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Stimulating learner autonomy in English language education : a curriculum innovation study in a Vietnamese context

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CHAPTER 7

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTENDED CURRICULUM

In this chapter, I present how the intended curriculum was operationalized at the classroom level and perceived by the teachers and students. In the first section, I start with the research questions, method, and finally with the results. The aim of the description and analysis of the operationalized curriculum is to find out whether the intended curriculum provided the students with *choices* (i.e., of content and strategies) when they did their tasks. An examination of whether the *interactions* between the teacher and student(s) and between/ among the student(s) were conducted in the target language was done. The ultimate aim of monitoring the operationalization of the intended curriculum is to ascertain whether the curriculum was operationalized as intended. In the second section, I present the teachers' and students' perception of the operationalized curriculum. In the third section, based on the observations of the curriculum in operationalization and on the teachers' and students' perception of the curriculum, I will put forward directions for improving the quality of the curriculum.

1. THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE INTENDED CURRICULUM

1.1 Research questions

The overall purpose of describing and analyzing the operationalized curriculum is to find out whether the curriculum was operationalized as intended.

Monitoring the operationalization of the intended curriculum aims to answer the four questions:

- 1) Did the teacher provide the students with the opportunities to make choices of learning content and strategies to do the tasks?
- 2) Were the interactions between the teacher and student(s) and between/among the student(s) conducted in the target language?
- 3) Was the curriculum operationalized in the same degree in the four classes?
- 4) Did the students demonstrate awareness of making choices, intervene, adapt choices and create the learning tasks and did they use self-regulated skills in their learning?

1.2 Participants

Teachers. Four teachers of English at CTU participated in implementing the intended curriculum. They (referred to as participating teachers) were senior teachers with at least 11 years and a maximum of 20 years teaching experience. Four of them

earned their MA degrees abroad. Two of them are from the Division of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching Methodology. One is from the Division of Educational Research Methodology and one from the Division of Language Skills. Before the operationalization of the intended curriculum, the four teachers had no experiences teaching English in the task-based approach.

To Ottevanger (2001), curriculum implementation is the translation of the intended curriculum into the implemented (i.e., operationalized and perceived) curriculum. In order to facilitate that translation, the teachers participated in a two-session workshop, which introduced them to the curriculum. Besides the four participating teachers, four teachers of the department attended the workshop. The workshop in the form of a round-table discussion with the OHP presentation aimed at making the teachers from the department, especially the four participating teachers, familiar with the intended curriculum and its implementation. The workshop focused on (1) teachers' attitudes towards learner autonomy in language learning and teaching, and (2) teaching the intended curriculum. Before the workshop, the information concerning the workshop and the content of the two sessions was delivered to the registered participants.

Students. Sixty students, majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), semester 1, academic year 2002-2003 at CTU were involved in implementing the intended curriculum. One student won the national prize for a contest in English. The other 59 participants were short-listed based on their performance in the national entrance exam into the program. For more information of the national entrance exam, see section 3.2 in chapter 6 of this book. The average age of the participants is 18.8 ($SD = 2.27$). There were 44 females and 16 males. The students were divided into four groups. Group 1 consisted of 12 students; group 2, 17 students; group 3, 19 students; and group 4, 14 students. Most students have learned English with the teacher-centered approach in their secondary schools for seven years, and some for three years. The average admission score into the program of the participants is just average ($M = 5.34$). The majority of them could not speak much English before entering the program. Their knowledge of grammar and their skill in reading were stronger than their skills in speaking and writing.

From each of the four groups, we selected four students because of their pre-test scores on self-regulation, intrinsic motivation and attitudes to autonomous learning (two with the lowest and two with the highest score). These target participants were observed more intensively in the class-meetings.

1.3 Instruments

To answer research questions 1, 2 and 3, the researcher monitored the operationalization of choices of learning content and learning strategies to find out whether the teachers provided the students with the choices of learning content and learning strategies for them to do the tasks. Classroom observations documented the interactions between the teacher and student(s) and between/among the student(s) regarding the provision of choices. The foci of the classroom observations are on:

- 1) What the teacher did to assist the students to make choices,
- 2) Whether the teacher let the students decide what content of the task to do and how to do the task, and
- 3) Whether the students chose what content to do and how to do the task.

The interactions between the teacher and students and among/between the student(s) were examined in terms of the language (e.g., English or Vietnamese) used as the main medium of communication.

To answer research question 4, in the class-meetings, which were observed to monitor the operationalization of choices, I documented the *responses* and *behaviors* of the target students regarding making choices of learning content and of learning strategies. The adapted observation framework covers four levels of students' responses and behaviors regarding choice (see section 4.1.1 in chapter 6 of this book for the observation framework). The four levels include *awareness*, *intervention*, *adaptation of choices*, and *creation of learning tasks*. In addition, the target students' portfolios were collected to examine whether they used self-regulated skills in learning (see section 4.1.2 in chapter 6 of this book for the heuristics to analyze the portfolios). In addition, at the end of the semester, these students were asked three main questions concerning their learning experiences with the intended curriculum:

- 1) How did you feel about learning with the intended curriculum?
- 2) Did the intended curriculum provide you with choices of learning content and learning methodology to execute the project work?
- 3) What do you plan for your future language learning?

1.4 Procedure

The class-meetings in which the teachers' pedagogical actions aimed at making the students aware of their choices of learning content and learning strategies and providing students with the opportunities to make choices and create learning tasks were defined as the key ones to observe. Also in these class meetings, authentic interactions in the target language were manifested through the students' planning their execution of the main task. Class-meetings 1 and 5 (unit 1), class-meeting 1 (unit 2) and class-meeting 1 (unit 3) fit the criteria of being the key class meetings. Therefore, they were chosen to be observed. Classroom observations were done in all four groups.

Classroom observations were note-taken, audio-recorded or videotaped. They were then transcribed and analyzed, using the classroom observation framework presented in table 6.1 in chapter 6 of this book. In table 7.1, I summarize the procedure and research activities regarding monitoring the operationalization of the intended curriculum.

Table 7.1. Procedure of monitoring the operationalization of the intended curriculum

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
During the operationalization of the curriculum	Observing class-meetings 1 and 5 (Unit 1), 1 (Unit 2), and 1 (Unit 3)	Documenting the teachers' pedagogical actions and documenting the target students' responses and behavior towards choices to find out whether choices were provided
At the end of the operationalization of the curriculum	- Collecting the portfolios of the target students - Interviewing students in the target group	Finding out whether the students showed to be aware of, adapt, intervene in the choices and create the learning tasks for themselves

1.5 Results

1.5.1 Provision of choices and interactions in the target language

Provision of choices. The following sections describe class meeting 1 of unit 3 as the result of the typical operationalization of the intended curriculum. The choice of unit 3 to describe in detail and to report how it was operationalized could be explained in terms of (1) *the researcher's familiarity with the observation framework* and (2) *the prime time and unit* to report as typical for the level of operationalization of the curriculum. After observing unit 1, the researcher had the opportunities to try out the observation framework in authentic classroom settings. After observing unit 2, the researcher got accustomed to the observation framework. Therefore, until unit 3, the researcher was quite familiar with the observation framework. In terms of *time* and *unit*, reporting the level of operationalization of the curriculum in unit 3 is the best reflection of how the curriculum had been operationalized.

Classroom observations: General remarks. The analysis of the four observations revealed that the unit was operationalized as intended. *First*, the teachers provided the students with choices of learning content and learning strategies to do the tasks. *Second*, the students participated in the classroom activities via group-work activities and showed to choose what specific content of the task to do and of how they were going to do it. The target students showed to be aware of the choices of learning content and learning strategies they had to complete the task. These target students showed to make choices and to create the learning tasks for themselves. *Third*, almost all interactions (a rough estimate of 95%) between the teacher and student(s) and between/among the students were conducted in the target language, except sometimes teacher 4 used some Vietnamese to clarify the procedure of running a journal.

Class meeting 1 of this unit could generally be divided into three phases: (1) Self-evaluating unit project 2, (2) introducing unit project 3, and (3) planning the work for project 3. During the three phases of the lesson, the four teachers used English as the main medium of instruction almost all the time. Phase 3 of the lesson was examined to find out whether choices of learning content and learning strategies

were provided to students. Phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3 of the lesson were examined to investigate whether English was used as the main medium of interactions in these lessons. The following sections present each individual teacher's pedagogical actions concerning the provision of choices to students in phase 3.

Provision of choice. In the third phase of the lesson, the students discussed in groups to make their work plan and the journal plan. In terms of providing the students with choices, the four teachers passed the control of learning to the students. The teachers themselves played the role of counselors during the time the students grouped together to work on their work plan and journal plan. The students discussed, agreed and decided what topic they would like to work on in their journal, the number of articles they would include, the quality and the layout of the journal. They agreed on their group's work plan. In general, the four teachers did not impose their ideas on the students' work plan or journal plan. The provision of choice in the four classes was guaranteed. However, the level of the teacher offering the students choices was slightly different. Excluding teacher 2 who, though providing students with the choices, showed greater involvement into the students' choices, the three other teachers fully authorized the students to make choices. The following section provides the details of phase 3 of the lesson for individual teachers regarding their provision of choices.

Teacher 1. The teacher explained the format of the project: In groups of three or four, students would run a journal whose general topic is "critical issues in the community". The teacher clarified that the students may focus on one topic such as *natural disasters* as the main focus for all contributions, or the journal may cover a range of critical issues in the community. Then she provided students with the choice of group members to work with, following the format of three groups of four and one group of three. After the groups had been formed, the teacher asked the students to work with their group members as an editorial board to run a journal. The teacher emphasized the choice the students had when they worked on their journal,

"You may choose the topic of your journal, the number of papers you expect, and the quality of the contributions."

The students started to work in groups. The following is a scenario in which a group of students discussed and decided on the topic for their journal.

In a group, Hong and Thuan took the floor. Hong suggested the "blossoming of internet" in the community and how it brings many problems. To Hong, teenagers surfed to porn websites which is considered as "forbidden" in the Vietnamese culture. Then Thuan disputed Hong's comments with the statement that Internet brings more benefits than problems and finally they both agreed that it is good and easy for writers to produce articles about the advantages and problems of Internet. The other two members of the group also agreed with the topic. Then Thuan suggested the topic "fashion". She thought it is interesting for female students to write about fashion. Another reason is that in Can Tho and in Vietnam now, there is an increasing focus on fashion. My (in Vietnamese) was rather critical of choosing this as a topic focus and asked in what way fashion is a critical issue to the community. Thuan is a bit confused but then Hong said that "imitation" is an interesting angle and someone mentioned the notion of "cultural reproduction". Thuan then said she thought that this topic would be of interest to writers. Kieu, the student in the target group, did not say anything up until this point, so I

turned to ask her what topic she thought is critical to the community. She said she thought "SIDA" (a Vietnamese definition for AIDS), and then Hanh said, "Yes, AIDS". Yet, when her friend My asked her about what aspects of the topic AIDS they may suggest for writers, she reacted in a confusing way again. Hong said something about the dangers of AIDS, the prevention, and then Thuan said that they had better consider another topic for their journal.... Finally, they agreed on "AIDS".

It was observed that the students participated in initiating, discussing and deciding the topic for their journal (e.g., they suggested topic by topic, explained their choice of suggestions and agreed on the topic AIDS). During the time the students discussed in groups to choose the topic, the teacher walked around the room and supervised the students. Most students showed a growth in confidence in using English to discuss with their friends. The coming excerpt displayed the interactions between the students regarding their choice of *how* to complete the journal.

...After the students in the group chose the topic "AIDS" for their journal, they started to discuss how to complete their journal. Hanh proposed to set the numbers of the articles for their journal. They agreed on between six to eight contributions. Then they started to discuss the quality of the papers. Thuan suggested that all contributions must be related to the topic AIDS and must be from 600 to 1000 words. The contributions must provide the readers, besides the writer's ideas or opinions, other author's facts or opinions about the target issue. ... Hong proposed to discuss the deadline for submission...

It was seen that the students were provided with choices to work on the project (e.g., they discussed and chose *what* to focus on and *how* to do the project). The teacher walked around the room and monitored the group work. No data showed that she imposed her ideas or interfered into the students' choices of the topic and of the strategies to do the task. Students stepped further than being aware of choices they had; they took part in making choices and in creating a learning task for themselves, which was reflected in their decision on what to do and how to complete the project work (i.e., the main task).

Teacher 2. The analysis of classroom interactions between the teacher and students in this unit revealed that she was so supportive that it could be misinterpreted as a kind of interference into the students' work plan and text plan. Except for this feature, in terms of the amount of choices, the students were provided with choices of *what* to focus on and *how* to execute the unit project. The following excerpt presents the students' discussion and selection of the content and the strategies to use to complete their main task.

After asking the students specific questions to elicit the procedure of running a journal (e.g., Will the editors run the journal? Who will initiate the topic? Who will determine the quality of the journal? How about the meetings or the negotiations between the editors and the writers to give feedback?), the teacher asked the students to work in their groups to plan their work on making the journal. Following is an excerpt of a group discussion.

....In this group, Thanh was the most active one. She initiated the discussion. She started by asking her friends what topics they should focus on. Tam said that they should choose five or six topics from the list of critical issues and each topic would be the title of the articles in the journal. Thanh agreed but Kim and Anh did not show any

sign of agreement or disagreement. Truc asked Kim and Anh again and they agreed. Truc worked as the leader of the group and the secretary as well. She asked her group mates "how about ...and how about?" ... Tam suggested the topic "flood" because the area where she comes from suffers flooding, so it is really a critical issue to her. The whole group agreed with her because Anh said that many children die during the flooding season. In addition, according to Anh, besides flooding, forests in Vietnam are being decimated, so they should consider including the topic "the destruction of forests". ...

It was seen that the students discussed the number of topics (e.g., five or six), and suggested the topic (e.g., flood, the destruction of forests). While they were discussing in groups, the teacher moved back and forth to each group to supervise the group-work. In some instances, it was observed that the teacher expressed her ideas on the students' text plan and work plan. Let us examine the next part of the excerpt.

...Bich suggested *traffic accidents* as one of the titles for their group journal. Truc then suggested "unemployment". All members showed their active participation in initiating the topics for their group journal.... The teacher stopped by and asked the teacher how far they went in terms of choosing the topic for their journal. The students reported to the teacher the topics they planned to choose. After listening to the students, the teacher analyzed each topic the students proposed. She added, "Air pollution" and then she said to the students, "You should choose no more than two topics." ... Students limited the topics; finally, they chose "unemployment" and "Air pollution".

Then Truc asked her group members to discuss the requirements for the articles to be included in the journal, the deadline of submissions, and the quality of the contributions. ... Finally, they divided the work among themselves. During their discussion, students spoke English together.

It was observed that choices of content were offered to students. Students discussed and decided the topics (i.e., unemployment and air pollution) and the plan to complete their journal (i.e., the articles included, the deadline for submissions, and the quality of submissions, and the work each group member assumed). The transfer of control over learning manifested by choices has been passed to the students. The excerpt demonstrates that students jointly worked together to choose *what* specific topic they liked for their journal and *how* to complete the journal.

Teacher 3. The teacher started to explain to the students the project of Unit 3, "*Running a Journal*" when the students would take on the role of editors and writers as well. Then she asked the students to make four groups, three groups of three and one group of four as editorial boards to run a journal and request articles from other journal editors. The students chose their group members. Like teacher 1 and teacher 2, teacher 3 offered students the choice of with whom they would work. Before the students started to work in their own group, the teacher asked them whether they already knew the process of making a journal, the theme of the journal and the sub-topics of the journal to make students aware of what they had discussed and to prepare them for the project work. The teacher then summarized,

"In your group, *you are working as an editorial board to produce a journal about critical issue(s) in the community. Can you choose which topic or topics you would like to*

include in your journal? "Students said out loud "Yes". "Can you decide how your journal will look?" "Yes". "Who will decide the quality of the journal?" "The editorial board". The teacher then confirmed, "You yourself". She also reminded students to think about the *purpose* of the journal and she added, "You have the choice of what to include and how to work in your group as an editorial board".

In terms of making the students aware of the choices they had to run their journal, teacher 3 asked the students' direct and specific questions, and the students' awareness of choices of content and strategies was confirmed through their answers to the teacher's questions. Students started to work in groups. Following is an excerpt of a group at work.

This group started with Bao's suggestions about the topic. She suggested that they should focus only on one sub-topic for their journal, not many. She would like to have *environment* as the topic for their journal and she suggested the group might limit themselves to that topic. Minh suggested the idea of "environmental protection"; he said that it was easier to find information on that issue. However, Ngoc thought that they should have AIDS as the topic. Minh and Bao argued for keeping their topic on the basis that it has a common theme, so maybe other groups would choose that topic too. According to Minh and Tran, they should have something "unique and interesting". The suggestion was that they should stick to "*environment protection*" but the most important point is what the group now thinks. Tran and Nhung whispered something and then Tran said that she would like "forests" to be the topic of their journal because she thought deforestation is a big problem in Vietnam now. The group seemed satisfied with this suggestion and they said it would generate suitable articles for their journal. On asking Thuong, a student from the target group, does not show to be particularly involved but looks thoughtful and attentive. She nodded her head and said that she likes the topic "forestry". Then Tran asked Thuong whether she meant *protect* the forest. She confirmed this. ...

The excerpt revealed that the students participated in making choices of the topic of their journal (e.g., from *environment* to *environmental protection* then to *forests* and *forestry*). While the students were busily working in their own groups, the teacher went around, listened to students and supervised them when they needed help. One student asked the teacher,

"If some writers had a topic in mind they would like to cover, could they discuss it with the editorial board?"

The teacher complimented her on her idea. The teacher said that it would be a negotiation between the writer and the editorial board. It was observed that the teacher created an encouraging atmosphere for the students to propose alternatives. Then the teacher raised the students' awareness of their decisions on the quality of their journal (i.e., the information, the language), the purpose of the journal and the resources by addressing to the whole class,

"In your groups, you will decide for yourselves these matters, but if you come across interesting articles or resources and you think they might be useful to your friends, then recommend them. OK?"

The students continued their discussions on the quality of the journal and the procedures to complete it. The teacher provided the students with these choices (e.g., she said to her students, "decide on these matters"). From the excerpt, the teacher explicitly asked the students the questions concerning choices they had and the students

made choices in a cooperative way (e.g., the students in groups discussed and finally chose the topic for the journal of their group). Seen against the curriculum guidelines, the teacher gave the students the choice of learning content and learning strategies.

Teacher 4. Most of the interactions between teacher 4 and the students showed that she asked her students the questions and gave her advice on the students' answers. During the time the students were working in groups, she encouraged the students to choose the topic for the journal and the work plan to complete the project work. Teacher 4 did not show any interference into the topic the students proposed. Following is an excerpt of a group of her students planning their journal.

In this group, Ngoc was the "head" of the group. She asked her group members to think about as many critical issues in the community as possible. Tuyet made notes. Ngoc suggested *marriages, superstition*. Phuong suggested *traffic accidents* as a topic. Tuyet thought about *spoiled children...* and Ngoc suggested the role of women in society. Ngoc said that she thought they were all suitable topics, so they would keep them all and considered them as main categories, and then they would decide how many articles they would like for each category. While this group was in discussion and the teacher was in another group, Nhung (from another group) came to ask this group where to start. Kieu spent time explaining to Nhung in English. Then Nhung returned to her own group...

...The teacher visited the group and a female student explained to the teacher what was going on in the group. A male student asked the teacher to look at their list of topics and said that they would like two or three articles for each topic. The teacher said "good" and asked them what they would do next. They said they would create the titles for the articles of their journals. "What next?" The group kept silent. The teacher said, "Look at it again and make the final decision on the topics and the papers for each topic and what else?" For a moment, a female student said in Vietnamese "Discuss the expected quality of the papers". The teacher said that they still had ten more minutes to decide the criteria for suitable articles before they announce the topics to request contributions. The students kept on working...

The excerpt revealed that the teacher provided the students with the choices of learning content (e.g., students' decision on *marriages, superstition, traffic accidents, spoiled children* as the possible topics for their journal) and learning strategies (e.g., the teacher informed the students that they had ten minutes to decide the criteria for suitable articles ...) for them to work on their journal. When the students showed her the list of the topics and explained to her what they were going to do, the teacher just proposed the students review the topics and then she raised the question what to do next after the students had the topic.

Interactions in the target language. The examination of the three phases of the lessons revealed that English was used the main medium of interactions in these lessons of the four teachers. In the first phase of the lesson, the students self-evaluated their performance of unit 2 in English. In the second phase, the teacher introduced the task of unit 3 to students. Teacher-students and student(s)-student(s) interactions were almost all in English. The examination of Teacher 4 revealed that in phase 2 of her lesson, she used some Vietnamese to clarify the procedure of running a journal

to students. Let us follow the interactions between the teacher and students and between the students in phase 2 of the class meeting of each teacher.

In the first phase of the class meeting, the four teachers spent from 10 to 15 minutes for the students to self-evaluate their execution of unit project 2 (the travel brochure) in their own group and with the whole class. 10 to 15 minutes proved to be sufficient for the students to use the target language with their group members to self-evaluate their task execution. The students' self-evaluation focused on what they *liked* and what they *disliked* about their work plan of the travel brochure and the travel brochure itself, and on what could be done to improve the work plan as well as the travel brochure. The students had the opportunity to look back on how they had executed unit project 2 and self-evaluated their language learning via their self-evaluation of the quality of their language use in the travel brochure. A common scene observed across the group work of the students in the four groups was that the students used English in their own group to self-evaluate their task execution and their English learning.

In the second phase, to introduce the main task of unit 3, the four teachers asked the students questions and had them work in groups to answer their questions. The examination of the interactions between the teachers and students and between/among the student(s) showed that English was used as the main medium for interactions. The following are the excerpts of phase 2 of the lessons of the four groups. The presentation of the excerpts aims to display some scenarios in which interactions in the target language was around 95% (a raw estimate) of all interactions conducted.

Group 1. The teacher asked the students to examine the *journals* and describe their characteristics. The teacher had students work in three groups of four and one group of three. Groups of students came up with ideas and the teacher again showed to be a good interlocutor, stimulating use of the target language authentically.

"The journal contains articles from different people," one student said. The teacher then said, "Yes, the journal content is *articles from different writers or authors*"

"The articles are about education". Then the teacher agreed and asked, "Yes, how about TESOL?" Then one student replied, "It's about teaching and learning English." "So, the articles in the journal are about a *certain topic*."

"What else?", the teacher asked. One female student answered, "Place of publication and year of publication" in Vietnamese. The teacher said "Good. Place and date of publication..."

The teacher had the students work in groups to answer the question, "If you run a journal, what do you do? You have fifteen minutes to answer the question with your group members and write down the list of things you do." Students worked in groups again. They discussed noisily. Most of the time the interactions between them were in English.

There were big agreements and disagreements among the students in different groups. One student in a group suggested, "We must have the topic first", but another student said, "We should have the editors first because the editors are responsible for making

the journal". Other group members agreed with her and then they moved on to the task of the editors and the following steps. "As editors, we correct the papers". Another student in her group said, "Before we correct, we ask people to write the papers and we collect the papers..." and finally one student said, "The editors have a topic, ask the writers to write and collect the articles for editing." After 15 minutes, the students worked in two groups together. The two groups were merged into one bigger group and they discussed the topic with agreements and disagreements. Again, students from the two groups had to show their group's ideas and agreed upon the procedures to make a journal. After ten minutes, the two big groups used the board to write down their procedures, the teacher supervised this and asked the two groups to compare the ideas. Some students looked at the board and suggested something and one student pointed out some similarities and differences.

The excerpt from group 1 showed that the students actively participated in discussing and formulating the task of running a journal. These authentic interactions were conducted in the target language.

Group 2. The teacher started by asking the Vietnamese meaning for the word "journal". Some students said out loud some answers. No one could give the equivalent Vietnamese to the word "journal", so the teacher translated the word into Vietnamese. Then she asked the students to give an example of journals. One male student did so. The teacher then showed students "Teachers' Edition" as an example of journals. She then indicated that students were going to work in group of four or five and went to the department library to examine the journals on the table, "Proceedings of Educational Research Conferences of the School of Education at CTU, "TESOL Quarterly" and "English Teaching Forum" list the procedures when producing a journal. The teacher asked the students to choose the group members to work on this project. Students discussed with whom they would work together. The head of the class had the responsibility of being the secretary for the whole class. There were some disagreements when choosing the group members. It may be that better students would like to work together; the teacher advised the students to choose the group members that they have not worked with before. So far, the interactions concerning the introduction to the journal and the choice of the group members were conducted in English.

After forming the groups, the teacher then asked the students to go to the library to examine the journals and wrote down a list of things to do when making a journal. In groups, the students went to the library to examine the journals and wrote the list of things needed to be done when making a journal. On arrival, the teacher fed students with the information by having them read the front page for the date of publication, editors, and authors and then each group had general information about making a journal.

Group 3. The teacher started *Unit 3: The Community* by writing the word "Community" on the board and then asked the students to brainstorm the word "community." Then she went round the students in turn. When the students seemed to run out of ideas, she started to ask the students yes-no questions so that the students could come up with more ideas. It was observed that the teacher first asked the students general questions, which required them to think for themselves. If the students could

not answer the question, the teacher started to ask them specific questions. All interactions between the teacher and students so far were in English.

Then the teacher distributed the journals (*Annual Proceedings of Educational Research* from School of Education, CTU, *TESOL quarterly*, *Teacher's Edition*, *ELT journal*.) to the students and asked them to work together in groups of four to examine the journals. She started by asking the question, "What do you think about these journals?" In English, some students answered they liked the journals. Some said that they were good journals because of the presentation. Then the teacher elicited the information from the students about the publisher, the editor, and the definition of a journal. Like in the first scenario when she started the class, the teacher gave the students support when necessary. By doing this, she supported the students to use the target language as much as they could.

The teacher then asked the students, "What is a journal?" A female student said, "It's a book on a topic". The teacher said, "It looks like a book which is about a topic. What else?" Chanh, one student in the target group said, "It has many articles from many different authors." The teacher said, "Yes. What else?" Ngoc said, "The editors will make corrections to the articles"...The teacher then asked, "Who decides the topic, the quality of the journal?" A female student answered, "The editors". Finally, the teacher returned to the question "what a journal is". Now students had a general idea of what a journal is. The teacher helped them to formulate the definition, "The journal is run by an editorial board and contains selected papers from different authors about a topic."

The teacher raised the question "How do we make a journal?" The students had some time to think, worked in groups and then the teacher, together with the students, formulated the steps in making a journal. The teacher guided the students gradually to the concept "journal" to prepare them for the project work. She raised questions and helped students to formulate the answers when students needed her support. No signal from classroom observation revealed that she imposed her ideas on her students. So far, she acted as a facilitator who was there to learn with the students. All interactions between the teacher and student(s) and between/among the students were done in English authentically. Both teacher and students used English to discuss how to run a journal.

Group 4. The teacher distributed the students the handout of unit 3, *The Community*. She asked the students to read the objectives of the chapter, and then asked them question by question in English:

- What will you be able to do at the end of the unit?
- What is a journal?
- What do you do when you run a journal?
- If you run a journal, who will be the editors?
- Who will be the contributors to your journal?

Most students volunteered to answer her questions. To some students, the teacher invited them to do so. The teacher summarized that at the end of the unit the students would be able not only to be the editors of a journal but the writers for a journal. The teacher explained about the work of a writer and then that of the editorial board in Vietnamese. Then she asked the students to choose the group members to work with. When the students finished, she again explained that each group would

be an editorial board running a journal and then she asked the students the theme. One student said: "Critical issues in the community." The teacher then asked, "What are the critical issues?" Students gave some examples of critical issues such as *clean water, divorce, and law breaking*. Then the teacher asked the students to work as an editorial board running a journal on the critical issues in the community. The teacher reconfirmed whether the students were clear about running a journal by asking them to reformulate the steps involved in being the editors. So far, teacher 4 helped students to orient themselves how to run a journal. The discussion with the students about how to run a journal was in English most of the time. It was seen that in one instance (i.e., when she explained the work of a writer and editor) the teacher used some Vietnamese in her communication. For the most part, the interactions between the teacher and students were done in English.

To summarize, at the level of operationalization, the four teachers provided the students with choices of content and strategies to run their journal. Though teacher 2 in some instances got much involved into the students' choices, the four teachers fully passed the responsibility of choice to the students. This is to say that the curriculum was operationalized in the four classes as intended, although to varying degrees. The curriculum was operationalized least well in class 2. In terms of interactions in the target language, most of the interactions (a rough estimate of 95 %) between the teacher and the students and between/ among the student(s) were in English.

1.5.2 *Students' awareness of choices in the creation of learning tasks: The case study*

Research question. In order to find out the operationalization of the intended curriculum on the students' awareness of choices, intervention and creation of learning tasks as well as on their use of self-regulation skills, the case study aims to answer the question,

Did the students demonstrate awareness of making choices towards the creation of learning tasks and did they use the self-regulated skills in their learning?

In the previous section, although the operationalization of the intended curriculum met requirements, it was observed that the curriculum was operationalized the least well in class 2. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the behavior of students from three other classes in comparison with those in class 2 would be more positive. Therefore, I decided to report on the target cases from class 2. The four cases comprised three females and one male. Their age ranges were 18-19, 2 from condition low; 2 from condition high (i.e., with the lowest or highest initial level of self-regulation, intrinsic motivation and attitudes to autonomous learning). There are two aims of the description of these cases. *First*, it aims at tracing whether students showed to be aware of, adapt and intervene in choices and showed to create the learning tasks for themselves. The study of these cases also aims at testing whether the cases showed use of self-regulated skills in their learning. *Second*, it focuses on gaining insights into how students with different initial level of self-regulation, in-

trinsic motivation and attitudes to autonomous learning changed regarding choices and using self-regulated skills in learning. Table 7.2 presents the cases' gender and initial condition.

Table 7.2. Cases' gender and condition

<i>Cases</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Condition</i>
Phuong	Male	Low
Bao	Female	Low
Hong	Female	High
Uyen	Female	High

Data sources. Three sources of data of the four cases were analyzed and reported to find out the students' behavior regarding choices and their use of self-regulated skills in learning.

First, in the observed class-meetings (class-meetings 1 and 5, unit 1; class-meeting 1, unit 2 and class-meeting 1, unit 3), the behavior and response of these four cases were documented, transcribed and analyzed in three categories: Whether they were aware of choices they had, whether they adapted choices and whether they created learning tasks for themselves.

Second, the cases' portfolios (i.e., students' reflections on class meetings, on sources used as sub-tasks, on their study plan, on their self-evaluating task execution and their making of plans for future task execution and language learning) were examined in the sub-categories: (1) how they planned their learning, (2) how they executed and monitored their learning, and (3) how they self-evaluated their learning product and process.

Third, the cases' responses in the interview were analyzed in terms of (1) how they felt about learning with the intended curriculum, and (2) whether the intended curriculum provided them with sufficient choices of learning content and learning strategies for them to execute the learning tasks. Upon analysis, their responses were reported.

The procedure of data analysis. First, the descriptions of each of the cases' activities or behavior during the operationalization of the three units of the intended curriculum were made. Students' behavior and verbal reactions in making choices were highlighted. In addition, the descriptions focus on the activities and behavior that each case demonstrated, respectively after each class meeting and after each unit. Second, their portfolios documenting their reflections on the class meetings, learning sub-tasks, their study plan, their self-evaluations upon unit task completion and plans for task execution and language learning were analyzed. Students' learning activities were classified into three groups: Planning, monitoring and self-evaluating

with reference to the framework for analyzing the students' portfolios (see section 4.1.1 in chapter 6 of this book). Third, their answers in the interviews about their perception of the curriculum (challenging, demanding, too new) and their real learning experience with the curriculum were analyzed.

Results. This section presents the target students' awareness of choices to creation of learning tasks and their use of self-regulated skills in their learning students during the time the intended curriculum was operationalized, starting from condition low to condition high.

Case 1. Phuong, a male student from condition *low*, looked quiet and a bit shy. During the first class meeting, he appeared worried. In his writing in response to the assignment "writing about your first-class meeting" in Unit 1, he addressed the way of learning as "the new method". Phuong showed to be aware of the choices available through his perception that with this new way of learning students could decide on the content and the method to learn, which could be challenging but advantageous to students studying English at CTU. In his writing about the first-class meeting, he acknowledged the benefits of the interactions that students could have. From these interactions, he may learn from the teachers and senior students of English. He perceived that the first class meeting also provided him with useful information to prepare for the completion of a good student guide. After reading his writing about the first class meeting, we will learn that his worriedness is not as serious as it looked.

"I think it is difficult for me to study English by this new way but I will try to study because my friends and teachers will help me."

In the planning section to design the student guide (Unit 1, meeting 2), Phuong kept silent most of the time when his group members were discussing the plan for the student guide. A positive sign was that despite being nervous while speaking (i.e., trembling hands) and poor spoken English, he did contribute that the student guide should include the difficulties of learning English. It could be inferred that the task created the opportunity for him to create the content to complete the task. His creation of the content manifested that the task generated the room for him to be aware of choices of content and make the decision on the content.

In terms of self-evaluating his own learning, in order to create proper learning tasks for himself, Phuong recognized the difficulties his group had when they worked on the student guide: "We lack the map of campus 2 and the information about the library" and difficulties he was facing learning English. At the end of unit 1, in his writing about his plans for learning English, Phuong pointed out his weaknesses; "I'm not familiar with the new environment and with the new teaching method, so I'm still afraid of speaking in front of the class." He set his plan for his learning English,

"I will try to study better; I'm going to listen to the tapes or news on the radio to practice listening skills. I will read books to provide me with vocabulary. I will raise the problems with friends and teachers."

With such a list of things to do, Phuong was quite aware of the choice of learning content (manifested by learning resources in his case) and learning strategies he had and even he created the learning tasks for himself.

In Unit 2, reflecting on the resources that he used as the sub-tasks to assist the completion of the main-task, Phuong showed to be critical. He wrote in English (polished by his teacher),

"In the library, I found many travel brochures about many regions in the world. I read a travel brochure about North Ireland. I like the beautiful pictures and the organization: Introduction, holiday activities, accommodation and maps. Besides, I learned many new words, but I do not like the introduction of many places to eat"

In terms of self-evaluating, Phuong could spot the strong and weak points in his group and elaborated his self-evaluation rather well,

"I feel that my group's travel brochure is good with many beautiful pictures and interesting content. Yet, we need more information to make my travel brochure more interesting and abundant."

Though Phuong still had problems with speaking English, it could be observed that through his writing in English he got involved in working seriously with the curriculum. He began to talk more when unit 3 started. He volunteered to give the example of a critical issue in the community. Phuong showed to do his best to follow the lesson and thought along with what was happening during the lesson. He looked more attentive, though still shy and somewhat quiet. He appeared to be more confident, though not yet taking an initiating role, and told in the interview that he felt inferior with his English. For his plan after this semester, Phuong set an agenda to improve his English to overcome the feeling of frustration and lack of confidence, and planning activities, creating opportunities to communicate in English. In his writing in English, he planned,

...I will speak more English with my friends and teachers so I can overcome my shyness and I will be confident with my English learning. I will go to the library to look for books to read so that I have more vocabulary and I will speak more...

From the interview, Phuong's speaking in English did not improve much. His writing in English got better after each unit. From his reflections, Phuong showed to involve himself in the curriculum, being aware of choice-making, learning to reflect on sub-tasks, self-evaluating the main-task, setting plans to overcome difficulties in learning and to improve his learning. Phuong recognized that his progress in speaking was not much but his progress in writing was easily seen and to him, with time, he would get better accustomed to this new way of learning, then he would be a better language user and learner. To Phuong, he liked to learn English in this new way because it is good for communicating in English and good for getting information.

It was observed that Phuong showed to be aware of being provided with opportunities to make choices of learning content and learning strategies. Going further than being aware of the choices available, Phuong showed the ability to create the learning tasks for himself, which was revealed in his future agenda of learning the target language. He showed use of self-regulated skills in his learning: Planning (e.g., speaking more English with friends, going to the library to read books.), monitoring

(e.g., suggesting including more pictures in the travel brochure) and evaluating his learning (e.g., showing the strengths and weaknesses of his group's travel brochure).

Case 2. Bao, a female student from condition low, looked quiet but confident. In the first class meeting in Unit 1, when being learned from the course policy that students would be able to make choices of content and methodology to learn, Bao looked stern and seemed to think about something. Yet, it was interesting to learn what Bao felt about her first-class meeting in the first draft of her writing in English,

It (the first-class meeting) is interesting because I work with my new friends, new teachers who are very friendly and happy. Moreover, it is surprising because in high school, I never spoke English with my teacher, but here in University, we use English to talk and to discuss together about many different subjects. So I have a little trouble, but I'm very excited with this new studying method in which I can improve my level of speaking and listening and study the way of communication by language.

Bao showed to be comfortable with the curriculum at the start, so during the planning session of the student guide, she actively participated in planning the student guide and suggested what to include and not to include

"not to write many details, just useful information such as learning English in Cantho University." (Bao 's spoken English)

Learning in a new environment and with a new way like that which Bao addressed, she made a plan of learning for herself so as "to be able to study well" as she shared in her writing in English,

The most important problem is the skill of listening and speaking English. At home, I started practicing to listen to the tape of English that I never did in high school, besides I also improve my skill of speaking English with my classmates about everything at every time and everywhere.studying in groups.

During the planning session of unit 2, Bao showed to make use of the resources as sub-tasks to complete the main task. In writing (in English) her reflection on her choice of reading one resource as a sub-task to complete the travel brochure as the main task, she noted,

I chose to read the Sydney travel brochure. It was a good brochure because the organization was good from general information to specific information. One thing I do not like it is that it gives too much information.

In Unit 2, Bao showed real confidence when, on behalf of the group, she presented their group's work plan and text plan and gave feedback to the content of other groups'. Bao evaluated her group's travel brochure with strong and weak points and had a clear scheme to improve the weak points. She reckoned that her group's travel guide was informative and beautiful in terms of presentation; her group did the best to produce that travel brochure. However, she thought that her group's weak points were the structures and words used; her group needed to read more to use better English.

During unit 3, Bao worked as the group leader. She did not talk much as some group leaders. She showed knowledge of how to plan the working plan and text plan. She facilitated the group discussion by asking her group members ideas or

questions concerning planning the unit task, planning the journal, suggesting how to collect information and dividing the work among the group members.

Bao showed that she had no problems with learning with the curriculum. At the first class meeting in the program, she looked stern because she was surprised about the way of learning with the curriculum (her response in the interview). Then, Bao was quite comfortable with learning in "the new way" (Bao's writing about her first class meeting). She went further than being aware of making choice. She planned what to do to improve language learning, she self-evaluated her group's project work and she set plans to learn English better (listening, speaking, self-studying grammar and pronunciation, studying in groups, paying attention to the structure and content expressed in the structure and planning activities, creating opportunities to communicate in English). In the interview, Bao explicitly expressed her interest in learning with the curriculum; she liked to study in the same way in the coming semester: "I prefer to study with this new way in the next semester". To her, the new way of learning is interesting and satisfying. It created opportunities for communicating in English and for getting information (i.e., about living and learning in Cantho, a province in the Mekong Delta or critical issues in the community).

Case 3. Hong, a female student from condition high, looked sad and quiet. In the first-class meeting in Unit 1, after the teacher explained about the course policy and about the choices that students may make, Hong looked quiet and confused. Her facial expression could be interpreted as that she was aware of choice making but the experience was too new for her. After the first class meeting, Hong, in her writing in English, expressed that she thought that her classmates spoke English well and she could learn many things from her classmates. To her, her first class meeting helped her to know about a "new" way to learn English. It also helped her write the student guide. In her writing, Hong was as "quiet" as in her speaking in the first-class I observed. She did not write much about the class and her feelings or impressions.

In the planning session of unit 1, Hong kept silent most of the time and did not take initiatives in planning the student guide. She seemed to be an outsider. Her eyes looked sad and seemed as though she had become lost and lonely. In the discussions with her friends about the planning session, when being asked in English, she answered in Vietnamese in very soft voice, which indicated that she understood the spoken English. Talking about the planning session of unit 1, Hong acknowledged that session helped her with useful information to complete the student guide. From her written account in English, we may infer that behind her silence, Hong fully recognized the independent way of learning English, problems she would encounter and how to find solutions to the problems. In addition, from that written account, she showed she was able to seek help by raising questions and asking for the teacher's help.

In this first semester in my university, I have to learn English in the new way of learning. I can choose the learning content and the learning method. It requires me to learn English by myself. I need to learn how to solve my problems.... I do not have enough vocabulary to speak some things that I want to. I am not good at listening, speaking, grammar and pronunciation. So I think I should learn more. At home, I am going to read storybooks, newspapers, magazines and listen to tapes. Beside school time, I need to

study in groups of three or four. In groups, I will raise and discuss problems that I face. Finally, I will ask my teacher for her advices about the way to solve the problem.

During Unit 2, she was passive and kept silent most of the time. She did not show to be critical or good at reflecting on resources which served as sub-tasks. When reading a Boston Travel guide, her evaluation of the guide focused on beautiful pictures rather than the information or on the organisation. In terms of self-evaluating her group's project work, Hong could pick out strong and weak points, but she did not elaborate her ideas why she thought that was a strong or a weak point.

Hong still did not talk much during the operationalization of unit 3. However, she showed to belong to the group as an insider: She used English to talk with her friends more often than she had done. When she spoke, she used about half Vietnamese and half English and she was still slow in expressing herself. She was nervous (e.g., red face, shaking hands) when she spoke. At the end of the semester, in her agenda, she will measure the possible problems and devise solutions to the problems faced in improving her English learning.

In the interview in English, Hong perceived that the curriculum was challenging for her and that it was good for her to learn to make choices and to create learning tasks for herself. She liked to learn with the curriculum in the coming semester. She said that she needed some more time to get used to learning with the curriculum to be more confident. Hong did not set a big agenda for her future learning. In setting her learning agenda, she was quite aware that the control of learning had been passed to her. She may choose learning content and learning methodology, so it was good for her to create a learning task by measuring possible problems and planning solutions to improve her English learning.

Case 4. Uyen, from condition high, is an active and confident-looking female student. At the start of Unit 1, Uyen showed to be active and aware of the choices the students could make when working with the curriculum. She looked happy and satisfied. She was very positive about her first class meeting in her writing in English,

We were very eager that morning because we had been told about the new and interesting teaching and learning methods. ... It (The new way of teaching) was different from high schools. We could choose the content of the lesson and the way we learn. We knew that it was time to change ourselves to get familiar to it. We could learn a lot from our first class meeting and found it very useful for our project completion... I felt very good about first class meeting and I loved it because it gave me a sense of friendship. We learned how to be active in public and how to be more confident of our English....

With an idea of changing herself to become familiar with the new way of learning, working in her group, Uyen raised the question about the student guide, "what information to include and how to organize it." She also created conditions for her group-mates to participate, for instance by turning to Hong to ask for opinions.

At the end of unit 1, Uyen looked back her task execution and set plans for her future study.

"After finishing chapter one, "school-life", I can now look back and evaluate myself and my studies so that I can shape my planning and learning strategies."

In working in groups, Uyen thought that she would cooperate more with her friends and shared the job among group members more equally. She had the impression that

she did much more than her friends did. She would try to discuss with her friends more and try her best not to make decisions by herself, but with the group members. To perform well at school, she would prepare the lessons well at home. To improve her English, she would listen to tapes, to radio programs, speak English with friends, self-study grammar and pronunciation, study in-group and control and use time in the best way. It was seen that at the end of unit 1, Uyen created learning tasks for herself.

During unit 2, Uyen showed to be quite active in learning. She was a critical reader and learned how to use the information from resources used as sub-tasks to complete the main task. She shared,

"After I read the travel brochure about New York City, I really found a lot of interesting things that I would like very much to include in my own. However, there is something that is not interesting at all."

Then she elaborated her evaluation of New York travel brochure. She liked the beautiful and impressive pictures about the city as well as special attractions of New York. She also appreciated liked the good text organisation because to her all ideas were arranged in a very clear way. She perceived that, in terms of writing style, New York travel brochure consists of many complicated structures that they were difficult for her to understand and she did not like the idea of including advertisements in a travel brochure.

In the class meeting in which students sat together to share and give feedback to other group's travel brochure plan, Uyen, confidently, tried to defend (in English) her group's text plan and also provided feedback to the other group's travel brochure plan. She showed to be very elaborative when she talked about her group's travel plan or gave feedback to other group's; she evaluated her group's travel brochure as meeting their expectation with sufficient information, nice presentation and good layout. The most important was that her group members got along well and had a good working plan.

Actively taking part in answering questions when the teacher starts teaching Unit 3, as usual in her group, she was appointed the leader of the group, reporting what had happened in her group, suggesting the dividing of jobs among group members.

At the end of the semester, Uyen planned future activities to improve her learning English: Being aware of learning styles and strategies, measuring the possible problems and planning solutions and planning activities and creating opportunities to communicate in English.

...To be a good student of English, I will speak as much English as I can. I will use language-learning strategies that are most suitable to me. In addition, I will predict the difficulties of learning I can face and then plan how to solve them.

It was seen that Uyen was quite confident with the curriculum. She moved from being aware of the choices she had when working with the curriculum to making use of the choices she had, planning her learning, self-evaluating her planning, setting a future agenda for task execution and English learning. Uyen goes further than being aware of choices that the intended curriculum allows her; she created learning tasks for herself.

In conclusion, it was observed that the four students in the target group, whether from condition low or high and from the class in which the operationalization of the curriculum was examined as the weakest of the four classes, showed awareness of making choices, showed ability to adapt choices and to create the learning tasks. They showed self-directed skills use in their learning. The analysis of the three sources of data from the target students confirmed that, at the level of implementation of the intended curriculum, students showed awareness of making choices, adapted and intervened in choices and created learning tasks for themselves. In addition, they exercised their self-regulated skills.

Of the four cases from the two conditions, case 2 (from condition low) and case 4 (from condition high) showed to participate better. They were more involved and created more learning opportunities when working with the curriculum than case 1 (from condition low) and case 3 (from condition high). They showed no difficulties in adjusting themselves to learn with the intended curriculum; they expressed their interest and enjoyment in learning with the curriculum. They were ready to make choices and set up their own learning agenda. In comparison with case 3 from condition high, case 1 from condition low participated and created more opportunities to learn. He showed progress after one semester and grew more confident in his learning of the language. It is the case that the curriculum benefited students from both condition low and high in so far that they became more responsible for their learning by taking part in deciding what to learn and how to learn and by setting learning tasks for themselves. Overall, the case study confirms that the curriculum was operationalized as it was intended.

To conclude, the description and analysis of unit 3 in operationalization showed that the intended curriculum, though on a slightly different level of operationalization, provided the students with choices of learning content and learning strategies for them to do the task. In terms of making the students aware of the choice of learning content and learning strategies, teacher 1 and teacher 3 asked the students questions concerning the choices they had and then let them work together to decide on what task and how to do it. Though teacher 2 and teacher 4 did not explicitly ask the students questions relating to the choices they had, they let the students decide the learning content and learning strategies.

Classroom observations revealed that all four teachers had students work in groups to plan which topic(s) to include in the journal and how to run the journal. Teacher 2 at times was so supportive that she seemed to direct students to her preference of text plan and work plan but for almost all cases, students in this class jointly decided what to do and how to do their project work. The operationalization of the curriculum met the requirement: Choices were available in all four lessons, and the way the teachers provided choices varied.

The main medium of communication in these lessons was English. During the four lessons, the teachers and students used English almost all the time. It was seen that teacher 4 spoke some Vietnamese to her students (e.g., when she clarified the task of a writer to a journal and the editorial board of a journal).

As observed in the four groups, the control of learning in a large extent was passed to students. Students were aware of the choices and they did make choices of

the content for their task and of learning strategies to complete the task. Globally, the intended curriculum was operationalized according to plan. The main medium of communication in these lessons was English. During the four lessons, the teachers and students used English almost all the time. It was observed that teacher 4 spoke some Vietnamese to her students (e.g., when she clarified the task of a writer to a journal and the editorial board of a journal).

The excerpts from the classroom observations revealed that almost all (a rough estimate of 95 %) interactions between the teacher and student(s) and between/among the student(s) were conducted in English. The teachers, via the task, got the students to participate in using the target language authentically.

The operationalization of the intended curriculum created opportunities for the students to be aware of choices, to adapt choices, and to create the learning tasks for themselves. Students also showed use of self-regulation skills in their learning.

1.6 Conclusions

The analysis of classroom observations in which the teachers' pedagogical actions concerning the provision of choices of learning content and learning methodology to students were demonstrated confirmed a positive answer to the research question, 'Did the teachers provide students with choices of content and strategies for them to do the task?'

The teachers provided the students with choices of learning content and learning strategies for them to do their tasks. An examination of the interactions between the teachers and students and between/among students showed a positive answer to the question, 'Were interactions between the teacher and students and between/among the student(s) conducted in the target language?'

All four teachers operationalized the curriculum as it was required; however, the "no" answer was given to the research question, 'Was the curriculum operationalized at the same degree in the four groups?' In the four groups, the curriculum was operationalized in a slightly different degree. The curriculum was least well operationalized in class 2.

The analysis of the class-meetings observed in the three units, the analysis of students' portfolios concerning their use of self-regulated skills in learning, and their responses in the interview confirmed a positive answer to the research question, 'Did the students demonstrate awareness of making choices to creating learning tasks and did they use self-regulated skills in their learning?'

Students from the condition low or high involved in working with the curriculum showed to awareness of the choices they had in the way that they adapted the choices and created the learning tasks for themselves. From the excerpts of classroom observations, from the analysis of the students' portfolios and from their responses in the interview, it was observed that students were involved in self-regulating activities, using self-regulated skills in their learning. They showed that they planned, monitored and evaluated their task execution and their language learning.

Overall, the descriptions and analysis of the classroom observations showed that the curriculum was operationalized as intended.

In section 1 of this chapter, the description and analysis of the intended curriculum in operationalization revealed that the curriculum was operationalized as intended, making students aware of the choices they had and providing students with choices of learning content and learning strategies to do the tasks to learn the language. In the following section, we will present the teachers' and students' perception of the operationalized curriculum.

2. THE PERCEIVED CURRICULUM

2.1 *Research questions*

The investigation into the teachers' perception of the quality of the intended curriculum in operationalization aims to answer the questions,

- 1) Which aspects of the curriculum did teachers perceive positively?
- 2) Which aspects of the curriculum need to be improved?

The purpose of students' perception of the intended curriculum is to find out the answers to the questions,

- 3) Which features of the curriculum contributed, in the students' view, to the enhancement of their self-regulation and intrinsic motivation?
- 4) Which feature(s) of the curriculum need to be improved?

The overall aim of documenting information on the operationalized and the perceived curriculum is to ascertain whether the curriculum was implemented as intended and to set directions for improving its quality.

2.2 *Instruments*

Documenting the teachers' perception. A questionnaire consisting of 14 questions was adapted from the framework of evaluating the elements of curriculum by Davis (1980) to document the teachers' summative evaluation of the intended curriculum. Teachers' evaluation of the intended curriculum focuses on objectives, the materials, and teaching and learning activities. Refer to section 4.2.1 in chapter 6 of this book for the detailed description of this questionnaire.

Documenting students' perception. A questionnaire consisting of seven questions was used to document the students' perception of conditions supposed to enhance students' self-regulation and intrinsic motivation. See section 4.2.2 in chapter 6 of this thesis for the detailed description of this questionnaire.

2.3 Participants and procedure

The four teachers and 60 students involved in operationalizing the intended curriculum responded to the questionnaire, perceiving the operationalized curriculum.

At the end of the semester, a questionnaire used for the summative evaluation was delivered to the teacher. Then the teachers' evaluation of the operationalized curriculum was discussed in two rounds, using the Delphi technique. Teachers' perception of the intended curriculum was summarized and grouped in the three main headings: *The objectives of the curriculum*, *teaching materials*, and *teaching and learning*.

At the end of the semester, students filled in a questionnaire in which they perceived the features of the intended curriculum supposed to enhance the students' intrinsic motivation and attitudes to autonomous learning.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Teachers' perception of the curriculum

The objectives of the intended curriculum. Evaluation of the objectives focuses on explicitness, authenticity, attainability and reflection of local conditions and requirements in the curriculum.

To the four teachers, at first, *the objectives of the curriculum* (i.e., learning English as a foreign language by using it authentically and learning how to learn the language) seem implicit. Then they became explicit through (1) the learning activities in the sub-tasks and the main tasks and through (2) the control of learning gradually passing from the teacher to students after each unit. At the end of each unit and at the end of the operationalization of the curriculum, students knew what they were able to do.

The objectives of the curriculum appeared to be realistic and to some extent attainable in a Vietnamese learning context. They were realistic because the students, at the end of the course, were able to write a student guide, to complete a travel brochure and to run a journal. The students showed improvement in their public speaking skills from their experiences presenting the outcomes of their task performances to their classmates. What the students are able to do is closely related to their daily life. However, according to one teacher, autonomous learning is still a novel way of learning to students, so they still need the teachers' guidance. That is to say, more teacher guidance should be included in the curriculum. However, in response to the idea of that teacher, another teacher perceived that students' autonomy is demonstrated in their seeking help. If students think they need the teacher's assistance, they will ask for this. Therefore, more guidance from the teachers is not necessary to design into the curriculum module. The reconciling position is that in future implementation of curricula for learner autonomy, *how much guidance to students from the teacher is decided by students' psychological characteristics* (e.g., shyness, too much teacher-dependence).

Three teachers perceived that the local conditions and the requirements of students and community were not reflected in the objectives of the curriculum because

local conditions (e.g., opportunities to speak English outside the class) do not offer any favors to the objectives of the curriculum. However, to one teacher, though the students did not have many opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, the objective of the curriculum was still attained because with the implementation of the curriculum, many students did seek opportunities to speak English outside the classroom when they met the teachers of English. The students created the opportunities for themselves to use English. Seeking opportunities to use English outside the classroom was a positive sign of autonomous language learners. To this teacher, the most important issue is that students should be encouraged to use English both inside and outside the classroom as often as possible. At the end, the teachers agreed upon supporting *the creation of an English language use environment*.

Another issue raised was whether the requirements of the students and the community were reflected in the objectives of the curriculum. Two teachers perceived that no reflection of the requirements of the students or the community could be found in the objectives of the curriculum. Students need to learn what they would be able to use in their future job when they graduate from the program. They reasoned that universities should prepare students for secondary schools and that we have to consider the gap between what happens in the university and what happens in secondary schools. Their idea relates to "learning to transfer" but this "transfer" is a short-term strategy, not anticipating future development. These two teachers' ideas go back to the question *whether we should prepare students for the future or educate them just for today*. Two teachers agreed that the requirements of students and the community were reflected in the objectives of the curriculum because students need to be trained to be independent language learners to prepare them for the future job-market and their professional development. The teachers finally decided that the curriculum should prepare the students for their future teaching in secondary schools by training them how to develop their teaching skills helpful for their teaching. In addition, to prepare students to cope with changes, students should learn to be autonomous. *Weaving the idea of developing learner autonomy into the existing curriculum is essential*.

To summarize, the reconciling perception of the teachers confirmed the *explicitness* and *attainability* of the objectives of the intended curriculum: Using to learn and to learn how to learn the target language. The gradual pass of control of learning to students within the activities in each unit and thereafter unit by unit, made the objectives of the curriculum explicit. Creating a language use environment (e.g., seeking the opportunities to use the target language and making the target language as the main medium of classroom interactions as much as possible) made the objectives of the curriculum attainable. Creating a language use environment is in line with Howatt's (1984) assumption of language acquisition through communication. Weaving the idea of developing learner autonomy into the existing English teacher education curriculum at CTU by adapting the design parameters in future curriculum development is essential.

Teaching materials. In evaluating whether the teaching materials supported the curriculum objectives, two perceived “yes” and two, “yes, but not much” because teaching materials in unit 2 and 3 need to be adapted to achieve the aim of the lesson and the objective of the curriculum module. Two teachers perceived to include more travel brochures and journals as forms of reading. They also recommended adding some audio materials relating to journal writing to help students to improve their listening skills so that they will learn not only to be autonomous language learners but also be given the chance to develop their language skills as well. One idea was that within the framework of learning and teaching at CTU in specific and in Vietnam in general, the facilities, equipment, personnel required, class size (from 11 to 17 students) and the students’ ability range (a rather homogenous population; all passed the requirements of the national entrance exam to the university) were adequate.

The majority of the teachers’ evaluation on the teaching materials suggested that more references used as sub-tasks should be added. As a curriculum developer, I agreed that it would be a good idea to have more references available to students. One of the purposes of operationalizing the intended curriculum is to create opportunities for students to be as much as self-directed as possible; therefore, it is a good idea that *students are encouraged to look for the references to be used as the sub-tasks* after some time familiarizing themselves to the curriculum. This search for the references to be used as the sub-tasks will offer students more authentic choices than by limiting them to a number of recommended sources. With the selection and choice of references which will be used as sub-tasks, students will exercise their autonomy.

Teaching and learning: Making choices. The four teachers evaluated that the curriculum module creates “quite a lot” of opportunities for students to make choices, which stimulated their autonomy. One teacher perceived that she liked the idea that the students might make choices of learning content and learning strategies; however, to this teacher, as with the first-year students who are used to being instructed in almost everything by the teachers, these students need extra training to function at this level.

It necessarily means that students learn to make choice by choosing. The teacher should hand over to students the decisions of what (in the framework of the negotiated curriculum) and how to learn. If students need teachers’ advice on choosing the learning content or learning strategies, the authentic questions should come from the students. Johnson et al., (1998: 80) claim, “When students are compelled to assume greater responsibility for directions their learning will take, they will gradually learn to see themselves as controllers of their own learning. Learning is seen as self-initiated and not other-initiated”. As a result, no extra training on helping students to make choices would be necessary.

Teaching and learning: Individualization. Two teachers agreed that if we allow students choice, we encourage individualization. One teacher perceived that the curriculum created “good” conditions for students to be individualized. Students had

flexibility in choosing what to learn and how to learn, which meant that their learning was individualized. One teacher agreed that individualization is stimulated via the tasks and learning activities in the module, but due to some students' adherence to traditional methods, we need more time to see more clearly how the students individualized their learning.

Teaching and learning: Reflection and self-evaluation. Four teachers perceived that the students had the opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation. The curriculum created opportunities for students to *reflect through interactions* by using the target language to communicate authentically with their peers about their learning process. These interactions are crucial for language development (Wolff, 1994) and the development of learner autonomy (Little, 1996a). However, to the teachers, questionnaires or checklists for reflections should be more specific so that the students find it easier to reflect on their learning. At the beginning of the course, students should be given a self-assessment form so that they can define what they want or need in order to develop their language ability. This will help them assess the progress they make by reflecting on the plan they set and the outcome they achieved.

Teaching and learning: Scaffolding. To the four teachers, the curriculum created the conditions for the students to negotiate and cooperate with their teacher and classmates. Pair-work, group-work and tutorials are good evidence of this.

The four teachers experienced that *the control of learning* was gradually passed from the teacher to the students after each unit; this could be seen clearly from Unit 2 onward. The transfer of control of learning will be seen more clearly after each semester. The four teachers all agreed that the degree of autonomy was increasingly encouraged between unit 1 and unit 3.

Teaching and learning: Learning strategies. To one of the teachers, the curriculum needs to make students aware that they may choose which strategies they think fit them best to do their tasks. Only then, according to her, the curriculum is satisfactory in terms of creating opportunities for students to choose the learning strategies. However, to three other teachers, "learning styles and learning strategies should be introduced explicitly at the beginning of the course and at the beginning of each unit so that students can choose among these strategies" (i.e., the best way to learn something oneself).

Though the learning activities and unit tasks made students unconsciously aware that language use is language learning and language learning is language use, the four teaching teachers perceived that the curriculum module should require teachers to make this point clear to students and then they will be more aware of using the language to learn the language.

The evaluation procedure and instrument were effective in documenting students' learning process, but not for grading the students' language proficiency. More specific criteria to evaluate the students' language skills need to be designed.

To summarize, the teachers' experiences and perceptions showed that the objectives of the intended curriculum were achieved. Two pedagogical lessons from the teachers' perceptions were drawn. First, how much guidance from the teacher to help students take control of learning, depends on the students' psychological characteristics. Second, an encouraging perception from the teachers was that using to learn and to learn how to learn, the target language would be feasible when learners and teachers create an environment to use the target language.

In terms of *teaching materials*, besides those recommended by the curriculum developers and teachers, students should be encouraged to select the references to use as sub-tasks, which provide students with more choices of learning content.

The intended curriculum created opportunities for the students to make *choices* of learning content and learning strategies with proper scaffoldings from their teachers and classmates. Therefore, the learning was individualized. The students showed self-evaluation in their learning product and process. To assist the students' reflection, especially to those who just start with using to learn and learning to learn the language paradigm, questions stimulating students' reflection on their learning process and products should be specific.

In terms of the learning strategies for successful language learning and learner autonomy, the curriculum should focus more on helping students find out for themselves what types of learners they are by exploring learning strategies that fit them best with the scaffolding of the teacher.

2.4.2 *Students' perception of the curriculum*

At the end of the semester, 60 students filled in a four-scale questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of seven items concerning whether the intended curriculum (1) provided students choices to do the unit project, (2) was designed to pass the control of learning to students, (3) allowed opportunities for students to reflect on the learning content and learning strategies, (4) helped students be aware of their own role in succeeding in language learning, (5) created opportunities for the students to work in cooperation, (6) helped the students to build confidence, and (7) aroused the students' curiosity and challenged the students.

The mean ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .49$) on the scale of "1 as *strongly agree*", "2 as *agree*", "3 as *disagree*" and "4 as *strongly disagree*" indicates that students positively perceived the intended curriculum. Figure 7.3 displays the mean score for each feature of the intended curriculum.

Regarding the students' perception of each feature of the curriculum, passing the control of learning to the students (i.e., item 2 of the questionnaire) was perceived to be the strongest feature of the curriculum. Helping the students to build up their confidence in learning (i.e., item 6 of the questionnaire) was perceived as the weakest feature of the curriculum. Reflecting on the operationalization of the intended curriculum, though the four teachers held tutorials on a weekly basis and at the students' request to support them and help them to build confidence in their learning, an important pedagogical lesson from students' perception could be that *more psychological supports may be provided to students*.

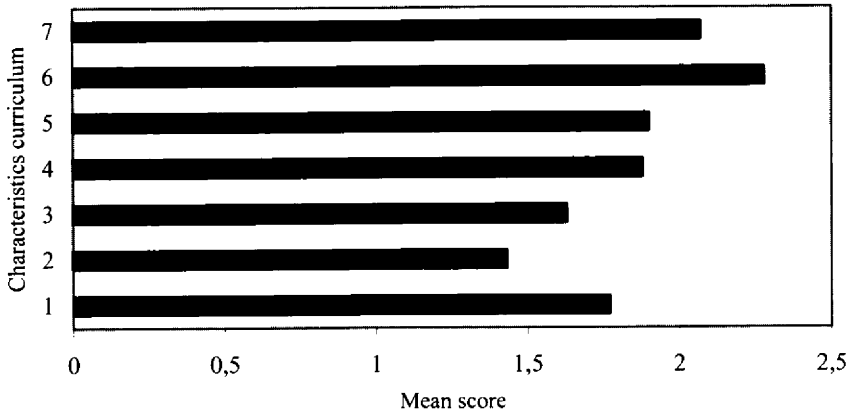


Figure 8.1. Mean score for each feature of the curriculum.

(1. choice; 2. self-control; 3. reflection on learning process; 4. awareness of one's role; 5. cooperation; 6. building up confidence; 7. challenges).

2.5 Conclusions

The teachers' and students' perceptions of the curriculum brought insight to the evaluation of the quality of the curriculum.

2.5.1 Teachers' perception

From the teachers' perception, this section answers these two questions:

- 1) Which aspects of the curriculum did the teachers perceive positively?

Objectives. The objectives of using to learn and to learn how to learn the target language were achieved. Students used the target language authentically to plan, to execute, and to self-evaluate their project work execution and language learning, which aim at stimulating students' learner autonomy and communicative competence. Control of learning was gradually passed to students from activity to activity within the unit and from unit to unit. In terms of learning strategies, the curriculum provided students with opportunities to experiment with language learning and self-regulation strategies.

Materials. From the teachers' perception, the curriculum provided students with sufficient materials to be used as sub-tasks to assist students to complete the main task (project work). More resources should be introduced to students and students themselves should be encouraged to select resources and use them as sub-tasks.

Teaching and learning. Teaching and learning activities in the curriculum provided students with choices of learning content and learning methodology to complete their tasks. The description and analysis of the curriculum in operationalization confirmed this evaluation. Learning was individualized. Students had the opportunities to reflect on their task execution and language learning.

2) What needs to be improved?

Reflection and learning strategies in teaching and learning activities. Questions and checklists to assist students' reflection on task executions and language learning should be more specific and detailed. In terms of learning strategies aiming at achieving the learning to learn objective, in future implementation, a task-based learning curriculum should focus more on stimulating students to find out for themselves what types of learners they are so that they can explore and choose language learning strategies that fit them best.

2.5.2 *Students' perception*

From the students' perception, this section answers two questions,

1) Which conditions of the curriculum did students perceive positively?

Overall, students perceived curriculum conditions supposed to enhance the students' self-regulation and intrinsic motivation positively ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .49$) on the scale of *1 as strongly agree* and *2 as agree*. Students positively perceived the features of the curriculum supposed to enhance their self-regulation and intrinsic motivation such as choice, self-control, reflection on learning content and learning methodology, recognition of one's role, cooperation, arousing the students' curiosity and challenge.

2) What needs to be improved?

The only feature that students did not perceive positively was "building up confidence". In other words, the curriculum has not worked well in assisting the students to build their confidence. An analysis of the operationalization of the curriculum showed that the four teachers held tutorials on a weekly basis and at the students' request. In these tutorials, the teachers helped the students to solve problems in their task execution and language learning. This means that teachers' support to students was displayed. However, an important pedagogical lesson from the students' perception is that more frequently psychological supports should be provided to students at their first stage of learning with the curriculum grounded in the theory of task-based learning.

Both the teachers and students perceived the operationalized curriculum positively. The implemented curriculum fits the intended curriculum.

Section 1 in this chapter presented the results of the operationalized curriculum: (1) The provision of choices and interactions in the target language, and (2) its creation of opportunities for the students to use self-regulated skills in their learning. Section 2 in the chapter presented how the teachers and students perceived the operationalized curriculum. The following section will summarize the results of the implemented curriculum and propose directions for future improvements to the intended curriculum.

3. SUMMARY

This chapter presented how the intended curriculum was implemented. The description and analysis of the operationalized and perceived curriculum showed that the curriculum was implemented as intended.

3.1 *The operationalized curriculum*

The results of the intended curriculum in operationalization showed that:

- 1) Choices of learning content and strategies were provided to students to do the tasks,
- 2) Interactions between the teacher and the students and between/ among the student(s) were most of the time conducted in English,
- 3) The curriculum was operationalized in a slightly different degree among the four groups. The curriculum was the least well operationalized in group 2,
- 4) Students showed to be aware of making choices and adapting choices towards creating learning tasks for themselves. Students with either high or low initial scores for self-regulation, intrinsic motivation and attitudes to autonomous learning participated in the curriculum.

3.2 *The perceived curriculum*

3.2.1 *Which features of the curriculum were perceived positively?*

The teachers' evaluation and the students' perception of the curriculum revealed that the curriculum achieved the goals of stimulating learner autonomy and communicative competence.

Choices. The curriculum provided the students with the choices of content and strategies for them to do the task. The students used the target language authentically in planning *what* to include in their output and *how* to come to the output and in monitoring and evaluating their task performances and language learning.

Interactions in the target language. The curriculum generated the opportunities for the students to use English authentically to learn it. The tasks provided students with the opportunities to use English to discuss, to talk about learning English at CTU, their life in Can Tho, and to share their experiences and knowledge about their hometown, the critical issues in Vietnam as a whole as well as in the community where are they are living. When planning, executing and reflecting on the tasks

done, the students had authentic purposes to communicate in English. In the interview (i.e., the oral test), most of the 60 students reported that they had a “language orientation” (Nunan, 2000) or a communicative purpose to use English. They perceived that language is the means for communication and learning a target language means learning to communicate in that target language. Most of them perceived that they “used English to work” with their friends, rather than “studied” English. The degree of using English increased as students became familiar with the way of learning, which will accordingly increase their confidence in using the language to learn and to learn how to learn it. The operationalization of the curriculum revealed an important feature to the teachers as well as the students: The teachers and students created the language environment in which the students learned to use the language for a real purpose of communication rather than the assumed perception of a native-speaking English language environment for learning the target language. The students created the learning opportunities for themselves by using English when speaking to their friends and teachers. By doing so, students may learn to evaluate their own language learning and learn English use from more capable peers.

3.2.2 *What needs to be improved?*

Sub-tasks. To offer the students more choices of sub-tasks to do, in all units, the curriculum developers should recommend more references (e.g., websites, books, audio-visual materials) to the students and teachers. In the three units, more students’ guides, travel brochures and journals respectively should be included. More importantly, students should be explicitly encouraged to select and use resources that will be used as sub-tasks by themselves. This will create authentic opportunities for students to exercise the choices of the content and the method to learn- a prerequisite to stimulating learner autonomy.

Assisting students’ self-regulated learning. At the start of unit 2, the teachers had the students write their own study plan as a learner contract and self-evaluate their plan on the weekly basis. This aimed to facilitate students’ self-regulated and reflection skills. To better assist students in planning, monitoring and self-evaluating learning, students will sign a *learner contract* with their self-study plan so that they can discuss their progress with their teacher in tutorials. In tutorials, besides teachers helping students deal with their language problems, it should be emphasized again that teachers should also help students to deal with their learning plan. Students should be aware that they have the freedom to choose what and how they would like to learn, but if they ask the teacher an authentic question, then the teacher should answer it. Students are advised that the learner contract, which they sign, may evolve over time.

Assisting students’ reflection. The curriculum developers should design specific questions to gather information on students’ self-regulation in their learning at the end of the unit. For instance, (1) how did you plan your learning? (2) upon completion of the unit project, what did you change in your learning plan and working plan

on the unit project? (3) why did you change? (4) how did you evaluate your working plan and your task execution: Is it good or bad? why or why not?

Psychological supports. From the students' perception, teachers should more often give psychological support at the first stage of learning.

Learner Contract

- 1) From:..... to
- 2) Learning objective(s):
- 3) Procedures for achieving objective(s):
- 4) Resources:
- 5) Your evaluation: What have you fulfilled and what not and why not?
How could you improve your performance next time?

(Nunan, 2000)

