

EXPLORING TEACHER AGENCY IN USING THE NEW ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN UPPER-SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HUE CITY

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Abstract: This research paper investigates the role of teacher agency in the implementation of new English textbooks for Vietnamese high-school students, especially focusing on teachers' reflection on the practical use of these textbooks. The study was conducted at four high schools located in Hue City. The primary objective was to examine how teachers exercised their agency in implementing the I-Learn Smart World and Global Success textbooks in real classroom settings based on the ecological lens of teacher agency. To gather and analyze data, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were employed. The findings of the study revealed that teachers develop agency as a means to navigate textbook changes by drawing upon their past experiences, envisioning a desired future, and taking action to implement the curriculum despite the obstacles they may encounter.

Keywords: Teacher agency, new English textbooks, practical use, Vietnamese high-school students

1. Introduction

Teachers play an indispensable role in the field of pedagogy as they directly impart lessons to students. They are at the core of language education and language policy research, responsible for implementing policy initiatives and curriculum reforms (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Guo et al, 2019). Recent research in language teacher education has taken teacher agency into more consideration. As aligned in Vähäsantanen & Eteläpelto (2009), Sannino (2010), Wernicke (2018), when language education policies are introduced, teachers become crucial agents who can either actively or passively implement them in classrooms. This means that teachers can respond to policy initiatives in various ways, such as appropriating, implementing, or resisting them, which can determine the success or failure of the policy implementation. In essence, teacher agency plays a vital role in sustaining effective teaching practices and teachers' continuous professional development to implement these practices successfully.

Language teacher agency has been the subject of recent research in various contexts (Tao & Gao, 2017; Miller, 2018). These studies have investigated how teachers exercise agency in areas such as negotiating pedagogical practices (Ishihara et al., 2018), shaping their professional identity (Leal & Crookes, 2018), demonstrating pedagogical expertise (Christiansen et al., 2018), and navigating emotions (Benesch, 2018). However, most of these studies have primarily focused on broader curriculum reform. Limited research exists on the specific role of teacher agency in the professional practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers when it comes to the introduction of new textbooks during curriculum reform.

In Vietnam, recent changes to the curriculum have aimed to promote communicative language teaching approaches. The national curriculum, supported by the National Foreign Language 2008-2025 Project, emphasizes the development of learners' qualities and abilities through educational content with basic, practical, and modern knowledge and skills; the harmonization of virtue, intellect, body, and beauty; the focus on practicing and applying learned knowledge and skills to solve problems in study and life (MOET, 2018). At the upper-secondary-school level, new locally-produced textbooks have been adopted to align with this curriculum. As pedagogical materials play a crucial role in language teaching, it is important to investigate teacher agency facing the implementation of new pedagogical materials. Thus, this study was conducted with the aim of examining teacher agency in using new teaching materials by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in certain upper-secondary schools in Hue city.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights to educational institutions and experts regarding the actual utilization of textbooks in specific classrooms. It sheds light on variations in teaching agency among instructors. Furthermore, the study's findings can inform training programs for English teachers, helping them adapt their approaches to maximize the benefits and minimize the drawbacks of using textbooks in specific educational contexts. Additionally, this research serves as a valuable source of feedback on the educational priorities of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), benefiting policymakers and administrators in planning future growth and development initiatives.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theorizing teacher agency

The idea of teacher agency can be understood in different ways with major conceptualizations of agency including the social cognitive theory, the sociocultural theory, the post-structuralist view, and the ecological perspective (Tao & Gao, 2021). In the social cognitive theory, represented by Bandura (1999, 2001), agentic action is seen as intentional, aiming at exploring how a teacher's self-efficacy influences his or her exercise agency. The socio-cultural approach emphasizes that individuals' thoughts, actions, and learning processes are always influenced and shaped by their socio-cultural contexts. According to this approach, agency is both facilitated and limited by these contexts (Wertsch et al., 1993). The post-structural tradition focuses on viewing agency as a form of discursive practice. More particularly, teacher agency is examined in the interaction with positionings in the social context (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1999). Another conceptualization is the ecological perspective in which agency serves as a temporal and situated achievement (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Priestley et al., 2015). This study chose the ecological perspective as a theoretical framework to examine how teachers exercise their agency in the use of teaching materials.

2.2. Teacher agency under the ecological approach

Drawing on the work of Emirbayer & Mische (1998), Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2013) created a framework (Figure 1) based on the ecological concept of teacher agency. Human agency, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), is a dynamic interaction between the "iterational" element—experience from the past—the "projective" element—an orientation toward potential future outcomes—and the "practical-evaluative" element—a way of integrating the past and the future into the present.

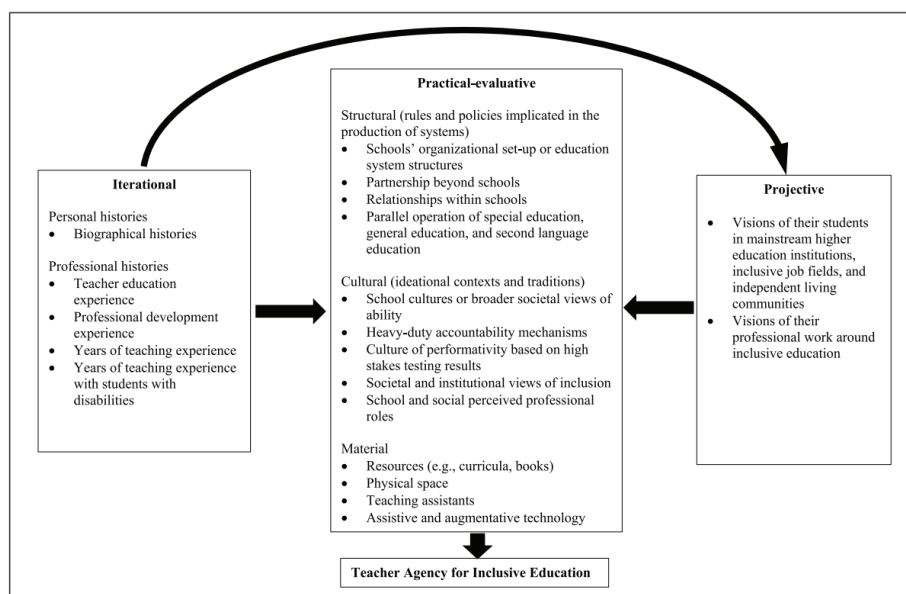


Figure 1: Factors influencing teacher agency. Source. Adapted from Priestley et al. (2016).

2.3. The implementation of textbooks

2.3.1. *The role of textbooks in English Language Teaching (ELT)*

Textbooks play a crucial role in language programs, shaping the curriculum (Altbach & Kelly, 1988) and providing essential language input and practice for learners (Richards, 2001). According to Hutchinson & Torres (1994), textbooks are almost universally used in English language instruction, and are a ubiquitous resource, with millions of copies sold annually and initiatives established to create textbooks in different countries. It seems that no teaching-learning scenario is complete without a suitable textbook. In other words, a relevant textbook is considered essential in any comprehensive teaching and learning environment. Textbooks play a crucial role in meeting the diverse needs of the classroom and its broader context. They act as a primary source of knowledge, presenting a wealth of facts, concepts, and generalizations that students nationwide are expected to learn. Textbooks also have a significant impact on lesson content, the balance of skills taught, and the types of language practice students engage in. They often offer valuable guidance for teachers, suggesting effective teaching methods and lesson plans (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998; Paxton, 1999; Schug et al., 1997). In the United States, for example, textbooks account for a substantial portion of instructional material and student activities, ranging from 75% to 90% (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998). Additionally, textbooks serve as the main way for language learners to connect with the language, especially for inexperienced teachers who can rely on them for guidance in lesson planning, teaching methods, and instructional formats.

However, it is important to acknowledge that teachers hold varying perspectives on the value of textbooks. Empirical studies have shown that educators use and interpret textbooks in different ways, adapting them to fit their instructional contexts and teaching styles. This highlights that the utilization of textbooks by teachers is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather a reflection of their individual teaching methods and preferences.

2.3.2. *Changes in textbooks*

According to Hutchinson and Torres (1994), textbooks are indispensable in education and widely used in teaching. However, the set of textbooks is not fixed as education progresses, due to changes in life as a whole and specific educational needs. Tomlinson (2010) suggested that one of the principles of language teaching is to align the teaching content and methodology with the program's objectives. This approach aligns with Hymes's (1972) proposition that mere knowledge of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules is insufficient for true language proficiency. To effectively use a language, learners must develop communicative competence, as defined by Canale and Swain (1980), which encompasses grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Consequently, ELT policy has experienced many changes along the way the general education curriculum has altered. Accordingly, the introduction of new textbooks, accompanied by innovations in the ELT curriculum, is essential for improving the status of English language teaching and learning (Orafi, 2013). The writing of textbooks is identified as a critical factor in successful implementation (Wang, 2007), and many studies have been conducted to analyze prescribed textbooks used in educational innovations.

2.4. Current context of education policy in Vietnam

2.4.1. *Language policy in upper-secondary education in Vietnam*

Vietnam is also not left out of the education reform process. The National Foreign Language Project 2020, which was launched in Vietnam in 2008 and extended in 2017, is recognized as a significant language reform initiative for the country. According to Nguyen and Bui (2016), this project has brought together experts from various fields to promote English learning, teaching, and distribution. Its main goal is to improve the English proficiency of Vietnamese youth and contribute to the nation's industrialization and modernization efforts. As a result of this project, there have been notable changes in English language education in Vietnam, such as the standardization of the English curriculum for content-based English

medium courses, the restructuring of English programs, and the creation of new textbooks. In 2018, the General Education English Curriculum was released, attached with General Education Curriculum in Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT (MOET, 2018). More specifically, the upper-secondary level English curriculum aims to develop students' English communication skills for everyday use, enhance their understanding of English-speaking cultures, and prepare them for further education or employment. Students will learn to use English to communicate effectively in various situations, gain a deeper understanding of English-speaking countries and cultures, appreciate cultural diversity, and apply English in their academic pursuits. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of self-directed learning and utilizing technology to enhance the learning process.

2.4.2. New textbooks for ELT in upper-secondary schools in Vietnam

As part of the curriculum reform, textbooks have been developed to align with the changes. According to Decision No. 404/QĐ-TTg (Government of Vietnam, 2015) named Project on Renewing the General Education Curriculum and Textbooks, instead of prescribing a specific set of books for the entire program, the Prime Minister has encouraged publishers, organizations, and individuals to create textbooks and as well as schools and teachers actively select textbooks under the "One curriculum, many sets of textbooks" framework. This new production policy allows for a range of textbooks to be used to meet various needs in different regions (Wang, 2007 & Chern, 2002). From 2020 onwards, new textbooks have been introduced using a rolling form, starting from grade 1. In the academic year 2022-2023, Grade-10 teachers and students were first introduced to the nine new English textbooks authored and published by different groups.

Two out of nine English textbooks have been utilized by high schools in Hue City, namely, English 10 Global Success and English 10 I-Learn Smart World, as stated in Decision No. 1209/ QĐ-UBND issued by the Thua Thien Hue Provincial People's Committee. The English 10 Global Success textbook is published by Vietnam Education Publishing House Limited Company, while the English 10 I-Learn Smart World textbook is a collaborative effort between DTP Education Group and Hue University Publishing House.

2.5. Previous studies

Recently, numerous studies have placed significant emphasis on investigating various aspects of the implementation of the new General Education English Curriculum alongside the introduction of new English textbooks. Vu and Pham (2023) conducted a paper to examine the capacity for gender bias in current English textbooks in Vietnam. By treating gender as a socially hidden concept, the analysis takes several critical steps to study linguistic and ideological structures. Findings display that no matter a few efforts to achieve gender equality, patriarchal Confucian values still affect textbook production in present-day Vietnam. Men are given more reputation in phrases of phrase of mouth and social attitude sorts, whilst girls are portrayed as having less freedom with fewer choices and fewer possessions. But there is a shared popularity of the importance of gender equality. Nevertheless, deeply ingrained male dominance ideals persist in society. This study raises critical questions on hard existing norms and sets up a brand-new cultural narrative that recognizes and empowers women's rights. At the same time, Nguyen (2023) carried out a study to determine end-of-year English research performance for sixth-grade students studying new English language textbooks in secondary schools in Hanoi, Vietnam. In addition, the study explores teachers' perspectives on the importance and effectiveness of language assessment. The findings therefore suggest assessment methods and criteria that should be included in the scoring rubric. A mix-method is used to collect data through questionnaires and interviews. The findings indicate inconsistencies in the formation of lectures at the end of the course but positive attitudes of teachers towards the assessment process. Finally, a model of scoring rubric is proposed based on the data collected. Another study by Tien (2023) targets to provide a study answering the significant research question '*How are interculturalism and multiculturalism mediated in a series of Vietnam-produced English textbooks for high school students?*'. In order to answer this query, a cultural content evaluation was performed with a focus on cultural knowledge and capabilities in

intercultural communicative competence. The results found that interculturalism and multiculturalism are mediated inside the textbooks, albeit with certain boundaries. The study also affords a sample cultural evaluation framework and tips for English language teaching writers in an era of interculturalism and multiculturalism.

These studies aim at exploring diverse aspects of new textbooks such as the effect of gender bias, assessment as well as interculturalism and multiculturalism. However, there is a limited amount of research related to the practical use of these new textbooks. Indeed, Tran, Ha and Tran (2023) examined the effectiveness of and teachers' cognitions and practices regarding the reformed curricula. This study expands upon the existing line of inquiry by adopting a sociological perspective, which has been scarcely explored in the L2 instructor cognition literature. The aim is to investigate teachers' comprehension, information, and beliefs regarding the implementation of a reformed English language curriculum, specifically focusing on venture-supported language teaching, in Vietnam. The participants were six experienced English-as-a-foreign-language teachers at a secondary school. The statistics comprised in-depth semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, lesson plans and classroom observations. The results of the study indicated that the lecturers utilized their pre-existing deep-rooted understanding and beliefs about language teaching and acquisition to implement the reformed curriculum in their own unique ways, demonstrating a focus-on-forms approach. By drawing on Bernstein's concept of pedagogic discourse, the study provided insights into the teachers' justifications for their individual teaching practices. The implications of these findings for pedagogy are discussed.

All taken together, the majority of studies have been conducted to investigate variables characterizing textbooks while there is still little research facing the practical implementation of these new textbooks, especially exploring teacher agency under the ecological lens. In order to fill a gap in the field's scant literature and contribute to the ongoing innovation process in Vietnam, the current study explores the teacher agency in using new textbooks of upper-secondary-school teachers in Hue City.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions and Scope

To achieve the desired goals, the primary focus of the research is to investigate how upper-secondary-school teachers exercise teacher agency in using the newly introduced English textbooks by addressing the following question:

How do upper-secondary EFL teachers exercise teacher agency in using new English textbooks?

3.2 Participants

The study took place in four high schools in Hue City with four randomly-chosen main participants coded as T1, T2, T3, and T4. They utilized two different series of new textbooks for Grade 10, namely Global Success (T3 and T4) and I-learn Smart World (T1 and T2). This broader and more diverse dataset allowed for more precise conclusions to be drawn from the study. Among participants, T1 and T3 are young teachers whereas the two remaining are experienced with over ten years of experience.

3.3 Data collection tools

In this study, interviews were conducted to collect sharing about the way teachers exercise their teacher agency implementing new textbooks. Interviews are a valuable tool for gathering qualitative data and obtaining in-depth information. With a well-planned approach, interviews can yield a wide range of valuable findings Aksu (2009). Semi-structured interviews were specifically chosen due to several reasons. This approach allows interviewers to skillfully adjust the tone, pace, and order of questions while engaging directly with interviewees, in order to obtain detailed feedback. It also enables interviewees to express their opinions in their own words and thought processes, which is deemed crucial by Kvale and Brinkmann

(2009). Open-ended questions were used in the interviews to gather voluntary responses from participants, minimizing potential bias.

The interviews lasting 30-40 minutes were conducted face-to-face in Vietnamese with permission to be recorded verbally from participants. The set of questions was designed based on the ecological perspective of teacher agency, serving as the theoretical framework for this study. Data was then translated into English carefully with many times of interpreting before releasing the fixed data for the whole study. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data, producing the findings below.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Prior experience and agency

As indicated by the ecological model, the agency of teachers is deeply influenced by their previous experiences. This aspect primarily focuses on how the personal and professional histories of teachers impact their agency. The participants in this study demonstrated a wide range of personal and professional experiences, which likely influenced their approach to enacting and adapting the new textbooks. There is a clear difference between experienced teachers and young teachers in this study. Both T2 and T4 showed the comfort facing the implementation of new textbooks thanks to what they had experienced for many years of teaching. T4 found using Global Success to be non-challenging because of its resemblance to the pilot textbook published in 2014 in terms of section organization, topics, and activity sequence. Similarly, T2 encountered few difficulties with I-Learn Smart despite the numerous differences between this new textbook and the pilot version. T2 revealed:

“Initially, this change makes me quite confused. But only need to reconsider and examine a bit more, it’s still fine. I have taught for the whole first semester, and I don’t face too many difficulties. Actually, I see that this newness motivates teachers to modify their current teaching practices.”

(translated from T2’s interview)

Facing the newness in I-Learn Smart, T2 narrated that she spent approximately a week familiarizing herself with the I-Learn Smart textbook and its accompanying materials from the Publishing House, in order to determine an appropriate teaching approach in light of its novelty. She went on to explain that each class possessed its unique characteristics, requiring her to prepare and plan ahead regarding how the content would be delivered in the classroom. Additionally, both teachers mentioned that over the years of teaching, they have accumulated a substantial number of extra exercises and reference books as well as a reliable network of colleagues. As a result, they felt confident in their ability to handle these new textbooks so as to implement or adapt appropriately to their students’ levels and needs. As T4 reported:

“Most of my students are not so excellent at learning English. Their basic knowledge is still lacking, let alone producing a speech or writing.”

(translated from T4’s interview)

Therefore, during the utilization of Global Success, she prioritized consolidating and providing students with additional practice about fundamental content such as vocabulary, and grammar, serving for examinations. She also acknowledged that at times she excluded certain productive activities that exceeded the students’ abilities.

In contrast, the other two teachers encountered greater challenges when it came to using the new English textbooks. While Global Success and the pilot book shared many similarities, T3 found it difficult to discover an engaging teaching method that would captivate the students’ attention due to her limited range of pedagogical approaches. She admitted that her experience was derived solely from micro-teaching classes during her university studies, her internship, and a few additional classes that she was tasked with. Therefore, in order to ensure successful classes, she extensively explored various approaches from diverse sources,

mainly from online courses, YouTube videos, etc. Moreover, she encountered challenges regarding the issue of a shortage of practice exercises. She stated:

“The number of exercises in the textbook is quite insufficient for students to practice..... I do not have access to a readily available source of exercise. Therefore, I often resort to searching on the Internet or joining teachers' groups on Facebook and Zalo to find additional exercises. However, it is essential for me to carefully examine and adapt these exercises to suit my students' abilities.”

(translated from T3's interview)

T1 also encountered difficulties when it came to implementing I-Learn Smart World. The reorganization of sections and activities posed a challenge for her in finding an appropriate teaching approach to ensure that her students could comprehend all the content in the textbook without becoming confused by the integration of multiple skills in a single lesson. Consequently, she had to restructure activities to ensure that students grasped the knowledge before engaging in their own language production. Furthermore, she expressed that a major difficulty stemmed from the students' abilities. She stated:

“They are exceptional students who quickly grasp the majority of the knowledge presented in the textbook. As a result, they are able to complete the exercises with ease in a short amount of time. This initially caused me stress as I had never encountered such a situation before. I dedicated a significant amount of time to finding ways to advance the content and challenge them further.”

(translated from T1's interview)

She also disclosed that when teaching vocabulary, she frequently incorporated more advanced words related to the topic. Similarly, when teaching grammar, she offered additional knowledge that surpassed the textbook's intended scope. In terms of exercises focusing on productive skills, she substituted sentence models and expanded the topic to provide students with ample opportunities for extensive discussions and the free use of English.

The findings show that the effort to implement the new textbooks clearly stemmed from the teachers' past experiences and their existing knowledge of the content. This finding aligns with Tao and Gao's (2017) research, which suggests that teacher agency is influenced by their prior experiences. Most participating teachers reported that the Ministry of Education (MOE) and even administrators from their own educational institutions provided limited practical assistance in terms of professional development for implementing the new textbooks. Instead, the teachers took it upon themselves to enhance their own knowledge. This finding is supported by Glasgow's (2017) study, which revealed that teachers identified gaps in their knowledge and expressed the need for support from the MOE to adequately prepare them for the new textbooks. However, in order to overcome these challenges, the teachers in this study demonstrated agency by independently pursuing various strategies for self-directed learning. This finding aligns with previous studies (Ollerhead & Ollerhead, 2010; Pyhalto, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2014) that suggest teachers proactively engage in self-directed learning to enhance their professional knowledge.

4.2. Future orientations

According to Priestley et al. (2015), teachers should create a wide range of future possibilities in order to construct their agency. This aspect deals with the future aspirations of teachers in order to bring about a change that distinguishes the future from the past. They argue that it relates to the hopes, wishes and fears of the teachers about both them and their students. T1 emphasized the importance of professional development, as explained:

“Actually, during the first semester, my efforts to implement the new textbook brought me significant improvements in my teaching. I discovered numerous approaches to effectively bring the content to life and engage my students as well as seamlessly integrate advanced knowledge into my lessons. I give

them the energy to enjoy the class. I am committed to further developing my knowledge and skills in order to provide the best possible education for my students."

(translated from T1's interview)

Meanwhile, T2 and T3 regarded the development of their students as the outcome of implementing the new textbook. Even though their students may not have been proficient in English language production, the teachers consistently made efforts to create activities that would encourage natural English conversation to daily themes. Rather than simply having students rely on examples and imitate sentences, T3 prompted students to speak English by incorporating songs, games, and even trendy phrases into their lessons. As a result, there was a noticeable positive change in the students' speaking abilities by the second semester. T3 specifically mentioned:

"I see students who have made progress in speaking. They understood my English instructions instead of waiting for me to translate them into Vietnamese as in the first semester. They also responded to me in English more naturally. Absolutely, they still can't give a whole speech by themselves, but this change is also a good signal."

(translated from T3's interview)

In summary, teachers' future goals encompass both their personal professional aspirations and their aspirations for their students. As a result, how teachers respond to changes and exercise agency is closely intertwined with their visions for themselves and their students. In essence, teacher agency is achieved by actively involving students in the content of textbooks and fostering the values advocated by the textbooks, thereby preparing them to become active members of future communities. This finding is corroborated by the research of Priestley et al. (2013), who assert that teachers perceive themselves as individuals who play an active role in shaping the lives of students, including those from diverse social backgrounds.

4.3. Current practices

As previously discussed, agency is influenced by teachers' past experiences and future aspirations. However, the exercise of agency occurs in the present and is influenced by various contextual factors. These factors can either hinder or contribute to the implementation of the curriculum and the development of agency.

Firstly, the physical environment within the classroom was perceived to have a significant impact on how teachers exercise their authority and adapt to the new series of textbooks. During interviews, teachers pointed out that class size is a determining factor in the implementation of educational practices. Unlike classrooms of T1 and T3, which accommodate approximately 30 to 35 students each, the ones of T2 and T4 were overcrowded, with over 40 students crammed into a space that barely accommodated a small-sized television mounted on the middle wall. This arrangement posed difficulties for students seated at the back or in the corners of the room, as viewing the screen became challenging. In fact, T4, one of the teachers, mentioned:

"On scorching hot days, my students would often turn off all the lights."

(translated from T4's interview)

This statement implies that the classroom lacked proper lighting, resulting in poor visibility for students. Consequently, both teachers resorted to alternative methods, such as utilizing available materials and employing paper-based resources like handouts and networking, to facilitate student activities. Additionally, they relied on traditional instructional tools like blackboard writing to convey the lesson content, compensating for the limitations imposed by the inadequate technological setup.

Another disadvantage that all participating teachers complained about was the quality and quantity of exercises provided in the textbooks. This issue is not unique to the introduction of new textbooks and has

been previously addressed by Marton (2006) when the Chinese government implemented a new textbook. Teachers expressed concerns about the exercises, feeling that they lacked in quantity and level of challenge, failing to effectively stimulate skill development. Each task was described by participants to only consist of a limited number of items, resulting in insufficient practice opportunities for students. Consequently, teachers took proactive measures to address this challenge. Teachers using Global Success, such as T3 and T4, shared that due to the uncertain abilities of their students, they added more exercises of similar difficulty as those in Global Success, providing their students with more opportunities to familiarize themselves with the language contexts and excel in exams. T4 confessed:

"My students show weaknesses in both their understanding of the language and their ability to use it, and they also lacked enthusiasm for studying. They have no need to advance or widen their knowledge beyond what is designed in the textbook."

(translated from T4's interview)

Meanwhile, T1 and T2 disclosed that they often incorporated advanced exercises tailored to their students' abilities. They selected more challenging vocabulary and introduced extended grammar structures to their students.

Indeed, the implementation of new English textbooks has presented numerous challenges, including limitations within the contextual environment and the content of the materials. However, the teachers in this study demonstrated agency by making deliberate decisions and taking actions to enhance the effectiveness of the new textbooks. This aligns with the findings of Pappa et al. (2019), who noted that teachers faced tensions due to a lack of necessary resources for implementing the new textbooks. To address this, the teachers in the study exerted agency by utilizing the Internet, seeking advice from colleagues, and collaborating with others. Another challenge encountered by the participants in this study was the scarcity of facilities, which is consistent with the research conducted by Kaivanpanah, Alavi, and Tabaeifard (1394). In essence, the participants experienced a gap between the expectations set by the textbooks and the reality of the classroom setting, which constrained their actions. However, the teachers in this study employed strategies to navigate these contextual limitations, highlighting the importance of exercising agency in bridging the divide between textbook ideals and the everyday challenges encountered in schools.

5. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research paper was to examine how teacher agency is exercised regarding the implementation of new English textbooks. The study utilized a qualitative approach and was conducted at various high schools in Hue City. The data was obtained through four interviews involving different teachers from these four high schools. Hopefully, this study can contribute to the existing literature on teacher agency under the ecological perspective in implementing new textbooks.

The results of this study have provided valuable insights into how teachers exercise agency in response to changes in textbooks within classrooms. This highlights the fact that teachers are not merely seen as passive conveyors of knowledge, but rather as active agents of change who play a crucial role in implementing curriculum reforms (Molina, 2017). Recognizing the importance of teacher agency is vital for understanding teaching experiences, as it is influenced by a combination of past and present experiences, as well as future aspirations. The knowledge and experiences gained from the past and present serve as a pathway toward enhancing future plans and actions.

The primary limitation of this study is that it did not employ a longitudinal design, which would have provided valuable insights into the development of teacher agency within a specific context over time. Additionally, conducting large-scale studies, such as utilizing questionnaires, could yield more generalizable findings regarding the investigation of teacher agency. Further research exploring the connection between teacher agency and other contextual variables, such as identity and emotions, would offer a clearer

understanding of how these factors influence teacher functioning, particularly in the context of curriculum change.

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TÌM HIỂU SỰ CHỦ ĐỘNG CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TRONG VIỆC SỬ DỤNG SÁCH TIẾNG ANH MỚI TẠI CÁC TRƯỜNG THPT THÀNH PHỐ HUẾ

Tóm tắt: Bài nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu vai trò của sự chủ động của giáo viên trong việc triển khai sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh mới cho học sinh trung học phổ thông Việt Nam, đặc biệt tập trung vào phản ánh của giáo viên về thực tiễn sử dụng các sách giáo khoa này. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện tại bốn trường trung học phổ thông ở thành phố Huế. Mục tiêu chính là kiểm tra cách giáo viên thực hiện quyền tự quyết của mình trong việc triển khai sách giáo khoa I-Learn Smart World và Global Success trong môi trường lớp học thực tế dựa trên lăng kính sinh thái về quyền tự quyết của giáo viên. Để thu thập và phân tích dữ liệu, các cuộc phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc và phân tích theo chủ đề đã được sử dụng. Các phát hiện của nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng giáo viên phát triển quyền tự chủ như một cách thức để định hướng những thay đổi trong sách giáo khoa bằng cách dựa trên kinh nghiệm trong quá khứ của họ, hình dung về một tương lai mong muốn và hành động để thực hiện chương trình giảng dạy bất chấp những trở ngại mà họ có thể gặp phải.

Từ khóa: Tự chủ giáo viên, sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh mới, sử dụng thực tiễn, học sinh trung học phổ thông Việt Nam