willingness to help, and willingness to provide students with freedom, motivated the participants to learn English. The teachers mentioned the teacher’s support, except the teacher’s willingness to provide students with freedom, as an impetus for students’ learning.

4.2.2.3.1. Influence of teacher’s encouragement.

All of the participants contended that the teachers’ encouragement and praise greatly inspired them in their English studies. Except for Phan, all of the participants talked about how their teacher’s encouragement made them work harder at school. Both Hai and Thuong shared the view that the teacher’s praise about their ability to learn English well changed their personal thinking about their ability to learn English, and made them work hard to improve their English competence. Regarding her English achievement, Hai emphasized most the influential role of her first private English teacher in grade 6, saying that “there would be no me today if I hadn’t had a teacher like her” (HiFp1, p. 3). She continued:

After the teacher said so, I really felt a change within myself. I was determined to learn English and was much more self-confident. ‘I can study English! It was a university lecturer who already said I could learn English and praised on my ability’(...) I was much more self-confident and I was motivated to learn English and I learnt English well (HiPe, pp. 11-12).
Hai also stated that the teacher’s continuous encouragement throughout her time of attending this private class (from grade 6 to before university entrance exam) motivated her to try her best to study English. At secondary school, Hai’s motivation to practise and improve her speaking skills was once again fuelled by another critical moment when she made her first oral presentation in class. The teachers’ praise for her presentation helped to build up her self-confidence in speaking skills. Later, her self-confidence was again increased by an English language centre teacher who kept encouraging students to speak English by praising their English speaking competence, despite their errors, and thanking them after they had finished. Meanwhile, a critical moment in Thuong’s English studies came when she had the first lesson with her English teacher at secondary school. She could answer all questions from the teacher fluently and the teacher praised her English competence. The teacher’s praise became a main source of motivation for her in her English studies as Thuong said, “the praise brought [her] a feeling of achievement that [she] had never experienced before (TgPe, p. 46). When she was deciding which major she wanted at university, the praise from several secondary school teachers of English regarding her English competence motivated her to choose English. Duyen recalled her time of learning English at intermediate school, saying that at that time, she was the best student in English, and she often acted as an English tutor for her classmates. Her teacher praised her on this and that praise resulted in Duyen’s higher “passion in [her] study” (DnOl1, p.8).

In contrast to receiving praise for doing well, Tram and Ngan experienced the motivating force of their teachers’ encouragement through their teachers’ consolation when they faced failure in their English studies at school. Ngan recalled a time when she was in grade 9 and failed to be selected for the group of English gifted students. She said that her English teacher at that time had “comforted [her] a lot” and communicated her own unhappiness when Ngan was not selected for the team (NnOl1, p. 6). As a result, Ngan was able to emerge from her disappointment and became motivated to study hard. She added that this teacher’s continuous encouragement inspired her to expend more effort on English than she otherwise would have done. Meanwhile, Tram’s teacher “encouraged [her] a lot” and even “asked [Tram]’s parents to let [Tram] join the gifted class in Hanoi” to prepare for the national English contest (TmPe, pp. 3-4).

Ngoc experienced her teachers’ encouragement at school through giving students the chance to get good marks. Ngoc said that her English teachers at intermediate school
encouraged students to learn by giving them opportunities to get good marks to offset bad marks they had got, and by giving students newspapers and magazines in English. Her teachers at secondary school motivated students to practise making English presentations by awarding them high assessment results such as marks of nine or ten.

At university, only Phan and Thuong stated that teachers’ encouragement motivated them to work harder. Specifically, Phan appreciated the encouragement techniques of her Vietnamese teacher of presentation skills, Ms Phi Nga, in the second year. She commented that the technique of encouraging students to practise speaking English to a partner instead of speaking directly to the teacher helped to improve the students’ self-confidence in speaking English, especially for those who were not yet ready to take risks. She added that in the second year, both Ms Phi Nga and the English-speaking teacher of presentation skills encouraged students to express their ideas despite the errors students might make. In the third semester, Phan stated that because of her teacher’s personal caring toward Phan, she was motivated to try practising note-taking listening skills after her failure to get a good result on her listening midterm test. She said:

When I have bad result in midterm test, she ask my question and from this she care about me much, so I feel that I don’t alone. I not alone because I think when I have good bad mark, bad score, all people will away from me, I feel that but my friend does isn’t, and my teacher isn’t (PnOl3, p. 12).

Phan also recalled her increased motivation in learning all English skills right after the listening teacher of semester four praised her on her listening competence. At university, Thuong was motivated to practise more to improve her presentations in English as a result of her teacher’s praise on her oral English competence. She said that the teacher’s praise on the clarity of her presentations and her good ideas brought her a feeling of achievement and this motivated her to practise more. In addition, Thuong felt motivated to practise using body language to make her presentations more naturally, when her Vietnamese teacher of presentation skills in the third semester appreciated her classmates’ use of body language in her presentation.

Some participants also commented on how a lack of teacher’s encouragement discouraged them from learning English. Ngoc claimed that she did not want to attend
the reading classes in semester three because the teacher did not provide appropriate encouragement. Ngoc said:

She still encourage but the way she encourage is just speak that ‘you should ah you have to try more and more at home’ and that’s all (NcOl3, p. 32).

Thuong complained that the teachers of English at intermediate school did not encourage students to learn English because “they assessed students’ work too strictly.” Her class, including her, was not good at English and “that strict assessment made them feel further discouraged” (TgPe, p. 45). Tram also attributed her demotivation in learning English at intermediate school and in her technical reading classes of semester three to a lack of teachers’ encouragement.

4.2.2.3.2. Influence of teacher’s feedback.

The findings showed that all of the participants, except for Hai and Ngoc, were influenced by their teachers’ feedback in their English studies. They all agreed that this feedback played a very motivating role for them.

Specifically, these five participants believed that they were encouraged to learn several skills at university not only because their teachers gave immediate feedback but also because the feedback was very detailed, in that each student was apprised of their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, the constructive feedback from the teachers helped them to see what they should do to improve their weaknesses. For example, Phan said that the constructive feedback provided by both teachers of presentation skills in the second year motivated her to practise to improve her speaking competence. She said that the native English-speaking teacher pointed out her errors, made her understand what her errors were, and helped her to correct them. Similarly, she made comments about Ms Phi Nga:

She nodded her head while we were speaking. She gave very detailed comments on what was good and what’s not and how we can correct these… She listened to our presentations very carefully and gave very good advice suitable to each student (PnPe, p. 42).

Tram recalled her writing classes in semester two, taught by Ms Chan, and stated that the teacher was very enthusiastic about giving feedback. Tram described how the teacher collected all of the class members’ work and gave very constructive feedback.
She added, “the teacher organized peer-editing activities and then gave careful feedback and correction” (TmPe, p. 36). Consequently, they were motivated to write more in English. She also appreciated the feedback techniques of the writing teacher in semester four, Ms Hien. She said:

When she returned our writing papers or drafts, she commented very carefully, she analyzed our errors very clearly. She just analyzed one example. She arranged our errors into groups, so when she corrected one example, others who had the same type of error would know how to correct theirs. When she put similar errors into the same group, she could tell us more of our errors and thereby helping us to avoid them (TmPe, p. 34).

Like others, both Duyen and Ngan said that their teachers of writing and pronunciation in semester one motivated students to learn because they often gave instant and constructive feedback on students’ errors. Duyen added that the teacher of writing, Ms Minh, also told students that they should finish these exercises despite their easiness because doing this would help them do the tests well. Duyen appreciated the pronunciation teacher:

She is very caring. She corrects the mistakes that each of us makes and she does it again and again until we could pronounce the words correctly (DnOl3, p. 9).

Thuong was also no exception to experiencing the motivating power of her teachers’ feedback. Thuong said that she was motivated to practise to improve her pronunciation because of the way the Vietnamese teacher of presentation skills, Ms Chan, once corrected her wrong pronunciation. Thuong described how Ms Chan understood the difficulties that Vietnamese students often encountered in their English studies, so she often commented on, and forced students to correct, their pronunciation errors. Additionally, she recalled that she was highly motivated to revise her writing drafts because “the teacher of writing skills in the semester four was very willing to offer immediate comments on students’ drafts” (TgPe, p. 5). As a result, she worked conscientiously on these writing drafts, correcting her work based on what the teacher suggested.

Conversely, a lack of teachers’ careful, constructive and immediate feedback impeded several participants’ motivation to learn English. Tram complained that her technical reading teacher of semester three did not give any feedback on students’
learning, so they did not want to continue to learn it. Tram also claimed that her writing teacher in semester three collected very few examples of the students’ work and checked these very quickly by “skimming” those papers (TmOl2, p. 16). Worse still, the teacher did not give feedback rapidly, as she did not return the essays that she collected. She complained that the teacher had not given her any feedback on her writing, so she did not want to write any more. Likewise, Ngan was not happy or motivated by the writing teacher of semester two. She said:

After she marked our papers, she gave very general comments and underlined our errors. She also organized peer editing. In fact, we couldn’t know whether we wrote correctly, how could we mark other people’s writing? We could find grammar errors, but we don’t know whether we were writing correctly, it’s difficult to comment on others’ writing (NnPe, p. 34).

All of the teachers contended that giving immediate feedback and encouragement to students’ works motivated the students to study English harder. Ms Hien and Ms Hong recalled that their students more actively participated in their lectures when they walked around class during their discussions, listened to them, and made comments. Ms Hien added that in her writing classes, as she often attempted to return students’ writing papers on time with constructive feedback, her students were always willing to submit their next assignments on time. Meanwhile, Ms Phi Nga talked about how her special encouragement techniques inspired her students to speak English more in class. She said that those special techniques included using activities, games, songs, and movies. Ms Phi Nga added that she always attempted to give students immediate feedback to motivate them to learn. Ms Minh stated that in addition to visiting each group of students while they were together working on a writing topic and giving feedback regarding their errors, she also asked each group to read their work for classmates to give comments and vote for the best paper. This greatly motivated her students because it created a competitive learning environment. Similarly, Ms Giao created a competitive and motivating learning environment by asking students to comment on one another’s oral presentations.

4.2.2.3.3 Influence of teacher’s willingness to help.

The data showed that all of the participants were strongly affected by the willingness of their teachers to provide help in terms of in-class assistance with their
learning difficulties, sharing English learning experiences, and offering opportunities to learn necessary skills for future employment and further study.

With reference to teachers’ in-class assistance with students’ English studies, all seven participants were motivated to study harder and seek further help from the teachers when their teachers showed care about their English progress and achievement. Ngan and Duyen even said that the teacher’s willingness to help was also an expression of that teacher’s enthusiasm in teaching students English. For example, Duyen observed that Ms G, her favourite English teacher at secondary school, “paid special attention to, and gave support for, students who had the intention to undertake an English major at university” (DnFp1, p. 8). She said that Ms G. helped these students to revise and build their knowledge and gave them more challenging exercises to practise. Similarly, Ngan claimed that one reason that she was motivated to learn English at intermediate and secondary schools was her teachers’ provision of challenging exercises to practise. Thuong appreciated the willingness of her favourite teacher of English at secondary school to answer students’ questions very clearly.

The participants seemed to have more help from their teachers of English than from the teachers of English at school. Hai said that after her listening teacher in semester one discovered that “[her] students did not get good midterm listening results, [she] provided more listening practice similar to those in the exams, so that students could get used to that test format” (HiPe, p. 51). Therefore, Hai felt very comfortable in her listening class, and always tried to concentrate even though she was sometimes sleepy because the class started at 7 am. Phan recalled asking her native English teacher of pronunciation skills in the first semester for help with her pronunciation as the teacher “was willing to help [Phan] whenever she asked” and would explain until Phan could understand (PnFp1, p. 5). She also said that she was more active and self-confident in seeking help from the teachers, especially from her teacher of writing during the fourth semester, than before, as she could observe the teachers’ willingness to offer assistance. She confessed that during the previous semesters, she was too shy to ask for help. Tram claimed that her teacher of writing skills in semester two was always willing to give students careful explanations in response to their questions, and her Vietnamese teacher of presentation skills in the third semester, Ms Giao, taught students effective speaking strategies and gave good advice. Tram also observed that her reading teacher of semester four enthusiastically gave advice in response to students’ questions.
about reading skills but also to their questions about other skills. For example, Tram said the teacher’s advice on her presentations was very useful because she “often commented in the role of an audience” (TmPe, p. 30). Additionally, Ngan described her native English teacher of pronunciation class in the first semester as “very enthusiastic,” as this teacher always spent time answering students’ questions (NnFp1, p. 1). Duyen also thought that both of her listening teachers in semester two motivated students to learn because they were willing to answer students’ questions. At university, Thuong observed that her teacher of writing in the third semester was also willing to spend time on consultations with students. She said:

She often came to class very early, about 30 minutes and left class later than stipulated in the timetable. During these times, she often sat face-to-face with us and answered any questions from us. I think she was very enthusiastic (TgPe, p. 32).

She also appreciated the assistance from her technical reading teacher of semester four. She said that the teacher often asked students to translate the technical texts in class and provided help when students had difficulty. She said this helped students to save long, tedious hours trying to make meaning from the texts when they might not yet understand the texts. Ngoc commented:

When the teacher cares about me, I will have to do something in return for that caring. For example, when the teacher is willing to help me, I will study very hard because I will feel guilty if I do not study. However, when the teacher does not care about me, I will be discontented because what do I study for when the teacher does not care? (NePe, p. 32).

All seven participants indicated that the teachers’ sharing of English learning experiences and necessary skills for future jobs influenced their English studies. Their English studies at school provided an example. It seemed that at that time, the teachers’ advice on English experiences and skills for future jobs and studies helped shape their choice of major at university. For example, Ngan’s English teacher in grade 9 advised her to major in English at university for its increasing popularity. The teacher said majoring in English would bring Ngan more job opportunities in the future. This encouragement contributed to Ngan’s decision to focus on learning English at secondary school. Ngan went on to say that her English teacher in grades 11 and 12 also
spent time talking to students about examples of good English learners and their learning strategies. She advised students to work hard on English, saying that “working hard was the most effective strategy” (NnPe, p. 39). She also advised Ngan how to get high English scores in university entrance exams.

At university, the teachers’ advice helped these participants to set both their short- and long-term academic and professional goals. Hai recalled that in the first semester, in her private class, she was motivated to study English by her teacher’s stories about good and bad English language learners, which reminded Hai that she had “had a good background in English and [she] just couldn’t waste” it (HiFp2, p. 11). In her formal listening class, her teacher influenced her motivation to practise listening skills for tests and exams by telling the students about the unpredictability of listening tests and difficulties associated with them, based on the teacher’s own experiences as an English major at the same university. Phan recollected that her teacher of listening skills in the third semester told students about her English learning experiences and career, and this motivated students to try very hard to learn. Tram appreciated her reading teacher in semester four and said that she shared with students a lot of experiences and effective learning strategies for learning English. For example, she gave students website addresses where they could find additional reading and reference materials on effective learning strategies for all English skills. Similarly, her listening teacher of semester three advised students on where to find good listening materials and effective tips to practise reading and writing English. This teacher also encouraged students to practise for their future jobs:

She said that ‘don’t worry about the future, if you practise more and more at home, practise at class, and never never think your future is doomy’ (TmOl3, p. 17).

Duyen’s listening teachers in semester two provided students with resources to learn English. Thuong’s writing skills teacher in semester three often shared with students her strategies and experiences in English writing skills. For example, she taught students how to read extensively and effectively so that students could use what they read in their subsequent writing, and also recommended some useful and interesting literary works to her students. Therefore, Thuong was motivated to study writing skills and finish all of her homework even though the teacher did not force students to do that. In addition, the teacher talked to students about their future jobs and
the necessary skills to do their future jobs well. With regard to their futures, Tram commented:

When we first entered university, many of my friends didn’t know what they would do after graduation, and what they goals were. Only a few were able to set their goals. I saw many teachers talk to us about graduates and their jobs and gave us advice what we should do. The advice helps us to see what our goals are (TmPe, p. 21).

As these participants valued their teachers’ advice highly, a lack of information resulted in their demotivation for learning English. Tram and Thuong did not want to study English at intermediate school partly because of their teachers’ lack of emphasis on the importance of English in the future. Thuong added that her intermediate-school teachers of English did not teach students any specific and effective English learning strategies. Duyen was demotivated to learn English reading in semester one because of the teacher’s lack of caring about students’ studies. She said:

She never asks us whether we have understood the lesson, or though we did not do well in the reading test because the test was a bit long, she didn’t show her sympathy or show us how to improve our reading skills (DnOl3, pp. 8-9).

Ngan claimed that her technical reading teacher of semester two did not tell students how to search for more materials to improve their skills. Therefore, she was not able to find materials to practise, so she did not want to practise at home.

All of the teachers agreed with their students’ perception that a teacher’s willingness to help leads to their students being more enthusiastic about learning English. Ms Hien and Ms Quyen stated that the first technique that they used to provide support was to divide students into groups of mixed competence levels so that students could also learn from one another. Ms Quyen stated that at the beginning of the semester, she held a placement test and then divided students into groups based on this result. All of the teachers contended while students were working, either individually or in groups, they often walked around the class, listening to or reading and checking students’ work, answering their questions, and showing them carefully what they needed to do if they were having difficulty. As a result, their students felt more excited about their English studies. In terms of teachers’ sharing experiences and skills for English studies and future careers, only Ms Hien and Ms Chan mentioned how they
motivated students by telling them about their personal experiences. Ms Hien said that her students were very motivated when she told them about her experiences as an interpreter for several projects because they then understood more clearly what they would have to prepare for their future jobs. Ms Chan shared with her students the difficulties she had experienced as an English major, and the solutions she developed to overcome those difficulties.

4.2.2.3.4. Influence of teacher’s willingness to provide students with freedom.

The findings showed that five participants mentioned that the teacher’s attempt to provide a certain amount of freedom in class motivated them to study English. However, it seemed that this provision of freedom did not affect the students as much as other sources of influence from the teachers, because these participants mentioned very few instances related to this factor. Additionally, the freedoms given by the teachers were limited; they were only offered with regard to having choice of topics, the amount of schoolwork to do, and giving students freedom to express their ideas in class. Meanwhile, the teachers did not mention the influences of giving students freedom on the students’ English studies.

For example, at intermediate school, despite her busy learning schedule, Hai was motivated to finish all homework assigned by her private teacher of English. Hai said that this private English teacher did not force students to finish all assigned homework, but just let students choose how much they could complete. At university, Phan observed that her native English-speaking teacher encouraged her to speak English through her respect of students and students’ ideas. Similarly, Ngan said that she was motivated to speak a lot in her pronunciation classes in the first semester because:

*In his class I found myself more active than other classes, I talked so much. His teaching method was let us say everything we thought about the lesson (the things were out of lesson were okay) as much as possible* (NnFp1, p.1).

As such, Ngan was stimulated to speak as she was free to talk about what she wanted. Ngoc was further motivated to learning writing skills in semester three because the teacher sometimes allowed students to choose their own topics for writing exercises. Thuong theorized that a reading teacher who “[asked] students to complete a very simple goal of learning ten new words per day [would] encourage students to learn more than requiring a large number of new terms” (TgPe, p. 30). She seemed to be
motivated to learn more new words when she was given freedom to decide how much she would learn.

Ngoc addressed the deleterious effect of not having freedom. She claimed that she was discouraged about learning writing skills in semester four because the teacher always tried to impose her thinking on students even when Ngoc attempted to show the teacher what she had done. In addition, it must be noted that not all participants were concerned about freedom given by the teachers. Tram said that she preferred to be controlled by the teachers who would “catch an eye on her” when she did not study seriously (TmOl1, p. 10).

4.2.2.3.5 Concluding remarks.

In conclusion, the teachers’ support in terms of teacher’s encouragement, feedback, willingness to help, and willingness to provide students with freedom had an impact on the participants’ motivation to learn English. Among these four sources of support, the teachers’ willingness to provide students with autonomy seemed to exert the least influence, and teachers’ willingness to help did the most to motivate the students. None of the teacher participants mentioned the potential power of autonomy as a means of giving support to the students in their English studies.

4.2.2.4 Influence of teacher’s interpersonal bonds with students.

The findings showed that all of the participants claimed that a close feeling with their teachers of English motivated them to study harder and seek help from the teachers. However, only four teachers mentioned this as a source of motivation. For example, because Hai observed that her teacher was trying to be close to students by trying to remember all of their names, she was motivated to study the hand-out listening sessions in the first semester so that she could answer the teacher’s questions well. Like Hai, Phan recalled her classes with the teacher of the gifted English team at intermediate school and contended that one of the reasons that she was motivated to learn with him was his closeness with students:

When we didn’t understand anything, he explained again carefully, he said to us as if he had been our father and we had been his children. We didn’t feel distant to him (PnPe, p. 29).
Tram claimed that most of her native English speaking teachers were very close to the students, and sometimes the teachers even invited students to their homes. Therefore, she felt comfortable and motivated to ask them for help when she had difficulty with her English studies. Duyen said that because her two favourite teachers of English at intermediate and secondary school were close to her, interested in her, and often asked her about her studies and other things, she felt motivated to study to please them. Ngan observed that the teacher at secondary school was “very close to students” and “considered [students] as children or younger siblings” (NnPe, pp. 24, 42). Ngoc said that when she felt close to a teacher, she would try to learn more in class, and even if she found the class boring, she would try to make herself become involved in the lesson. Generally, she said that feeling close to a teacher positively “affected [her sense of] responsibility” for learning in that teacher’s class (NcOl3, p. 33).

Only four teachers emphasized the importance of closeness of a teacher toward her students in motivating students to learn. Ms Hien always attempted to remember all students’ names because she thought that this expressed an effort to be close to her students, thereby motivating them to learn. Ms Phi Nga believed that when a teacher was a friend to students, students would feel comfortable with that teacher and then would be encouraged to ask that teacher for help. Ms Minh described her attempts to be close to her students by chatting with them during breaks and asking them about their studies at home. Ms Giao stated that students would feel encouraged to learn when the teacher tried to be close to them. She added, however, that despite how close the teacher and students were, there needed to exist a certain distance so that the teacher was still respected.

4.2.2.5 Concluding remarks.

Taken collectively, it seemed that the teachers had great influence on the participants in their English studies. Generally, a motivating teacher was portrayed as having good teaching techniques, providing lots of encouragement, giving constructive and immediate feedback, showing willingness to help students, and making students feel close to her. Other qualities, like having good assessment techniques, good content knowledge, or providing students with autonomy support were considered complementary to those other qualities.
4.2.3 Influence of the Instructional Materials

All of the participants commented on how the level of difficulty and the personal relevance of the instructional materials influenced their English studies. Each participant emphasized the motivational power of challenging instructional materials and tasks. They also found themselves energized to put effort into learning English and willing to search for more materials when they had interesting and curiosity-triggering topics and activities. In addition, they were motivated to learn by the usefulness of these topics and materials to their English improvement and personal needs (also see 4.1.1). Only three teachers mentioned the instructional materials as important in students’ English studies.

Thuong, Phan, Tram, and Ngoc were motivated to learn by the challenges associated with the difficulty of the instructional materials in the second year. Phan said that she was motivated to study listening and writing skills in the third semester because they were difficult for her. Both Tram and Thuong were motivated to study harder because of the high level of difficulty of all skills in the second year. For example, Tram claimed that she had to prepare difficult presentation topics about which she was not self confident. Therefore, she was motivated to search the Internet to find supplemental information that might help her to do well on those topics. Tram was also motivated to improve her writing skills because not only were these difficult for her but she found it hard to get good final writing results. Tram went on to describe how she was “nervous” about not being able to get good study results (TmOl2, p. 22). Consequently, she was motivated to study hard. In addition, Ngoc claimed that in the third term, she was motivated to study harder than previously because of more difficult reading and writing course materials. Duyen was motivated to practise speaking and listening skills because they were difficult for her.

In addition to the motivational power of the difficulty of the instructional materials, Tram claimed that she was highly motivated to practise writing skills because they would help her to write her graduation dissertation well in her last year at university, and because good writing skills would help her to have “good written translation skills” (TmFp2, p. 2). She was also motivated by her beliefs that good English learners needed to have good writing skills. Tram also believed that both writing and speaking skills would be important when she graduated from university, so she was motivated to practise all of her English skills, but especially speaking and
writing. Ngan appreciated the writing coursebook in the first semester, saying that it provided students with lots of new writing structures and told students about the errors that they needed to avoid. She said that she could continue to use this knowledge in her writing skills in the second term. She claimed that in semester two, she was motivated to write in her technical reading skills class because “each reading had a special note teaching students writing skills” (NnPe, p. 17). She was motivated to write after she had read these notes. As Ngan found that as she could get more ideas, know more words, and understand more, she was motivated to read, even though she admitted that she was sometimes bored with reading long pages full of words. She claimed that the information she gathered from the readings would be helpful for other skills. Hai said that unlike with other skills, she found the listening materials relevant. Additionally, Hai liked and was motivated “to practise listening and speaking skills more than other skills” because she could choose and vary the types of materials she practised (HiPe, pp. 33-34). She often practised her listening skills naturalistically by listening to news and watching movies.

Nevertheless, these participants were also demotivated by the personal irrelevance of the instructional materials. For example, Hai said that unlike the original book she had a chance to learn in her private English class, the writing instructional material in the first semester left out many important writing steps. She criticised the material as being too theoretical, and not focusing on teaching vocabulary or grammar, or formal or informal writing style. It required students to “learn structures by heart” (HiFp3, p. 1). As a result, she observed that many classmates could not write and even forgot what they had learnt. In the second semester, Hai said there was a mismatch between the speaking material in the first term, which had taught students to pronounce words and sounds, and that of the second term, which focused on structures for speaking but not pronunciation or intonation. Though the book maintained that it taught students to speak naturally, in practice it forced students to follow a predesigned format in which they had to build their conversations. Hai added that in the first semester, she considered what she was learning at her formal pronunciation class easy, thereby not motivating her to practise more. Phan contended that she did not want to learn English at her formal class at secondary school because the textbook repeated what she already learnt at intermediate school. Meanwhile, Tram claimed that in the first year, due to the easy syllabus, she did not “want to learn much and didn’t want to discover new things or new
techniques or some new skills in learning English” (TmOl3, p. 3). At the end of the second year, Ngoc was demotivated in learning reading skills because the texts were long and boring. She added that these reading topics were not interesting to her. At the end of first year, Duyen was demotivated to learn technical English because she thought it was “not practical”. She believed that she could “rarely use it in real life” (DnPe, p. 26).

Four teachers, Ms Phi Nga, Ms Giao, Ms Chan, and Ms Minh, agreed that the relevance and attractiveness of the topics in the instructional materials had the power to motivate students to learn. Ms Phi Nga and Giao said that motivating topics were those that were related to students’ interests. Ms Chan said that her students were engaged in the topics that they considered practical in their life. Ms Minh observed that her students were motivated when the topics were relevant to improving their skills for their future jobs or for achieving their dreams of foreign study. At that time, her students were motivated to search for more information to further understand these topics or to write about them.

4.2.4 Influence of the School Requirements

This category pertains to how students’ perceptions of school requirements, in terms of workload and the role of English, affected their motivation to learn English. No teacher discussed the importance of the school requirement in motivating students to learn.

4.2.4.1 Influence of workload.

The findings showed that several participants were motivated to complete their heavy workloads to achieve some kind of external rewards. For example, at secondary school, Hai was very motivated to learn in the “demanding and competitive” learning environment (HiFp1, p. 6). She said that students were assigned lots of homework, including assignments and presentations. The tests were difficult and the interim English results were counted three times toward the final course results. Therefore, she was highly motivated to learn so she could achieve what she wanted: a desired final result and student title. Thuong was also greatly motivated by the heavy workload in the fourth semester. She said that she had to “prepare a great deal for all of the subjects in [that] semester”; she had difficult writing assignments, group oral presentations, and home readings for all of her subjects (TgPe, p. 5). She said that in addition to having to
complete all of these class requirements, she had to ready herself for exams. Similarly, Phan was motivated to complete the assigned homework in the fourth semester to meet the requirements of the course. Tram claimed that “the heavy workload in the fourth term drove [her] to work much harder than in the other term” (TmPe, p. 36). As students were required to complete a large number of exercises, and prepare for class readings and presentations, she was motivated to read extensively to get herself ready for classes.

In contrast, Ngoc attributed her loss of interest in learning English at secondary school to the heavy workload she experienced. She stated that together with the competition from competent classmates, students were assigned “too much work, and had to study English all day” (NcPe, p. 5). She was so demotivated that she decided to stop learning English. She temporarily gave up her idea of majoring in English at university and started to study for another major in natural sciences.

4.2.4.2 Influence of English as a required subject.

Only four participants, Hai, Phan, Ngoc, and Thuong, claimed that at primary school and secondary school, school regulations on the role of English influenced their English studies. The teachers did not give any ideas on the influence of English as a required subject on students’ motivation to learn English.

Hai and Ngoc shared the view that they were motivated to learn English at primary school only because it was a required subject. They contended that they were forced to study English at that time because even though the Ministry of Education just “encouraged” primary schools to teach students English, students “did not have a choice of whether to study English or not” (HiFp1, p. 1). Meanwhile, Thuong and Ngoc claimed that they were motivated to learn English at intermediate school because it was considered to be an important subject. As a result, they needed to have good English results.

Unlike the other three participants who commented on this factor, Phan noted that at her intermediate school, the rules for gifted students made her abandon learning English for several years. She recalled that students were grouped into different gifted teams of specialized subjects; she was selected for the team of literature in grades 6 and 7. Phan claimed that “gifted students who won prizes at the district and provincial levels were awarded the highest result for other subjects that they did not major in” (PnPe, p.
Consequently, she did not pay attention to English, or feel motivated to learn it at that time.

4.2.5 Influence of English Exams, Learning Progress, and Achievement

This section describes how students’ perceptions of pressure from exams, and success in their English learning influenced their English studies. The teachers also considered the influence of English exams, progress, and achievement as important in the students’ English studies.

The findings showed that some of the participants were under pressure to learn English only to get good exam and study results, or scholarships. For example, although she did not like English at intermediate school, Thuong was still motivated to study English enough to get mark eight to pass the school requirements. Meanwhile, at school, Duyen and Ngan were motivated to study only grammar to meet exam requirements. However, in preparation for university entrance exams, all of the participants worked hard so they would pass. They all attended private classes, described how they studied day and night, and adopted personally effective learning strategies to achieve their goals. Thuong described:

*Everyday I spend 1 hours to 2 hours to study English and I sat 3 extra classes about English. It helps me meet grammars again and again. As the result, I remember them quite well. Before sitting for entrance exam, I perhaps did at least 500 tests like that* (TgFp1, p. 2).

Hai was motivated to work diligently for the university entrance exam and get a good result, as she was aware that “[she] had been an English major for a long time, and English competence would be [her] strength in the university entrance exam” (HiOl3, p. 24)

At university, all of the participants were concerned about how they could prepare well for their exams and ongoing assessments. Thuong stated that she was always worried about how to prepare well for exams, especially when under pressure from a shortage of time or heavy review workload. She said “this pressure affected both [her] effort and learning strategies” (TgPe, p. 38). Tram was clearly working hard for the exams, as she said she ceased to work hard when the exam was postponed. Hai was motivated to attend reading classes even though they were boring, because she was afraid of losing participation and attendance marks, thereby getting lower study results.
Phan stated that she was always worried about how to achieve good study results, especially in speaking and listening skills, which were her most difficult content areas. For example, she repeatedly asked herself “What should I do to achieve a good result?” (PhD dated Sep 11 & Oct 26 2008). This tension caused her to be highly motivated to practise those skills. Generally, all of the participants expressed their worries and feelings of tension about whether they could do well in exams, and their efforts as well as intentions to work harder after getting low exam results. For example, after failure to get good test results, both Ngoc and Tram were disappointed in themselves and immediately motivated to study to improve their results in the future. Duyen said:

*After getting bad midterm results, I started to think about how to improve it. Before the midterm test... I just studied as much as I could... but did not think about how to improve it. After this test, I see that I have to know how to study to fit the test requirements... Now I have specific plans* (DnOL3, p. 19).

However, sometimes these participants were aware of their personal responsibilities for learning. Ngan was always motivated to learn even in the middle of the semester when other students left their studies aside. She claimed that it was her “responsibility” to keep studying because she could envision the pressure of having too much to revise at the end of a semester (NnPe, p. 28). Thuong tried to read more to have a wide variety of ideas for her presentations because she believed that having interesting ideas meant that she was a creative thinker. She said that having the power of creative thinking would make people respect her. She also felt pressure “to work hard to get good results to obtain a good university degree as [she] was a second-year student” and she was running out of time to obtain such a degree (TgPe, p. 38). Thuong stated that she was motivated to finish all of the assigned homework because in part, it would be helpful to improve her English skills for her future job. She added that she did not want to have a university qualification if she was not able to do her job well. Meanwhile, Ngan was concerned about how to improve her English skills to meet her goal of achieving good English competence. She tried to practise these skills diligently at home, because she said that “in class, [students did not] have much opportunity for practice” (NnPe, pp. 26-27).

The findings showed that most of the participants became more interested in studying English and expended more effort on it after they had some success in exams and their study. For example, Hai was motivated to study English more conscientiously.
after she got a consolation prize in English in a district contest in grade 7. Thuong and Phan were energized to work harder after they got good study results in the previous semester. In addition, completing exercises well, getting a good result for continuous assessment, or finding that their English had gradually improved, all provided strong motivation for the participants to learn. Being successful in their studies motivated students to study harder because those good results created a feeling of self-competence. For instance, Phan said:

*In the second term, my results were higher, so I started to believe that I could study English, and then I started to have interest in learning English* (PnOl1, p. 15).

Conversely, failures to finish exercises or class assignments well, or not getting exam results back in a timely fashion served to demotivate some of these participants in their English studies. Duyen did not want to continue studying English when she did not receive her midterm test results rapidly. She claimed that test results helped her to assess her progress, so without her results, she did not know “*what [she] should do to improve her [study]*” (DnOl3, p. 12). Hai and Duyen did not want to continue studying after they received poor test results, which they did not expect. Hai also stated that failures to do the exercises well made her lose the belief that she had the ability to learn English, so she did not want to learn any more. Ngoc and Tram wanted to stop studying English when they could not complete class assignments well. Tram said:

When I was writing a draft for the final writing assignment, I diligently looked for a lot of supporting documents...However, when I started to write, I could not put everything together logically… I thought a lot, felt very disappointed and decided to give up for a while. I think that when I try a lot but without success, I will be demotivated (TmPe, pp. 12-13).

Except for Ms Kim Ngan, all of the teachers emphasized the importance of getting good study results in motivating the students to learn. However, this consensus of opinion was only reached to a certain degree. For example, Ms Phi Nga and Hong thought that students’ efforts to obtain good academic results originated from the socially-situated attribution of learning success to high study results. Ms Hong elaborated that Vietnamese evaluated graduates’ competence via the rank order of their qualifications. Ms Phi Nga echoed that Vietnamese often made comparison between a
student’s academic results and that person’s ability. Meanwhile, Ms Hien and Giao contended that students’ interest in either learning results or progress depended on the assessment criteria. Ms Minh said that the students’ view of the importance of study results and progress changed in accord with their lengths of time of studying at university. Specifically, first-year students were very interested in their achievements; second-year students cared about both progress and results. Generally, all of the teachers thought that the pressures of exams acted as an impetus for the students to work to the best of their abilities.

4.2.6 Concluding Remarks

It is evident that the formal English educational environment played a very important role in the participants’ efforts in their English studies. Among all of the factors in the educational environment, the teachers and then classmates exerted the most influence on whether these students were motivated to learn English. Generally, the availability of support, care, and interpersonal relationships within that formal setting were influential factors that affected motivation and learning for these students. However, other factors like influences of English exams, learning progress and achievement, and influence of workload also worked to either motivate or demotivate the students.

4.3 Influence of Family and Social Networks

This theme discusses the student participants’ perceptions of how their family members and social networks influence their desire, effort and strategies to learn English. The theme includes two subthemes: Influence of family members and Influence of social networks (see Appendix B for the definitions of themes and code exemplars).

4.3.1 Influence of Family Members

With reference to the influence of family members, the student participants’ motivation to learn the English language was influenced first and foremost by their parents, and then by other family members, including extended family members. The influences of these family members were divided into three categories: family members’ attitudes toward English, family members’ support for English studies, and
family members’ expectations. The teachers did not mention the influences of family members as a source of motivation for students.

4.3.1.1 Influence of family members’ attitudes toward English.

The findings showed that the family members’ attitudes toward the importance of English and its utilitarian values influenced all of the participants’ motivation to learn the English language. Specifically, family members’ positive attitudes influenced the participants’ decisions to focus on learning English and later major in it. This was clearly seen in three participants who were official English majors at intermediate and secondary school. In each case, the student’s decision to major in English was initiated by her parents. Hai and Ngoc shared the view that at the time that they started intermediate school, their parents decided that they would major in English because their parents believed that good English knowledge would help them to get excellent jobs in the future. Both participants claimed that they were too little to know what would be best, so they just followed what their parents chose.

My parents wanted me to study English when I was little, and when I took the entrance exam into university, my Mum wanted me to major in English at university. My parents said that learning English would help me to find a good job more easily after graduation, and get a high-paying job (NcPe, p. 1).

Tram’s parents advised her to start learning English seriously at the beginning of grade 9, because they held beliefs about the importance of English for her future job prospects. Tram admitted that they also told her about her “limited ability” to become a mathematics major at secondary school (TmOl1, p. 4). Similarly, Thuong’s and Ngan’s parents told them about examples of people who earned lots of money by using their knowledge of English. Hai and Duyen expressed that they, as well as their parents, appreciated the benefits that English would bring them in the future, so they were determined to study English to achieve those benefits. Duyen said that her parents were “very optimistic about her future as an English major” because they believed that “an English qualification [would] help [her] to earn lots of money in the future” (DnPe, p. 47). As a result, Duyen was also optimistic about her future. Hai also valued what her parents appreciated about being an English major at a good secondary school:
Passing the entrance exam into a good secondary school means you have had half a chance to pass the entrance exam into university. That’s the point of view I learn from my parents (HiPe, p. 10).

She said that this viewpoint inspired her to learn to her best ability to gain the highest mark possible in passing the entrance exam into her desired secondary school.

4.3.1.2. Influence of family members’ support for English studies.

The findings showed that among the participants, parental support in terms of financial investment, verbal and tangible encouragement, and approval of the participants’ academic and professional goals affected the participants’ motivation to learn English well.

Only Hai, Duyen, and Thuong directly mentioned their parents’ financial investment in their English studies. Hai frequently mentioned how her parents invested time and money in her English studies by trying to find a good private English tutor for her, and taking her to private English classes regardless of bad weather:

*My parents can do everything so that I can get the best education. They try to give me the best conditions they can give me, and my duty and responsibility is trying to get the best result I can* (HiFp1, p. 29).

Duyen stated that her parents spent lots of money buying her English books, installing cable television, and on private English classes. Thuong said that she was trying to learn English well to avoid feeling guilty with her parents because:

*They gave me a lot of things, the best condition to study but I haven’t given the best result. It will be extremely terrible if I am not harder now* (TgD dated Nov. 14th 2008).

Next, all of the participants felt motivated to learn English in terms of their family members’ encouragement. For example, Hai said that her parents continuously encouraged her before English contests or when she failed to achieve what she wanted. She also mentioned how she was motivated to study to avoid disappointing her extended family members because they always encouraged and praised her and considered her a shining example for her cousins:

I have been majoring in English since intermediate school, so my relatives often praise me too much on my English competence. I have had such success in my
English studies, so I can not disappoint my family members. My relatives also show their belief in my ability and encourage me a lot, and this also motivates me to learn harder (HiPe, p. 6).

Tram was highly motivated to learn English to prove that she was “able to learn English” as a result of her parents’ support for her chosen major (TmPe, p. 43). Ngan said directly her desire was to “please [her] parents” with her study achievement (NnFp1, p. 1). She said that her parents always allowed her to decide what she wanted to do with her studies and her future, so she was motivated to learn well to please them because of their support. Phan said that her parents encouraged her to learn English and become an English major at university because they were positive about the importance of English. Though they were uncertain about her future job, saying that they could not imagine what she would do after graduation, they believed that “[she] would learn English well if [she] really liked it” (PnFp1, p. 1). Phan said that she was encouraged to study hard for the university entrance exam and to be an English major at university because of her family members’ encouragement, and support for her chosen dream. Similarly, Thuong said that her parents always gave her the freedom to choose what she really wanted to do with her studies and with her future job. They supported her decision to be an English major at university, and said she could still “choose any job [she] desired in the future, even if it were not connected to what [she] was trained for at university” (TgPe, pp. 41-42). They emphasized that they believed that what she chose to do was what she could do best. Duyen’s parents believed that an English qualification would help her to earn lots of money in the future, so they supported her decision to become an English major at university. Therefore, Duyen felt as optimistic as her parents and tried to study English diligently.

However, both Hai and Tram faced disappointment and occasional demotivation because of their parents’ disapproval of their professional goals. Hai said that although her parents approved of her decision to become an English major at university, they did not believe that English majors ultimately would be competitive in the job market. They said that English majors did not have a “skill” to get a good job (HiOl3, p. 39). Hai was frustrated with this belief and she said that she was trying to study English well so that she could get a good job after graduation to prove that she herself could be a proof of the statement that “learning foreign languages can help you to find a job” (HiFp3, p. 19). Tram stated that she was sometimes disappointed that her parents did not
enthusiastically support her professional goal to be a businesswoman. She said that when she was preparing for the university entrance exam and thinking about majoring in economics, her parents commented that she did not have “any ability” to do that (TmOL1, p. 6). At that time, they also revealed their wish that she would become a teacher after university graduation.

I thought that they had sacrificed their whole life for my happiness and asked myself why couldn’t I live up to their expectation?? (TmOL3, p. 3).

As a result, Tram decided that she might become a teacher to please her parents.

4.3.1.3 Influence of family members’ expectations.

The findings showed that most of the participants were concerned about how to study English well to meet their parents’ expectations and receive their parents’ pride in their success. Ngoc was forced to learn English due to the expectations of her parents. She recalled that at intermediate school, she was often overloaded with schoolwork and work from private classes but still had to attend the training class for English-gifted students. Despite her heavy workload, she always attempted to finish all of the homework assigned by that training class to avoid her parents’ punishment. At secondary school, Ngoc said that she did not want to learn English but still “had to try [her] best to avoid [her] parents’ shouting at [her] if [her] study results were lower than classmates” (NcPe, p. 5). She also said that she was trying her best to study to be selected onto the English gifted team for the national English contest to avoid punishment from her parents. In the middle of grade 11, when her parents at last allowed her to choose the major she desired, she immediately gave up her major in English and turned to mathematics, also giving up her intention to become an English major at university. Unlike Ngoc, sometimes Phan did not want to continue to learn English because she failed to achieve at the level of her parents’ expectations. However, each time this happened, Phan would become energized again to study well to please her parents and meet their expectations. Phan stated that together with their encouragement and support, her parents also expressed their high expectations for her English study results at university. Therefore, they expressed disappointment about her bad results in the first semester at university. They also compared her study achievement and her cousin’s. This comparison, Phan claimed, hurt her deeply but also was a strong source of motivation for her to study to show that she had “ability to
study” and to “change their thinking about [her]” (PnFp1, p. 4). Phan also said that she was trying to get good study results and a scholarship to avoid disappointing her parents. She believed that study results were very important with parents because they helped parents to assess children’s progress. Hai’s parents also directly created pressure on her, saying that she had to achieve something to return to their investment in her English studies. They also made comparisons between what she had gained and what their friends’ children had achieved. Hai said that even when her parents did not overtly exert this pressure, she was aware of it and what she had to do, and she admitted that learning English well was her “duty,” her “responsibility” to her parents (HiFp1, p. 22):

For example, when I took the entrance exam into gifted secondary schools, my parents said that I would have to try my best to pass the entrance exam into a gifted school. Otherwise, their investment in my studies would have been a waste (HiPe, p. 7).

Ngan said that her parents were very proud of her being an English major at her current university. Ngan said that she was motivated to learn well to please her parents because of their pride in her success in English. Generally, Hai expressed the desire of all of these study participants to study well to please their parents:

*I think generally everyone wants to have a high position (that comes with the chance to get the scholarship) and to make their family proud of their studying achievements* (HiFp2, p. 10).

**4.3.1.4 Concluding remarks.**

The findings in this section showed that the study participants were highly motivated to learn English as a result of influence from their family members, especially from their parents. They also experienced short-term demotivation from this pressure, but the demotivated feelings did not last long. The main consequence of parental influence was each participant’s awareness of her responsibility to work hard to please her parents.

**4.3.2 Influence of Social Networks**

This section presents the findings on the student participants’ perceptions of how the social requirements of English knowledge and social respect for English knowledge and English as a major influenced their desires, efforts, and strategies to learn English.
The subtheme includes two categories: Influences of other-perceived pressure of the social requirements of the English knowledge, and Influences of social respect toward English and English as a major (see Appendix B for definitions of code and code examples)

Generally, all of the research participants were influenced by social attitudes toward English and English-based jobs. They all believed that Vietnamese considered English as important and that it has become a social requirement for advancement in many fields. However, although Hai claimed Vietnamese do not believe that foreign language majors, let alone English majors, are competitive in the job market, other participants believed that job opportunities for English majors were as good as for other majors. Despite different perceptions of social attitudes toward English and English majors, all participants claimed that they were highly motivated by social pressure to do well in studying English. Meanwhile, the teachers only considered the social respect toward English as important in students’ English studies.

4.3.2.1 Influence of other-perceived pressure of the social requirements of the English knowledge.

This category concerns how students internalized the pressures that other Vietnamese experienced in seeking better opportunities for their life, for example better jobs, due to the high demand of English.

Regarding the social requirements of the English knowledge, all of the participants, except Duyen and Ngoc, were aware of the importance of English to their future jobs because they had witnessed the pressure on previous graduates who had had difficulty finding jobs due to their lack of English knowledge. Some of them, like Thuong, even internalized the uncomfortable feeling that these graduates experienced:

_There are many reasons that make me feel I have [to] get better result in this university to find a good job in the future because I see many student after graduating, they don’t find the job or find the unsuitable job, yes. ... And I see the people that don’t find the job, they are very hard, they feel uncomfortable and it’s make other people like me feel uncomfortable too (laugh) (TgOI3, p. 28)._ 

They had also witnessed people from all walks of life, older and younger people, learning English to have better opportunities. Some of them were told by the seniors about the importance of English. Therefore, they were aware of the prestige brought by
having English knowledge. Another important point was that some of the participants also envisioned pressure brought on by the popularity of English, such that English majors might not have many job opportunities in the future. They learnt of this competitive pressure from other seniors, so they decided that they would study a second major after university graduation to increase their opportunities to find a good job in case English as a major would not be in high demand, as it was at present. Phan said:

I follow the views of my senior friends who said that currently, English is very important. However, in the era of integration and globalization, the need to know a second language, English, forces people to learn to master it. As a consequence, it will be hard for an interpreter to find a job, while teachers may still have a place. These senior friends advised me to learn another major… since I was told about this, I have often thought about it, and I also want to follow a major that I really like (PnPe, p. 28).

4.3.2.2 Influence of social respect toward English and English as a major.

This category describes how the appreciation of Vietnamese people of the knowledge of English and the option for English as a major influenced their English studies.

In terms of social respect toward English and English majors, most of the participants believed that Vietnamese people thought English was important in Vietnam, especially in the era of globalization, and that majoring in English was a good decision. For example, Duyen, Ngan, Tram, and Thuong were all motivated to study English harder when people admired their ability to communicate in English and praised them on being an English major. Tram said:

When people consider English to be important, when they know that I am majoring in English, they said that’s a good decision, I am more excited about learning English and want to learn it better (TmPe, p. 44).

Meanwhile, Duyen was encouraged to study English more diligently because she saw people admire her when she talked to native English-speakers, even though she was able to say very little. Ngan also contended, along with Tram and Duyen, that Vietnamese respected English-based jobs as well as English majors, especially English majors from famous universities like hers. As a result, she felt encouraged and motivated to better her English.
People more and more think that English is important because the media considers it important and it is a global language. At school, English is also important and students good at English get a lot of encouragement. People around me also respect English as their children are also learning English (…) When asked about which university I am studying at, they always praise me on the university I am studying at. I also understand that English is an important tool in my future job, so I have to practise, and when they respect my major, I feel more interested in learning English (NnPe, pp. 44-45).

Meanwhile, Hai felt pressure from her perception that Vietnamese did not respect the job competitiveness of English majors, and foreign language majors in general. Hai recalled how her secondary-school friend’s family members underestimated her friend’s dream to major in Korean and said that she would not “be able to support herself financially” being a Korean-major graduate (HiOl3, p. 18). Therefore, as an English major, Hai perceived pressure to study English well to prove that majoring in English could help to find a good job.

All of the teacher participants supported the student participants’ views that English had been considered important in Vietnam because of Vietnam’s open-door policy, and globalization. The importance of English was reflected in requirements for evidence of English competence on job applications, further study, and scholarships for foreign study. All of the teachers believed that this socially situated importance of English motivated all Vietnamese, not just students, to learn English for their jobs, for chances to study abroad, and for communication.

4.3.3 Concluding Remarks

The study data showed that the participants were aware of the importance of English in Vietnam and of the strength of their major. Therefore, they were all motivated to learn English so that they could meet this social requirement in their future jobs and maintain their social image as well as their strength as English majors. It seemed that the social pressure mainly exerted positive influences on these participants and caused them to work hard in their English studies.
4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings on how the perceived values of the English knowledge, the English educational environment, and family and social networks influenced the participants’ English studies. These factors worked together to motivate the participants to study English conscientiously in both formal and informal settings.

Among these factors, the English educational environment, and especially teachers and classmates, played the most influential role in motivating the participants. The issues related to the educational environment had direct impact on the English language learning process of the participants on a daily basis. However, the personally perceived values of the English knowledge, and the family and social networks also played an important role in motivating the participants. Family and social networks served to motivate the participants, often acting as guides for the participants to see how they would benefit from their English studies in the future. These networks also helped to shape the students’ learning strategies, and goals in their English studies, especially in informal settings. In more formal settings, when there were circumstances under which the participants were demotivated in their English studies, their personally held beliefs about the values of the English knowledge and the responsibilities they perceived regarding their roles in society were sources for reinstatement of their motivation.

The following chapter will present a detailed discussion on how these sources of influence motivated the participants in their English studies within the complexity of the educational, social, and cultural practices in Vietnam.
Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter presents the findings of the three research questions addressed in this thesis. The chapter will be organized into four parts. The first part will summarize the findings as they relate to the research questions. The second part will discuss the participants’ intrinsic motivation in their English studies. The third part will discuss other types of motivation that the participants experienced that were either in parallel with their intrinsic motivation or in the absence of their intrinsic motivation. The last part will discuss the influences on the motivations of these study participants. All of these discussions will be related to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

As can be seen from the findings presented in Chapter Four, the participants’ motivation to learn English were influenced by three main sources:

- the perceived value of English knowledge
- the English educational environment
- family and social networks

Based on the theories of motivation and the Vietnamese socio-cultural picture presented in Chapter Two, I identified the types of motivation and influences on these types of motivation to answer the three research questions, as follows.

Question 1: Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?

As can be seen from 4.1.1, these female Vietnamese technical English majors claimed that they were intrinsically motivated in their English studies. Their intrinsic motivation was manifested in both formal and informal English educational contexts. All of the participants, except for Hai, expressed their intrinsic motivation to learn English in their first encounter with English, describing it as an innate need for curiosity, and/or a feeling of attachment. All of the participants were intrinsically motivated to learn English in the classroom under circumstances where the activities provided by their teachers were fun and relevant to their personal needs and interests, and their basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were met. In English learning contexts
outside of the classroom, all of the participants were autonomously and intrinsically engaged in self-selected English learning activities that were closely related to their personal interests and needs. Their intrinsic motivation was differentiated into various skills based on their self-perceived relevance of those skills to their own goals and interests. Additionally, their need for autonomy was influenced by certain cultural values.

**Question 2:** What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?

As can be seen from Chapter Four, the participants reported that they experienced other types of motivation in their English studies. The findings showed that the most common additional types of motivation were introjected motivation, followed by external/instrumental motivation. Other much less common types included internalized motivation, demotivation, identified and resultative motivation, and integrative motivation. Based on the definition provided by Deci and Ryan (1985), and Reeve (1996) (see also 2.1.3), internalized motivation was identified when there was insufficient evidence to say whether the response belonged to external, introjected, or identified motivation. These motivations were shaped and heavily influenced by Vietnamese social, educational, and cultural values.

**Question 3:** What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?

There were two main sources of influence underlying the participants’ motivation to learn English. The first was cross-cultural contact with the English language and its speaking communities. The second concerned specific cultural practices that pervade Vietnamese life and are transmitted to each Vietnamese from birth. These cultural practices include the respect for learning and knowledge, respect for the teacher, attribution of successes and failures to effort, filial piety, the concept of face, and the sense of belonging. These two sources of influence served to guide and shape the participants’ learning processes in their English studies to help them achieve their goals.

In the next sections, I will discuss these results in terms of how they relate to the literature. The first section will address intrinsic motivation.
5.2 Intrinsic Motivation

All of the participants in the study claimed that they were intrinsically motivated in their English education, in both formal and informal settings. Meanwhile, only three of their teachers officially mentioned interest as a source of intrinsic motivation, but they did not consider it as of much importance (see 4.1.1). However, in the course of replying to the interview questions, all of the teachers further confirmed that interesting activities and materials that are relevant to students’ needs and competence levels made students genuinely engaged in their formal English studies (see 4.2.2.1.1 & 4.2.3). Figure 5.1 shows the sources of intrinsic motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.

| First encounters with English | 1. Curiosity  
2. Enjoyment  
3. Feeling of attachment |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formal English Educational Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teacher-related factors</strong></td>
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| | 1. Teaching techniques
  • Organizing interesting activities
  • Providing interesting reading materials
  • Personally involving in class activities  
**Conditions:**
  • Teacher’s praise and informative feedback
  • Teacher’s willingness to help
  • A feeling of closeness and comfort with the teacher in class.
  • Teacher’s provision of freedom in class (to a lesser extent)  
| **Instructional-material-related factors** | 1. Relevance of instructional materials to personal needs and interest  
2. Challenging activities  
3. Providing opportunities for students to find more practice at home  
4. Chance to learn new knowledge and skills |
| **Home-based English Learning Context** | 1. Relevance of materials to personal needs, interest and background knowledge  
  • Continuing improving skills learnt in favourite classes and subjects  
  • Continuing improving favourite aspects of the subjects learnt in class.  
  2. Materials selected from a range of personal hobbies |

*Figure 5.1: Sources of intrinsic motivation in the participants’ English studies*
The participants’ intrinsic motivation was manifested in two ways. First, they were intrinsically motivated to “learn and explore” to satisfy their inherent curiosity about novel things and their innate needs for enjoyment and feelings of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 56) (also see 2.1.3). Their feelings of enjoyment and achievement came from being engaged in fun, curiosity-triggering, and challenging activities, as well as from the chance to improve their knowledge. However, not all of the participants experienced every one of these intrinsically-stimulating opportunities, nor did they necessarily respond in a positive way to opportunities for being intrinsically motivated. For example, except for Hai, participants enjoyed their first formal encounters with the English language and even felt a special attachment to it (see 4.1.1). They commented on its curiosity-driven and fun aspects. However, for most of the participants, these feelings of curiosity and fun in the formal setting did not last long. Instead, they gradually became situational, only experienced when their teachers provided fun and personally meaningful activities that brought them opportunities to enrich their knowledge and sharpen their skills. This finding concurred with that of L. T. Tran’s (2007) on English majors in a writing class at a university in central Vietnam, in that both studies found that Vietnamese English majors enthusiastically engaged in those class activities that were interesting, and closely related to their own needs and background knowledge.

The current study also showed that in the informal context, wherein the participants had a chance to self-select what they found relevant to their needs and interests, they reported more opportunities to feel intrinsically motivated. These activities might have served to improve the knowledge they believed necessary for their short-term and long-term academic and professional goals, or might have been closely connected with their English-related hobbies. They also self-created opportunities to bring more fun and inspiration to learning English by alternating their learning materials with their activities (see 4.1.1). In addition, in the informal context, they often attempted to seek naturalistic English practice opportunities, although these activities might have focussed mainly on improving their receptive skills (Hyland, 2004). Furthermore, it is worthwhile to add that although the informants might have found themselves intrinsically motivated in some of the formal English class activities, they were not motivated to continue expanding their knowledge about those skills outside of class if they did not find them personally meaningful (see 4.1.1). Generally, the first factor
found to influence the participants’ intrinsic motivation in both formal and informal settings was the fun and personal relevance of English learning activities that created “positive experiences associated with exercising and extending one’s capacities” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 56).

The finding on intrinsic motivation as a motivating force for out-of-class autonomous learning strategies supports those of other studies (Bonney, Cortina, Smith-Darden & Fiori, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Pickard, 1996; Spratt et al., 2004). Bonney et al.’s quantitative study demonstrated that intrinsic motivation acted as an impetus for students to initiate out-of-class learning strategies like reading and watching TV in the target language. Pickard found that “the intrinsic interest value” (p. 157) of the participants in certain learning materials and activities led them to adopt these for extracurricular English practice. The English majors in Hyland’s study engaged in those English-improving activities that they found personally interesting and fun. In combination, the findings from the literature and the current study indicate that a combination of fun, knowledge and challenge contribute to increasing intrinsic motivation that leads students to actively seek more practice out of class.

The research participants also experienced all three types of intrinsic motivation (IM) (see 2.1.3 & 2.3.1.1.1): IM-knowledge, IM-accomplishment, and IM-stimulation (Noels et al., 2000; Vallerand et al., 1992, 1993). However, as seen in 4.1.1, the participants mainly attributed their intrinsic motivation in the formal context to the fun aspect (IM-stimulation) and the chance to improve their knowledge and skills (IM-knowledge); only Hai directly referred to all three aspects of intrinsic motivation. All of the activities that were perceived as interesting were first described as being fun, and then knowledge-expanding. In contrast, in the informal setting, they all described the activities they engaged in as fun, knowledge-enriching, and challenging. Whereas the quantitative studies that investigated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of students who learn a second or foreign language (Noels et al., 2000; Pae, 2008) often measured the three aspects of intrinsic motivation separately using discrete items, in this study at least two aspects of intrinsic motivation, IM-stimulation and IM-knowledge, were described as inseparable. Furthermore, as the participants were all English majors who had been seriously focusing on learning English for several years before university entrance, it is possible that they might not have seen an activity as knowledge-enriching and skill-sharpening if it were not challenging for them. Similarly, their teachers of English,
albeit not always explicitly admitting the role of intrinsic motivation in stimulating students, confirmed that motivating activities were interesting (IM-stimulation), supportive of students’ background knowledge and competence levels (IM-accomplishment), and practical in that they provided students with the chance to enrich their English knowledge and future job experiences (IM-knowledge) (see 4.2.2.1.1 & 4.2.3). Taken together, it might be said that the intrinsic motivation of these research informants comprised three inseparable aspects: knowledge, stimulation, and accomplishment.

Another finding was that the participants’ intrinsic motivation in both formal and informal English educational settings seemed to be differentiated into various English skills and subjects, depending on the influences of contextual factors and the personal relevance of these skills and subjects. This echoed Gottfried’s (1985) findings that intrinsic motivation might exist both as “a general [academic] orientation” and as “a situational specificity” (p. 643) due to the contextual factors (see also Lucas et al., 2010). Most of the research participants stated that they had had general interest in English from the time that they had started to learn it. Additionally, since they entered university and studied four English skills along with some other English-related subjects, they felt more intrinsically motivated to learn certain specific skills as compared to others. This finding necessitates further research, especially qualitative studies, because extant literature on intrinsic motivation in learning a second or foreign language, including English, mainly focuses on intrinsic motivation as a general orientation (e.g., Noels et al., 2000; Pae, 2008). The explanation for that focus might be because these studies have only explored the motivation of English non-majors. Moreover, the use of qualitative research will help to have an emic perspective of the participants’ motivation rather than the etic view that quantitative studies often provide (Dörnyei, 2001b).

As the participants described their intrinsically-motivating experiences in the formal setting, they often portrayed contextual features that have been attributed as indispensable to the existence of intrinsic motivation. These features included their feelings of being related to the teacher or feeling comfortable in that class (see 4.2.2.4, 4.2.2.1.3), having competence, (see 4.2.2.3.3) and autonomy (see 4.2.2.3.4) supported by the teacher (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 1999; Reeve, 1996), although autonomy support was not as frequently mentioned as the other features. These findings suggest that relatedness and competence support are the major contextual
factors in nurturing participants’ intrinsic motivation in the formal setting. The study participants felt intrinsically motivated when the teacher was close to them, thereby making them comfortable about engaging in provided activities. It must also be added that when engaging in activities that were perceived as inspiring, the participants often had the feeling that the whole class was enjoying these activities. For instance, regarding the activity of listening to two versions of a piece of music, Ngoc said about her classmates

\[\text{It was} \text{ a PAIR activity but then it became a class activity. Everyone joined in ... very well, I think so (NnO12, p. 23, her own emphasis)}\]

However, it would be inappropriate to ignore the role of autonomy support in fostering the participants’ intrinsic motivation. Though both the English majors in the current study and those in L. T. Tran’s (2007) study infrequently mentioned their need for autonomy support and the actual autonomy support provided by their teachers of English, freedom in these intrinsically motivating classes was actually provided to a certain extent by their teachers. First, based on the definition of autonomy by Littlewood (1999) (see 2.3.1.3.1), the participants sometime had proactive autonomy in which they were free, for example, to choose topics on which to write, to express their feelings and ideas (see 4.2.2.3.4). Second, they had a lot of reactive autonomy provided in the types of activities that the teachers had already selected for them. Though the choice of class activities was made by the teacher, all of these intrinsically motivating activities were conducted in pairs or groups. Therefore, the students had the chance to work independently of the teacher (Littlewood, 1999). The presence of reactive autonomy, as accepted by the participants in nurturing their intrinsic motivation, reflected the cultural influences on motivation of the Vietnamese technical English majors. Autonomy in the Vietnamese English educational context has a “collectivist structure” (Littlewood, 1999, p. 91); that is, personal choice is not as important as choice made by important others (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). This, Littlewood (1999) claimed, reflected the Confucian influence in that students often respect the teacher’s authority in the classroom. In contrast to the prevalence of reactive autonomy in the formal setting, it might be said that in the informal context, the participants had more proactive autonomy as they initiated the activities they considered useful for their English improvement. In sum, despite having more reactive or proactive autonomy, the study participants experienced relatedness, competence, and autonomy support in the
activities and classes that they found intrinsically motivating. It is apparent that the need for relatedness and (competence) support of the participants reflects the Vietnamese “care orientation” (X. H. Le et al., 2005, p. 4) and “village culture” (N. T. Tran, 2006, p. 180-181), which emphasize harmony in relationships. V. C. Le (2001) also claimed that as a collectivist society, “the class [in Vietnam] is a family” (p. 9) where care, protection and support are always sought and provided for its members.

These findings confirmed that intrinsic motivation did exist in the context of learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam. They also lend support to the existence of intrinsic motivation in Asian students as found by several previous quantitative studies on Asian English learning context (e.g., Lucas et al., 2010; Pae, 2008; Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006). Intrinsic motivation also existed in collaboration with three factors: relatedness, competence, and autonomy, and it was influenced by Vietnamese cultural values. Furthermore, as can be seen from the autonomy capacity that the participants exercised in both formal and informal contexts, it is clear that the participants also “have the same capacity for autonomy as learners from other cultures” (Littlewood, 1999, p. 88). However, intrinsic motivation, albeit important in the informal English educational context, was only situational in the participants’ formal context, depending on the presence of the abovementioned three factors and the relevance of the learning activities to the students’ needs. The following discussion will present other types of motivation that seemed to exert more influence than intrinsic motivation on these students’ English studies.

5.3 Other Types of Motivation

As the findings demonstrated, most of the time this sample of female Vietnamese technical English majors did not feel intrinsically motivated in their English studies, either in or out of class contexts. This is in contrast to Pae’s (2008) findings that intrinsic motivation was the most important type of motivation for Korean EFL students. Specifically, aside from intrinsic motivation, the study participants had other types of motivation including external, instrumental, introjected, identified, integrative, resultative, and internalized motivations. Sometimes, they were even demotivated in their English studies. As Noels et al. (2000) and Pae (2008) found that instrumental orientation was highly correlated with external regulation, these two types of motivation will be combined where appropriate. In addition, I will not discuss integrated regulation
in this chapter because Vallerand and his associates (1992, 1993) and Vallerand (1997) contended that in educational research, integrated regulation was not differentiated from identified regulation (see also 2.1.3).

This section will be divided into seven parts, each devoted to a type of motivation. Within each part, major considerations and thorough discussion will be paid to the main influences for that type of motivation.

5.3.1 External/Instrumental Motivation

As the findings on the influence of the utilitarian values brought by English studies, influence related to the English educational environment, and influence of family networks (see 4.1.2; 4.2 & 4.3.1) showed, external/ instrumental motivation was prevalent for the participants. In the following section, I will discuss the impact of these sources of influences on the participants’ external/instrumental motivation. Figure 5.2 shows sources of external/instrumental motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of the Perceived Value of the English Knowledge</th>
<th>Influence of the utilitarian values brought by English studies</th>
<th>Teacher’s teaching performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Influence related to the English Educational Context | • Getting a good job in the future  
• Studying overseas  
• Being able to communicate in English |

**Teacher’s teaching performance**

- Teacher’s assessment and monitoring of students’ schoolwork:
  - Teacher checking homework and give penalty to students who did not complete it.
  - Teacher marking homework.
  - Teacher assessing students’ work in a strict manner.

**Workload**

- Heavy workload:
  - Work hard to pass exams and achieve desired final results
  - Work hard to meet the course requirements

**Instructional materials**

- Difficulty of the materials
  - Work hard because of the fear of not being able to get good results.

**Exam, learning progress and achievement**

- Work hard to meet ongoing assessment requirements
- Work hard to pass exams, and get good results and scholarships
Figure 5.2: Sources of external/instrumental motivation in the participants’ English studies

However, as parental influence did not result in as much external motivation as did introjected motivation, I will leave the discussion on parental influences until 5.3.2.2.

As can be seen in 2.1.3, external motivation is described as the least self-determined motivation type because the actor only acts to get external rewards or praise, or to avoid punishment. The motivation often wanes when the external influence ceases to impact on the actor (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, the relationship between the actor and the external influence is conditional. Meanwhile, Gardner (1985) defined instrumental motivation as the motivation that is present when the actor acts to get practical benefits (see 2.2.1.3). Both Noels and her colleagues (2000), and Pae (2008) found that these two types of motivation, external and instrumental, were closely correlated (see 2.3.1.1.2). First, with regard to influence of the perceived value of knowing English (see 4.1.2), all of the participants were externally/instrumentally motivated to learn by the potential practical benefits to be gained by knowledge of English. These utilitarian values comprised getting a good job in the future, studying overseas, and communicating in English. Of the participants, Ngoc was the most instrumentally and externally motivated by these personally perceived values of having English knowledge. All of the teachers agreed that bright future job prospects motivated students to learn English, but few of them appreciated the motivating role of a chance to study overseas (see 4.1.2.1 & 4.1.2.2). Overall, the English educational environment (see 4.2) seemed to exert the greatest influence regarding the external motivation in the participants’ English studies. Specifically, except for influence of classmates, influence of the teacher of English in terms of assessment and monitoring students’ schoolwork (see 4.2.2.1.2), workload (4.2.4.1), instructional materials (see 4.2.3), exams, and learning progress and achievement (see 4.2.5), all led to most of the participants feeling externally motivated to learn the English language in the formal setting. Among the seven participants, only Phan was not as influenced by these external factors in the formal setting. A little different from their students, most of the teachers believed that only their assessment and monitoring
of students’ schoolwork, influence of the English exam, and learning progress and achievement motivated students to learn diligently (see 4.2.2.1.2 & 4.2.5). Generally, the perceived practical benefits of having English knowledge, and the formal English educational context resulted in the participants’ having instrumental/external motivation to learn the English language.

A multitude of research studies on learning motivation in EFL, especially on that of Asian students, have placed emphasis on the importance of instrumental motivation in EFL students’ English studies (Clement & Kruidenier, 1983; J. F. Chen et al., 2005; Warden & Lin, 2000) (see 2.2.1.4.3 for further discussion). The study participants were no exception to the influences of this type of motivation. Hai’s words help to visualize how the participants were influenced by this type of motivation:

As far as I am concerned, I just start to learn something when I want to learn it and I can see the benefits it brings to me. I don’t start to study anything because people around me are studying it. I just study it when I can envision its benefits (HiPe, p. 6).

As could be seen, all of the participants were motivated to learn when they could envision the practical benefits to be gained by English competence. First, the primary utilitarian motive for them was to get a good job. As J. F. Chen et al. (2005) found in their study with Chinese students, job motivation was one of the main reasons for students to learn the English language. Second, they dreamed about a chance to study overseas after university graduation. Third, the participants acknowledged English competence as an effective tool to provide access to knowledge resources in English. T. T. H. Phan (2009) stated that, in the Vietnamese domestic labour market alone, high-paying jobs, especially jobs in companies with foreign investment, often required the applicants to have good English proficiency. She also stated that the potential awardee of a scholarship to study overseas needs to achieve a high level of English competence, first to get a visa and then to get university entrance admission. Nonetheless, the popularity of English as a communication medium, for example, on TV, in newspapers, and in learning materials in Vietnam, also requires Vietnamese to master English to a certain level. As a result, the participants were possibly aware that they would be advantaged by having competent English knowledge, which would enable them to gain certain privileges.
With reference to the influence of the English educational environment on the participants’ external motivation to learn the English language, it was clear that the participants were putting significant effort on learning English to meet their course requirements and get good study results. They were all motivated to learn so that they would pass the university entrance, midterm and final exams. They were also motivated to learn to assure that their final results were good, so that they received desired student titles and scholarships (see 4.2.5). Even when they talked about the difficulty of the course materials, difficulty was not considered as a challenge for them to overcome. They just showed concern about whether the difficulty would prevent attaining their goals of meeting course requirements or getting good results. Furthermore, these externally stimulated behaviours did not always go together with happiness. Some participants reported feelings of being forced to do what they did not really want to do, thereby being bored or frightened.

However, it seems that external/instrumental motivation is also a strong source of motivation. J. F. Chen et al. (2005) claimed that “[instrumental] motivation can effectively motivate language learners, especially when they value the return on investment” (p. 612). As far as the participants were concerned, the motivation to learn to meet course requirements and get good results seemed to be strong. Despite their complaints about being overloaded with schoolwork or difficult tests (see 4.2.4.1 & 4.2.5), they rapidly overcame feelings of disappointment and depression, and continued to work hard. In the Vietnamese context, this might be interpreted that as learning and achievement are highly valued, the participants had to strive to excel even in the most difficult situations so that they could meet social expectations and gain respect. Consequently, the participants, even in the case of the “bright mirror” (Hai), did not view the heavy and difficult workload as a challenge for them to overcome. Though exams and achievement acted as strong external sources of motivation for them to generate effort and develop effective strategies for learning English, for most of the participants, their efforts ceased when those forces were no longer present. The findings of this study support J. F. Chen et al.’s (2005) findings that Chinese students were motivated to study English to pass required class and entrance exams. J. F. Chen et al. claimed that this reflects the Chinese cultural context in which excelling in exams as one of the traditional values is highly appreciated. In the same vein, V. C. Le (2001) contended that in Vietnam, “[education] is considered a ticket to ride” (p. 35). Therefore,
it might be that these Vietnamese students expended significant amount of effort on exam preparation so that they could achieve high results with the goal of attaining social approval and esteem. For instance, in Vietnam it would be necessary for a school leaver to pass the exam into a university or a college. Getting a place in a university means that a student will have better job prospects than those who have not gone to university. Obtaining a university qualification will make a person eligible for a high-paying job in a big company, for example. A similar situation was reported in Korea (Kim, 2010), where students’ enthusiasm for learning English was fuelled by their desires for acceptance into a prestigious university and guaranteed prospects for bright future jobs, with English as the passport.

Generally, learning English to pass exams and get good study results, as well as to gain certain social benefits and a better chance to get a good job, functioned as important sources of motivation for the participants (see 4.2.5). They acknowledged that learning English in the formal context would not be enough to attain their goals. Accordingly, their home-based English practice was aimed toward obtaining their academic and professional needs and goals. To gain better English proficiency for future pragmatic gains like a good job or a scholarship to study overseas would require them to practise more, and seek more opportunities for practice outside of class (see 4.1.2.1 & 4.1.2.2). This supports what Norton (2001) claimed was an “investment” in English language learning, “If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world” (p. 166). The meaning of the term “material investment” was appropriate for the participants, as they had been investing in English for potential/imagined future practical benefits long before starting university. However, in this case, what they invested in their English language learning would not return “the privileges of the [English] language speakers” (Norton, 2001, p.166) but rather access to better pragmatic gains as compared to other Vietnamese university graduates who did not have knowledge of English. Clearly, it seemed that the study participants understood and clearly envisioned what their “investment” in learning the English language would bring them in the future, so regardless of any negative affect, they continued to invest in these future benefits.
5.3.2 Introjected Motivation

This type of motivation is related to a student’s concerns about how to please others or to protect one’s self-image in the eyes of others in one’s social environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 2000; Reeve, 1996) (see also 2.1.3). Introjected motivation was another common type of motivation that the participants experienced in their English studies. Figure 5.3 shows sources of introjected motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies. It must be said that though the teachers mentioned their encouragement and feedback to students’ work as a source of motivating influence on students’ English language learning, they did not explicitly discuss how these were actually internalized by their students. Therefore, I will leave the teachers’ views on their encouragement and feedback until 5.3.7, which discusses internalized motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence related to the English Educational Context</th>
<th>Influence of the teacher of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good relationship with teachers (getting teacher’s encouragement and belief in competence)</td>
<td>Study well to please teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teacher’s praise on competence and ability</td>
<td>Study well in accordance with teacher-induced belief in personal competence and ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teacher’s responsibility for teaching</td>
<td>Study in accordance with internalized duty to return to teacher’s responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers’ communication of expectations</td>
<td>Study to meet teachers’ expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teacher telling stories about good language learners</td>
<td>Study in accordance with an awareness of personal strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher’s teaching strategies</td>
<td>Study to avoid being embarrassed in front of classmates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of classmates</th>
<th>Social comparison with classmates and peers in ability, competence and effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To outperform classmates and peers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To enhance one’s ego,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To confirm one’s ability

Influence of English Exam, learning progress and achievement

- Personal responsibility for learning under pressures of exams, and graduation time
- Enrich one’s knowledge for social respect
- Personal responsibility for matching one’s competence and skills with future job requirements

Personal responsibility for learning under pressures of exams, and graduation time

Enrich one’s knowledge for social respect

Personal responsibility for matching one’s competence and skills with future job requirements

Influence of Family and Social Networks

1. Family members’ support for English studies
   - Duty to study in return to parents’ support
2. Family members’ expectations
   - Duty to study to meet expectations.

Influence of Family Members

1. Other-perceived pressure of the social requirements of the English knowledge
   - Study in accordance with internalized social pressure
2. Social respect toward English and English as a major
   - Study in accordance with internalized social respect

Figure 5.3: Sources of introjected motivation in the participants’ English studies

As the findings demonstrated (see 4.2.2; 4.2.1; 4.3), the influences of the teachers of English, classmates, and family networks mainly brought about introjected motivation for the participants. In the following sections, I will discuss the impact of these influences on the students’ introjected motivation.

5.3.2.1 Introjected motivation as a result of the influence related to the English educational environment.

As the findings showed (see 4.2), the English educational environment brought about a great deal of introjected motivation in all of the participants. Among the factors in the environment, the social comparison with classmates and peers made the participants feel the most introjected stimulation to learn and improve their English. Hai had been affected by this type of motivation since intermediate school. Phan and Thuong had been very concerned about their competence and progress in English compared with their classmates since secondary school and university, and this concern led them to try to work hard to protect their self-image. In addition, the participants’
perceptions of the teachers produced introjected motivation in the participants. I will discuss introjected motivation due to perceptions of both classmates and teachers in turn.

### 5.3.2.1.1 Introjected motivation as a result of the influence of classmates.

The main influence of classmates that caused introjected motivation was social comparison (see 4.2.1.2). All of the participants had been making social comparisons with their peers regarding ability, competence, effort, and achievement, both in their formal and private classes. These comparisons were important motivators for these female Vietnamese technical students in their English studies. Indeed, it seemed that competition was an indispensable part of the participants’ English studies. They frequently and actively compared themselves with their peers in both formal and private classes. They made social comparisons mainly with more competent others, but also with equally and less competent ones. However, the aims of their social comparisons might change depending upon the learning contexts. That is, when the context was product/achievement-oriented, and the peers were also product/achievement-oriented, the participants’ goal for social comparison was to use introjected-motivation to rouse themselves to overcome others (see 4.2.1.2). When the context was study/progress-oriented, the social comparison was for the participants to overcome limitations they saw in themselves. For example, Hai considered the results of the social comparison process as a means for her to evaluate her own competence and as a challenge for herself to overcome her weaknesses. Furthermore, under circumstances in which there was no target for social comparison in the immediate environment, like in the case of Hai and Tram at university, they autonomously and actively searched for potential targets among other peers in the cohorts so that they could continually have references for self improvement (see 4.2.1.2). Despite the fact that this social comparison could bring disappointment and sometimes depression, all of the participants were motivated to practise harder to enhance their egos (Duyen), to confirm their abilities (Thuong), or to outperform others (Ngoc), so that they could achieve certain desired goals.

Wood (1989) stated that the social comparison process focused on two parameters: the quality/attribute under comparison and other surrounding qualities and attributes. Wood added that upward social comparison with people who had similar surrounding dimensions might threaten one’s ego. In this study, it could be seen that although most of the participants, most of the time, made upward social comparisons with other higher
achieving peers, they surmised that these higher achievers had different surrounding dimensions; that is, these high achievers expended more effort on learning English than the participants did. Consequently, most participants, despite making upward social comparisons, did not have their self-esteem injured. Instead, the social comparison acted as a source of motivation for them to self-evaluate and improve (Watkins, 2010).

The participants in this study always desired to outperform others, and this was a strong motivational source for them to study hard and adopt effective learning strategies in learning English. According to the goal theories, it might be said that most of the participants had a performance approach (Elliott & Harackiewics, 1996; Nicholls, 1984), self-enhancing ego (Skaalvik, 1997), or approach ego (Simons et al., 2004). However, the participants did not fit the definition that a performance-goal-oriented person often makes comparisons in terms of ability and sense of self-worth. First, despite any initial comparison of ability, achievement, or study progress, the participants’ social comparisons with peers always ended up in comparing amounts of effort expended. This might help to explain why most of the participants were re-motivated quickly after experiencing negative feelings from such social comparisons. Social comparison gave hope to the participants in the sense that they believed that, with more expended effort, they would keep pace with their peers and might even surpass them some day and achieve their desired self (Reeve, 1996). Second, it is believed that a performance-goal-oriented person would avoid learning situations in which they might make public mistakes (Elliott & Harackiewics, 1996; Nicholls, 1984). However, in this study, there was insufficient evidence to say whether the participants tended to avoid such learning situations. Conversely, some participants even voiced that they were motivated to prepare themselves better by the fear or experience of making public mistakes (see 4.2.1.2).

As discussed above, belief in the power of effort over inborn ability helped the participants avoid decreased self-esteem, and even further stimulated them to continue learning English after failure to improve their own English competence and achievement. This belief reflected the Confucian belief that effort is more important than ability (Hau & Salili, 1991; Lee, 1996). It also seemed that the participants considered effort to be “internal, controllable, [and] global” (Hau & Salili, 1991, p. 134). For example, Ngan said that she never left her lessons unlearnt until before exams but instead learnt them bit by bit every day, even in the middle of the term when others did
not concentrate much on their studies. Additionally, all of the participants believed that with more expended effort, they could achieve as well as other higher achievers. As such, even in the case of getting very negative results from the social comparison process, as in the case of Phan, the participants still had enough strength to re-motivate themselves (see 4.2.1.2).

Even though it seemed that the participants initiated their social comparisons themselves, the current study possibly demonstrates that they made these comparisons under the influence of the social environment. In Vietnam, educational achievement is a culturally-rooted value. Social respect for high-achievers is a cultural tradition in Vietnam that has existed since feudal times (Hua et al., 2004). Therefore, the harsh competition for a limited number of scholarships at university and striving for good final results in a course for a chance to have a good job in the future or the possibility to study abroad might have provoked the participants into making intentional social comparisons to evaluate their potential and improve their study. Kim (2010) found similar findings in Korean secondary schools, where social competition originated from students’ desires for places at a famous university and good jobs in the future.

The study also demonstrated that despite any resulting disappointment or depression, the social comparison process did not result in a negative social relationship between the specific participant and the targeted higher achiever, or among the class members as a group. In fact, the participants respected those higher-achievers and considered them as “bright mirrors” to follow. Moreover, the majority of the participants reported that their class had good social relationships, in which class members encouraged and supported one another in their English studies (see 4.2.1.3). This supports Watkins’s (2010) findings with Hong Kong students that “the students respected their fellow competitors” (p. 85). It also lends support to Fülöp and Sándor’s (2006) claim that competition and cooperation are not bipolar but “work jointly” (p. 79). Collectively, we might also say that this group cohesiveness reflected the Vietnamese cultural value of group harmony and closeness in which people, albeit following different individual goals, still aim to support the mutual goals of the whole group (Jamieson, 1993; N. T. Tran, 2006).
5.3.2.1.2 Introjected motivation as the result of influence of the teacher of English.

As the findings in 4.2.2 demonstrated, there were several circumstances under which the participants experienced introjected motivation from the influence of their teachers of English. Among the participants, Duyen and Hai seemed to be more introjected motivated by their teachers. Specifically, Duyen and Ngoc were motivated to learn to please their teacher if they had a good relationship with that teacher. A good relationship might include getting encouragement from that teacher after failure, or being aware of the teacher’s belief in one’s competence. Second, Hai and Thuong were motivated to try harder to improve their English as a result of the teacher’s praise regarding their competence and ability. Unlike with external motivation, they were not motivated to learn to get more praise from the teacher; instead, the teacher’s praise created their self-belief and self-confidence in their ability to learn English. Therefore, they were motivated to learn in accord with belief in their own ability. Third, Hai, Ngoc, and Duyen were motivated to learn in accordance with internalized responsibilities of students. They were motivated to finish exercises because they thought it was the students’ duty to finish those. They were motivated to learn and participate in class, to be good students in response to the teacher’s responsibility for teaching. Some of the participants experienced introjected motivation through other teacher influences. For example, Tram was motivated to learn to meet their teacher’s expectations after the teacher communicated her disappointment about the students’ failure to complete a task as well as the teacher had expected. Thuong was motivated to learn well as the result of social comparison with the teacher. She wanted to have a lecturing position like her teacher in the future, so she was motivated to study to make that eventuate. Hai was motivated to improve her English competence after listening to her teachers’ stories of good and bad language students. These stories increased her awareness of her strengths and her determination to make good use of her English competence. Hai and Duyen were also motivated to learn to avoid feeling embarrassed in front of the class as a result of their teachers’ teaching techniques.

In summary, although the participants varied widely as to precisely how they were influenced, they were all strongly influenced by introjected motivation from their teachers of English. Taken together, the teacher’s relatedness to students and support for their studies acted as the main sources of students’ introjected motivation. However, as
Reeve (1996) claimed, the internalization of values by these students was still “in a rigid, unreflective fashion” (p. 45), as they acted in accordance with their beliefs about student responsibility, to please their teachers, or to avoid losing face. Therefore, their motivation was driven by “social pressure and a sense of fear and guilt” (Reeve, 1996, p. 45). As such, it is evident that the participants’ introjected motivation was initiated by low levels of self-determination because as Deci and Ryan (1985) argued, the participants acted in accordance with an internal representation of what was required, or expected, of them; they did not have choice of whether to do what they really wanted.

5.3.2.2 Introjected motivation as a result of the influence of the family members.

Among the participants, Hai and Ngoc experienced the most introjected-motivation from influence of family members, especially parents. They described their parents as having an impact on their English studies from when they chose English as a major or the most focussed-on subject at school. Phan experienced this motivation once she entered university and faced failures in her studies. For these three participants, parental influence came in the form of both parental pressure for success and their personally perceived responsibility to repay their parents’ love and caring about their studies. Ngan, Tram, and Thuong, however, felt introjected motivation to learn to please their parents just because they acknowledged their parents’ love and caring. Therefore, they forced themselves to study hard and well. However, whether the responsibility came from the parental pressure or from self-perceptions of their responsibilities as good children, this type of motivation acted as a very strong force, making these students work hard in their English studies, especially in the formal context. It must be added that this source of motivation had the potential to bring them depression and disappointment in the case of academic failure, but it also acted as an impetus to help them overcome depression, and motivation to continue conquering their studies to attain good study to please their parents.

As the findings in Chapter Four demonstrated (see 4.3.1.2 & 4.3.1.3), the participants were much aware of their parents’ support, especially financial investment, for their English studies, so they attempted to study hard to get good academic results to repay their “moral debt[s]” (Jamieson, 1993, p. 17). So, what are the moral debts the participants thought they owed their parents? The following Vietnamese folk-song fully
captures what Vietnamese children often consider to be the parental sacrifice for their upbringing.

Công cha như núi Thái sơn
Nghĩa mẹ như nước trong nguồn chảy ra

The father’s beneficences are as great as a giant mountain
And the mother’s are as infinite as water flowing from a source.
(Duong, 1988, p. 19)

The participants acknowledged their parents’ investment, support and sacrifice in different forms. The terms that Gao (2006, pp. 290-293) used to describe the roles of the Chinese parents in his study encapsulate what the participants in the current study said about their parents. First, the participants considered their parents as their “language learning advocates,” who transmitted their belief in the importance of English to the participants, thereby initiating their motivation to learn the English language. Second, the participants valued the role of their parents as “language learning facilitators” who created a good language learning environment for their children by purchasing access to English learning facilities. Third, when the parents sought private English classes where the children’s confidence and interest in English studies were fostered, the participants appreciated their parents as “collaborators with teachers” to instill the love of English. Last, some of the participants still valued their parents’ role as “language learning coercers” who persuaded their children to select their major and the schools at which they would study. All of these roles reflected the financial investment and caring that the participants’ parents had for their children’s English progress and achievement. In addition, the participants also ascribed their parents’ support for their English studies to the continual parental encouragement through their academic challenges and failures, and their pride in the participants’ academic progress and successes.

The participants understood their responsibility to repay these debts. Some of the participants like Hai, Ngoc, and Phan were directly told by their parents to work hard in return for the parents’ investment in their English studies. Furthermore, all participants were fully aware of their parents’ hard work in raising them, so they all were motivated to work hard in return to repay their moral debts. Possibly, Hai’s words best described how the participants perceived their parents’ involvement in their English studies:
They try to give me the best conditions they can give me, and my duty and responsibility is trying to get the best result I can (HiFp1, p. 13).

Her words clearly reflected the Vietnamese tradition of fulfilling filial obligations. Most of the participants internalized their parents’ involvement in their English studies as the belief that they needed to do their best to please their parents. It was obvious that as the participants were now mature, they could understand how hard it had been for their parents to support their studies. For example, Phan described her parents’ old age and their endless efforts to work to support her financially, and Tram spoke emotionally about her parents’ sacrifice. Though some other participants did not verbalize their understanding of their parents’ hard work, their efforts to study to please their parents indicated their understanding. This internalization reached a higher level than merely repaying a debt. Specifically, the participants wanted to make their parents proud. Hai’s observation summarizes this desire for all of the participants:

I think generally everyone wants to have a high position ...to make their family proud of their studying achievements (HiFp2, p. 10).

“Making parents proud of study achievements” might be perceived by the participants as one of the best ways to please their parents during their time at school and university. That could be seen in how the participants wanted to pass the university entrance exams, get the best study results in class, and get a scholarship.

Such effort of Vietnamese children in fulfilling their roles as good children has been captured in some studies (T. Phan, 2003, 2004, 2005). In these studies, as in the current study, the participants strived to excel in their school as a result of their parents’ guidance, discipline, and encouragement. As T. Phan (2005) insisted, “[the] family provides the strongest motivation, much stronger than religion or nationality” (p. 436). Clearly, in this study, the family is where the love of English had been inculcated through the parents’ love, support, and caring, and also where the participants’ desires to strive for success in their English studies, albeit sometimes forced, were initiated. The participants also achieved a certain amount of self-determination to successfully learn English via their socialization by their parents. Over time, they gradually internalized their parents’ wishes and expectations and worked in accord with these. This reflects Gardner’s (1985) theory that parents are important “socialization agents”
(p. 109) with their child, playing an important role in motivating the child to learn a foreign language (see also Gardner, 1968).

It is important to note that the demotivation that some of the participants experienced at times germinated from failure to meet their parents’ expectations or from a clash between their academic and professional goals and their parents’. There were occasions when this led to depression and a desire to stop studying English (see 4.3.1.2 & 4.3.1.3). However, the participants did not let their desires win over their parents’ wishes and expectations. Regardless of the depression and tension they suffered, as when Tram realised that she would not attain her dream to be a businesswoman, the participants continued to fulfil their filial obligations. They were motivated to do what their parents desired in accordance with their internalized values stemming from their parents’ sacrifice for their studies and their lives.

The findings from this study clearly reflect the tradition of the Vietnamese family in which the ‘care orientation’ is well looked after (X. H. Le et al., 2005). The care orientation was manifested in this study via both the care of the participants’ parents in their children’s English studies and the internalized responsibility of the children to fulfil their filial obligations (Jamieson, 1993; X. H. Le et al., 2005; McLeod & Nguyen, 2001). The participants, as good children, ignored their personal desires and wishes to bend themselves in accordance with their parents’ wishes and expectations. They showed their care for their parents by means of their respect for the parents’ wishes and expectations, and in this way, they conformed to the tradition of maintaining family harmony (Vu, 2008). Under the circumstances in which they could not meet their parents’ expectations, they felt guilty and disappointed, but they never really thought of giving up that repayment of moral debts. As these Vietnamese folk-songs illustrate:

Công cha như núi Thái sơn
Nghĩa mẹ như nước trong nguồn chảy ra
Một lòng thơ mẹ kính cha
Cho tròn chữ hiệu mới là đạo con

Cá không ăn nước cá ướơn
Con cãi cha mẹ trâm đường con hư

---

Good children must honour and respect their parents to fulfil their filial obligations.
As unsalted fish is soon rotten,
So the disobedient child will be spoiled (Duong, 1988, p. 19)

Clearly, regardless of any societal changes, Vietnamese still maintain the core values of filial piety in their families, which include gratitude, respect, and honour for parents (T. L. Nguyen, 1999). Vu also (2008) stated that fulfilling filial obligations was one of the important rules in the Vietnamese family, and obeying these rules helped the family to develop well. Taken collectively, filial piety reflected in respect, caring, gratitude, and honour for one’s parents is a culturally rooted value that Vietnamese have long practised and maintained. In this study, the motivation of the participants to learn English well to please their parents strongly reflected this tradition.

In summary, the parents of the participants had profound influence on their children in terms of their support, encouragement, and expectations for the children’s success in their studies. The participants, as a result of their awareness of their parents’ sacrifice, internalized the parental expectations, aspirations, values, and goals, and acted in accordance with these. As a result, the most salient type of motivation they had in their English studies as a result of parental influences was introjected motivation.

5.3.3 Identified Motivation

As seen in the findings in Chapter Four, identified motivation did not play a very influential role in motivating the participants to learn. The influences leading to the identified motivation of the participants included the influence of the utilitarian values brought by English studies (see 4.1.2); influence of the teacher (see 4.2.2.3.3); influence of the instructional materials (see 4.2.3); influence of English exams, learning progress, and achievement (see 4.2.5); and, influence of family members’ attitudes toward English (see 4.3.1.1). Generally, all of the participants were more or less equally affected by identified motivation to learn the English language. However, the situations under which the participants experienced identified motivation to learn English differed. Figure 5.4 shows sources of identified motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.
Influence of the Perceived Value of the English Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of the utilitarian values brought by English studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Influence of future chance for overseas study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desire to study personally valued major abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Influence of the perceived value of English as a communicative tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English knowledge as a means to enrich technical knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English as a means to satisfy personal hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desire to be able to achieve as good English competence as an English native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influence related to the English Educational Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of the teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of teacher’s willingness to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher’s sharing of work experiences and skills required to do future jobs well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motivated by the perceptions of how success in learning English brought advances for teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of instructional materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal relevance of instructional materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relevant to future English courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relevant to future uses after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relevant to writing graduation papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of school requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of English exam, learning progress and achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improving English skills to attain the goal of having good English competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Influence of Family and Social Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of Family Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of family members’ attitudes toward English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value what parents told about the pragmatic benefits of English knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.4: Sources of identified motivation in the participants’ English studies

In the following section, I will discuss the influences of the English educational environment and the utilitarian values brought by English studies because these produced the largest effect on the participants’ identified motivation.

Generally, a person has identified motivation to learn English when learning this language acts as a means to access other personally meaningful aims (Noels, 2001; see also 2.1.3). As shown by the influence of the English educational environment and the
utilitarian values brought by English studies on the participants’ identified motivation, individually, participants were influenced by identified motivation to study English in different situations. For example, Tram was willing to make a presentation on part of a lecture because she thought this would help her to take part in class discussions better and be more self-confident when speaking in public. It is evident that she valued the importance of preparation for English class presentations in improving her speaking competence. Meanwhile, Hai had identified motivation to learn English for her highly valued dream of studying abroad as a graphics design major. The first step in her preparation for this dream was taking the university entrance exam for her current university to have more time to improve her English competence. In the second semester, she even said that though she was the best student in her private English class, and she had made considerable progress, she believed that she needed to practise English harder because studying in an English-speaking environment would be much different from at home (HiE dated 24th April, 2009). Hai was not only preparing hard for the IELTS exam so that she could pursue her dream of studying abroad, but also envisioning what the learning environment in a native English-speaking environment would be like, and preparing herself for studying in such an environment. It is evident that Hai’s identified motivational source had been widened to include a vision of the first subgoal of that goal completed (being able to study abroad), and how the second step would be carried out with certain current careful preparation (studying in that new environment). It was evident that she was self-determined to make her dream come true and was sure that her dream would come true. Other participants also embraced the values of certain English-related aims, and thus practised English diligently to achieve those aims (see 4.1.2).

At university, sometimes the participants showed identified motivation to learn English when the teachers shared their own work experiences and discussed the skills required to do the job well. Some participants were also energized by identified motivation to learn English when they could see how success in learning English had brought advances for their teachers.

As I have argued, the participants internalized the values of English as a means to achieve other personally important goals and were self-determined to do certain English-related activities so that they could achieve these aims. In the beginning, significant others might have required them to do these activities and also told them
about the meaningfulness of doing such acts. However, at the university, when the participants were more mature in their thinking, and even in some cases when significant others did not tell them about these values, they could still envision those values and actively worked hard in English so that they could obtain their goals. In other words, in this study, in terms of the participants’ identified motivation, they “[relied] relatively little on [an other-generated] source of motivation and much on a student-generated source” (Reeve, 1996, p. 49). Unfortunately, these circumstances were not pervasive, as most of the time, the participants still worked under the pressure of internalized regulations, rather than with their free choice.

Furthermore, the findings on the identified motivation of the participants, albeit not as important as those on other types of motivation, demonstrated that the ideal L2 self hypothesized by Dörnyei (2005, 2009; see also 2.2.3) was in operation in this context. As the participants envisioned what they wanted to become in the future and saw discrepancies between their current L2 selves and their ideal L2 selves, they were motivated to close the gaps between those two selves.

5.3.4 Integrative Motivation

Integrativeness is conceptualized as

an openness to, and respect for other cultural groups and ways of life. In the extreme, this might involve complete identification with the community (and possibly even withdrawal from one’s original group), but more commonly, it might well involve integration within both communities (Gardner, 2001, p. 5).

As seen from this conceptualization, an integratively motivated language learner would have favourable attitudes toward the target community and their culture as well as ways of living. This might also lead to a desire to merge with that community (see 2.2.1.1 for a detailed discussion). Figure 5.5 shows sources of introjected motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.
Influence of the Perceived Value of the English Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of the utilitarian values brought by English studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Influence of the perceived values of English as a communicative tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Favourable attitudes toward English-speaking communities and their cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desire to be able to communicate with English natives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desire to get married to a Westerner (especially an English native)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.5: Sources of integrative motivation in the participants’ English studies

Based on Gardner’s definition, there seemed to be little evidence that the participants were affected by integrative motivation to learn the English language, and if integrative motivation existed, it was not strong compared with other types of motivation that they experienced. Specifically, the participants expressed their love for English-speaking cultures. However, their belief about the liberal ways of living and thinking of the target group was not only of English-speaking communities, but about that of Westerners in general. The participants also compared their Vietnamese way of thinking with the Western way, and reached the conclusion that the Western way better suited the young Vietnamese generation. Additionally, not all of them wanted to identify with the target community. Most of them wanted to learn about the cultures, and make friends to practise English. Only Duyen expressed her desire to get married to an English speaker to get nearer to her favourite community, and to achieve a level of native-like English competence. Furthermore, despite their love toward the English culture, and the community in general, their motivated behaviour was not only to communicate with this target community but also with other English speakers. In their attempt to seek for English practice opportunity to improve their communicative competence, they all made contact with people who could communicate in English.

It seemed that the integrative motivation of the study participants was not directly connected to the English-speaking communities. Though they loved the British culture, it might be said that their cultural knowledge was from the course on British culture they had at university, or via the movies, music, and other cultural products viewed online or available in Vietnam and not from actual experience. Additionally, although all of them had access to American teachers in class, only Ninh and Duyen actively sought opportunities to communicate with those teachers outside of class. Furthermore, in Vietnam, the annual number of tourists from English-speaking countries does not account for a large number out of the total number of tourists (see T. T. H. Phan, 2009).
As a result, most of the time, the communication of the participants with English speakers was with anyone who could speak English. For example, Hai exchanged email with an Australian student who stayed at her house during a cultural exchange program and an online Arabic friend. Duyen, in her part-time job, spoke English to her customers, who did not always come from English speaking countries. As a result, it might be fair to say that the affection toward the English-speaking culture was mainly formed by means of indirect contact via education and mainly media (Csizér & Kormos, 2008; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Kormos & Csizér, 2007). In addition, investment in Vietnam from English-speaking countries was less than that of other Asian countries (T. T. H. Phan, 2009). Accordingly, their future use of English in jobs might not be with native English-speakers (Le, 2001). It is also noteworthy to add that the participants expressed their affinity for the ways of Western living and thinking, and behaving; they did not specify that they only liked those of English-speaking communities. Taken together, for the participants, the term ‘integrative motivation’ was not relevant in the Vietnamese context of learning the English language. Though these students had been English majors for quite some time, their constructed image of English-speaking countries was not clearly a target English-speaking community or Westerners in general. It also might be hard to use the term ‘international posture’ (Yashima, 2002) to capture this type of motivation, because these students (except Phan) did not express any interest about taking part in international activities, or interest in international affairs. Moreover, they seemed to differentiate between the motivation to study English for jobs and overseas study from this integrative motivation. As such, it might be more appropriate to label this type of motivation, ‘intercultural friendship motivation’ (Yashima, 2002), where the participants were trying to gain a membership in ‘the global community,’ but not the community of the English natives (Bektaş-Çetinkayaa & Oruç, 2010; Dörnyei, 2005; Ryan, 2006). This ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991, as cited in Norton, 2001) was mainly formed in the mind of the participants via their limited contact with cultural products (Dörnyei, 1990).

5.3.5 Demotivation

This section will examine the demotivation that the seven participants experienced in their English studies. Figure 5.6 summarizes the types of influences that led to the participants losing their interest in learning English.
### Formal English educational context

#### Teacher-related factors

1. Teacher’s teaching performance
   - Bad teaching techniques
   - Strict monitoring of homework
   - Assigning students too much homework
   - Teachers’ bad mood leading to uncomfortable class environment

2. Teacher’s knowledge
   - Lack of subject knowledge
   - Bad English competence

3. Teacher’s support
   - Lack of encouragement
   - Lack of feedback
   - Lack of teacher’s willingness to help (lack of in-class assistance with difficulties in English studies, no share of English learning experiences and necessary skills for future employment and study).
   - Imposing ideas on students

#### Classmate-related factors

1. Lack of class integration (mismatch in attitudes toward class activities and English learning goals)

2. Social comparison
   - Lack of availability of social comparison targets
   - Negative results from social comparison

4. Lack of relatedness to classmates

#### Instructional-material-related factors

1. Irrelevance of instructional materials to personal needs and interest
2. Easiness of instructional materials

#### Demotivating factors related to perceptions of English exams, progress and achievement

1. Delay in getting exam results back in time
2. Failures to finish English schoolwork well
3. Failures to get as good study results as expected

#### Family and Social Networks

#### Parent-related factors

1. Failure to meet parents’ expectations
2. A clash between personal academic and professional goals with parents’ desired goals

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*Figure 5.6: Sources of demotivators in the participants’ English studies.*

However, as parental influence did not result in as much demotivation as did introjected motivation, I will leave out the discussion on parental influences (see 5.3.2.2 for demotivation caused by parental influence).

Among all of the participants, Ngan and Phan were the least demotivated, whereas Hai, Tram, and Ngoc were the most. Among all sources of demotivation, the influence
of the English educational environment, especially of the teachers, seemed to produce the most debilitating effects on the students in their English studies (see Keblawi, 2005; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Tran & Baldauf, 2007). The demotivating attributes of the teachers found in the literature on students’ EFL demotivation were the grammar-translation approach used by the teachers; teachers’ focus on learning and preparing for university entrance exams; teachers’ communication style; teachers’ pronunciation; teachers’ instructional style (Kikuchi, 2009); teachers’ style and personality (Keblawi, 2005); teachers’ competence and teaching styles (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009); and teachers’ behaviour, competence, teaching methods, and grading and assessment (Tran & Baldauf, 2007). Among these studies, only Tran and Baldauf (2007) investigated university students’ perceptions, but focused on the economics majors. As the participants in this study were English majors and it was likely that their English competence was better than those in the abovementioned studies, the participants’ list of demotivators derived from teachers and other sources seemed to be wider. Their main demotivating influences are discussed next.

5.3.5.1 Demotivation as a result of the influence of the teacher of English.

As Figure 5.6 shows, the participants were demotivated in their English studies by a variety of the teachers’ attributes. Among these attributes, teachers’ bad teaching techniques and lack of subject knowledge and English competence were considered to be the most detrimental to students’ motivation to learn. However, as the students further elaborated (see 4.2.2.2), these two qualities were complementary. When a teacher lacked good teaching techniques, the participants would be further demotivated by her lack of subject knowledge and English competence. Both Kikuchi (2009), and Tran and Baldauf (2007) also found that teachers’ poor pronunciation made students lose interest in learning English. However, the current study demonstrated that the participants would still love learning with a teacher who had good teaching techniques but did not have good English pronunciation. Generally, the results of this study supported those of Tran and Baldauf (2007), in that the teacher’s ineffective teaching methods demotivated the participants the most, but contrast with Breach’s (2004) finding that teaching methods were much less important than a teacher’s knowledge. Specifically, the findings of the current study demonstrated that the participants cared most about the teacher’s abilities to choose appropriate and varied class activities so that they would have more opportunities to practice, to explain and instruct students clearly,
and to expand their knowledge beyond the textbook. That indicates that the participants were more interested in the role of the teacher as a leader and facilitator of the class than as “the sole provider of experience in the target language” (V. C. Le, 2001, p. 35). For example, Phan said that she preferred a teacher with good in-class teaching techniques so that she could understand the lesson well. She was not as interested in the English competence of a teacher because she could study more at home by herself to enrich her knowledge (see 4.2.2.2). This might mean that the participants were autonomous in seeking knowledge for themselves in the out-of-class context, and in class, they wanted teachers to act as guides so that they would have more opportunities to practise.

These findings related to the teachers’ in-class teaching performances showed that the participants had changed their thinking about the traditional role of the teacher in the English language classroom. The teacher was no longer viewed as the knowledge transmitter (V. C. Le, 2001). The participants already actively took personal responsibility for part of their learning in the classroom and especially in the out-of-classroom context. Furthermore, since they did not think that the teacher would need to be a perfect example of English competence, they excused less than perfect pronunciation. However, like the Vietnamese English majors in Breach’s (2004) study, the participants still cared about the teachers’ level of knowledge as they believed that good knowledge still went hand in hand with enabling the teacher to expand their knowledge beyond the text book and select a variety of suitable activities for the class.

The findings also demonstrated that lacking one of three other attributes of the teachers, (encouragement, teachers’ willingness to help, and teachers’ good mood) also contributed to most of the participants’ demotivation in class. These findings indicate that a lack of teachers’ competence support (Noels et al., 1999) or comfortable class environment (Kikuchi, 2009) could lead to students’ loss of interest in their English studies. On the one hand, the findings clearly showed that the participants needed the teacher’s encouragement to learn, and help to see what to do to improve their English competence and prepare themselves for their future. On the other hand, the participants also needed the teacher to create a comfortable learning environment in which they felt safe and self-confident to express themselves. These findings again showed that the participants conformed to the Vietnamese traditional values of the ‘care orientation’ (X. H. Le et al., 2005; N. T. Tran, 2006), in that they tended to seek care and support from
the teacher of English in the classroom. Therefore, a lack of these would make them feel uncomfortable, unsafe, and thereby demotivated.

These findings regarding the demotivating effects of a lack of good teaching techniques, teachers’ subject knowledge, and English competence, as well as care and support from the teacher lends validity to Norton’s (2001) claim that “a disjuncture between the learner’s imagined community and the teacher’s curriculum goals” might lead to a learner’s “non-participation” in the classroom (p. 170). In this foreign language context, the participants’ imagined community of a motivating English language class, in which the teacher had good teaching techniques and good knowledge of English, and was willing to provide students with care and support, did not always match reality. When this mismatch occurred, the participants became demotivated in their English studies.

5.3.5.2. Demotivation as a result of the influence of classmates.

Aside from the debilitating effects from some of the teachers’ qualities, the study participants were also negatively influenced by factors related to their classmates. The main factor was a lack of class integration (see 4.2.1.1). Put more specifically, the negative attitudes of the classmates toward class activities and assignments discouraged most of the participants from active participation in these activities. Similarly, Tran and Baldauf (2007) found that unfavourable class environments such as quietness and boredom, or classmates’ negative behaviours badly demotivated the participants’ in-class English studies. Kikuchi’s (2009) participants in the quantitative study did not admit that they were negatively affected by classmates, whereas those in the qualitative study did. In this study, for some participants, their group cohesiveness (Dörnyei, 2001b; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) did not seem to exist at all. Ngoc’s group members did not adhere to the group norms of working together on class assignments and presentations, thereby decreasing the group’s productivity. Hai’s class as a group had totally different academic goals from hers. For instance, she wanted to bring some positive norms into the class like speaking English only in class, but no group member wanted to support her. As the group norms became disrupted, the participants did not find themselves in an environment that facilitated learning. The negative influence of a lack of class integration on some of the participants’ in-class English studies also reflected the needs
of the participants to belong to a group in which members worked together toward mutual goals.

The last two factors that seemed to exercise negative impacts on the majority of the participants’ motivation to learn English in the formal classroom concerned the instructional materials, and English exams, progress, and achievement. I will discuss these in turn.

5.3.5.3. Demotivation as a result of the influence of instructional materials, and English exams, progress and achievement.

In terms of the detrimental influence of instructional materials, the findings of this study correspond with those of Kikuchi (2009), and Tran and Baldauf (2007), that the instructional materials were not as debilitating as the influence of teachers or classmates. Nonetheless, the instructional materials were another demotivator in the participants’ English studies. Specifically, the findings from these two studies and the current study demonstrated that a lack of the attractiveness of the materials to the participants, as well as the inappropriate level of difficulty to the participants, demotivated students to learn. The current study also showed that the irrelevance of the materials to the participants’ needs and goals had a negative impact on their motivation to learn. Because each participant perceived the value of the skills and knowledge presented to them in a different way based on their perceptions of the relevance of those skills and knowledge to their own passions and goals, they were demotivated by different materials. These findings match Brophy’s (1999) claim regarding the self-relevance of learning materials and the utility aspect of a task (see also Eccles et al., 1983). Generally, “understanding, appreciation, and attention to life applications” (Brophy, 1999, p. 81) were crucial to the content and activities in the learning materials to motivate students. That means motivating tasks should not be too difficult or easy, and should be relevant and practical.

With reference to demotivation resulting from the influences of English exams, progress, and achievement, the current study supported the findings of Kikuchi (2009), Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), and Tran and Baldauf (2007) in that failure to get good test or study results was detrimental to the participants’ study. Furthermore, this study showed that being able to complete exercises well or get good exam results helped to confirm the self-efficacy belief that one has the skills and qualities to do something well (Dörnyei, 2001b). In fact, Hai stated that failure to do the exercises well made her lose
the belief that she had the ability to learn English, so she did not want to learn any more (see 4.2.5).

Taken together, the participants were demotivated by a variety of factors related to their formal English educational environment. Among these, teacher- and classmate-related factors were the most detrimental. Following Norton’s (2001) notions of ‘investment’, ‘imagined community,’ and ‘class non-participation,’ most of the participants in this study found their investment in their English classroom unworthy and therefore demotivating when there was a mismatch between their imagined communities and their groups in the class and the class as a group.

5.3.6 Resultative Motivation

Skehan (1989) and R. Ellis (1994) postulated that some learners will expend more effort and persistence on learning after gaining successes. Skehan even claimed that motivation should be considered “as a consequence rather than a cause of success” (p. 49). Both R. Ellis and Skehan named this type of motivation ‘resultative motivation’. In this study, most of the participants demonstrated resultative motivation by being stimulated to learn English after gaining some successes, but this type of motivation was the least salient among all the types of motivation that the participants experienced; it seemed to be attached only to the good results that the participants got from their studies. Figure 5.7 shows sources of resultative motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence related to the English Educational Context</th>
<th>Influence of school requirements</th>
<th>Influence of English exam, learning progress and achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Getting good study results</td>
<td>• Completing exercises well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Completing exercises well</td>
<td>• Finding English gradually improved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting a good result for continuous and final assessments</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5.7: Sources of resultative motivation in the participants’ English studies*

The findings (see 4.2.5) showed that most of the participants became more interested in studying English and expended more effort on it after they had some successes in exams and their studies. Specifically, completing exercises well, getting a good result for continuous and final assessments, or making gradual English progress all facilitated the participants to learn. In other words, good academic results created a feeling of self-competence which formed a strong impetus for the participants to expend
more effort. Chuo & Yen (no date) also found that some of the so-called successful English learners in Taiwan experienced resultative motivation from their successful learning experiences. Garcia (2006) found that his participants’ resultative motivational orientation might change to another type of orientation under the influence of the participants’ ability to communicate with others in the social network in a study abroad context. Given that the participants in this study did not have many chances to communicate directly with English natives or other English-speaking people, their resultative motivation mainly came from their formal academic successes. The results from this study support Dörnyei’s (2001b) claim that resultative motivation from successes can lead to self-efficacy and act as a very strong motivating source in students’ English studies. Once again, the notion ‘investment’ by Norton (2001) is applicable, in that when the participants could visualize the fruits of their investment, they were more motivated to learn.

5.3.7 Other General Internalized Motivation

Deci and Ryan (1985) defined the internalization process as, “the process through which an individual acquires an attitude, belief, or behavioural regulation and progressively transforms it into a personal value, goal, or organization” (p. 130). The internalization process results in introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. I have already discussed introjected and identified regulation above (see 5.3.2 & 5.3.3). However, some of the resultant motivation that the participants got from their teachers’ and classmates’ influences were not sufficiently transparent to be categorized into either introjected or identified motivation types (see 4.2.2 & 4.2.3). Therefore, I labeled this resultant motivation ‘general internalized motivation’ and will discuss it in this separate section. Specifically, the ability of the teacher to create a comfortable class environment (see 4.2.2.1.3); the teacher’s knowledge (4.2.2.2); the teacher’s support in terms of encouragement, feedback, and willingness to help (4.2.2.3); the teacher’s interpersonal bonds with students (4.2.2.4); and class integration (4.2.1.1), and support and relatedness (4.2.1.3) brought about the participants’ internalized motivation. The teachers also agreed that all the above-mentioned qualities of the teacher of English motivated their students to learn. Figure 5.8 shows sources of internalized motivation that seven participants experienced in their English studies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence related to the English Educational Context</th>
<th>Influence of the teacher of English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher’s ability to create a comfortable class environment</td>
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<td>2. Teacher’s good knowledge</td>
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<td>3. Teacher’s support in terms of encouragement, feedback and willingness to help</td>
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<td>4. Teacher’s interpersonal bonds with students</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Influence of classmates</th>
<th>1. Class integration</th>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Class support and relatedness</td>
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*Figure 5.8: Sources of internalized motivation in the participants’ English studies*

### 5.3.7.1 Internalized motivation as a result of the influence of the teacher of English.

In terms of teachers’ influence on the participants’ internalized motivation to learn English, when the teachers provided students with either constructive feedback, encouragement, or help, and made students feel comfortable and close in class, the participants felt motivated to learn (see 4.2.2.3 & 4.2.2.1.3). In addition, some participants were motivated to learn with teachers whose knowledge those participants respected.

Reeve (1996) contended that in the educational context, when the student feels related to the teacher, that student will internalize the values brought by that teacher. However, the internalization will only thrive when the teacher provides autonomy and competence support as well as a feeling of security and involvement. Dörnyei (2001b) also described how the “teacher immediacy” (p. 37) had an impact on students’ motivation. Dörnyei (2001a) considered the teacher’s creating “a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere” as one of the “basic motivational conditions” (p. 29). Therefore, a feeling of relatedness (Reeve, 1996) is the prerequisite for internalization of values to occur. In this study, the participants often felt close to their teachers, thereby considering the class as a comfortable place for them to learn. According to Reeve, that means that the participants had started to internalize the values brought by their teachers. However, because it is not known whether these teachers consistently provided the participants with competence and then autonomy support, it is not possible...
to conclude that the participants’ internalization process “flourished” (p.46). It is, however, possible to say that the internalization motivation was situational.

Interestingly, Noels et al. (1999), and Noels (2001) were only able to find indirect correlations between the scale Teacher Congeniality with students’ perceptions of autonomy and competence via Teacher Control and Teacher-Informative Feedback. This seemed to say that teacher’s relatedness with students is not as important as the teacher’s provision of autonomy and competence support. However, Breach (2004), in her study with Vietnamese English majors in the north of Vietnam, found that these students considered the teachers’ caring, friendliness, and sympathy as the top characters of a good teacher. Furthermore, a famous Vietnamese proverb states, “a teacher is like a fond mother”. Together with the findings of this study, it might be said that in the Vietnamese context, relatedness with, and support in terms of encouragement, sharing, and comfort from the teachers played the most important role in motivating the students to learn.

5.3.7.2 Internalized motivation as a result of the influence of classmates.

The class integration, support, and relatedness also acted as a force that made the participants feel internally motivated to learn. The findings of this study on the influences of class integration and support on motivation to learn the English language supports that of Chang (2010). In Chang’s mixed-methods study with Taiwanese English majors at a technical university, she found that group cohesiveness defined as “how well students get along,” (p. 131) and group norms defined as “group rules accepted and respected by all group members” (p. 132) positively influenced the students’ motivation to learn (see also 2.2.7.1). Specifically, both the current study and Chang’s study demonstrated that sharing the same positive academic goals and attitudes toward class activities with classmates influenced the students’ motivation to learn English in class. Moreover, sharing learning materials and encouraging one another to learn also facilitated the participants’ motivation to learn. While the current study could not show what kinds of motivation these group processes facilitated, Chang’s study could only find slight to moderate correlations between these group processes and students’ motivation to learn. Chang explained that the participants claimed that the most important factor influencing their English studies was their own determination, and group influences, albeit important, were only a contributing factor. In the current
study, it could only be found that the influence of the group processes was only one of the factors in the intricate web of those factors affecting the participants’ motivation. The current study also supported the findings of Clement et al. (1994) that group cohesion was linked with a positive evaluation of the class learning environment. The participants in the current study considered their class environment conducive to their learning when all their classmates were excited to participate in the class learning activities and motivated to practise to improve their English competence.

Dörnyei and Malderez (1999) also contended that group dynamics in the classroom played an important role in the students’ “learning experiences and outcomes” (p. 155). Group dynamics include the “structure, composition, cohesiveness, climate, norms, roles and interactional patterns” of the group (p. 156). Group development comprises several stages, in which the transition and performing stages involve students’ conflict and competition. However, these conflicts and competitions always lead to a negotiation of values and goals and thereby more positive group norms to consolidate the group and its work efficiency. Although the purpose of the current study was not to examine all of the aspects of group dynamics, the findings demonstrate that some aspects of group dynamics, like class integration and support, as well as competition, exerted influence on the participants’ learning behaviours and motivation. It also demonstrated that though social comparison had the most salient influence on the participants’ motivation, all of the participants considered class support and integration as crucial factors in facilitating their learning. That means, while the participants pursued the accomplishment of their individual goals, they still needed the support of their group to motivate themselves.

The influences of the teachers and classmates in terms of support and relatedness on the students’ internalized motivation also demonstrate that in the Vietnamese educational context, mutual support and a close interpersonal relationship between the teacher and students, as well as among students, play a very important role in the students’ studies. Once again, this reflects the Vietnamese traditional value of care orientation and group harmony (X. H. Le et al., 2005), in which individuals work together toward mutual goals to build a good community.
5.3.8 Concluding Remarks

I have argued that aside from intrinsic motivation, the participants experienced other types of motivation in their English studies, in which introjected motivation seemed to be the most common and influential. In addition, each of the participants seemed to have a different amount of motivation, and the types of motivation varied across the participants. In other words, the three sources of influence, influence of the perceived values of English knowledge, influence related to the English educational environment, and influence of family and social networks, seemed to induce different resultant motivations in each participant.

Section 5.4 will provide a more thorough discussion on the specific factors underlying the English educational context in Vietnam that underpin the participants’ motivations to learn the English language.

5.4 Influence of Cross-cultural Contact with the English Language, and Specific Cultural Practices on the Participants’ Motivations to Learn the English Language

I have argued that the three sources of influence presented in the findings chapter acted as an impetus for the participants’ English studies, thereby stimulating different motivations in their English learning process. Specifically, how the participants interpreted the value of knowing English and the relationships among a variety of factors in their English learning environment and in Vietnam’s social context affected the participants’ motivation to learn the English language (see 5.3). In this section, I will explore the specific factors that permeated all three sources of influence (see Chapter Four & 5.3) and worked as underlying motivational processes in the participants’ English studies. These specific factors comprise intercultural contact of the participants with English, and specific cultural practices which consist of the respect for learning and knowledge, respect for the teacher, attribution of successes and failures to effort, concept of filial piety and face, and finally, the sense of belonging. The following section will investigate the impact of these specific factors on the motivations of the participants.

5.4.1 Influence of Inter-cultural Contact with the Target Language, English

Intercultural encounters of EFL learners with speakers of English involve both direct and indirect contact (Kormos & Csizér, 2007). In this study, the participants
experienced both direct and indirect contact in their formal English educational context as well as in the out-of-class setting. However, the amount of indirect contact surpassed that of the direct and was more actively initiated by the participants. Specifically, the participants had direct contact with English native and non-native speakers in both formal and informal environments, and also had indirect contact in both settings via their attendance in a course on British culture (for four second-year participants), through their teachers’ stories about English-speaking communities and their cultures, and by their own contact with cultural products. It is worthwhile to add that the influence of cross-cultural communication on the students’ attitudes toward the English cultures and people, and their motivation to learn English were mediated by several other factors as discussed below.

In the former context, all of the participants had a chance to learn with volunteer American teachers, but contact was limited because it happened in the classroom where the teacher’s attention was supposed to be evenly divided among all students in the class. However, there was evidence that this limited contact also had some influence on the students’ positive attitudes toward English-speaking communities. The participants considered most of the teachers to be helpful, encouraging, and close to students, thereby experiencing a comfortable class environment. Similar to what Rao (2010) found in a Chinese English learning context, interacting with these teachers also familiarized the participants with the target language culture. Therefore, all of the participants felt confident and were motivated to learn in these classes. However, it was interesting that except for Duyen, Tram, and Ngoc, the other participants did not actively maintain contact with these teachers after class. The lack of contact with the teachers after class was due to either the teacher’s lack of understanding Vietnamese culture (Hai), the participant’s lack of personal self-confidence (Ngan) or the teacher avoiding direct contact with students (Thuong). In addition, in the formal context, Thuong, Ngoc, Tram, and Phan, as the second-year students, also had the chance to enjoy indirect contact with the target language and its communities in a class called British Culture. They all stated that the teacher told them interesting stories about the target culture. It was possible that this helped to develop their liking toward the community and its culture. Collectively speaking, in the formal context, direct and indirect intercultural encounters influenced the participants in two ways. First, all of the participants had positive thoughts about the target culture and its communities. Second,
their motivation to learn in the class with these teachers was also positively affected, but it was mediated by the teachers’ good teaching techniques. Further contact with these teachers in the out-of-class context was mainly determined by the teachers’ provision of opportunities for students to communicate with them and the student’s self-confidence in their personal communicative competence.

In the informal context, the participants seemed to more actively initiate both direct and indirect contact with the target language and its native and non-native speakers. The out-of-class intercultural contact further contributed to forming favourable attitudes toward speakers of English. With regard to direct contact, except for Nga, all other participants claimed that they had opportunities to speak directly to both native and non-native speakers of English. Although most of them did not have regular contact with either native or non-native speakers of English, like the subjects in Kormos and Csizér’s (2007) study, the participants believed that their direct contact experiences were crucial to improving their English competence, cultural knowledge, and self-confidence, and in reducing their anxiety in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, they were motivated to seek or to take advantage of further opportunities for communication. However, the amount of indirect contact greatly surpassed that of direct contact (see Csizér & Kormos, 2008). The indirect contact was mainly via using the internet, listening to the radio, watching films, and reading printed English materials. Most of the time, the indirect contact was done voluntarily and with a feeling of intrinsic motivation (see 4.1.1 & 5.2). Though not all of the participants explicitly said much about how effective the indirect contact was in their English studies, it might be appropriate to say that this type of contact contributed much to their English progress, cultural competence, and self-confidence. However, unlike in Csizér and Kormos’s (2008) study, and Dörnyei et al.’s (2006), these Vietnamese participants all sought English cultural products to practise their English, whether they were self-confident or not in their English ability. It seemed that self-confidence acted as one necessary condition to seek direct contact with speakers of English, but was not necessary for indirect contact.

Much along the same line as Csizér and Kormos’s (2008) conclusions, the current study lent support to the view that generally, frequent indirect contact might play a more important role in enriching cultural knowledge than limited direct contact. Specifically, it is hard to say that the brief and infrequent cross-cultural encounters with speakers of
English both in class and out of class helped the participants to get much cross-cultural knowledge. Meanwhile, listening to the radio, listening to music, reading books, accessing the Internet, and watching movies provided the participants with more prolonged and frequent contact with the target culture. However, it might be even more appropriate to say that these two types of contact were complementary, because their indirect contact helped the participants to construct an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991, as cited in Norton, 2001) of the speakers of English, while their direct contact enabled them to get to know that imagined community in real life. Overall, intercultural contact positively influenced both English language attitudes and motivations of the participants (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005).

5.4.2 Influence of Specific Cultural Practices

There was a lot of evidence in the data showing that specific Vietnamese cultural values affected the EFL motivations of the participants. The values comprise respect for learning and knowledge, respect for the teacher, attribution of successes and failures to effort, filial piety and face, and the sense of belonging/community spirit. These cultural values were formed from the influence of, firstly and basically, Vietnamese indigenous culture, then Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, and furthered reinforced by communism (as discussed in 2.3.2). The following discussion will demonstrate how these specific cultural values influenced the motivations of the participants in the study.

5.4.2.1 Influence of the respect for learning and knowledge.

The findings showed that motivation to learn the English language was influenced by the traditional Vietnamese Confucian respect for knowledge and education for all of the participants. The respect for learning and knowledge comes from the values of learning and knowledge in both perfecting a person (Lee, 1996) as well as from the possibility to gain social status and pragmatic benefits (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; N. T. Tran, 2006).

First, the participants viewed English as a means to enrich their own knowledge, in terms of both cross-cultural knowledge and their personal interest (see 4.1.1; 4.1.2.3 & 5.2). This reflected what Lee (1996) claimed as “learning for self-realization” (p. 33), whose ultimate aim is “to cultivate oneself as an intelligent, creative, independent, autonomous,…an authentic being, who is becoming more fully human in the process of
learning” (p. 34). As such, the participants actively self-regulated their English studies in the home-based context to improve their knowledge because they believed that:

Dao có mái mới sắc
Người có học mới khôn.

To be cutting, a knife must be sharpened
To be wise, a person must study.

(Duong, 1988, p. 22).

Second, for all of the participants, success in learning the English language and getting good academic results would provide them access to “upward social mobility” (Lee, 1996, p. 37). Traditionally, under the Vietnamese feudal regime, going up the social ladder for a Vietnamese lineage was not difficult due to the democratic Confucian exams. Clever and hardworking students from poor families who passed the national civil service exams would be selected to become mandarins for the royal court (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; N. T. Tran, 2006). As such, educational success might lead to high social status and material success for themselves and for their whole family. For the participants, the values of learning English and English knowledge, aside from the self-realization purpose, included many utilitarian benefits, for example, future high-paying jobs and a chance to study overseas (see 4.1.2). In addition, knowing English brought them a respected social status; the participants claimed that many Vietnamese valued their decision to major in English (see 4.3.2.2). Collectively, their own appreciation for their English major might come from the possibility to pursue both social mobility and economic benefits.

Once again, Norton’s (1995, 2001) notion of ‘investment’ is applicable in this Vietnamese EFL context. The participants valued their investment in learning English because this investment could allow them to satisfy their “multiple desires” (Norton, 1995, p. 17), which was motivated by the Vietnamese traditional respect for learning and education.

5.4.2.2 Influence of the respect for teachers.

The Vietnamese tradition of respecting the teacher originated from the respect for learning and knowledge (Hua et al., 2004, p. 13). Many Vietnamese sayings reflect this tradition, for example:
If one wants to cross the water, build a bridge
If one wants his child to be educated, respect the teacher.

(Breach, 2004, p. 32)

There was also evidence in the findings showing that the participants respected their teachers of English. For example, the respect of the participants for their teachers of English was reflected in their reactively autonomous behaviour in English classes (Littlewood, 1999) (as discussed in 5.2). All of the participants were willing and intrinsically motivated to take part in the interesting activities initiated by their teachers. Their willingness to take part in these activities might have originated from the belief that the teacher’s experience and knowledge in teaching the English language would result in a selection of appropriate activities and materials. Moreover, their respect for the teacher of English was shown in the participants’ expectation for the teacher’s support in terms of feedback, advice, and sharing of experiences. Indeed, the support of the teachers exerted such a powerful influence on the students that some of them became aware of their personal intellectual potentials and identities, and all were able to set their “life’s [goals]” (Lim, 2002, p. 100) (see 4.2.2.3.3). As such, I argue that the perceived power of the teachers in shaping the student participants’ will to learn and to envision what would be possible, or in other words, in constructing an ‘imagined community’ (Norton, 2001) for their future, might have come from the students’ respect for the teacher’s experience and knowledge.

In sum, I have argued that the tradition of respecting the teacher exerted great influence on the participants in their formal English learning setting.

5.4.2.3 Influence of the attribution of successes and failures to effort.

The findings of the study also indicated that the participants conformed to the Confucian tradition of attributing achievement more to the power of effort than to ability (Hau & Salili, 1991, 1996; Lee, 1996). For example, after comparing their academic results with peers, the participants concluded that their worse results sprang from a lack of effort (see 4.2.1.2). Listening to their teachers’ stories of successful EFL students also led them to believe that these high achievers had been working hard to obtain such fruits (see 4.2.2.3.3). Difficult learning materials, and failure to achieve
desired exam results or study results only motivated the participants to expend more effort (see 4.2.3 & 4.2.5). As such, the participants in this study, albeit suffering from disappointment and short-term demotivation from their failures, did not suffer from learned helplessness due to perceived low self-esteem (Salili, 1996). Indeed, as Salili (1996) argued, the attribution to effort, a controllable and malleable factor, made the participants feel optimistic about their future chances of improving their study results, thereby encouraging them to increase their efforts in their studies.

The findings also supported Ho and Hau’s (2008) finding that students expend a high amount of effort on their English studies, whether their goals were to be competitive with classmates, to improve their personal knowledge, or to gain academic success. In the current study, the participants’ goals were closely related to effort, which might have been considered an effective means to achieve their ultimate goals. However, the participants’ belief in the power of effort in their English studies did not mean that they would work hard in English without any proper strategies. For the participants, expending effort went hand in hand with an adoption of appropriate learning strategies or a change of ineffective strategies, to ensure they could achieve their desired goals (see 4.2.1.2) (see Biggs, 1996b).

5.4.2.4 Influence of the concept of filial piety.

This study has demonstrated that filial piety as the guiding principle in the Vietnamese family (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; McLeod & Nguyen, 2001) continues to exert its influence on the participants’ motivation to learn the English language. Six out of seven participants in this study were clearly very aware of their responsibility for repaying the moral debts that they had owed their parents since their births (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; Vu, 2008). Their awareness of filial obligations was ingrained in their minds in two ways, first and more importantly via a witness of parental sacrifice and caring acts, and, to a lesser extent, via parents’ overt pressure (see 4.3.1). As a result, the act of repaying moral debts was implemented by means of the participants’ willingness to follow the parents’ desired academic and professional goals, and explicit motivation to study English well to make their parents proud (see 5.3.2.2). This is in line with the desired image of children who successfully carry out their filial obligations in a traditional Vietnamese family by gaining success to honour the family (Vu, 2008). As good children, the success that the participants in the study brought to their families
was maintaining the family harmony by respecting their parents, and achieving as highly as expected by important family members.

The study lent some support to Bowen’s (2008) conclusion regarding the motivation of Chinese learners that filial piety acted as “an implicit expectation that motivated the participants” (p. 126) to study. However, in this Vietnamese specific context, filial piety was sometimes not only an implicit expectation but also an explicit source of pressure. Whether implicit or explicit, it was evident that filial piety worked as an effective and continual source of motivation for the participants. This contested Dornyei and Otto’s (1998) hypothesis that parental influence only motivated students in the actional phase (see 2.2.2) when the students are learning the English language. As such, the study concurred with that of Bowen (2008) that filial piety as a source of parental motivation affected all the English learning process of the participants, including the preactional phase in which students made the decision to learn the language, the actional phase when they were learning the language, and the postactional phase when the students evaluated their language learning achievements.

Finally, for all of the participants in this study, the concept of filial piety was mostly concerned with their parents, but not with their extended family members. As showed in 4.3.1, except for Hai’s relatives whose encouragement and praise stimulated her to learn, other participants did not mention any support from their extended family members. This finding is in contrast with Bowen’s (2008) findings. It seemed that in the specific context of the current study, filial obligations were to those people directly involved in the socialization process of the participants – their parents. In return, the participants were compelled to please them.

5.4.2.5 Influence of the concept of face.

N. T. Tran (2006) claimed that as Vietnamese valued the interpersonal relationships in the collectives with which they identified, they valued their “face” in the social encounters with the collective members. Pham (2007) contended that the concept of face in Vietnamese culture was attached to both the individual and one’s collectives. Specifically, the individual face is associated with personal qualities, potentials, and characteristics, as well as social roles for which the individual expects to be admired and honoured. The concept of face in the collective with which a Vietnamese identifies reflects the qualities of that collective. These two components of
face are inter-related, as the qualities and characteristics of an individual contribute to those of the individual’s collectives, and vice versa.

The findings support the conclusion that the concept of face exerted a great deal of influence on some of the participants’ motivations to learn English. First, at the individual level, some of the participants were motivated to learn English well so that they could maintain their social image as the best student in their class, or to gain social respect from peers, or to save face in class, or to save their self-esteem (see 4.2.1.2). Outside of the classroom, some participants were motivated to learn because they wanted to confirm their strengths as English majors (see 4.1.2.4), or to gain social respect from other Vietnamese (see 4.3.2.2), or even to save their face in their family (4.3.1.3). As such, the participants’ motivations to learn English were influenced by their desires to protect their own social status (Pham, 2007) or to achieve their desired social status. Second, at the collective level, Ngan and Hai expressed their desires and motivations to study well in order to protect the face of their family by making them proud of their study successes (see 4.3.1.3). These two participants possibly believed that by achieving high academic achievements, they would be able to enhance the face of their families as being happy families (T. L. Nguyen, 1999; Vu, 2008).

In summary, the concept of face had an impact on the participants’ motivation to learn the English language in that it caused them to work hard to protect both their individual and their family’s reputations.

5.4.2.6 Influence of the sense of belonging.

The Vietnamese emotion-based culture (N. T. Tran, 2006) leads to the appreciation of human relationships in Vietnamese life philosophy, and of the community spirit (X. H. Le et al., 2005; N. T. Tran, 2006). Vietnamese always put the collective benefits above the personal ones, and strive to maintain harmony among the collective members. The community spirit acts as a strong connection, which makes each Vietnamese consider acts of caring about others as a social responsibility. A Vietnamese is also interdependent on the selves of the other community members and the self of the whole community (N. T. Tran, 2006). This study demonstrated that the sense of belonging as a signal of the Vietnamese community spirit influenced the participants’ motivations to study, in that the participants continually sought support
and a sense of relatedness from their classmates and teachers, and of course from their family members.

With regard to how the sense of belonging affected the participants in their relationships with their classmates, it seemed that the participants were motivated to learn when they shared the same attitudes toward class activities and goals in English studies (see 4.2.1.1), and when they were encouraged by, and felt close to, their classmates (see 4.2.1.3). As such, it was evident that the participants’ inherent community spirit guided them to strive to achieve harmony with their classmates by sharing the same social goals toward constructing the class environment as a cooperative community environment conducive to learning. It is undeniable that different members of that community might pursue different life goals, which could be observed in the types of motivation that Duyen and Nga, or Ngoc and Thuong, who shared the same community, experienced in their English studies. However, as a member of a collective, they all sought for spiritual and sometimes material support from other members, so a lack of these would lead to their disappointment and subsequent demotivation to learn English in their class (see 4.2.1.1; 4.2.1.3 & 5.3.5). Collectively, the Vietnamese community spirit has attached all the members of a class and made them into a “family” (V. C. Le, 2001, p. 35; see also Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996), in which each member is aware of the importance of the mutual support in their motivation to learn and of their own responsibility for working toward the collective goals. It was evident that the participants were acutely aware of the influence of the class community on their motivation to learn English, due to the existence of the sense of belonging that they always longed for in the collective with which they identified.

In terms of the sense of belonging with their teachers, the participants also looked for support and a feeling of relatedness with the teacher of English (see 4.2.2.1.3; 4.2.2.3. & 4.2.2.4). Together with the teacher, the participants expected to construct a collective in which the teacher as the leader (see Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) would also work toward the collective goals to help improve the English competence of each student who was a collective member. The community spirit that the participants expected from their teacher was the teacher’s care about each collective member, as shown by providing a supportive and comfortable learning environment so that they would feel self-confident and thereby motivated to learn. The motivations that the participants experienced in their formal English studies, and their commitment to
completing assigned schoolwork at home (see 5.3), suggests that they also tried their best, albeit sometimes forced, to compromise with their teachers so that harmony could be achieved in class. As such, the community spirit connected both teachers and students in a way that by the end of each semester, with the teacher’s support, students could achieve their goals. However, it seemed that the participants desired more care from the teacher rather than from themselves to build such sense of belonging with the teacher. The care of such teachers might be shown via, for example, the teacher’s listening to and trying to understand the students, and by giving encouragement (Breach, 2004).

Lastly, it might be appropriate to say that the participants also sought a sense of belonging with their family members by striving to maintain harmony within their families. This harmonious family environment was achieved through the participants’ endeavours to conform to what their parents expected of them, regardless of their own desires (see 4.3.1). I have argued in 5.3.2.2 that the participants attempted to fulfil their parents’ wishes and expectations on the basis of their awareness of filial piety and face of the family. However, at the same time, I want to add that practising the acts of filial obligations and enhancing the face of the family also contributed to harmonizing with the family members so that a happy collective could be realized (Vu, 2008). That might represent the ultimate goal that the participants were motivated to achieve to please their parents.

**5.4.2.7 Concluding remarks.**

Taken together, the specific factors underpinning the participants’ motivations to study the English language include inter-cultural contact and several cultural practices. I have argued that indirect intercultural contact had much more impact on the participants’ motivations than direct contact, but it is undeniable that both types of contact worked together to give the participants a clear picture of how their English competence would work and fit into their real and imagined communities. Apart from the influence of intercultural contact, the participants were also affected by specific cultural practices that helped them to shape their studies to serve the important goals that they wanted to accomplish. Altogether, the specific factors discussed in this section influenced the study participants at every stage of their English language learning.
5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the most important types of motivation in the participants’ English studies were introjected motivation and external/instrumental motivation. Some demotivation was also common. Although intrinsic motivation was not as important as introjected motivation and external/instrumental motivation, and contextually-bound in the formal setting, it played an important part in generating autonomous learning strategies, especially in the home-based English studies of the participants. Other types of motivation, identified, integrative and resultative motivation, were not as common or important for the participants. It must be noted that despite being demotivated as a result of influences of various contextual factors and personal failures in learning English, the participants were able to re-motivate themselves very quickly with their “motivational thinking” (Ushioda, 1996) and by generating more effective learning strategies to achieve their desired goals.

The findings also demonstrated that the participants were influenced by an intricate web of motivations, in which some types of motivation were stronger than others. Moreover, each participant was affected on an individual basis by certain types of motivation over others. This concurs with Ryan and Deci’s (2000) claim that “motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. People have not only different amounts, but also different kinds of motivation” (p. 54). Despite these differences, all of these Vietnamese technical English majors were heavily externally/instrumentally and introjected motivated, and demotivated in their English studies. However, their instances of external/instrumental, introjected motivations and demotivation varied according to the circumstances under which they experienced these types of motivation. As such, the findings from this study refute G. Ellis’s (1996) generalization that Vietnamese students’ motivation to learn the English language is generated by their teachers and their “will to succeed” as well as “fear of failure” (p. 215), because he did not take into account the full variety of motivational processes and sociocultural factors underlying the Vietnamese students’ English studies.

The participants were pursuing different goals at the same time. It could be said each of them had a “simultaneous focus on a number of different but interacting goals and activities” (Dörnyei, 2001b, p. 13; see also Dowson & McInerney, 2003). That is, their goals might converge, compensate for one another, or even sometimes conflict
(see Dowson & McInerney, 2003). Specifically, they might be studying English to meet school requirements and parental expectations, and simultaneously striving to fulfil their personal dreams of studying overseas and surpassing their classmates. Although they might have felt reluctant to learn one English skill, they still did it to achieve good marks.

The participants differentiated among their motivations, including intrinsic motivation, into assorted skills and subjects depending on, first, the influences of different factors in the context, and then the relevance of these skills and subjects to their interests and goals. This echoed Gottfried’s (1985) finding that intrinsic motivation might exist both as a general academic orientation and as a situational specificity depending on contextual factors.

In addition, the participants were able to separate their class-related motivation from their out-of-class motivation to learn (see Lim, 2002). In class, they might be demotivated by the teachers while being externally motivated to learn to meet certain requirements, but at home, in a more self-determined context, they were free to choose what to learn in accord with their interests and their life’s goals. It must be added, however, that despite the intrinsic motivation the participants might have developed in the classroom as a result of the teacher’s organization of interesting activities and provision of autonomy, competence, and relatedness support, they might not choose to continue practising those same skills or learning those subjects at home if they did not find them relevant to their needs (see 4.1.1). This means that even in a conducive environment, the student would only be motivated to persist in learning something if it were personally meaningful to them.

The findings were also able to show that motivation was not only the cause but also the consequence of success. Actually, the motivational process in the study was reciprocal. For example, Tram was motivated to study English hard at grade 11 so that she could pass the provincial English test. After coming in second in this test, she was even more motivated to learn English to pass the selection test onto the gifted team, whose members would take part in the national English contest.

The study also showed that motivation is connected with a variety of affective, contextual, and cultural factors. For example, the motivations of these students were closely linked to either negative or positive feelings, perceptions of the teachers and
classmates in their immediate environment, and culturally-rooted beliefs about the role of effort, autonomy, respect, and concept of face. The study has demonstrated the presence of profound influences of sociocultural and educational factors on the participants’ motivation to learn. Some participants said that the influences of teachers and parents were very important in their English studies, but their self-determination to learn was more important. However, as could be seen from the findings and discussions, the participants actually were more affected by the social, cultural and contextual factors than their own desires.

However, the need for autonomy was not as salient as required in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In this study, the need for autonomy in the formal English learning context was conducive, but not so much that intrinsic motivation became the most important type of motivation. The participants seemed to prefer to be guided by their teachers. In other words, we might say that they preferred to have reactive autonomy (Littlewood, 1999). The need for being cared for (competence support) and having a sense of belonging to a community seemed to be more salient in this context. Within the learning environment and even family environment, support and relatedness from teachers, peers, and family members formed the foundation for a comfortable learning environment. This was shown in their teacher-student, student-student, and parent-child relationships. This also reflects the Vietnamese ‘care orientation’ and ‘village culture’ (X. H. Le et al., 2005; N. T. Tran, 2006), which emphasizes harmony in relationships. V. C. Le (2001) also claimed that as a collectivist society, “the class [in Vietnam] is a family” (p. 9) where care, protection, and support are always sought and provided for its members.

Generally, the answers to the three research questions demonstrated that using the framework of the self-determination theory alone was insufficient to cover the types of motivation and influences that the participants experienced in their English studies. An appropriate motivational framework for Vietnamese English technical language students must take into account the various factors influencing the students’ motivations to learn the English language and the intricate relationships among those factors. Moreover, when such a motivational framework is applied to a specific English learning setting, it must take into account the social, contextual, and especially cultural processes that underlie the motivations of the students to learn in that particular setting.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This final chapter will be organized into four sections. It begins with a summary of the key findings to the three research questions, and my main arguments for these findings. Then it presents the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study. The last two sections will outline the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study has attempted to answer the following research questions:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?

(2) What other types of motivation do these research participants have in their English studies?

(3) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?

Despite the limited number of participants, the current study was able to draw some important conclusions as follows.

The study suggested that these female Vietnamese technical English majors were intrinsically motivated to learn the English language in both formal and out-of-class learning contexts. In the formal context, these students were motivated to learn when the teachers provided them with learning activities and materials that were relevant to their interests, needs, and background knowledge. In the contexts outside of the classroom, they were intrinsically motivated to complete the activities and materials they self-selected according to their own interests and needs. It must be said that in both contexts, the students’ needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were nurtured so that their intrinsic motivation could thrive.

The study also demonstrated that these female Vietnamese technical English majors’ intrinsic motivation was only situational, and most of the time, the students experienced a variety of other types of motivation and demotivation. The motivation
types consisted of external and instrumental, introjected, identified, integrative, resultative, and internalized motivations. The students were also affected by demotivation. Among all of these motivation types, introjected motivation was the most prevalent, followed by external and instrumental motivation. Furthermore, the study showed that integrative motivation was not common in this Vietnamese context because the students mainly had indirect contact with English cultural products. Due to a variety of motivations that simultaneously had an impact on the students’ English learning processes, it can be said that students followed different but interacting goals simultaneously, and they clearly gave priority to certain types of goal at certain points in time. For example, Hai simultaneously practised IELTS test-taking skills to obtain a scholarship to study overseas, and tried to learn English to her best ability in her class to please her parents and to surpass her peers. Most of the time, she prioritized the goal of pleasing her parents with her best English results.

It was evident that the main sources of introjected motivation came from parents and, to a lesser extent, the teacher and classmates. Students were also heavily influenced by instrumental motivation brought about by the utilitarian values of knowing the English language, and by external motivation caused by the requirements of the English educational context. The students were also heavily demotivated by different factors in the immediate English learning context, especially by their teachers of English. Generally, the study demonstrated that parents and teachers played the most important roles in motivating students to learn. Students were mainly influenced by their internalized responsibility and duty for achieving good academic results to please their parents and to fulfil their filial piety (see 5.3.2.2). As a result, they were willing to sacrifice their own wishes, desires, and aspirations to meet their parents’ expectations. The teachers of English also either motivated or demotivated students in their English studies depending upon their effectiveness in teaching performance, knowledge, support, and interpersonal relationships with students. Among all of the teacher-related factors, the existence of competence and relatedness support laid the most important nurturing foundation for students’ motivation, especially for the internalization of the teacher’s expectations (see 5.3.7.1).

There existed a combination of both individual and contextual factors that affected the students’ motivation to learn the English language. The students’ need for autonomy (albeit not strong), competence, and relatedness interacted with various
factors in the English educational environment and the broader social context to either promote or impede students’ motivation. However, it seemed that most of the time, contextual influences overrode individual factors, leaving the students with little self-determination in their English studies, and even with demotivation.

The study lent strong support to the claim that the students’ motivation to learn the English language was powerfully influenced by their contact with English cultural products via education and the media. It cannot be denied, though, that little direct contact with English speakers also contributed to enhancing these students’ motivation to learn as a combination of both types of contact motivated students to learn through visualization of a community of English speakers, and through real contact with that community.

There was a lot of evidence in the study that students’ motivation to learn was influenced by specific Vietnamese cultural practices: respect for learning and knowledge, respect for the teacher, attribution of successes and failures to effort, filial piety, the concept of face, and the sense of belonging. These cultural values shaped the students’ motivation and acted as motivational influences that continuously stimulated students to learn despite their failures.

Last, the study revealed that the students’ motivation was interconnected to a web of affect and learning strategies. Despite disappointment in the case of failures, students were able to adopt effective learning strategies to overcome their failures and achieve their ultimate goals.

6.2 Implications of the Study

This section outlines both theoretical and pedagogical implications drawn from the findings of this study.

6.2.1 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications drawn from the findings of this study concern the applicability of integrative versus instrumental motivations, and extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation in Vietnamese EFL context.

As outlined in 2.2.1, integrative motivation pertains to the positive attitudes toward the L2 community and a desire to merge with L2 community members, and
instrumental motivation concerns the pragmatic values brought by learning an L2 (Gardner, 1985, 2001). However, the discussion in 5.3.4 demonstrated that these female Vietnamese technical English majors were not greatly stimulated by integrative motivation in their English studies due to limited direct contact with English natives. Their positive attitudes were generally shown toward Western ways of thinking and behaving, and toward English speakers, but not limited to English-speaking community members. As such, the discussion lent support to the claim that integrativeness should be reconceptualised to fit various language learning contexts (see Bektaş-Çetinkayaa & Oruç, 2010; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006; Lamb, 2004b; Yashima, 2002). However, the current study also questioned the applicability of the “international posture” construct proposed by Yashima (2002) (see 5.3.4) to the Vietnamese context.

This study has demonstrated that the utility of only self-determination theory is insufficient in explaining the types of motivation that these female Vietnamese technical English majors experienced in their English studies (see Chapter Five). Moreover, as researchers previously often employed quantitative approaches in examining this theory (Lucas et al., 2010; Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 1999, 2001; Pae, 2008; Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006; Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand et al., 1992, 1993), they largely ignored the culturally situated meaning and role of three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, in the internalization process of motivation (see 2.3.1.3 & 2.3.3). Consequently, the culturally bounded importance of these needs has been overlooked, which might have led to a misleading interpretation of the types of motivation that students from certain cultures like Vietnam experience in their studies.

Judging the nature of Vietnam’s social and cultural context, wherein both the cultural traditions and communism emphasize the respect for learning and knowledge, respect for the teacher, attribution of successes and failures to effort, filial piety, the concept of face, and the sense of belonging, it may be said that these cultural values play a very important role in shaping this sample of Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language. Ignoring the significant role of these values could lead to a misinterpretation of students’ motivation.

Overall, the current study suggests that simply applying a Western-designed theory of motivation to the Vietnamese context, without taking into account the social and cultural values practised in that context, would most likely lead to an inappropriate application, and even misinterpretation of, the motivation and learning approaches of
Vietnamese students (see Biggs, 1996a; Biggs & Watkins, 1996 for further arguments about misleading interpretations of Confucian Heritage Culture students).

### 6.2.2 Pedagogical Implications

The findings from this study suggest some pedagogical implications for the teachers of Vietnamese technical English majors.

First, as can be seen in Chapter Five, these female Vietnamese technical English majors experienced a variety of motivations in their English studies. However, their teachers seemed to be most aware of the important role of external/instrumental motivation in stimulating these students to learn, at the expense of intrinsic motivation and other highly internalized motivations. Though intrinsic motivation is easily thwarted by various factors in the English learning environment, it plays an important role in the student’s study as it brings feelings of fun, achievement, and enrichment of knowledge (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 1996). Therefore, there exists a need for the teacher of English to create conditions that nurture students’ intrinsic motivation. For example, teachers can provide interesting materials and activities in which they are also personally involved. These activities and materials need to be selected based on individual students’ needs, interests, and background knowledge levels so that their need for competence is also considered.

Second, judging the fact that students separated their in-class motivation from their out-of-class motivation to learn, the teacher should be aware that the knowledge, materials and activities provided in class are not always relevant to students in real life. There may be a mismatch between students’ needs, goals, and interests with the proposed materials in the syllabi. To compensate for any mismatch, it may be helpful if the teacher conducts a needs survey at the beginning of each semester to see what the students consider as important to their goals and desires. Based on the results of this survey, the teacher can select and organize activities that are meaningful to students. As a result, students may autonomously continue to practise their English learning outside of class.

Third, the findings suggest that in this Vietnamese context, most of the time in the classroom, the students seemed to experience reactive autonomy. However, it can be seen that they were capable of self-regulating their learning activities and materials outside of class. That would indicate that they have capability for proactive autonomy,
as Littlewood (1999) claimed. To encourage students’ proactive autonomy and transfer personal responsibility for learning to students, at the beginning of the semester the teacher may invite students to contribute to designing a list of topics that the students are interested in. Based on this list, the teacher can assign presentations, home assignments, or simply ask students to select activities and materials to share with classmates. The teacher also can create opportunities for students to work collaboratively with their classmates on presentations or assignments for which they are free to choose topics and manage the entire process of completing those assignments. These activities will not only foster students’ capacity of proactive autonomy but also a sense of belonging among class members, and satisfy their need for competence.

Fourth, the findings showed that the majority of the participants did not recognize the practical value of the basic technical reading classes taught during the first two years at university in preparing themselves for their technical English major, even though they indicated that they had chosen that university particularly for that major. It is important that the teacher take responsibility for making students realize the importance and relevance of learning in those basic technical reading classes. The awareness of learning in these classes may be encouraged through activities that provide simulated experiences of future jobs or the teacher’s sharing experiences of their jobs. Such activities will not only make students aware of the importance to learn the content in those reading classes but also tighten the interpersonal bonds between the teacher and their students.

Last, the findings showed that the needs for relatedness and competence support were salient in this context to make the internalization of the teacher’s wishes and expectations thrive. It is suggested that as the leader of the class, the teacher create a class environment conducive to nurturing the students’ sense of belonging and competent feelings. This can be done via the teacher providing immediate constructive feedback and encouragement to stimulate students to learn. In addition, the teacher can create a selection of activities that encourage both cooperation and healthy competition among students. The teacher should also take the time to talk and share with students, especially about his or her experiences to make the class environment cosier, secure, and encouraging.
6.3 Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations, which include sampling limitations, limitations related to the data collection methods, and language limitations.

6.3.1 Sampling Limitations

The sampling limitations include the weaknesses of the convenience sampling strategy, the sample size, and having only female participants.

First, I used a convenience sampling strategy in that I entered each class and invited students to participate in my study. Berg (2004), and Creswell (2007) claimed that using this strategy might reduce credibility of a study. However, as can be seen in 3.1.2.1, credibility of this study was strengthened by the utility of a variety of strategies, including my prolonged engagement in the research context, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. Moreover, as Berg (2004) suggested, I also evaluated this student sample for “appropriateness of fit” for the current study (p. 36). As such, the student participants fitted the purpose of this study because they represented the population of Vietnamese technical English majors, were first- and second-year students, and came from different areas of Vietnam.

Second, the sample of participants in this study consisted entirely of females, which did not help to verify any differences in motivation to learn English between male and female students of the technical English major. Nonetheless, the purpose of this study was not to look for gender differences in motivations to learn English but to investigate in general the motivations, and influences on motivations, of Vietnamese technical English majors.

Furthermore, given that the sample of students was small, seven participants, it is difficult to make generalizations across other contexts. However, as can be seen in 3.1.2.2, the replication of this study is possible by the detailed description of the research site, participants, and research procedures (see also 3.5). It is, however, up to other researchers to make comparisons.

6.3.2. Limitations of Data Collection Methods

With regard to the data collection methods, the study employed semi-structured interviews as the main data collection tool. Though the utility of interviews helps to
gain an emic view of the participants, I did not have any means to check the truthfulness of the participants’ accounts (see Marshall & Rossman, 2006; see also 3.5.3.1.1). However, triangulation of these students’ interviews with their teachers’, and students’ diaries, as well as my prolonged relationship with the participants (see 3.1.2.1), have provided a means of enhancing the trustworthiness of the data and findings.

Another limitation was the length of the diary-writing activity. The diary-writing activity lasted for the first three months out of approximately 10 months of the data collection period. This might have reduced the richness of the data as well as the effectiveness of triangulation. However, it is believed that after the first three months of intensive face-to-face interviews with the students, and informal socialization with them, trust developed between the students and me as a researcher. This might have helped to improve the trustworthiness of the study data and findings.

6.3.3 Language Limitations

The student participants were given the choice of replying to the researcher’s interview questions in either English or Vietnamese according to their preferences; almost all of them chose to speak in English in the first three interviews. Given the limited spoken English proficiency of the students, the data collected in those first three interviews were found to be poor. However, extensive email exchanges written in both English and Vietnamese after each interview with the students were helpful in enriching the data. The students were also willing to elaborate on the points they raised in their diaries. In total, the data were found to be rich and detailed.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings, and taking into account the limitations of this study, some recommendations can be made for future research. First, future studies on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language should consider using a mixed-method research approach to account for the changes in motivations of these students over time. Researchers may also utilize observations to see how students’ motivated behaviour is displayed in class. Second, as this study failed to address the differences between male and female students in their motivations, future research may investigate whether male and female students differ in their motivations to major in, and learn technical English. Third, researchers may also conduct interviews with students’ parents to compare the views between the students and their parents on students’
motivation and impact of cultural values on students’ motivation. Finally, researchers may also extend the data collection period into students’ senior years at university to see if there are any changes in students’ perceptions and motivations when they are actually learning various specialized subjects of their major in preparation for future jobs.

6.5 Closing Statement

This chapter has closed my journey into investigating the motivations of this sample of Vietnamese technical English majors. From the beginning of the journey, I was already aware that the road to knowledge would be long and hard, and it has been! However, along the journey, I have learnt a lot from my participants, and from other researchers, so now I feel like a new world is opening in front of my eyes. It is sure that the knowledge I have gained from doing this study and writing it up into a thesis will be very useful for my future research and teaching career. It is also expected that the study findings will contribute to enriching the extant research on Vietnamese students of English.
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Appendix A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Reference Number: 8/133

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS (Interviews and Diaries)

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind, thank you for considering this request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

The aim of this study is to explore what majors of English for Science and Technology think of motivation in their English language learning.

The research questions are:

(1) Are Vietnamese technical English majors intrinsically motivated in their English studies?
(2) What are the influences on Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language?
(3) How has the Vietnamese technical English majors’ motivation to learn the English language changed over time?

What Type of Participants are being sought?

We wish to involve first-year and second-year majors of English for Science and Technology.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to:

(1) Take part in interviews that will be conducted three times during the semester. The interviews will be audio-taped.
(2) Write diaries about your learning experiences.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project or withdraw from the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

If you participate in the interviews and written diaries, the questions will explore your motivation in learning English in more depth. You will also be asked to give your student number so that the researchers can keep the data collated. However, all interviews will be anonymous when published, and only combined data will be reported. No personal information will be collected.

The findings will be analyzed to further understand Vietnamese students’ learning of English for Science and Technology. It is also expected to help teachers to improve their teaching methods.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the library of Otago University, but every attempt will be made to preserve anonymity. All students and teachers' data will be aggregated; no personal information will be identified.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:
Hang T. Thanh Phan or Professor Lisa Smith (Supervisor)
College of Education College of Education
University of Otago University of Otago
Email: hangluu06@gmail.com Telephone Number: 64-3-479 90 14

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix A (contd.)  PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Reference Number: 8/133

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS (Interviews and Diaries)

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the library of Otago University but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.
5. I understand that reasonable precautions have been taken to protect data transmitted by email but that the security of the information cannot be guaranteed.
6. I will take part in three interviews.
7. I will be audio-taped while I am being interviewed.
8. I will take part in writing diaries every week.

I agree to take part in this project.

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(Signature of participant) (Date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix A (contd.) GUIDES FOR STUDENTS’ INTERVIEWS

The first interview

1. The participant’s English studies at intermediate school (as it was supposed that they all started to learn English at intermediate school): feelings about the first encounter with the English language, English learning materials, classmates and teachers, and parents, out-of-class English studies.

2. The participant’s English studies at secondary school: comparison between his/her English studies at intermediate school and secondary school in learning materials, teachers, classmates, parents and out-of-class English studies.

3. Reasons for deciding to be a technical English major at university.

4. Impressions and expectations about his/her English studies at university.

5. Plans for his/her English studies in the semester: desired achievement, learning strategies.

The second interview

1. Comparing English studies at university and secondary school: English teaching and learning strategies, relationships with and support from teachers and classmates in English studies, how these changes impacted on their motivation to learn English.

2. Differences between what the participant had expected and what he/she experienced so far in his/her English studies at university.

3. Tell about a personally interesting English class at university: teaching strategies, classmates’ reaction, how these impacted on his/her motivation to learn in that class, his/her motivated behaviour after that class.


5. Improvement of personal English competence: expected English proficiency level, motivated English learning behaviour, how the improvement impacted on the motivation to learn the English language.

6. Changes in motivation and learning strategies to cope with English studies at university.
7. Chance to practise English naturalistically outside class, how this change influenced motivation to learn English.

8. The midterm exam and how it impacted on motivation to learn English.

9. Any pressures and how they impacted on motivation to learn English.

The third interview

1. Success and failures in English studies in the semester (English use, learning strategies, goal achievement…), the causes of these, how these impacted on motivation to learn English.

2. Pressures in learning English during the semester, and how these impacted on motivation to learn English.

3. Chance to use English outside class, confidence to use.

4. Changes made in English studies (motivation, learning strategies…).

5. Example of a successful attempt at learning English and how it impacted on motivation to learn.

6. Example of an unsuccessful attempt at learning English and how it impacted on motivation to learn.

7. Lessons learnt from the midterm test and how these impacted on motivation for the final exams.

8. Formal English learning environment: teachers, classmates, learning materials, support, and how these impacted on motivation to learn English.

9. Importance of English at the time of being interviewed compared with at schools (and compared with in the first year at university-second-year students).

10. Plan in English studies for the next semester.

The fourth interview

1. Factors influencing motivation to learn English, most motivating factor.

2. Example of a demotivating circumstance in learning English.

3. Example of a motivating circumstance in learning English.
4. Personal goals in learning English, factors influencing goals in English studies, long-term and short-term goals in English studies, how these impacted on motivation to learn English, contribution of formal English education at university to personal goal accomplishment, how goals set during the last semester were achieved.

5. Importance of each English skill, and how this impacted on motivation to learn them.

6. Formal English education at university: classmates, teachers, learning materials, and influences of these on the participant’s motivation to learn English.

7. Influences of exam pressure on motivation to learn English, and example of this.

8. Parental influences on motivation to learn English.

9. Societal influences on motivation to learn English.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix A (contd.) GUIDES FOR TEACHERS’ INTERVIEWS

1. Importance of English in Vietnam and how this impacted on students’ motivation to major in English, and technical English at university.

2. Strengths of technical English majors over general English majors.

3. Example of a successful and an unsuccessful class, techniques used, reasons for success and failures.

4. Qualities of a good English teacher.

5. Expectations of students about a teacher of English.

6. Factors influencing students’ motivation to learn what (this specific) teacher taught.

7. Techniques used to motivate students to learn the skills she taught.

8. Example of students seeking help from (this specific teacher) in and outside class.

9. Comments on the specific students she taught (motivated behaviour in class).

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Thank you for agreeing to participate in writing diaries. Here are some guidelines on how you can write your diaries.

*Your diaries might be about the daily or weekly concerns that you have in your English studies. For example, what are you struggling with in English classes? How do you feel? What are you doing to overcome it?*

You can email your diaries to me every week at this address:

hangluu06@gmail.com

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix B:

DEFINITION OF THEMES AND EXAMPLES OF CODES

Theme 1: Influence of the Perceived Values of English Knowledge

This theme concerns how the student participant’s perceptions of the values of English knowledge influenced her desire, effort, and strategies to learn English.

Subtheme 1: Influence of intrinsic values

This subtheme concerns how the enjoyment brought by participating in interesting and novel activities or by completing successfully challenging activities influences the participant’s desire, effort and strategies to learn English.

a. Influence of interesting and novel activities

At the first time I when I see the English books, I felt a very special feeling. It gives me a feeling, a special feeling as if I had been attached to it for long, a very special feeling that I had never had with any other subjects (NnOl1, p. 7).

b. Influence of challenging activities

I think that fun is a part of the motivation cause, I, myself, cannot do something well if I find no fun doing it. And it was getting more and more interesting as I could handle the challenges, or at least, I sensed that I could handle them (HiFp1, p. 11).

Subtheme 2: Influence of utilitarian values

This category describes the participant’s perceptions of how the practical values of learning English knowledge motivated her to learn English. The values as pictured by the student related to the chance to get a good job, study overseas, use English well as a communicative tool, and the strengths of her technical English major as compared with other English majors.

a. Influence of future jobs

As an English major, I will be able to choose among a variety of jobs. For example, I can work full-time in a job like other people, but I can also work part-
time as an interpreter or a tourist guide. Generally, I can earn heaps of money (DnPe, p.1).

b. Influence of future chance for overseas study

My private English class with Ms T. is drawing to a close. In that class, I am the best at reading skills. My listening skills have also much improved, and my speaking skills are also much better. However, I still need to practise a lot because studying in an English-speaking environment will be much different from at home (HiE dated 26th April, 2009).

c. Influence of perceived values of English as a communicative tool.

Having contact with foreigners allows me to learn their ways of thinking. Unlike Vietnamese, they often have liberal thinking. When I talk to them, I can enrich my knowledge about the world (…) They lead a very free life, so their thinking is also more liberal (NnPe, p. 13).

d. Influence of perceived strengths of technical English as a major

[We] are English majors, so there needs to have some differences between English majors and other English learners. Therefore, English majors need to study harder and harder to create some differences between their English competence and that of other English learners who just learn to use it as a tool (TgPe, p. 2)

Theme 2: Influence related to the English Educational Environment

This theme discusses how the student participant’s perceptions of classmates, the teacher of English, instructional materials, school requirements and English exams, learning progress, and achievement influenced her desire, effort, and strategies to learn English.

Subtheme 1: Influence of classmates

This subtheme concerns how the student perceived her classmates’ influences on her motivation to learn the English language.
a. Class integration

This category describes how the attitudes of the participant’s classmates toward class English learning activities and goals in English studies influenced her effort and persistence in her English studies and adoption of English learning strategies.

When my classmates are excited to learn, I cannot let myself be a fish out of water, I also have to take part in discussions actively (TmPe, p. 29).

b. Social comparison

Social comparison concerns the student participant’s comparison of her English progress, achievement, and amount of expended effort, to other classmates’, and how this comparison influenced her English studies.

I always ask myself why my friends could study English well, but I can’t. At such times, I was so stuck and depressed that I did not want to continue my English studies (PnPe, p. 9).

c. Class support and relatedness

Class support is described as encouragement and help provided by classmates, while relatedness concerns the comfortable feeling that the student participant had when socializing with classmates, perhaps from shared interests.

Our friends like me we have studied, and when we don’t understand about anything we can ask other people to make clear it and I want to say that my (laugh) friends have enthusiastic to make it to me. Yes, of course sometime they don’t willing but when they don’t willing to make clear it to me, I feel I have more confidence to study it because when they know about it, and I don’t know, I have to ... come on, yes, to understand like them (TgOl2, pp. 2-3).

Subtheme 2: Influence of the teacher of English

This subtheme concerns how the student perceived the influence of their teachers of English on her motivation to learn the English language.

a. Influence of teacher’s teaching performance

This category involves the impact of the student’s perceptions of her teachers’ performances in class on her motivation to learn English. The performances comprise
her teachers’ selection, explanation and instruction of class activities, assessments and monitoring of students’ schoolwork, and ability to create a comfortable class environment.

She didn’t transfer knowledge; she told us about her experience of how to write in English. She just sat there and spoke about that and we wanted to listen to her very much because she told us a lot about her experience, strategies, how to select words or information that we could find (TmPe, p. 34)

b. Influence of teacher’s knowledge

This category pertains to how the student’s perceptions of her teachers’ English competence and subject knowledge influenced her study.

Her classes were boring. Sometime when we asked her about some new technical terms, she told us she would go home and check. When she was lecturing, she had a sheet of paper full of new terms in her hand, and she even wrote the meaning of these terms on her hands because she couldn’t remember them (laugh). Her knowledge is not good, so she made students bored in her class (DnPe, p. 14)

c. Teacher’s support

This category describes how the student participant’s perceptions of her English teachers’ support in terms of teacher’s encouragement, feedback, willingness to help, and willingness to provide students with freedom, motivated the participant to learn English.

After the teacher said so, I really felt a change within myself. I was determined to learn English and was much more self-confident. ‘I can study English! It was a university lecturer who already said I could learn English and praised on my ability (...)I was much more self-confident and I was motivated to learn English and I learnt English well (HiPe, p. 11-12).

d. Teacher’s interpersonal bonds with students

The category describes how a close feeling with her teachers of English motivated the participant to study harder and seek help from the teachers.
When we didn’t understand anything, he explained again carefully, he said to us as if he had been our father and we had been his children. We didn’t feel distant to him (PnPe, p. 29).

**Subtheme 3: Influence of instructional materials**

The subtheme describes how the level of difficulty and the personal relevance of the instructional materials influenced the participant’s English studies.

*a. Influence of the difficulty of the instructional materials*

Our writing skills this term was very difficult, so we had to practise regularly. I think that the amount of homework assigned by the teacher was sufficient for us to practise this skills because we needed to read a lot and sometime we had to search for new grammar structures and interesting vocabulary to write successfully (TgPe, p. 22)

*b. Influence of the personal relevance of the instructional materials*

I learnt technical readings during the last two terms. Generally I haven’t seen its importance so far. However, when I decided to learn at this university, I think I will have two qualifications upon graduation: communication English and technical English. Currently, I haven’t found it relevant because this book just provides us with a chance to get used to terms and their difficulty (…) The knowledge is practical, so I haven’t seen its importance. (DnPe, p. 26).

**Subtheme 4: Influence of the school requirements**

This category pertains to how the student’s perceptions of school requirements, in terms of workload and the role of English, affected her motivation to learn English.

*a. Influence of workload*

I also spent more time learning English than in previous terms because we had more exercises and we had to read more. For example, the Britain subject also requires us to read in advance and summarize main ideas of a reading. The teacher asked every body to read the text in advance and in the next lesson, if any one couldn’t answer her question, she would put a tick that that person couldn’t answer her question, so we were frightened. Consequently, we had to spend more
time reading the texts. We also had to spend a lot of time reading materials of
writing skills, search for materials, preparing for our presentation, and design
slides. Reading teacher also assigned a lot of homework (TmPe, p. 36)

b. Influence of English as a required subject

At that time English was not a compulsory subject as it was not a subject in the
Primary study framework of the Ministry of Education, which meant that primary
schools might teach English or not; but as far as I remember, Primary schools
were encouraged to teach. In that case, pupils didn’t have the choice of whether to
study English or not. It wasn’t like an optional subject, but still, it was not
compulsory!! (HiFp1, p. 1).

Subtheme 5: Influence of English exams, learning progress and achievement

This section describes how the participant’s perceptions of pressure from exams, and
success in her English learning influenced her English studies.

a. Influence of English exams

Everyday I spend 1 hours to 2 hours to study English and I sat 3 extra classes
about English. It helps me meet grammars again and again. As the result, I
remember them quite well. Before sitting for entrance exam, I perhaps did at least
500 tests like that (TgFp1, p. 2).

b. influence of learning progress and achievement

After getting bad midterm results, I started to think about how to improve it.
Before the midterm test… I just studied as much as I could…but did not think
about how to improve it. After this test, I see that I have to know how to study to
fit the test requirements…Now I have specific plans (DnOl3, p. 19).

Theme 3: Influence of Family and Social Networks

This theme discusses how the student participant’s perceptions of how her family
members and social networks influenced her desire, effort, and strategies to learn
English.

Subtheme 1: Influence of family members
This theme discusses the participant’s perceptions of how her family members influenced her desire, effort and strategies to learn English.

*a. influence of family members’ attitudes toward English*

The category describes how the family members’ attitudes toward the importance of English and its utilitarian values influenced the participant’s motivation to learn the English language.

My parents wanted me to study English when I was little, and when I took the entrance exam into university, my Mum wanted me to major in English at university. My parents said that learning English would help me to find a good job more easily after graduation, and get a high-paying job (NcPe, p. 1).

*b. Influence of family members’ support for English studies*

The category portrays how parental support in terms of financial investment, verbal and tangible encouragement, and approval of the participant’s academic and professional goals affected her motivation to learn English well.

Because my parents let me choose which major and which university to study, I decided everything including my future job, my parents support my decision. With my parents’ support, I am motivated to study, and to prove that I am able to learn English (TmPe, p. 43).

When parents encourage me to study, I will feel motivated to study. It’s better than when parents do not say anything, or are not interested in my study or when they do not support for this major (DnPe, pp. 47-48).

*c. Influence of family members’ expectations*

The category describes how the participant’s perceptions of parental expectations and pride in her success as well her avoidance of parental punishments motivated her to study.

My parents’ pride and support motivate me to study. When I am lazy at studying, I immediately think that I will disappoint my parents and I try more to study and get over disappointment. When somebody is proud of me, I will have to try hard to live up to their expectations (NnPe, p. 44).
**Subtheme 2: Influence of social networks**

This describes how the student participant’s perceptions of the social requirements of English knowledge and social respect for English knowledge and English as a major influenced her desires, efforts, and strategies to learn English.

*a. Influence of other-perceived pressure of the social requirement of the English knowledge*

This category concerns how the participant internalized the pressures that other Vietnamese experienced in seeking better opportunities for their life, for example better jobs, due to the high demand of English.

> There are many reasons that make me feel I have [to] get better result in this university to find a good job in the future because I see many student after graduating, they don’t find the job or find the unsuitable job, yes. ... And I see the people that don’t find the job, they are very hard, they feel uncomfortable and it’s make other people like me feel uncomfortable too (laugh) (TgOl3, p. 28)

*b. Influence of social respect toward English and English as a major*

This category describes how the appreciation of Vietnamese people of the knowledge of English and the option for English as a major influenced the participant’s English studies.

> When people consider English to be important, when they know that I am majoring in English, they said that’s a good decision, I am more excited about learning English and want to learn it better (TmPe, p. 44).
Appendix C: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

*Italics:* utterances originally spoken in English not in Vietnamese

For example:

> At the first time I when I see the English books, I felt a very special feeling. It gives me a feeling, a special feeling as if I had been attached to it for long, a very special feeling that I had never had with any other subjects (NnOl1, p. 7).

(...)

deleted utterances by the researcher

[] word replaced by the researcher to make the sentences grammatically correct.

For example:

> All of her classmates were trying to study very hard to be the best in class, and this “[became] a driving force” for her to expend more effort in her English practice (PnOl3, p. 7).

… silence of more than three seconds

CAPITAL emphasis by the participant

For example:

> [It was] a PAIR activity but then it became a class activity. Everyone joined in ... very well, I think so (NnOl2, p. 23)
Appendix D: DATA REFERENCE CONVENTIONS

The original data have been referenced in the thesis as follows:

XyOln: The first letter and last letter of the participant’s pseudonym, Oral interview number.

For example: Hai’s third interview is referred to as HiOl3

XyPe The first letter and last letter of the participant’s pseudonym, and phone interview.

For example: Ngoc’s phone interview is referred to as NcPe

XyD The first letter and last letter of the participant’s pseudonym, and diary.

For example: Phan’s Diary dated October 9th 2008 is referred to as PnD dated October 9th 2008

XyFpn The first letter and last letter of the participant’s pseudonym, and email exchange number.

For example: Duyen’s email exchange 3 is referred as DnFp3.
Appendix E: EXCERPT FROM THE FOURTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH PHAN

(Answered in Vietnamese by Phan, translated by me)

M: What can influence your motivation to learn English?
Phan: It’s my class environment. Actually, I don’t want to be someone who does not study as well as my classmates, or someone unknown in my class, so I want at least to be as good as my classmates. Additionally, I don’t want to disappoint my parents with my low study results. My competence is evaluated by these results. When my parents see my bad results, they will be sad, so I don’t want to disappoint my parents.

M: What factors in your class environment influence your motivation?
Phan: Generally, my class environment is very good. All of the classmates often help one another to study, but I think that they are all aware of the fact that they have to work hard to be better than others.

M: Does that motivate you to study more diligently as well?
Phan: Yes, because I don’t want to be worse than my classmates.

M: Between the two factors, parents and classmates, which one influences your motivation to learn English more?
Phan: The influence from my classmates plays a more important role in motivating myself to study because I think such a competitive environment exists at both school and workplace. If at school I can survive in that environment, later I will also be able to do that in the workplace.

M: Can you please tell me one circumstance under which you were demotivated?
Phan: Yes, this is my fourth term at university, isn’t it? My study results fluctuated during the last three terms. That is, my results were bad in the first term, good in the second term; and in the third term, my results were a little bit lower than in the second term. Since the third term, I have been much stressed because of the heavy workload. My result of the first writing assignment in this term was not very good. Many times I have been too stressed and tired to study, thereby being demotivated.

M: What was in your mind at that time?
Phan: However, I think the more pressure I have, the better I work. When I am under time pressure, I work much harder because I consider this pressure as my challenge. I go somewhere for a walk to refresh my mind, as I have no other alternative than my study.
Appendix E (contd.): EXCERPT FROM AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH TEACHER HIEN

(Answered in Vietnamese by Ms Hien, translated by me)

M: Can you please tell me which qualities you think are necessary for a university teacher?

Hien: First, teachers need to be dynamic. That means, they need not be pleased with their current teaching quality. For example, the next lecture must be better and more varied than the previous one. Second, teachers need care about their students. Classes at this faculty are of small size, so at least teachers must know students’ names to address them. This will help to tighten the relationship between the teacher and students, and motivate students to learn. Third, teachers need to return students’ assignments on time though this is very difficult, because students always expect their teachers to give immediate feedback on their work. Last term, I always had to try to return my students’ writing assignments on time though I had to mark lots of them. I had to mark each assignment three times, first the outline, then the draft and the final paper. Returning students’ work on time puts much pressure on teachers; teachers need to be able to deal successfully with this pressure.

M: In the relationship between teachers and students, do teachers need to have any specific qualities?

H: I think all the teachers at this Department are close to their students; there exists no distance between teachers and their students. However, this closeness causes problems in exam supervision. We need to take these problems into account. All of the teachers need to take responsibility for their job and try to complete their job as well as they can. They need to be aware that they are working in the education sector so that they will expend more efforts in their job. I think all the teachers are responsible, enthusiastic with the students and often share their experiences with students. I think teachers are also more open with students than before. They directly tell students what they do not know. I think this makes both teachers and students more comfortable. Previously, teachers often tried to avoid admitting that they did not know something, and this made both teachers and students feel uncomfortable. Now, teachers do not know anything, we can check it again at home, or both teachers and students can check. Since I started to use this technique, I have never felt worried about whether my answers to students’
questions were wrong. When I first started teaching, I was always worried that students did not think I was knowledgeable, so I tried my best to answer all of their questions. I was also inexperienced, so students often asked challenging questions to test my knowledge. Now, I am much more experienced, so I am more open with my students. Additionally, the current generations of students are more knowledgeable because of their life experiences, so they are more empathetic with teachers.

M: What do you think students often use to evaluate a teacher’s enthusiasm?
H: They just judge a teacher’s enthusiasm by that teacher’s behaviours. First, an enthusiastic teacher will give timely and constructive feedback on students’ work. Second, a caring teacher will know the names of all of the students in her class. Third, during the lecture, enthusiastic teachers rarely sit still at the table but walk around to join students’ activities. Furthermore, if a teacher provides students with lots of activities and handouts that are not in the textbook, it means that the teacher is responsible for the quality of her lectures.

M: Does the teacher’s enthusiasm greatly influence students?
H: If teachers care about students, students will naturally have good responses. They will participate actively in class activities. If teachers return students’ writing assignments on time, students will submit their next writing papers on time. I often contact my students on my personal webpage; I find this very convenient and my students also find it easier to get in touch with me after class.

(Transcription page: 11-13)
Appendix D (contd.): SAMPLE OF STUDENT’S DIARY ENTRIES

Sample 1
(written in English by Thuong)

November 14th 2008

I have received the result of middle exam. It’s so bad. Although my teachers say that it’s a common situation, I feel very disappointed. I have tried my best - is it wrong? I haven’t enough hardness, in my opinion.

If the result of end exam is the same as it of middle one, I will feel very shamed with my parents. They gave me a lot of things, the best condition to study but I haven’t given the best result. It will be extremely terrible if I am not harder now.

Sample 2
(Written in Vietnamese by Ngoc, translated by me)

October 1st 2008

I have never had any difficulty in my study, and my study has never disappointed me as much as this. Neither has my family! Though my Mum has put lots of pressure on me, the pressure has just made me try to study more diligently. What has happened to me? It was a trivial thing that has made myself lose in thoughts, even disappointed me, and made me not dare to face the truth and myself.

People often say that you have to take personal responsibility for what you have done. It is true! But is it completely true when people can not always control everything that happens to them? What can I do to get rid of all these trivial disturbing things off my head? The exam is coming; how far can I put up with this? Say goodbye to these disturbing things and I will be completely relaxed!