

COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE LANGUAGE COMMUNITY MODEL IN A SPECIALIZED ACADEMY

Huong T. D. Ngo & Ha H. Khuong
People's Public Security Academy

Abstract

The transition from EFL to ESL within the higher education sector, particularly in specialized institutions or academies in Vietnam, represents a significant turning point requiring extensive structural and administrative adjustments. This presentation explores collaborative management strategies developed to implement the 'Language Community' model within the context of officer training at a specialized academy. Drawing on language policy research and the concept of expanded domains of English use, the study analyzes how this model is facilitated by coordination between the foreign language department and the training management department within the academy. This collaboration ensures that pedagogical innovations, such as curriculum redesign and the integration of professional tasks, are supported by a robust administrative framework and strategic resource allocation. The language community model creates an environment where English becomes a professional tool, encouraging learner agency and stakeholder engagement throughout the academy. By presenting a phased transition roadmap, the presentation addresses key conceptual tensions in moving toward an ESL future while ensuring pedagogical sustainability.

Literature Review

The EFL to ESL paradigm shift

The transition from an EFL to an ESL environment represents a broader "paradigm shift" in second language education, which Jacobs and Farrell (2001) describe as a departure from behaviorist, decontextualized grammar drills toward socio-cognitive, contextualized, and meaning-based views of language. In Vietnam, this shift is legally mandated by Decision No. 2371/QĐ-TTg, which requires educational institutions to build a comprehensive English language ecosystem and create the most favorable environment for English to become a second language.

The policy-practice disconnect

Despite national mandates pushing for communicative ESL, specialized academies face severe practical barriers that cause a disconnect between policy and classroom reality. The first one is "assessment paradox" identified by Baker (2021) where cadets have to prepare for related transnational security duties while still being tied to paper-based graduation benchmarks (such as multiple-choice VSTEP B1 tests). The second one is the scarcity of appropriate ESP materials. Nguyễn Thị Trang (2022) found that a critical shortage of pre-packaged law enforcement ESP textbooks, forcing instructors to become active curators of authentic documents.

Collaborative management strategies

In the context of Vietnamese higher education, the lack of this coordination is the primary cause of reform failure as stated by Huynh and Nguyen (2025). The demanding preparation time involved in implementing TBLT (task-based language teaching) and curating authentic resources intensifies the workload, ultimately resulting in teacher burnout and resistance (Duong, 2015). Resolving these tensions requires administrative support such as the Training Management Department adjusting credit-hour workloads and reforming graduation metrics and pedagogical ownership through professional learning communities (PLCs) within the Foreign Language Department.

Methodology

Participants: - 300 third-year cadets

- 19 English language teachers
- 10 training management officers
- 2 department heads

Design: parallel mixed-methods

Cadet questionnaire	- views on the redesigned curriculum - opinions on the applicability of practical tasks - challenges in adapting to the updated curriculum - key factors driving learning motivation - contentment with English clubs
Teacher Questionnaire	- readiness and assurance in selecting and designing authentic learning materials - efficiency and impact of support provided by the TM department - impact of redesigned curriculum on lesson preparation workload - perspectives on shifts in cadets' learning motivation following the implementation of the updated curriculum
Administrative Interviews	- administrative adjustments required to embed English into the academy's routine operations - resources and infrastructure provided to assist cadets with limited English proficiency in their ESL transition - efficiency of interdepartmental communication and collaboration in executing the staged transition plan

Objectives

Decision No. 2371/QĐ-TTg (2025), approved by the Prime Minister, with the scheme "Making English a second language in schools" marks a strategic paradigm shift in Vietnam's higher education policy. Despite the clear urgency of this policy, actual implementation in specialized academies frequently encounters delays. A close examination of this stagnation reveals a persistent 'institutional disconnect.' To bridge this institutional gap, this study examines the implementation of the 'Language Community' model which is designed to expand language learning beyond the traditional classroom by establishing active co-curricular spaces (such as ESP English clubs) where cadets practice English through professionally oriented tasks at a specialized public security academy. Through a parallel mixed-methods study analyzing 300 third-year ESP cadets, 19 language teachers, 10 training managers and 2 department heads, this paper evaluates how collaborative management can resolve scheduling constraints, mitigate the heavy burden of uncompensated teaching labor, and harmonize rigid assessment frameworks that currently impede communicative proficiency.

Findings and Discussion

*The quantitative survey results
for third-year cadets (N = 300)*

Survey Dimension / Item (Cadets)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)
Perceiving English as a professional tool due to task integration	4.42	0.65	88.0%	264
Feeling overwhelmed by mandatory extracurricular activities	4.65	0.52	92.0%	276
Prioritizing standardized exams (VSTEP) over speaking to graduate	4.70	0.45	94.0%	282

Survey Item (Teachers)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n)
Experiencing stress due to material vacuum and spending 10+ extra hours/week curating ESP texts	4.35	0.72	78.9%	15
Rating of physical space, technology, and specialized department cooperation	3.15	0.91	N/A	N/A

*The quantitative survey results
for foreign language teachers
(N = 19)*

The data proves that the "Language community" model successfully shifted cadets' perceptions of English. 88% (n = 264) of the 300 surveyed cadets noted that their motivation increased specifically because the language tasks mirrored their future operational duties. By aligning physical facility availability with teacher schedules, the academy successfully secured and structurally protected 3 specialized English club meetings per week for the students. Despite the high success and attendance of the clubs, analyzing the data backwards reveals a severe financial and psychological strain placed on the teachers. Institutional data analysis reveals that although English teachers are permitted to allocate 10% of their mandatory duty lecture time to facilitating these specialized clubs, this administrative adjustment does not translate into any extra financial remuneration. Another difficulty laying on the fact that despite enjoying the 3 weekly club meetings, cadets remain hyper-focused on standardized testing.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that repositioning English as an active professional resource, rather than a fixed academic subject, requires the establishment of the "language community" model. However, the model remains heavily constrained by the "assessment paradox" and the untenable burden of uncompensated workloads imposed on faculty, who currently sustain the ESL transition through personal commitment and unpaid effort rather than through equitable institutional support. Pedagogical innovation is unlikely to be sustainable until specialized academies formalize Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), modernize graduation metrics, and restructure teacher compensation to financially reward club facilitation, pedagogical innovations will remain vulnerable to collapse under the weight of faculty burnout.

References

- Baker, L. (2021). The intersection of policy and practice: Two cases of English language programs in Southeast Asian law enforcement academies. *Global Business Languages*, 21(1), 10–29.
- Duong, T. M. (2015). Implementing task-based language teaching in Vietnamese schools: What hinders teachers? *TESL-EJ*, 19(2), 1–26.
- Government of Vietnam. (2025). Decision No. 2371/QĐ-TTg: Approving the Project "Making English the second language in schools during 2025 - 2035, with a vision to 2045".
- Huynh, A. T., & Nguyen, T. H. H. (2025). Factors affecting the operation of professional learning communities of English as a foreign language teachers at Vietnamese specialized universities. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 41(1), 166–185.
- Jacobs, G. M., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2001). Paradigm shift: Understanding and implementing change in second language education. *TESL-EJ*, 5(1).
- Nguyễn, T. T. (2022). Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of using authentic materials in ESP teaching at a higher education institute in Vietnam. *Tạp chí Khoa học Ngoại ngữ*, 70, 53–65.
- Schrauf, R. W. (2002). Asymmetry in bilingual domain use. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(4), 260–277.
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy: Key topics in sociolinguistics*. Cambridge University Press.