

Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community

Phan Le Ha

Dat Bao

Joel Windle *Editors*

Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam


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Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community

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Phan Le Ha · Dat Bao · Joel Windle
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Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam

 Springer

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ISSN 2731-7552

ISSN 2731-7560 (electronic)

Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community

ISBN 978-981-99-9092-4

ISBN 978-981-99-9093-1 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1>

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Praise for Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam

“This book presents an eclectic collection of 15 chapters unified by an interest in developing and teaching the Vietnamese language. To my knowledge, there has been no previous attempt to make the national language of Vietnam a focus for as many perspectives as are documented in the book. In this regard, the book makes an original and intriguing contribution to the literature on Vietnamese culture, including the culture of Vietnam’s expanding diaspora. The book is pioneering in the extent to which it draws attention to the many roles played by a national language in a nation’s political, social and cultural development. It also documents the challenges of preserving a national language in settings where it is at risk of being marginalized. It is pleasing that so many of the contributing authors are young Vietnamese scholars who can provide a distinctly Vietnamese perspective on concepts and practices of global significance.”

—Dr. Martin Hayden, *Emeritus Professor of Higher Education, Southern Cross University, Australia*

“Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam brings together an excellent collection of chapters that highlight the diverse and important but under-explored roles the Vietnamese language plays in different settings within and outside Vietnam. The fifteen chapters of this much-needed book provide unique insights into various aspects and meanings of Vietnamese language. Collectively, the volume contributes to broadening our view about the evolution and transformation of Vietnamese language under the impacts of local, national, regional and global forces. The book invites readers to engage in a reflective and intersectional approach to rethinking and re-examining our understandings of the changes and developments of Vietnamese language over the history of the country.”

—Dr. Ly Tran, Professor, *Centre for Research for Educational Impact (REDI), Deakin University, Australia, and Founder: Australia-Vietnam International Education Centre*

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Chapter 1

Foregrounding Vietnamese Language, Education, and Change in and Outside Vietnam



Phan Le Ha

Setting the Scene

This volume, long overdue, is the very first book that pays close attention to the varied roles the Vietnamese language plays in different educational, sociocultural, political, ideological, geopolitical, and linguistic contexts and settings in global Vietnam. It recognizes and engages with major transformations and the ever-changing and expanding roles of the Vietnamese language and its associated educational matters in and outside the current Vietnam. Likewise, the volume introduces readers to many ways in which Vietnam, the Vietnamese language, and their multiple accompanying and arising meanings are established, evolve and mutate as a result of historical events and encounters, change, development, mobilities of people and ideas, globalization, and the processes of nation-building, among other factors and forces. It is important to note that this volume is mainly focused on the spread, change, education, and issues concerning the modern Vietnamese language written in the Quốc Ngữ script (the Latin script). This volume is neither about the history of the Vietnamese language nor Vietnamese linguistics. However, these aspects are referenced and discussed to varied extent in many chapters throughout the volume.

In Vietnam's history, among very important historical events and encounters leading to the massive transformation of the Vietnamese language as seen in its current form are two milestones that must be named. The first event dates back to the sixteenth century when Portuguese missionaries started to spread Christianity in parts of what is now Vietnam, followed by their invention of a Latin script to record the Vietnamese spoken language in the seventeenth century (Pham, 2019, 2023).

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_1

The second event was marked by France's invasion of Vietnam, starting in 1858, followed by its colonization of Vietnam for nearly 100 years which largely defined the fate of Vietnam and the Vietnamese language in the later part of the nineteenth century and almost the entirety of the twentieth century. During this period, important reforms took place, notably the controversial introduction of the French language and French schools to the then Vietnam that the French divided into three territories with three distinctive political and administrative arrangements, the French colonial regime's determination to end the Sinitic education system active in the then Vietnam (Altbach & Kelly, 1978; McConnell, 1988; Nguyễn, 2020), the gradual introduction of the Quốc Ngữ script into the then Vietnam's educational system, starting in 1906 alongside Chinese-medium instruction and French-medium instruction, and the Nguyen dynasty's decision to hold its very last imperial examination in 1918 while also proactively promoting the use of Quốc Ngữ and the French language (for more information, see Kelley, forthcoming).

The twentieth century was mostly associated with colonialism, imperialism, warfare, partition, various resistance movements against foreign invasion and occupation, the declining role of the Nguyen royal court—Vietnam's last royal empire, the formation of the Communist Party in 1930, the official end of Vietnam's last monarchy in 1945, President Ho Chi Minh's proclamation of the independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, the First Indochina War against the French occupation (1946–1954), the Second Indochina War (also known as the Vietnam War or the Anti-American War 1955–1975), and the unification of Vietnam in 1976 (Asselin, 2018; Đinh, 2012; Goscha, 2016; Lê, 2012; Marr, 2013).

After the reunification of Vietnam in 1976, the country continued to be at the receiving end of, as well as a player in, a series of notable internal and external political events. These include the Cold War period that last until the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989, the tension and hostility between Vietnam and China because of the border war between the two countries from 1979 to the mid-1980s, the command economy implemented throughout unified Vietnam until about the early 1990s, the almost 20-year economic sanction from America, and the game-changing Doi Moi Reform policy (economic reform) introduced in December 1986 by the Vietnamese Communist Party that enabled far-reaching changes and transformations of the society in the decades that followed. The past 35 years or so, starting in the late 1980s, have witnessed the normalization of relations between Vietnam and China in 1991, Vietnam's diplomatic normalization with America in 1995, Vietnam joining ASEAN in 1995 and joining the World Trade Organization in early 2007, Vietnam's aspirations for international integration and globalization, and the booming of the market economy under the direction of the Communist Party, all of which have enabled Vietnam to join the global economy and the world stage on all fronts (Baum, 2020; Do & Nguyễn, 2013; Gillen et al., 2021; London, 2022; Ljunggren & Perkins, 2023; Pham, 2018; Revilla Diez, 2016). These factors and forces have also resulted in remarkable transformations in Vietnam's education system, which have simultaneously inspired and formed the foundation for Vietnam's large-scale reforms and expansions of its educational sector at all levels nationwide (Duggan, 2001; Le, 2009; Le et al., 2022; London, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2020; Phan &

Doan, 2020; Tran & Marginson, 2018). Accompanying these reforms and expansions has been the changing and ever-growing role of the Vietnamese language and its associated educational matters in Vietnam—a focus of this collected volume.

At the same time, the diverse vectors of human mobilities in and out of Vietnam since the colonial time induced by the many major historical events and encounters, and by internal and external forces and factors such as the nation-building project and the processes of globalization and internationalization as briefly indicated thus far (Amer, 1994; Dorais, 1998; Hoang, 2020; Nguyen, 2015a, b; Phan, 2022; Thompson, 1952) have resulted in the widespread yet nuanced use of and attitudes towards the Vietnamese language beyond the physical border of Vietnam (Do, 2015; Hue Binh, 2023; McLeod et al., 2019; Nikolaevich, 2021; Nguyen, 2022; Tran, 2008; Tran, 2022; Yeh et al, 2015). This very phenomenon is also central to the scholarly examination highlighted in this edited book. Such phenomenon, as it showcases and embodies an angle of global Vietnam, makes the linguistic, cultural, educational, political, and ideological landscape of Vietnamese language ever more complex and omnipresent.

As shall be shown throughout the volume, Vietnamese is the national and official language of Vietnam, a country of around 100 million people by the end of 2023.¹ It is also a second language or an additional language for ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, which account for about 15% of the overall population.² According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the end of 2023, there were about 6 million Vietnamese people living and working outside Vietnam, spread over 130 countries and territories,³ making Vietnamese a heritage language in many of these places. Vietnamese is the dominant language and the medium of instruction in Vietnam's national education system as well as in community schools and is adopted by other educational providers countrywide. It is also a second language option for Vietnamese students enrolled in schools overseas and in international schools in Vietnam. Vietnamese is also one of the two media of instruction in bilingual schools and in a variety of international schools in Vietnam. Further, as a heritage language of many Vietnamese diasporic communities around the world, Vietnamese is taught in numerous community language schools globally. Likewise, Vietnamese is also included in the mainstream curriculum for public schools and is promoted in various university programs in countries where many Vietnamese live, study, and work, such as the United States, France, Australia, Russia, South Korea, and Taiwan. Specifically, commencing in 2018, Vietnamese (together with seven other Southeast Asian languages) has been taught in elementary schools in Taiwan as part of the core curriculum starting at grade 3, as officially announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/vietnam-population/>, accessed on 9 February 2024.

² [https://vietnam.opendevlopmentmekong.net/vi/topics/ethnic-minorities-and-indigenous-people/#:~:text=Vi%E1%BB%87t%20Nam%20I%C3%A0%20qu%E1%BB%91c%20gia,n%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Bc%20\(Xem%20b%E1%BA%A3ng%201\)](https://vietnam.opendevlopmentmekong.net/vi/topics/ethnic-minorities-and-indigenous-people/#:~:text=Vi%E1%BB%87t%20Nam%20I%C3%A0%20qu%E1%BB%91c%20gia,n%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Bc%20(Xem%20b%E1%BA%A3ng%201),), accessed on 9 February 2024.

³ <https://tuoitre.vn/viet-nam-dang-co-khoang-600-000-nhan-luc-chat-luong-cao-O-nuoc-ngoai-20231214182037416.htm>, accessed on 9 February 2024.

China (Taiwan).⁴ At the same time, Vietnamese is a key language for research and academic purposes for many foreign scholars and researchers specializing in Vietnamese Studies. In the context of the internationalization of Vietnam's higher education, Vietnamese is also the medium of instruction in Vietnamese-medium programs that enroll international students. Indeed, the teaching of Vietnamese to prepare international students for Vietnamese-medium programs is rising in universities in Vietnam (Mai & Chau, 2022; Phan et al., 2022). The multiple roles, functions, and positionings of Vietnamese language in and outside Vietnam as briefed here are, for the first time, brought together in this collection, making it a one-stop venue where one can be informed of and engage (with) multi-faceted scholarly interrogations that are long overdue.

The Conceptual Edge and Significance

The conceptualization of this edited volume has stemmed from a variety of scholarly aspirations and emerging scholarship. First and foremost, this volume is the very first collection that identifies, examines, and engages with Vietnamese language and its underlying educational matters in varied contexts and settings in and outside Vietnam. In this regard, the volume embeds a sense of global Vietnam, a sense that has been developed in the well-established annual academic conference series Engaging With Vietnam (EWV) and in recent EWV-informed scholarship that editor Phan Le Ha has led over the years (Gillen et al., 2021; Kelley & Sasges, forthcoming 2023; Phan & Doan, 2020; Phan et al., 2020; <http://engagingwithvietnam.org/>). Global Vietnam signifies and brings to the fore multiple meanings attached to Vietnam and the Vietnamese language. For instance, Vietnam can signify a country, a memory, a place, a homeland, and an emotional attachment. Via multimodal representations and discursive means, Vietnam and the Vietnamese language are projected, discussed, appropriated, and embraced by different actors and entities across time and space. These representations and means are often governed and shaped by specific contexts and purposes within and between communities in global Vietnam. As shall be seen throughout the volume, many roles played by and assigned to the Vietnamese language as well as many meanings associated with Vietnam inside, outside, and beyond its physical borders are illustrated, called upon, and engaged with.

By documenting and investigating multiple facets and processes of Vietnamese language education in global contexts, and by engaging with global Vietnam through the lenses of language and education, this volume breaks new ground and advances existing scholarship, which remains extremely limited and scattered (see for example, Do, 2015; Maloof et al., 2006; McLeod et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2001; Phan, 2019; Phan

⁴ https://nspp.mofa.gov.tw/nsppe/content_tt.php?post=105441&unit=&unitname=Taiwan-Today&postname=SE-Asian-languages-to-be-included-in-school-curriculum, accessed on 9 February 2024.

et al., 2014; Tran, 2008, 2021; Yeh et al., 2015). Specifically, the contributing chapters, in diverse manners and to varied extent, examine how Vietnamese is perceived, practiced, taught, learnt, institutionalized, kept, revised, politicized, personalized, and given meanings by multiple communities and actors across time, space, and contexts. The chapters take into consideration associated and broader sociocultural, linguistic, educational, ideological, and political debates in local, transnational, global, and inter-contextual settings and domains. As such, the volume also offers new analyses, insights, and on-the-ground theorizations based on which further scholarly inquiries could be enabled. In the same vein, it creates original scholarship, particularly in relation to the conceptualization of global Vietnam and global contexts as policies, practices, and performances of the Vietnamese language and educational matters unfold. For more elaborations and discussion of the many scholarly debates, aspirations, and contributions presented in the volume as a whole and in each individual chapter, see the last two chapters—Chaps. 14 and 15—of this volume.

Another very important conceptual underpinning informing this volume lies in its attempt to respond to scholarly calls to challenge hegemonic views and frameworks of globalization, particularly in terms of knowledge production and in the domain of language and education studies (see for example, Barnawi, 2018; Canagarajah, 1999; Nonaka, 2018; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phan, 2008; Phillipson, 1992, Tsui, 2020; Tupas, 2014; Windle et al., 2020). It puts Vietnam and its Vietnamese language and educational matters at the center of inquiry from a global and evolving perspective. It considers how Vietnam and Vietnamese are constructed globally and enacted in global spaces of classrooms, textbooks, student mobility, and intercultural contacts. It is one of the world's most spoken languages and is ranked among the world's top 20 in terms of the number of speakers. Yet, at the same time, as a 'peripheral' or 'southern' global language in the Global North–Global South spectrum, the dynamics of multilingual and multicultural encounters involving Vietnamese generate distinctive dilemmas and tensions, as well as point to alternative ways of thinking about global phenomena from a fresh angle. Rather than being outside of the global, Vietnamese, like many other 'non-central' global languages, is present in diasporas, commercial and transnational structures of higher education, schooling, and in the more conventional settings of primary and secondary school, in which visions of culture and language also evoke notions of heritage and tradition as well as bring to the fore deep-seated ideological conflicts across time, space, communities, and generations.

Conceptualizing a volume on the Vietnamese language and its associated educational matters must not overlook the works of those practitioners and researchers who are dedicated to this very language on a daily basis. Neither can it be acceptable to only include authors who have mainly used English in all their research, writing, and teaching. Hence, this volume features many authors who, up to this stage, have hardly published in English. Most of these authors have been conducting a good amount of research in the medium of Vietnamese. Likewise, they are also experienced published authors in Vietnamese, whose perspectives, expertise, and knowledge could be introduced, via this volume, to a more international audience. In this aspect, this volume is refreshing and original.

As the very first volume documenting and examining Vietnamese language and educational matters in varied contexts and settings in and outside Vietnam, this volume, while refreshing, is still at the early stage of making substantial scholarly contributions. Nonetheless, one has to start from somewhere, and hence this volume. Chapter 14 of this volume presents and discusses in more detail a number of contributions made by the volume and the individual chapters to knowledge and knowledge production regarding language and education, Vietnamese studies, and educational matters in global Vietnam.

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Part I
Vietnamese Language Education
and Language Issues in Diverse Contexts

Chapter 2

Literacy Education in Vietnamese Schooling System



Hang Thi-Diem Ngo , Quynh Thu Nguyen, and Robert James Smith

Abstract Vietnam at its initial announcement of independence, in 1945, had a remarkably high rate of illiteracy. The many wars that followed have contributed to slow down the government effort in delivering literacy education to its citizens. Yet, from the 1980s, Doi Moi marked the big shift in politics, economic policies, as well as educational practices. The privatization of economic factors in Doi Moi went with the liberation of social activities in other cultural fields. The late 1980s and 1990s saw the booming education market, which helped to increase the rate of literacy. Subsequently, in the second decade of twenty-first century, there has been another intensive innovation of education policies on literacy education, responding to increasing social and economic globalization. This chapter provides an overview of literacy education in modern Vietnam and brings those historical marking stones into a discussion of current challenges toward the future for Vietnamese literacy education. The chapter also unpacks current practices in the twenty-first century with some significant landmarks of development toward globalization. Taking the outline of literacy education in Vietnam to the point where it is today, the chapter shows a shift from the centralized nationalist discourse toward a more critical approach, looking outward to global standards and inter-connected settings.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_2

Introduction

Literacy is the ability to read, write, view, comprehend, discuss, create, listen, and respond in a way that enables individuals to communicate effectively (UNESCO, 2005). It also involves applying these skills to connect, discover, interpret, and understand both written and verbal information. In Vietnam, being literate, or *biết chữ*, commonly means knowing how to read and write with understanding simple sentences in one's national, ethnic, or a foreign language. The definition of being literate can be curriculum-based or subjective. For instance, the Vietnam Population and Housing Census gives the following definition:

persons were literate if they had completed grade 5 or higher or if the head of their household (or the representative of the household who was interviewed by the census collector) believed that they were currently able to read and write (Phan, Bilgin, Eyland and Shaw (2004), p. 4).

The language referred to in this definition is *Tiếng Việt* (Vietnamese), the national language of contemporary Vietnam. It belongs to the Mon-Khmer linguistic branch of the Austro-Asiatic language family and is both monosyllabic and tonal, with the number of tones varying by dialect (six in the standard Hanoi dialect, five in some southern and central regions). Vietnamese has a rich history of employing Chinese characters, vocabulary, and grammar (Sino-Nom) during the millennia when the north and northern central region of Vietnam were under Chinese domination. Subsequently, Vietnamese elites developed their own script (*chữ Nôm*), used by a small, highly educated segment of the population (Hoàng, 2007). The emergence of the Vietnamese alphabet (*chữ Quốc ngữ*), or “national language script”, in the seventeenth century, diminished the use of Sino-Nom, especially under the French colonial rule. Nevertheless, Sino-Nom remained the official written language of the Vietnamese government until the early twentieth century, when the Vietnamese alphabetic writing system was adopted as the official script, a status it retains today.¹ Thus, in Vietnam, language has been deeply intertwined with power, colonialism, bureaucracy, and elites interest, influencing national, social, and regional resistance. This historical context has led to evolving definitions of literacy, encompassing both the capacity to read and write and the broader concept of literacy education.

This chapter provides an overview of literacy education in modern Vietnam, with a particular focus on the contemporary period. It aims to trace the development of literacy education from a centralized, nationalist discourse to a more critical, globally integrated approach. The narrative begins with a brief history of literacy education in Vietnam, leading up to the modern era, and continues with an examination of literacy education following the establishment of the modern government. The chapter delves deeply into the ongoing educational reform initiatives, highlighting the shift toward global standards and interconnected education practices.

¹ More discussion on the history of writing of the Vietnamese can be found in Hoàng (2007).

Literacy Education in Vietnam: A Brief History

During the French colonial period (1861–1945), French was imposed as the language of power, leading to a decline in the use of literary Chinese (Sino-Nom), while the status of the Vietnamese language increased among the populace. This era marked the gradual replacement of Sino-Nom with the French and Vietnamese alphabetic script. The French administration's preference for using French in governance bolstered French, language education, thereby diminishing the role of Chinese characters. Concurrently, Vietnamese language education was provided to French administrative officials to facilitate policy implementation. In 1861, the French established a Vietnamese language school in Saigon, adopting *Quốc ngữ* as the medium for teaching and learning, which further supported national language education and the proliferation of Vietnamese language newspapers. By 1904, a similar French-Vietnamese educational program was introduced in the Northern region.

The colonial education system categorized schools into various levels, making the Vietnamese language a compulsory subject at the primary level. The Vietnamese Literature Program was mandated for students in elementary education (grades 6–9). At the high school levels (Baccalaureate), there was the Vietnamese Program (*Chương trình Việt văn*) was implemented in French-Vietnamese high school before 1940.² Textbooks, serving as key education materials, implicitly contained these requirements. Classroom activities were designed to facilitate comprehension and retention of textbook materials, culminating in examinations.

From the early twentieth century, numerous Vietnamese intellectuals actively participated in teaching the Vietnamese alphabetic script (*chữ Quốc ngữ*), viewing literacy as a tool to counteract colonial oppression, notably the “keep the people stupid” policy (*chính sách ngu dân*). This educational movement also enabled the exploration of Western educational paradigms, supported by the efforts of political groups like the *Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng* (Nationalist Party) and the *Đảng Cộng Sản Đông Dương* (Indochina Communist Party).

The Revolutionary State and Its Literacy Education Campaign (1945–1989)

In the process of The revolutionary leadership recognised literacy as essential for the extension of nationalist ideology. General Giáp recounted Hồ Chí Minh's curt dismissal of one of Giáp's compositions: “No peasant will understand this stuff”.³

² The elementary curriculums were selecting essays or excerpting from the poetries and old story books, or from the contemporary literature. At higher level, for example, curriculums for the first year (grade 10) include popular literature; The influence of China; The regimes of learning and examination; Texts; French influences; Language problems (Đỗ 2019).

³ Stanley Karnow, Giap Remembers, The New York Times Magazine, Section 6, page 22, <https://nyti.ms/29jUgjm>.

Consequently, in 1940, the Việt Minh Đồng Minh Hội (Việt Minh) announced a commitment to eradicate illiteracy through compulsory primary education. This initiative was central to the political agenda of the Viet Minh, aiming to strategically educate communist ideology, to win the hearts of the people, and foster unity among ethnic minorities.

Following the 1945 Declaration of Independence and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the new government continued its policy against illiteracy, prioritized nationwide literacy programs. Literacy education was to be conducted under the will of the Central Party and the decisions of the government, aimed for mass education (Malarney, 2012), and the ambitious goal of universal education, or *education for all*. Over time, the campaigns became more sophisticated and extensive. New methods were adopted to address the challenges of school attendance and the retention of literacy skills among the populace.

The first literacy campaign spanned from 1945 to 1954, starting immediately after Vietnam declared independence. On September 3, 1945, Ho Chi Minh initiated the fight against “illiterate enemy”. This was followed by the launch of a mass education movement on September 8. In 1945, the Central Party outlined *Đề cương văn hóa Việt Nam* (Outline Propaganda for Vietnamese Culture) which set the task of building “Vietnamese for all” (tiếng Việt toàn dân) and education in Vietnamese for the masses. The government then issued three continuous executive orders to: (1) establish *Nha bình dân học vụ*, known as the Administration Institute of Mass Education, (2) mass education classes to be established in every village, and (3) compulsory literacy education for individuals aged eight and older.

The anti-illiteracy campaign was intertwined with the national call for “fighting against the invaders” (Appeal for National Resistance, known as “Lời kêu gọi toàn quốc kháng chiến” in 1946), emphasizing the strategic importance of education in the political landscape of the newly established nation-state. President Ho Chi Minh himself launched the campaign, his statement clearly linked the literacy situation with the life of a nation:

“An Illiterate Nation is a Weak Nation,

... Eradicating the Illiteracy Issue is One of the Urgent Tasks of the New Democracy Nation States”.

His saying about fighting against illiteracy became a popular lesson for the Vietnamese masses, asserting that eliminating illiteracy was crucial for the development of a democratic nation:

“Every Vietnamese needs to know their right, having knowledge and participate in the national building project, the first and foremost task is to be able to read and write Vietnamese.”

In subsequent years, the top-down educational initiatives included the Directive of Central Party in 1948, a “Call for patriotic competition”, which associated the eradication of illiteracy with patriotism. Efforts to expand educational infrastructure led to the creation of new primary and secondary schools, and the reconstruction of universities (1949). In 1950, the Department of Art and Literature was established within

the Ministry of Education, highlighting the government's commitment to comprehensively educational development, including prioritizing Vietnamese language education for both Kinh and the ethnic minority students.⁴

After the first campaign, Vietnam witnessed a remarkable surge in literacy rate (Fraser, 1993). Before World War II, the illiteracy rate was between 80–95%. After three months implementing the first campaign, by the end of 1945, it was reported that 22,100 classes were successfully organized, with more than 30,000 teachers teaching more than 500,000 people. By the close of 1946, the number rose to 75,000 classes, 95,000 teachers, and 2.5 million learners. By 1952, literacy had reached 10 million rural inhabitants, and by the decade's end, the literacy rate for individuals aged 12 to 50 soared to 93.4%. The period of 1955–1975 saw the North and South manage literacy education separately due to political divisions. Under the Southern political regime, *Ngữ văn*, a Vietnamese language curriculum was designed in 1957. This curriculum emphasized comprehensive linguistic fluency and cultural appreciation, which was “to let students understand their mother tongue fluently and fully, speak and write fluently, transparently, accurately, elegantly and purely; After all, thanks to that language, people can train their character and aesthetic appeal” (Ministry of Education, 1957).⁵ Then in 1970–1971, the revised curriculum was introduced, focusing on enhancing literacy appreciation and linguistic skills, aiming to deepen the understanding of national literature: “the main point is to help students know how to listen, speak, read, write, enjoy literature to promote aesthetic appeal, enrich feelings, and understand the general outline of the national literature's background in terms of words, art and thought” (Ministry of Education, 1971).

In the North, the second literacy campaign (1956–1958) coincided with “the new period of revolution” (Alexander, 1983), prioritizing educational materials and facility enhancement⁶ to improve the quality of education.⁷ Post-reunification in 1975, the third literacy education campaign happened in 1976. As the Northern government gained control over the whole country, their educational model was extended to the South,⁸ focusing on educating revolutionary cadres and the youth involved in the protracted resistance efforts. This period marked a significant effort to elevate educational standards and eradicate illiteracy across Vietnam.

⁴ Ban Bí thư [Party Committee Board], 1952, Directive dated August 16, 1952 on the implementation of the policies for ethnic minority.

⁵ For this curriculum, the structure of the curriculum consists of the majority: Opening introduces the purpose of the lecture; and shows how to choose the works. Curriculum's structure is also mentioned to Reference books. After the outline of the generalization, it is necessary to specify the specific contents for each class with two items: Works and Prose, only naming the text (Đỗ 2019).

⁶ Ban Bí thư [Party Committee Board], 1962, *Directive no. 54-CT/TU*.

⁷ Ban Bí thư [Party Committee Board], 1969, *Directive of the Party Secretary Board no.*

⁸ TŨ Đảng [Central Party], 1975, *Directive no. 221-CT/TU. Chỉ thị của TŨ Đảng phát về công tác giáo dục ở miền Nam [Directive of the Central Party about the Education Practices in Southern Vietnam]*.

The *Đổi Mới* Spirit and Reformation Processes of Literacy Education in Contemporary Vietnam

Starting in 1981, Vietnam's education system faces pressures from economic and financial shift towards a market-based and globally integrated economy. These changes led to increased inequality affecting various groups, including ethnic minorities, prompting discussions about the decline in socialist values, "socialist ideology, morality and personality in the Party and in society" due to the failure of the centrally planned economy (Đảng, 2007). The inequality generated conflicts and competition among social groups, especially among ethnicities (Pelley, 1998; Salemink, 2003; Taylor, 2002, 2008; Ủy ban, 2011). The *Đổi Mới* reforms transformed educational policies, emphasizing the need for education to develop a workforce with both cultural and technical knowledge, disciplined and creative, to meet the evolving demands of the economy, as said in the Party's document: "train a contingent of working people endowed with cultural and technical knowledge, with a high sense of discipline and creativeness, rationally distributed among different trades and branches, and thereby meeting the need for the social division of the workforce" (Đảng, 2007).

Success in the reduction of poverty and improvements in national health laid a stronger foundation for education reforms. In 1989, the National Committee for the Eradication of Illiteracy was established, later renamed in 1992 as the National Committee on Education for All, signifying a broader commitment to inclusive education.

The Committee aimed to drastically reduce illiteracy, especially targeting the 15–35 age group, planning to reduce 50% of the illiteracy number and to enhance access to primary education for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 1993, further reform were enacted to revitalize education and training, with the government adopting a Communist Party decision, highlighting education as the "driving force and basic condition for the realization of socio-economic objectives", and prioritizing educational investment as one of the principal directions of investments for development. Efforts focused on eliminating illiteracy among youths aged to 15, and adult from 15 to 35. It would do this through a redefinition of education content, methodology, and accessibility, particularly in difficult and remote regions.

A 1994 UNICEF report recognized Vietnam's commitment to education, noting the government's educational interest and its strategic plans for achieving universal literacy and primary education, both under the motto of "education for all". The government introduced three types of curricula to cater the diverse needs of the population: a standard curriculum of 165 weeks over 5 years for most children, a 120-week curriculum for children from ethnic minorities or those in remote or mountainous areas, and finally a 100-week curriculum for children with particular difficulties caused by disability, impoverishment or limited access to education. The design aimed for comprehensive literacy within 3 years of schooling. To attain universal primary education, stringent benchmarks were set, such as each province, commune or village had to eradicate illiteracy for 90% of its people in

the 15–35 age group, 90% of 6-year old going to school, 90% of first year enrollment would continue to the fifth year, and 90% of 15-year old would complete primary education. Through these goals, literacy was seen as a fundamental right and a cornerstone for personal and national development.

Central Control Model of Literacy Education in Contemporary Vietnam

The common curriculum with rigid outcome measures in contemporary Vietnam set a uniform standard across all general schools. To facilitate this, a specific institute within the Department of Education was tasked with writing textbooks. These textbooks, written in Vietnamese, included literature appropriate for each educational level. Additionally, a wealth of reference books was produced to support the demands of teaching.

This centralized model of literacy education in Vietnam represented a significant shift from the more flexible approach used during the time 1945–1975, and continuing until 1989. The earlier approach was flexible, prioritized the basic literacy skills, and was deeply intertwined with the communist state’s ideology, reflecting Vietnam’s national identity. Initially, this method primarily benefited a small, educated elite, leaving the broader population with limited access to education. As time progressed, the necessity for a more inclusive educational strategy became apparent. The government, acknowledging the limitations of the previous system, moved towards a centralized model. This change aimed to democratize education, ensuring broader participation and alignment with the communist party’s vision of equitable and comprehensive education for all Vietnamese citizens.

Achievements and Shortages

The aims expressed in legislation were always high, as we would expect from lawmakers who had such a strong commitment to the benefits of improved national literacy.

A survey of achievements in literacy over the most recent 30 years gave a sense of the overall situation as well as the challenges confronting those lawmakers. In February 1992, the National Committee on Education for All concluded that eight cities and provinces out of 53 had reached the national standard for recognition in the struggle against illiteracy.

It was reported that for adults aged between 15 and 35 in Vietnam, the literacy rate increased from 86.1% in 1990 to 95.6% in 1998 (Education for All in Vietnam (1990–2000)). In some regions, the increase was much greater—in the Northeast from 68 to 93%, in the North West from 52 to 84%, and in the Central Highlands from

53 to 88%. These figures were derived from reports of the National Committee for Literacy, the Continuing Education Department, and the Ministry of Education and Training.

Figures for 1993 showed that about 15% of primary age children did not attend school. This became well over 50% in the most remote ethnic areas. The dropout rate over the whole country was about 12%, and 11% of primary age children had to repeat one or more years. Only about 60% of children who began grade 1 completed primary education in the standard time. Vietnam's problem was not just to get as many children as possible to start school, it was also necessary to keep them there and to ensure smooth progression through the grades. Again, substantial improvements were evident in the figures for 1995, which showed the dropout rate for Vietnam had fallen to 6.93% and the repetition rate to 5.09%.

By 1995, in urban and surrounding areas, about 80% of the 15–35-year-old group had completed primary education and roughly 94% were literate, with an “average mean schooling level of 9.5 years”. The National Committee's figure of 9.5 years did not correspond with the State Planning Committee, which reported that children attended school for an average of 5.4 years (7.49 years in urban areas and 4.96 in rural areas).

Up to 2000 classes to teach basic literacy had been established, catering for 70,000 people. There are no comparative figures to show the size of the increase, but it can be assumed these classes did not exist when the campaign started in the early 1990s. There are also no comparative figures showing what reduction had occurred in the estimated two million people in the 15–35 years age group who were illiterate in 1991. These figures must be offset against the rates for children in remote ethnic groups, which are extremely low. In Lao Cai, only 12.6% of the school aged children attended school, and in Son La, 7.7%. Only about 6–10% of those in the 15–35-year-old age group in all remote areas were described as literate. The problem is multifaceted, as the areas cannot be reached easily and if the effort is made, education becomes expensive. Alternatively, in impoverished areas, locals cannot afford to establish their own primary schools or to attract good teachers, and many ethnic people do not see the value of education. Impressively, in 2011, male literacy was at 95.8% and female literacy was at 91.4% (Malarney, 2012, pp. 83–84). Yet, these numbers vary depending on region, gender, and ethnicity. A key highlight of these differences is the matter of literacy education for ethnic minorities.

Since 2014, the Government of Vietnam has recommitted to its position by issuing many policies to promote education universalization and illiteracy eradication. The policies aim to strengthen Vietnamese language for preschool children and primary school students in ethnic minority areas. The results of a survey conducted by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs and the General Statistics Office in 2019 across more than 56,400, villages in ethnic minority communes nationwide showed that more than 1.4 million children aged 5 to 9 years in ethnic minority areas had access to primary school; among these, the ethnic groups with the largest number of children of primary school age were Tay, Thai, Khmer, Muong, Mong, and Nung (Ủy ban dân tộc, 2015).

As of the 2019 report, the percentage of children going to school at the appropriate age at all levels has increased, the percentage of ethnic minority (EM) children of general school age who do not attend school has decreased in half, from 26.4% in 2009 to 15.5% in 2019 (Ủy ban dân tộc, 2019). However, the survey results also show that significant limitations remain in terms of inequalities in children's access to education across regions, especially for children of ethnic minorities in mountainous areas. Ethnic minority children still face difficulties in accessing literacy, so illiteracy among children has not been completely eliminated. The rate of older children not attending primary school is 3.1%; it is 18.4% for lower secondary school, and 53% with high school (ibid.). In general, around 80.9% of ethnic minorities aged 15 and over can read and write (Ủy ban dân tộc, 2019).

From 2012 to 2020, MoET conducted the project “Building a learning society”. Of the four main goals, the report claims that the project has achieved two major goals: “Eradication of illiteracy and education universalization”, “Learning to improve life skills, building happier individual and community lives”. All provinces and cities have achieved level 1 illiteracy eradication standards, while 34/63 have reached level 2 illiteracy eradication standards; localities have organized illiteracy eradication for over 300,000 people aged 15–60. The number of women who are literate is high, helping the gender balance index to almost reach the absolute balance. Among the newcomers to the position, more than 90% continue to study (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2021). For the period of 2021–2030, the Project on “Building a Learning Society” aims to form an open, flexible, and interconnected education system, ensuring that by 2030, all people have equal access to education for quality lifetime.

Emerging Changes and Challenges for the Literacy Education in Vietnam

In line with global trends, Vietnam is deepening its international integration, influenced by rapid advancements in science and technology, educational science, and the competition global landscape. This context necessitates educational reform to keep pace with international standards (Vietnam Update, 2011).

Responding to these needs, in June 2012, the Vietnamese government issued the *Strategies for education 2011–2020* (Chính phủ, 2012) analyzing the limitation in educational practices, and outlining a comprehensive reform plan to overhaul education management, teacher training, curriculum content, teaching methods, assessment, and resources allocation. On November 4, 2013, the 8th Conference of the XI Central Executive Committee issued Resolution 29-NQ/TW, further solidified this commitment, advocating for fundamental and comprehensive change in education and training to support the country's industrialization and modernization within a socialist-oriented market economy and global integration. The two central issues of innovation being mentioned were: (1) strongly focusing on shifting from education

for knowledge impartment to education for quality and capacity; (2) changing, reorganizing education based on the requirements of learners' personality and capacity development. In short, this reformation spirit saw education addressing the human resource requirement of contemporary society.

In its implement process, the Ministry of education and Training (MoET) initiated a pilot reform in 2013 (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2013), leading to a significant directive from the Central Party to intensively reform the teaching and training system, aligning with the nation's industrialization and modernization agenda in global integration, market-oriented economy (Ban chấp hành TƯ Đảng, 2013). This led to the proposal of school textbooks reformation in the National Assembly of Vietnam (Quốc Hội, 2014). Taking on board the proposal, the Ministry of Education introduced a new national education curriculum, aimed at transforming teaching practices, learning assessment, educational materials, and overall schooling management. This new curriculum, especially in language and literacy, is crucial for literacy education, setting the stage for substantial educational advancement in Vietnam. It marks a significant step toward modernizing the Vietnamese education system, aligning it more closely with global standards and the evolving needs of the country's socioeconomic development. The following part unfolds a part of the new national education curriculum that focus on literacy education via subject curriculum of Vietnamese language and literature.

Reformation to Be Continued: The General Education Curriculum and Its New Phase of Literacy Education

In 2018, MoET officially approved the new national education curriculum (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2018a), after many times of drafting, collecting comments and refining; the official document, known as Circular No. 32/2018/TT-BGDĐT in December 26, 2018, included the subject curriculum for Vietnamese language and literature.

As part of this, the new curriculum of language and literature was also issued. Compared with the current Literature Program (2006), the new document required the achievement of three main goals: (1) to provide students with general, basic, modern, systematic knowledge of language (focus on Vietnamese) and literature (focus on Vietnamese literature), suitable for age development and human resource training requirements in the period of industrialization and modernization; (2) literature subjects form and develop students' competencies in using Vietnamese, receiving literature, perceiving aesthetics; learning methods, ideas, especially self-study methods; the ability to apply what they have learned to life; and (3) literature fosters students' love of the Vietnamese language, culture, and literature; love of family, nature, country; national pride; self-reliance and self-reliance; socialist ideal; the spirit of democracy and humanity; educating students about civic responsibility, a spirit of international friendship and cooperation, a sense of respect and promotion

of the cultural values of the nation and humanity (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2018b, p. 5).

Literacy education is designed as the main task in the subject curriculum of Vietnamese language and literature (it is called *Vietnamese* in primary curriculum, and *Language and Literature* in secondary and high school curriculum) (ibid., p. 1). Besides the old criteria of providing knowledge, attitude education, and emotion to students, the new curriculum highlights the requirement to implement an interdisciplinary approach in content design, and a communication capacity focus in the outcome (ibid., p.4). It is worth noting that the previous 2006 curriculum did not give the same priority to learners' capacity, but more to the content of knowledge.

The second highlight of the new curriculum is its openness spirit in limiting the outcome on required standards of skills and knowledge, but not limiting the input choices. This significant change will finalise the era of one curriculum—one textbook system in Vietnamese national schooling. It also gives a certain level of freedom for school leadership and teachers in choosing the textbook and related teaching materials. In the implementation process, MoET has diversified the compilation of textbooks. New textbook standards are issued together with MoET's Circular No. 33/2017/TT-BGDĐT dated December 22, 2017. Instead of having only one set of textbooks as before, now there are different books from different expert groups and publishing presses.

In 2020, for the first time, five series of textbooks for grade 1 have been used in Vietnamese schools. They are (1) For the equality and democracy in Education (Vi sự bình đẳng và dân chủ trong giáo dục) (Education Publishing Press); (2) Connecting knowledge to life (Kết nối tri thức với cuộc sống) (Education Publishing Press); (3) The horizon of creation (Chân trời sáng tạo) (University of Education Press, HCMC); (4) Knives (Cánh Diều) (Education Publishing Press); (5) Learn together to develop capacities (Cùng học để phát triển năng lực) (Education Publishing Press). Schools and local authorities can consider their own priorities to decide the textbook they want.

Literature is a compulsory subject in the field of Language and Literature Education, studied from grade 1 to grade 12. In primary school, this subject is Vietnamese, with 35 weeks per year and the number of lessons specified for each grade level: 1st grade (420 h), 2nd grade (350 h), 3rd grade (280 h), 4th grade (245 h), 5th grade (245 h). In middle school and high school, this subject is Literature, with each school year lasting 35 weeks, 140 lessons for middle school, and 105 for high school. In addition, there are 35 elective topics (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2018b).

The Literature subject program is part of the system with the General Education Program, in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are core and maintained across three levels. The curriculum is designed to be “dynamic” and “open”. This subject also has the advantage of forming and developing students' language ability and literary ability. Objectives of this subject at the primary level focus on instrumentality (language competence); at the lower secondary level, it balances language ability and literary capacity (basic); at the high school level, it focuses on differentiation and literary competence (vocational orientation). Compared with the previously implemented Literature Program (2006), the 2018 Literature Program has

many changes in objectives, approaches, principles of program development, requirements to be achieved, teaching content, teaching methods, and assessing learning outcomes. The following parts will focus on understanding and analyzing two main contents related to the change of this program: teaching methods and testing and assessment of learning outcomes.

Critical Changes in Teaching Methods

The General Education Program's approach emphasizes shifting from content-based teaching to capacity development. The subject of Literature incorporates these common requirements. Specifically, there are four highlights: (1) Promote the activeness of learners; (2) Integrated and differentiated teaching; (3) Diversify teaching methods, forms and means; and (4) Promote the positive, proactive, creative in learning and applying knowledge and skills of students. Teachers must choose methods and forms of teaching organization that are suitable for the development of key qualities and competencies for their particular students; At the same time, it is also necessary to focus on promoting the initiative and creativity of students. A focus on teaching methods for the subject is designed in the program in skills, including methods of teaching reading; methods of teaching writing and methods of teaching speaking and listening.

Methods of Teaching Reading

According to the Editor-in-Chief of the General Education Program in Literature (Do Ngoc Thong, 2019), the main purpose of teaching reading in high schools is to help students learn to read and read texts themselves; through fostering and educating the quality and personality of students. Reading objects include literary texts and informational texts. Each type of text has its own characteristics, so it is necessary to have an appropriate way to teach reading comprehension.

Depending on the audience of students in each class and the genre of the text, teachers apply appropriate methods, techniques and forms of teaching reading comprehension such as: expressive reading, reading role-playing, story-telling, role-playing to solve a situation, act out a play, use questions, guide notes in the reading process with note cards, study sheets, reading diaries, organize students to discuss texts, draw pictures, make movies, experience situations that characters have experienced... Some other teaching methods such as dialogue, question and answer, lecture, problem-solving can also be applied appropriately according to the development requirements and capacity building for students.

Methods of Teaching Writing

In addition to technical writing and correct spelling, the important purpose of teaching writing in the subject of Literature is to train thinking and writing, thereby educating the quality and developing the personality of students. Therefore, when teaching writing, teachers need to focus on the requirements of generating ideas and knowing how to present ideas in a coherent, creative and persuasive manner.

Teaching writing at the primary level, according to Do Ngoc Thong, has two requirements: teaching writing techniques and teaching paragraph and text writing. At the middle and high school levels, teachers ask students to perform more complex tasks such as: gathering information from sources for writing; discussing and analyzing the article evaluation criteria; know how to self-edit to improve the article and reflecting after each writing task.

Methods of Teaching Speaking and Listening

The purpose of teaching speaking and listening is to help students have the ability to express and present in spoken language clearly and confidently; have the ability to understand correctly; respecting speakers and listeners; Have a suitable attitude in exchange and discussion. Teaching speaking and teaching listening not only develops communication capacity but also educates students' self-esteem and personality.

Teachers can guide students to observe and analyze samples; guide how to organize for speaking practice. Students can prepare and present to the group or class in speaking exercises. When teaching listening, teachers guide students on how to grasp the listening content, how to understand and evaluate the views and intentions of the speaker; how to check for unknown information; to have a positive listening attitude and respect for speakers, respect for different opinions; and to know how to cooperate, solve problems with a positive attitude.

For interactive listening and speaking skills, teachers can guide students to listen and know how to ask questions to understand listening content, to speak in turn in conversations, to know how to use other audio-visual means to support oral presentation.

Do Ngoc Thong (2019) also gives four points to note about the method of teaching the subject as follows: (1) the priority of teaching is to develop learners' capacities, especially language and literary competence; (2) the selection of teaching methods and techniques should be flexible and contextualized; (3) the teaching quality should go with whole school approach; and (4) the application of teaching methods should be creative and innovative.

As for the content of Vietnamese language teaching appearing in the new Middle School Program, Do Ngoc Thong (2021) commented on the emphasis on communicative approach, focusing on abilities to apply the knowledge to life circumstances.

Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2022b) has also issued a document guiding more specifically on the innovation of teaching methods of Literature in high schools. The official dispatch clearly states that it is necessary to renew the teaching and learning methods of Literature subject in several points such as to (1) further enhance the students' positivity, initiative, and creativity in the process of studying; and (2) develop lesson plans that prioritize the application of learners' capacity through learning inside and outside the classroom.

Thus, in terms of teaching methods, an important point in the transformation of the 2018 Program compared to previous programs is the shift from content-oriented teaching/knowledge transfer to a capacity-oriented approach. Teachers focus on organizing activities to facilitate learning where the teaching content is designed to be branched, with division by level and capacities of learners. Hence, learners have many opportunities to express their opinions and to participate in productive criticism.

Critical Changes in Assessment and Evaluation

Examination and assessment in education is an important part of educational management. Evaluation is the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information about the object to be assessed, thereby understanding, and making necessary decisions about the object. Testing is a way of organizing evaluation. This is also an integral part of the teaching process and an important tool for teachers. The general purpose of testing and assessment is to provide information to make teaching and educational decisions (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2020).

The Literature Program determines the assessment of educational results to provide accurate, timely, and valuable information on the level of satisfaction required for the quality, capacity and progress of students in the subject. Then there are guidelines for learning activities, adjustment of teaching activities, program management and development, to ensure the progress of each student and improving the quality of education.

Teachers assess both the general and specific capacities (language competence and language arts competence) (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2018b). Assessment should combine both quantitative and qualitative forms, through tests (reading, writing, speaking, listening).

Assessment of reading comprehension activities: requirements to understand the content and topics of the text; the writer's point of view and intention, identifying characteristics of the mode of expression (type of text, language used).

Evaluation of writing activities: ask students to create types of texts like narrative, descriptive, expressive, elements of argumentative text, some types of explanatory and applied text. The assessment of writing skills is based on major criteria such as: content, writing structure, ability to express and argue, language form and presentation.

Assessment of speaking and listening activities: ask students to say the right topics and goals; the speaker's confidence and dynamism; pay attention to the listener; be

able to argue and persuade, have appropriate speaking techniques, know how to use non-verbal communication and assistive technology.

For listening skills, ask students to grasp the content spoken by others, grasp and evaluate the speaker's point of view and intention; know how to ask questions, raise problems, exchange information to check unclear information; have a positive listening attitude and respect the speaker; listen to and respect differing opinions.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Training (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2020) also emphasizes the quality assessment integrated in the assessment of language ability: focusing on behaviors, jobs, behaviors, and expressions of language ability. students' attitudes and feelings when reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is conducted mainly by qualitative, through observations, notes, comments.

Assessment in Literature is designed in two ways: formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is carried out continuously throughout the teaching process by the teacher. For formative assessment, teachers can choose various forms, such as: observing and taking notes about students, students answering questions or giving presentations, writing analysis, writing summaries, and collecting projects and doing research exercise, etc. The forms of summative assessment include teachers evaluate students, students evaluate each other and students' self-assessment. These forms may include multiple choice questions, essays, test cards. Along side this, teachers must assess students' learning attitudes.

In the national curriculum, teachers are given suggestions on forms of assessment, like written tests, presentations, question and answer method, learning profile, and alternate learning products (ibid.). MoET issues the Training Manual for Secondary School Teachers in which specific instructions and suggestions for teachers are built in a matrix including relevant assessment specifics such as duration, number of questions, question format, knowledge area, ability level of each question, among others (Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào tạo, 2022a).

The new General Education Program and its Literature Program highlights the competency approach in assessment design. This is a significant shift of focus from assessment knowledge through memory check to evaluating the ability to apply and solve practical problems with higher-order and creative thinking. Hence, assessment has shifted from being seen as an independent activity after teaching to become integrated into the teaching process, even as a teaching method.

Concluding Discussion: Toward Global Standards and Inter-connected Settings

The significant shift in the new General Education Program resulted from a long process of the Vietnamese educational reforming stakeholders' interactions with forces and sources outside of Vietnam, evident in its decades of opening policies after Doi Moi, and the increase integration into global debates of literacy education

through the engagements of multinational organizations and many other international partnerships in education.

As stated by Nguyen Minh Thuyet, the general editor of the new general education program, this reformative document has been planned for a decade, with the work of intensive team base on the national context, international guidelines and lessons learnt from many education reform agenda in developed countries (Nguyen 2019).

One key guideline underpinned for the writing of the new general education program is about competencies approach. For example, the *Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* issued by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) has been used together with Europe's *Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning—A European Reference Framework* (2006). The idea of applying technology into education reformation is also adopted from World Economic Fund's *New Vision for Education: Unlocking the Potential of Technology* (WEF, 2015).

During the writing process, Vietnamese scholars have reached out to examples of national curriculum in developed countries for critical comparison studies. As explained in the section about the introduction of five new textbooks collections, each team has their own clarification of how they come up with their education ideology implied in their textbooks. For example, Do Ngoc Thong (2019) provides detailed samples of the Language Arts curriculum of US states, Australia, and the UK, as the comparison for his justification of changes in the Language and Literature Program in the Vietnamese new general education program.

While the constructing process has involved many interactions with international forces and sources, the implementation practices of this new general education program have been shaped in the inter-connectedness of dynamic national subjectivities, such as the teachers, education managers, parents, and students, as well as social media critics from a more general audience.

Only a few months into teaching with the new books, there are already various criticisms from media about certain books. Some teachers were not confident with the new textbook (Mạnh Tùng, 2020), some parents commented that the book price is higher than average (VTV, 2020), some media claim that there are mistakes of content in some textbooks (Thanh Nam, 2020). Together these responses reveal that there are limitations in implementing the new policy and the reform model of education. In 2020, while any new policy will have unexpected problems, with the emergence and spread of COVID-19, there were even more delays, for example, in training for teacher and school leadership (Tuệ Nguyễn, 2020). While there have been several options for textbook, the issue of teaching literacy for ethnic minority students is still under researched, both in Vietnamese and in their mother languages. In addition to that, there has been limited integration of ethnic culture and values into the national textbooks. While there are many changes, there are also numerous challenges for literacy education in contemporary Vietnam. There are still unseen challenges that teachers, school, students, and the system are facing in implementation of the new program and the new textbooks. All the challenges and difficulties above are just the observation of initial implementation. As the reform journey will be a decade long, no one can predict all of the struggles ahead. However, there are also positive comments

that the reform is on the right direction, promoting education for integration and development (Trung Hieu, 2020).

Leaving analysis of the implementation practices for further research, this chapter has illustrated the pathway to the present of literacy education in Vietnam in its modern history. From the switch to *quốc ngữ* instead of French or Sino Nom, the establishment of education administration institutions, to the conduct of literacy campaigns an education reform, it can be said that the twentieth century has witnessed the fundamental establishment of modern literacy education in Vietnam (Duggan, 2001).

The chapter also unpacks current practices in the twenty-first century with some significant landmarks of development toward globalization. Taking the explanation of literacy education in Vietnam to the point where it is today, the chapter has shown a shift from the centralized nationalist discourse toward a more critical approach outreaching to global standard and inter-connected settings.

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Chapter 3

Institutional Transformation for Internationalization: The Making of National Language Program in Higher Education in Contemporary Vietnam



Hang Thi-Diem Ngo and Trong-Nghia Tran

Abstract This chapter looks at the institutional transformation of higher education institutions (HEIs) through the case study of the program training Vietnamese language for international students in contemporary Vietnam. The investigation focuses on a HEI in the South of Vietnam, the birth and development of its Vietnamese Studies program, in which the role of Vietnamese language education has been key to the department's success. The study is set in the context of post- *Doi Moi* opening, with the surge of market-based economic, social mobility and globalization, evident in the increase of international student mobility to Vietnam. The chapter unpacks the practices of HEI who put effort in changing for good, including curriculum development, textbook writing, research collaboration, leadership innovation, and so on. Framing and linking these practices with the larger economic and social movements, the chapter highlights the creative and active agency of Vietnamese HEIs and their teachers in embracing the change and accommodating the demand of language education from those who come to Vietnam for work, travel, or education. Yet, it also points out the challenges of change and the stress on implementing changes. The chapter reveals how institutions can position themselves for opportunities and success through institutional transformation. It argues that HEIs in Vietnam can be proactive agents in conducting transformation for internationalization with the use of its national language programs. Despite the dual nature of these practices, it opens up the opportunities for a much more globally connected education system, where an emerging country like Vietnam can amplify its voice.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_3

Introduction

The issues of languages of instruction and language of knowledge development are constant focuses of research on the internationalization of higher education (HE) in contemporary Asia, in relation to students' mobilities and HE transformations (Collins & Ho, 2018; Ha & Fry, 2021). On the one hand, English has been established as a dominant language contributing to the internationalization of HE in Asia, with many countries implementing policies to enhance English (Ha, 2013). On the other hand, Asian language programs for international students are also thriving. For example, countries like China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand, to name just some, have developed national language entry requirements for international students (IS) pursuing higher education in these countries, using their national languages as medium of instruction. This trend has opened other options for the internationalization of HE. Higher education internationalization, with no dependent on, and no offense to, the rise of English used as the dominant medium of instruction.

In the case of Vietnam, the context of Doi Moi implementation has brought about abundant of changes to the landscape of its higher education, now influenced by opened market policies, global integration, and internationalization tendencies. From the perspective of education languages, it is the rise of central languages like English, influenced by Western values, and its impact on local languages and cultures.

Previous research on HE in Vietnam post-Doi Moi have initially mentioned changes in HE policies to develop curriculum to a "socialist-oriented market economy" and respond to the call of economic and cultural integration (Huong & Fry, 2004). Investigations have presented top-down factors in governmental strategies for education development, Education Law and Higher Education Law. There are also interpretations of how higher education institutions moved away from Soviet influence models to Western ones. These include the rise of English as the dominant medium of instruction for exchange education, co-training programs, and internationalized programs (Phan & Doan, 2020).

In the context of the internationalization of Vietnam's higher education system, Vietnamese is also the medium of instruction in Vietnamese-medium programs that enroll international students. Indeed, the teaching of Vietnamese to prepare international students for Vietnamese-medium programs is a significant part of some universities in Vietnam. Yet, the role of Vietnamese in current dynamic picture of higher education in Vietnam is not yet well investigated.

This chapter specially looks at Vietnamese and the education of the official language of Vietnam to its international students, to see how it is constructed and enacted in the national practices of internationalization in higher education. It does this by investigating the policies of language education to IS, and the institutionalization of the programs in HEIs in Vietnam. It focuses on one case study of a self-perceived successful internationalized program of Vietnamese Studies in a university in Ho Chi Minh City.

An Overview of the Education Programs *Vietnamese for Foreigners*

Vietnamese is the national and official language of Vietnam. It is the first language of about 85% of Vietnam's population and serves as a second language for ethnic minority communities in Vietnam. Vietnamese is the dominant language and the medium of instruction in Vietnam's national education system. For people with other linguistic backgrounds, coming from other territories to Vietnam to learn Vietnamese for living, working and education purpose, Vietnamese is taught to them as an additional language.

The term *Vietnamese for foreigners* mentioned in this article refers to all type of language education courses for speakers of other linguistic backgrounds, aiming to provide them with the knowledge and skills to use Vietnamese as a foreign language. The teaching of Vietnamese to people coming from other territories and other linguistic backgrounds is not new, if not saying that it is as old as the history of foreign exchanges of the Viet population. Leaving aside the complicated history of teaching and learning Vietnamese with its Sino Nom script, the following part provides a historical summary of the teaching of Vietnamese with its Romanized writing system.

Before 1945—The Spread of Religion by the West and the Domination of French in Vietnam

The need to learn Vietnamese in this early period was mainly for the purposes of religious propagation and colonial rule. The most obvious impression of foreigners learning Vietnamese started in the seventeenth century, associated with the birth of Chữ Quốc ngữ—a script crafted by Western missionaries to facilitate the spread of Catholicism in Vietnam. To do this effectively, they learn Vietnamese. “In order to spread their religion, Western missionaries needed a means to communicate with native speakers. The first task they undertook was learning Vietnamese” (Giap, 2006).

During the French domination (beginning in 1858), the French used Vietnamese as a medium of communication. Consequently, they carried out the teaching of Vietnamese to French administrative officials. In 1861, they established a Vietnamese language school in Saigon to train French interpreters, and Chữ Quốc ngữ was chosen as the medium of instruction.

During the Japanese occupation (1940–1945), a number of Japanese scholars were sent to Vietnam to learn the language and to study the country. Imprints left from this period include research works and Vietnamese teaching textbooks (the language was called Annamese during this time): *Annamese dialogue* by Taichi in 1941; *Anamese Conversation* by Nobukazu and Tsuneo in 1941; Matsumoto's *Introduction to Annamese* was published by the Indochina Research Association in 1942, Scholar

Kin Eiken compiled *Japanese–French–Annam conversational dictionary* in 1942 (Masaaki, 2019).

The Period of the Two Governments, North and South Vietnam: 1945–1975

Since 1945, Vietnamese became the national language, but during this period, Vietnam had two coexisting governments: the North was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam led by the Communist Party, the South was a pro-French and pro-American government, leading to differences policies in teaching and learning Vietnamese.

The North implements language policy aiming at democratization and massification. In Hanoi, right after its establishment in 1956, Hanoi University held a department teaching Vietnamese to foreigners, which later evolved into the Faculty of Vietnamese Language and Vietnamese Culture for Foreigners (Giap, 2006).

In 1950s, Nguyen Tai Can was the first Vietnamese professor to teach Vietnamese at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Leningrad University in the Soviet Union. The lecturers of this university published a number of research works on Vietnamese, such as: *Vietnamese phonetic system* by M.V. Gordon and I.S. Bystrov; *Vietnamese Grammar* by I.S. Bystrov, Nguyen Tai Can and N.V. Stankevich; *Vietnamese grammar system* by V.S. Panfilov.

With the assistance of the Saigon government, Vietnamese language teaching in Korea began in the 1960s to serve the Korean army fighting in Vietnam. “The first Vietnamese class in Korea started in January 1965, under the help of the Saigon Embassy. In March 1967, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) officially enrolled and trained Vietnamese for the first 20 students” (Tae, 1998). After the Vietnam war ended, the demand for learning Vietnamese subsided, and the only Vietnamese department in Korea existed in name only due to a lack of students.

The Vietnamese language programs for international students have been tied to the nation-building agenda and foreign governmental affairs since the foundations of its nation-states. To take a closer look at the Democratic Republic of Vietnam government in North Vietnam (1945–1975) and then the current government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (since 1976), the programs primarily served the foreign affairs of the communist government with countries like Laos, Cambodia, Soviet Union, by providing Vietnamese language education to exchange democrats and students from these countries coming to Vietnam.

For example, in the training history of the Lao Viet Friendship School in Thai Nguyen, in 1955, they enrolled 150 Lao officials, soldiers and students in the Vietnamese language program. The number of learners increased rapidly until the Viet—Lao Treaty of Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation (July 18, 1977), with about 35,000 Lao students having received Vietnamese language training at the school. Similarly, another Friendship School in Hanoi, found in 1980, specialized

in providing secondary education for Lao students under the Vietnamese government scholarship, has recently expanded to provide Vietnamese language training for higher education exchange students. In just one school year 2016–2017, this school enrolled 287 Lao and 93 Cambodian graduate students (Vietlao, 2017). This system of Friendship schools, as well as many training units in other universities, has been founded to serve this training request from the Vietnamese government, like the Vietnam National University in Hanoi (since the late 1950s) and Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City (since the 1980s).

From Period of Reunification to Doi Moi: 1976–1990, the Period of Country Reconstruction After War

After the war, Vietnamese language education mainly focused on the implementation of international missions aimed at strengthening security and fostering prospects for economic development cooperation with foreign countries. Teaching Vietnamese to Laotian and Cambodian officials served as a means to strengthen national security. Meanwhile, the demand for learning Vietnamese in countries related to the Vietnam War decreased significantly. “After 1975, due to differences in the political system, Vietnam-Korea relations froze, and since then, Hankuk University has only recruited around 20 Vietnamese students each year” (Minh and Woo, 2013).

However, with the introduction of Doi Moi reforms, as the results of the opening policies in economic and social exchanges, the training practice radically shifted from short courses for political purposes to independent programs responsive to the globalization and internationalization of Vietnamese higher education.

In an effort to find solutions for developing, the Vietnamese government determined that it was necessary to renew its approach and decide on immediate action; as a result, the Doi Moi policy was introduced in 1986, opening the country to foreign investors. This led to an influx of foreigners coming to Vietnam to do business, which inevitably increased the need for learning Vietnamese to communicate with the native population.

The Context of Doi Moi and Governmental Policies Toward HEI’s Vietnamese Language Education

Post-Doi Moi, Vietnam experienced a nationwide economic rise. The situation of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Vietnam has grown impressively. Data from the General Statistics Office show that FDI from countries investing in Vietnam has continuously increased, with the first quarter of 2019 reaching a record in the value of registered investment capital over the same period in the previous three years (Tuyet, 2018). Regional and global exchanges in all aspects of life in Vietnam, from

politics to economic, have brought changes and transformations to higher education (Tran & Marginson, 2018; Phan & Doan, 2020). General mobilities resulted in waves of foreigners coming to Vietnam for a variety of purposes, length of stay, and types of engagements. For a country not accustomed to such a large number of visitors, and for visitors in a country not previously popular as an international destination, language for communication became a focal point, leading to a surging demand for Vietnamese language training, from basic to advanced levels, for living and working purposes.

These eager learners are active in seeking out training centers, flexible in learning arrangements, and paying US dollars for tuition. With thousands of foreigners in Vietnam needing to learn Vietnamese, a new market emerged—teaching Vietnamese to foreigners, and the post-Đổi Mới policies have been just right for the birth of various forms of education businesses (center-based short courses, private tutors, contracted, and professional providers).

At the same time, globalization has led to an increase of international student mobility globally (OECD, 2022), with directions to previously less-known destinations, like Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Ha & Fry, 2021). If in early 2000s saw Vietnamese media filled with news about studying abroad opportunities, a decade later, there were more about international students in Vietnam.

The government has been supportive, allowing universities to open Vietnamese language centers and Vietnamese studies programs (VSP) for foreigners. The programs of teaching Vietnamese and using Vietnamese as a medium of instruction (VMI) were established in the 1980s and have seen significant growth since the 2000s, continuing to the present day. The open policies also allowed HEIs to be active and responsive to educational market, being creative in seizing this opportunity.

The rise in demand for Vietnamese language education from learners meets the active scholars and university leadership who promote scientifically and politically the establishment of a new graduate training program named Vietnamese Studies,¹ for both Vietnamese and international students. Since its first launch in 1998, which focused on defining Vietnamese Studies as a science and promoting Vietnamese international affairs in academia, the International Conference on Vietnamese Studies has been organized every four years, sponsored directly by the Vietnamese government. Between 2001 and 2005, some universities launched their training units and began enrolling domestic students in VSP at the bachelor's level; for example, Hanoi National University of Education welcomed its first-year students in 2002. The field of Vietnamese Studies as a higher education training program was made official in a decision by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in 2005 (see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2005).

By the 2007–2008 academic, VSPs were present in 76 universities and colleges nationwide. These programs used Vietnamese as a medium of instruction and

¹ The field of Vietnamese Studies has got a long history, as summarized in the sessions above, with the active involvement of the Chinese, Japanese, European intellectuals. Yet with the birth of the university education systems in the second half of twentieth century in Vietnam North and South, there has been no higher education program providing certificate for Vietnamese studies.

targeted both domestic and international students, contributing to the development of Vietnamese language education at HEIs.

For this rapid development, in 2015, MoET issued its first milestone decision, Circular 17/2015/TT-BGDĐT, establishing a six-level language competency framework in Vietnamese to assess foreign learners. In 2018, another circular was issued outlining the Vietnamese language competency requirements for international students studying at HEIs in Vietnam. Then, in November 2021, MoET issued another circular regarding the organization of Vietnamese language exams for international students. These circulars represent a series of top-down initiatives by MoET to institutionalize and standardize Vietnamese language education for international students in Vietnam.

These circulars, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, response to the rapidly developing programs teaching Vietnamese to foreigners in HEIs and private centers across. This growth has contributed to the dynamics of internationalization in Vietnamese higher education, a phenomena that, compared with the rise of English in education, has been under-researched.

How do HEIs seize this opportunity and address the challenge to construct or adjust their development strategies? To elaborate further on this point, we will delve into the theoretical debate on institutional transformation at HEIs in the context of increasing globalization and student mobilities. These theoretical debates will guide our analysis of an accidental internationalization and strategic transformation for internationalization in a HEI in Vietnam.

Institutional Transformation and Internationalization of National Language Program at HE

The concept of institutional transformation is used here to frame the internal adjustments of HEIs to adapt to changes stemming from factors like society, economic, and politics, leading to the reconstruction of the institution for development.

According to Levy and Merry (1986), institutional transformation involves planned alterations in the institution's core elements, including authority, goals, decision-making, practices, and policies. As outlined by Levy and Merry, institutional transformations are: (1) deliberate, purposeful, and explicit; (2) a "process" of alteration; (3) engaging external or internal expertise; and (4) involving a strategy of collaboration and power sharing between the experts and others (1986, cited in Fox, 2018, p. 83). In other words, transformation is a "strategic reorientation" (Wischnevsky & Damanpour, 2006, p. 104), involving purposefully changes in the institution's mission, organizational structure, management and leadership, functional practices, and communication patterns (Levy & Merry, 1986).

What are the indicators of institutional transformation? Nutt and Backoff (1997) categorize four main indicators: (1) changes in the institution's vision, (2) changes in action strategies, (3) changes in organizational structure, (4) changes in institutional

culture or communication patterns. In terms of vision and mission, new discourses would often present changes in the statements of the institution's leadership, in short- and long-term development plan, or, in other words, in the alternative "ways of thinking". This future vision is followed by evidence of alternative "ways of doing" compared to the usual practices, in everyday practice. In a structural view, it is evidenced in the de/restructure of the old with significant changes. And finally, the fourth indicator refers to the expertise network and professional culture of the institution, like teaching, research, and service (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, pp. 27–28).

Applied to higher education, Fox summarized others' research to emphasize four characteristics of transformation: (1) systemic, (2) deep, (3) intentional, and (4) cultural (2008, 83–84). First, the systemic aspect discussed the interrelatedness between different parts of the institution, such as *personnel policies and practices, faculty development, recruitment and admissions*, research and publications (Burkhardt, 2002, p. 120). Introducing change to one part of the institution can result in *stresses and tensions* connected to other parts, potentially leading to *resistance to change* (Astin & Astin, 2001). Second, transformation is deep because it affects values and assumptions as well as structures and processes in the higher education institution, encompassing both "interior" and "exterior" aspects (*ibid.*). Third, transformation is intentional, involving deliberate and purposeful decision-making about institutional actions and directions.

Elaborating on the key factors that facilitate transformation in higher education, Burkhardt (2002) first emphasizes the leadership factor, which has the authority to shape organizational visions, present institutional statement, and implement changes. Another key facilitator of transformation is identifying stakeholders throughout an institution who may be involved in designing and implementing activities for the process of transformation. Effective networks (Eckel & Kezar, 2003) include pathway for personal development, collaborated steps of change implementation, and training to equipped human resources with new capacities to meet new expectations, or so-called work innovation). In addition, transformation is enhanced by generating supports outside of the institution, like agencies and foundations which provide both material and symbolic support (Astin & Astin, 2001).

In what follows, we elaborate in more detail about institutional transformation of HEIs in Vietnam, through the case of the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH), Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City, to show how these institutions addressing the challenges and developing its Vietnamese language education program for international students.

Vietnamese Language Education at the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies Faculty

Strategic internationalization of higher education at Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) began in the 1990s, but it was not until the years 2000s that it really made its mark. The strategic plan for socio-economic development of Vietnam for the period 1996–2000 clearly defined this as a very important period for accelerating industrialization and modernization of the country, promoting comprehensive and synchronous industrialization; it continued to develop a multi-sector economy operating according to the market mechanism, creating a solid premise for higher development at the beginning of the next century (Đảng cộng sản Việt Nam, 2015, p. 427).

Following the national strategy, VNU-HCM identified that world higher education had developed rapidly with obvious trends: massification, marketization, diversification, and internationalization. In the general objective of period 2006–2010, VNU-HCM promoted internal resources, integrated actively, strengthened international cooperation, innovated training, and created a strong change in the quality of training, science–technology, and international cooperation, contributing to meeting the demand for high-quality human resources for society and develop VNU-HCM on par with advanced universities in the Southeast Asia region (Đại học Quốc gia HCM, 2006).

In this section, we observe the case of the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) in VNU-HCM, the first institution in the South of Vietnam to offer Vietnamese studies. Strategic institutional transformation of VNS was the continuation of the implementation and concretization of the strategies of the VNU, in which the market factor was particularly focused.

The Birth of VNS at USSH

The Faculty of Vietnamese Studies (VNS) at USSH has led in training Vietnamese studies and Vietnamese language for foreigners for over 20 years. Its initial purpose was to carry out a political mission—to teach Vietnamese for national security and then for nation building. After the liberation of Vietnam in 1975, the country focused on reconstruction and strengthening solidarity with fellow socialist countries, undertaking international missions where teaching Vietnamese to Laos and Cambodia was seen as crucial for national security (Liên hiệp các tổ chức hữu nghị, 2020). Given the complex geopolitical positions of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, heavily influenced by international relations with major “ambitious” countries, all three shared a path of liberation and a common front against aggression. Establishing a good relationship would benefit all three countries, especially in terms of economy, politics, security, and defense; helping Laos and Cambodia meant Vietnam was also helping itself.

The year 1979 marked Vietnam's significant involvement in Cambodia, supporting the Khmer People's National Liberation Front against the Pol Pot genocide. The following year, 1980, the Ministry of Education summoned the leaders of the Faculty of Literature at USSH to Hanoi to receive an urgent decision to establish a group of experts to teach Vietnamese to Cambodians (Giang, 2018). This Group, with initially five lecturers under the Faculty of Literature, is the predecessor of today's VNS. According to the agreement between the two governments of Vietnam and Cambodia, USSH-HCM annually trained 30 Cambodian students. From 1985 to 1990, USSH-HCM annually sent lecturers to Phnom Penh to teach Vietnamese at Cambodian universities. "During this period, the economic conditions were still difficult; we lacked everything, even textbooks" (Lich, 2008, p. 663).

Prof. Bui Khanh The, former head of the Group of Experts teaching Vietnamese (1986–1989), noted, "Cambodia at that time was almost ruined, all valuable knowledge destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. We, along with some intellectuals of the newly established Cambodian government, went to find survivors to bring back for training, built a core force, and re-established Phnom Penh University" (VNS, 2018).

Teaching Vietnamese to Cambodian students was crucial as it enabled them to access other science and technology subjects taught by Vietnamese educators. Language education often leads the way for international cooperation and exchange relationships, followed by the internationalization of higher education in Vietnam.

After the mission in Cambodia, USSH's leaders decided to continue Vietnamese language education, seeing an opportunity to serve many foreigners coming to Vietnam for business. In 1990, the Group of Experts teaching Vietnamese split into the Department of Vietnamese Language and Department of Vietnamese Culture, both under the Center for Vietnam—Southeast Asian Studies.

Post-Doi Moi in 1986, Vietnam experienced significant changes, starting with thought reform and opening door for economic growth (Chính Phủ, 2010). This attracted foreign investment, with many foreigners coming Vietnam for business and settlement. The Vietnam government encouraged activities promoting the development of Vietnamese studies. In 1998, the first International Scientific Conference on Vietnamese Studies was held in Hanoi, marking an important milestone for the birth and growth of VNS. Concurrently, VNS was established as per *Decision No. 439/QĐ/ĐHQG/TCCB*, signed on December 26, 1998, by the Director of VNU-HCM,² based on the Department of Vietnamese Studies and Vietnamese language for foreigners at USSH, VNU-HCM.

Over 20 years (1998–2018), VNS saw a significant increase in enrollment, from 600 in 1998 to 2164 in 2018 (*Lịch sử hình thành phát triển Khoa Việt Nam học*, 2023). Initially, enrollment was 885 in 1998 (Hong Phuong, cited in *ibid.*, Fig. 1), doubling to 1719 in 2004, and doubling again by 2013, reaching half a million in 2017 and 2018 before COVID (Hong Phuong, cited in *ibid.*, Fig. 2). The enrollment rate increased rapidly from 2005 to 2008, then sharply decrease from 2008 to 2010, before gradually increasing again from 2015 to 2018 (*ibid.*).

² Vietnam National University is the management agency of USSH-HCM.

Regarding bachelor's courses, from 2000 to 2018, VNS enrolled 19 courses with 734 successful candidates and 470 graduates (VNS, 2018). The postgraduate program, started in 2009, has trained 98 students, including 15% international students from various countries, like Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and the USA. To unpack the success of VNS, we consider key activities such as responding to market's needs, strategic transformation, student care, and research-based activities. We also pointed out the challenges faced by VNS in its development history.

Responding to the Market's Needs: VNS Strategic Transformation

From the outset, VNS's leaders prioritized flexible and strategic program development. As stated in 1998, "Right from the time of developing program, we planned it under the credit system. The program meets the needs of students, so the number of students is continuously increasing" (Lich, 2008). VNS provided a variety of courses, with short-term (including pre-university), graduate, and post-graduate programs being the most prominent. Each course was designed to cater to students' need at different stages, from basic to advanced, ensuring the continuity of the program system. The primary reason students chose to study Vietnamese was for job opportunities and the necessity of living in Vietnam. A March 2022 survey of 54 foreign students at VNS revealed that 57.4% aimed to find jobs, 50% intended to reside permanently in Vietnam, 12.9% had interests in the history, culture, language and people, with a noted cultural affinity between Vietnam and Korea, and 11.1% followed their parents working and living in Vietnam, with some students citing multiple reasons.

In addition to the standard admission process, VNS also participated in 2 + 2 and 3 + 1 cooperative programs (where students study 2 or 3 years in their home country and then complete their education in Vietnam for the remaining 1 or 2 years to obtain a bachelor's degree) under agreements between Vietnamese and foreign partner universities. These students can earn dual bachelor's degrees, enhancing their employment prospects in both nations and fostering bilateral relations and economic human resource development. Since 2019, VNS has offered an online Vietnamese studies bachelor's program and short-term language courses, which gained increase attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. These programs are accessible globally, allowing students from Korea, the US, Japan, and elsewhere to enroll easily.

VNS has gained recognition for its "Methods of teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language" course, which not only enhance its reputation but also increase its revenue. The faculty saw the need from people who wanted to conduct training to be a qualified teacher to teach Vietnamese as a foreign language. Consequently, these courses initiated primarily for Vietnamese learners, have been offered since 2017, with 19 sessions over 300 individuals. The curriculum encompasses second language education theory, teaching Vietnamese as a second language (TVSOL), and pedagogies

for teaching core language skills. Delivered over three months, the course culminates in a practical teaching session evaluated by a committee of instructors. The program also attracts international students graduates from bachelor's and postgraduate Vietnamese Studies programs aspiring to teach Vietnamese. For instance, in 2021, several Korean students enrolled. Despite the pandemic, online course delivery continued, and international training, such as at Chihlee University of Technology in Taiwan, proceeded as planned (VNS, 2022).

VNS also conducts Vietnamese language proficiency assessments for foreign students. Designated by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), VNS administers tests and issues Vietnamese language proficiency certificates according to the Vietnamese language proficiency national framework standard. This certificate is crucial for foreigners seeking education or employment in foreign-invested firms or any organization requiring Vietnamese communication skills.

Taking Care of Students

A standout aspect of VNS is its commitment to prioritizing foreign students, encompassing both academic programs and extracurricular activities. This approach, novel in the early 2000s Vietnamese higher education context, positioned VNS as a pioneer in taking care of students like valued customers. The rationale is clear: foreign students are viewed as highly beneficial, often referred to metaphorically as the “goose that lays golden eggs”. The university has prioritized foreign students by enhancing training quality, fostering teacher enthusiasm and care, and providing top-notch facilities. A former VNS leader highlighted the keys to attracting students: “The secret to attracting students lies in the quality of the training, the enthusiasm and teaching methods of the faculty, and the teaching and learning facilities” (Lich, 2012, p. 628).

Notable activities at VNS include the orientation for new students and internships for those nearing graduation. For local students, orientation is usually on-campus, while for foreign students, this event is usually held in tourist destinations, creating fun and relaxing environment for introductions to the school, faculty, and academic programs, as well as for student socialization.

Similarly, the internships or field trip practice serve as significant attractions, particularly for third- and fourth-year students, lasting about two weeks. These excursions, often to areas with scenic beauty like traditional craft villages and cultural sites, aim to encourage students to delve deeply into the local life. This allows them to explore, experience reality firsthand, and employ their Vietnamese language skills for interviewing and gathering data for their final graduation project survey reports.

Research-Based Activities and Connections with Foreign Universities

Besides teaching, VNS has a strategy to develop its research capacity as an essential component of its training and social service. The motto “research to support teaching” underpins this strategy, with specific goals such as compiling textbooks, reference books, monographs, and encouraging the publication of scientific works in journals (VNS, 2012). Each full-time lecturer is required to publish at least one paper or one research work annually. This mandate is reflected in institutional policies and the research profiles of its individual staff members. *Official Letter No. 576/XHNV-TCCB* (USSH, 2020a) specifies that a lecture’s scientific research tasks must include at least one scientific product from categories like articles with ISBN, textbooks, reference books, published monographs (excluding reprints), or successfully defended Ph.D. and master theses. Staff who achieve these scientific outputs are eligible for incentive rewards, either as bonus points or cash. For instance, an article indexed with ISSN earns two points, equivalent to 100,000VND; one with an international ISI index gets 30 points, or 15,000,000VND (USSH, 2023); and an article in the ISI/Scopus (Q1) list equates to 1400 hours of scientific research (*Official Letter No. 589/XHNV-TCCB*).

Collaborated research efforts have seen significant interactions in materials and curriculum design between scholars in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. The VNS’s founders, like Bui Khanh The and Nguyen Van Lich from the south, had strong connections with scholars in Ha Noi due to their time in the north during the war, facilitating the development of this field. Nguyen Van Hue, a third-generation leader of VNS, has significantly contributed to expanding VNS’s global connections. Biennially, VNS collaborate with USSH Hanoi to host an Interfaculty Scientific Conference, continuing a decade-long tradition of cooperation between the two institutions (USSH, 2020b). These scholars have worked together on creating teaching materials for both domestic and international training, leading to the creation of textbooks like *Que Viet* and *Vietnamese Reading—Writing*³.

Scholars have also been sent abroad for teaching exchanges, fostering interactional collaboration and impacting Vietnamese studies. For example, Nguyen Van Hue promoted the *Vietnamese as a Second Language* (VSL)⁴ book series globally, with institutions like Australian National University in Australia, Kanda University of International Studies in Japan, Bushan University of Foreign Studies in Korean, the University of Bonn in Germany), United States Department of State adopting it. In another instance, Nguyen Quang Ninh from Hanoi National University of

³ *Que Viet* is a set of Vietnamese language teaching textbooks consisting of 06 books, divided into three levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2) edited by Mai Ngoc Chu (VNU, Hanoi) and Nguyen Van Hue participates as a member editor. *Vietnamese Reading—Writing* A1&A2 is the series of textbooks co-written by Nguyen Quang Ninh (Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE)) and Tran Trong Nghia (HCM-USSH) at Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS), South Korea.

⁴ The series of current VSL textbooks for foreigners consists of five books compiled by a group of authors (edited by Nguyen Van Hue) is the result of 10 years of preparation of many lecturers. VSL was first published in 2000, so far, they have been reprinted for 8 times and are still widely used in many countries around the world like the US, Canada, Australia, Korea, Brunei.

Education was invited to teach at Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS) in Korea from 2015 to 2016, while Tran Trong Nghia from USSH at Ho Chi Minh City served as a lecturer in Vietnamese at BUFS from 2015 to 2018. Together with Korean colleagues, they produced a series of *Vietnamese Reading–Writing* textbooks, now used in Korean universities offering Vietnamese language courses.

VNS's research initiatives focus on Vietnamese studies and Vietnamese language, addressing both theoretical and practical issues. To date, they have published over 25 textbooks, hosted 14 domestic and 5 international conferences, and released more than 350 articles. They maintain connections with numerous foreign universities to collaborative training in Vietnamese studies and Vietnamese languages, with key partners in Japan, Korea, France, Czech Republic, and Taiwan (VNS, 2018).

Current and Coming Challenges to VNS

Vietnamese studies are currently facing the challenges, including developing human resources, constructing curriculum and teaching material banks, and improving graduate employability.

Firstly, regarding human resource development, VNS acknowledges the need to develop a team of professional lecturers ready for the internationalization of this discipline. The VNS's report for the academic year 2020–2021 indicates a shortage of qualified teachers to replace those retiring. A 2022 survey of 59 discipline teachers showed that 30.5% having a suitable background for TVSOL; 10.2% having highly relevant backgrounds (like Vietnamese literature); 18.6% having educated in foreign languages other than Vietnamese. However, 40.7% had less relevant backgrounds, such as Sociology, Cultural Studies, Communication, and Asian Studies, facing difficulties in teaching TVSOL without additional training in its pedagogies. Since 2020, the discipline has required teachers from other backgrounds to undergo training in TVSOL pedagogies.

Second, VNS is developing a systematic bank of textbooks and teaching resources. The current stock does not fully meet the teaching and learning needs. Although VNS planned to develop a new textbook series by 2020 (VNS, 2015), this has yet to be completed as of 2024. Existing textbooks mainly support short-term courses; with many subjects in the official training program lacking specific textbooks for foreign students (VNS, 2021). A compilation committee, editor-in-chief, and a comprehensive plan are needed to create a complete textbook set, building on the curriculum from basic to advanced level.

Third, the employment rate of graduates is a concern, as students struggle to find jobs due to an interdisciplinary but shallow knowledge base and lack of practical experience. With society needing more specialized skills, many students often study some other additional fields to enhance job prospects. In 2020, only 71.15% of graduates found employment, the lowest rate among USSH majors at VNU-HCM (USSH, 2020d). VNS annually organizes meetings with employers to gather feedback to improve the training program, but more detailed post-training assessments

are needed, including job placement rates and the satisfaction level of employers, to inform future training initiatives.

Wrapping Up Discussion: Accidental Versus Strategic Internationalization of HE Beyond English

In researching on pathways of internationalization in Vietnam, Phan (2019) breaks the ground to reveal the need for more research on internationalization in higher education (HE) beyond English, emphasizing the alternative role of national language as medium of instruction. This discussion section brings the case of VNS at USSH into the context of internationalization beyond English, reveal different transformation methods within HEIs during the same process of internationalization.

Phan, Dang and Ngo (2022) present a case study of HEI where internationalization happened as an unintended gift resulting from increasing social and economic exchanges between Vietnam and Korea. This led to a bottom-up demand of learning Vietnamese and a rise in self-enrolled students at the institution. Vietnamese Studies (VS) at Binh Minh University (BMU) in this article emerged not internally but from economic impacts and external demand, described as “the relationship between Vietnam and Korea kept getting warmer and the demand for VS from Koreans kept rising”. The influx of Korean students to VS at BMU and the transformation of this institution is termed as “accidental, bottom-up, responsive, and by-product internationalization of HE beyond English” (ibid., pp.11–13). Though not elaborated in the article, the concept of accidental internationalization contrasts with other HEIs proactively adopting “strategies gearing toward internationalisation” (ibid., 12), referring to the development of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) programs that Phan (2017, 2018) pointed out, with strategies like “internationalising their curriculum and training programmes and attracting international students”.

This novelty concept of accidental internationalization inspires and enriches the conversation in this chapter, especially in the critical comparison between BMU and USSH. Unlike BMU, VNS at USSH has played in the game as pioneers, establishing the norms, and leading the field. Unlike other HEIs that focus on EMI programs, USSH has made its Vietnamese as a Medium of Instruction (VMI) program highly sought after by international students in HCMC and abroad. This success is evident in the institution’s transformation, marked by leadership, internal collaboration over an extended period, and the development of external relationship. We posit that VNS at USSH exemplifies strategic internationalization of HE using Vietnamese as medium of instruction.

From its origin as a small department for training Cambodian learners, VNS at USSH has evolved into an internationally recognized training unit, expanding its learner network through Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for students exchanges since 1975. Strategically, VNS at USSH has been proactive in changing

core elements, such as devising its curriculum and teaching materials, developing internal policies to promote academic research alongside teaching improvement, and establishing external partnerships to attract more international students. These initiatives are, indeed, (1) purposeful; (2) part of a planned process; (3) engaging both external and internal expertise; and (4) involving collaborative and power-sharing strategies (Levy & Merry, 1986). In other words, it is “strategic reorientation” within the institution (Wischnevsky & Damanpour, 2006).

Contributing to its success are actions aligned with Nutt and Backoff’s (1997) four main indicators of institutional transformation: (1) changes in VNS’s vision to become an international hub in the South, (2) changes in action in teaching and promoting research, (3) changes in organizational structure, evidenced by the expansion from a small unit to a department with 70 staff members, and (4) changes in institutional culture, with responsive policies toward student care and service quality. Changes in teaching, research, and service (Eckel & Kezar, 2003) are further detailed in Mai and Chau (2022), highlighting that attracting international students has been a central priority of USSH’s sub-institutions, including VNS.

However, the process of innovation within the institution has also faced challenges, including *stresses and tensions* and *resistance to change* (Astin & Astin, 2001). We have pointed out that VNS at USSH continues to confront the need to enhance the quality of human resource and reduce resistance. The pressure to improve career prospects for learners and increase the employment rate for has intensified, especially as the market grows and faces more competitors from private sector entities with smaller and more agile organizational structures. Furthermore, there is an open question regarding the investigation of the identities and agencies of stakeholders, including teachers and students.

In conclusion, the case of VNS at USSH offers a unique story of strategic internationalization of HE beyond English. It provides valuable insights into the pathways of HEIs in countries like Vietnam, which were previously less dominant and proactive in the internationalization of HE.

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Chapter 4

Teaching Vietnamese as an Additional Language: A Case Study from Explicit Pragmatic Instruction to Intercultural Approach



Thi Minh Tran, Thi Ha Pham, and Hang Thi Diem Ngo

Abstract This chapter presents a case study on teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language, aiming to enhance students' deep understanding of both their native language and the target language while addressing individual language preferences and complexities. It focuses on teaching Vietnamese compliments and responses to Korean students in a higher education setting in Vietnam, employing an explicit pragmatic and intercultural approach. Bridging the gap between cultural norms and learners' language, this study emphasizes the importance of cultural understanding for effective communication and interpersonal relations. The lesson plan, informed by pragmatic investigation, fosters intercultural competence, encourages self-expression, and boosts learners' confidence in social interactions. Overall, it offers a practical pedagogical framework for empowering learners in the classroom.

Introduction

When You Meet a Person of the Opposite Gender for the First Time, Who Has a Very Good Appearance. What Would You Choose to Say to Express Your Opinion? Consider These Options:

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- A. Hello, you are very good-looking!
- B. Hello, do you know that you are very good-looking?
- C. You should not be so good-looking, because the more beautiful/handsome you are, the more dangerous?
- D. Not giving a compliment.

Ms. Han often used this example in her class teaching Vietnamese for international students. Among the answers, there is no wrong option in terms of grammar, yet there are options being chosen more by men than women (option A and B), and there are options rarely used or considered inappropriate in Vietnamese culture (options C). To Miss. Han, “teaching Vietnamese language is teaching Vietnamese culture”. Hence, the successful learners should know how to use language appropriately in the target culture.

However, Ms. Han also received different responses for her experimental questions. In her class of Korean students, 5% did not choose any options from A to D. In another class of mixed Asian and Western students, one student commented that they would never talk about someone else’s appearance, because the appearance of somebody is given to that person and is unchangeable; another student spoke up and commented that the issue of gender is very sensitive and should be avoided in the class.

Students did not find any given answers suitable for themselves in a language-in-use context. Students responded in an unexpected way to a topic or issue in the class. Facing the situations that were out of her initial plan and expectations, Ms. Han believed that she needed to investigate more about the suitable approaches in teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language.

Ms. Han’s story is set as an inspiration for this experimental research on finding how students and teachers respond to different approaches in language education, in the case of teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language at higher education institutions (HEI) in Vietnam.

The twenty-first century observed rapid internationalization and students’ mobility among Asian countries (Phan & Fry, 2021). In Vietnam, after the strong implementation of the Doi Moi policies in all aspects (Harman et al., 2010), the reformation of higher education happened in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. There has been an obvious increase in Vietnamese language courses opened for foreigners in Vietnam, by both private language centers and public higher education institutions (Nhân Dân, 2008). This surging demand for Vietnamese language education is considered a result of a significant rise in students’ mobility, as well as the rise of Vietnamese as a medium of instruction (VMI) programs (Phan & Fry, 2021).

Yet, this rapid development also reveals a lot of gaps in curriculum and teaching materials, mismatches between the views of teachers and students. Among the big challenges are how to equip teachers with thorough knowledge of not just Vietnamese but pragmatic concepts across cultures, and multiple pedagogic tools to deal with multicultural learners, to overcome the traditional teaching method of prioritizing

the target language and move towards an effective learning experience for learners (Tran & Duong, 2018; Ho, 2009, 2011; Nguyen & Ho, 2013).

This research addresses the need of teachers like Ms. Han in understanding the requirements and proposing solutions for effective teaching of Vietnamese. It emphasizes the importance of equipping teachers with thorough knowledge not only of the Vietnamese language but also of pragmatic concepts across cultures. Additionally, it highlights the necessity of providing teachers with multiple pedagogic tools to effectively teach multicultural learners and to move away from traditional teaching methods towards more responsive and individualized learning experiences for students.

The research focuses on the case of teaching Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese. The experiment is conducted in a class of Korean students in a language course for undergraduate programs at a university in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The research's aims and focus are:

To understand the applicability of explicit pragmatic instruction and intercultural approach in foreign language education.

To understand cross-pragmatic compliments and compliment responses in different languages and its related challenges in foreign language education.

To understand the challenges of teaching Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses to speakers of other languages.

To design and experiment with a teaching model that can address cross-pragmatic challenges and be responsive to individual learners' needs.

The first part engages critically with the theoretical discussion of teaching model in foreign language education, from explicit pragmatic instruction to intercultural approach, applying to the case study of teaching Vietnamese at a HEI in Hanoi.

The second part is set up with a critical review of teaching pragmatic concepts across languages and cultures, through the case of compliments and compliment responses. It suggests that an intercultural approach would be effective in bridging the gap and being responsive to diverse learners.

Yet, to apply intercultural approach to teaching, it is crucial to understand the pragmatic concepts of compliment and compliment responses in Vietnamese, contextualized in a case study of teaching Vietnamese for a group of Korean undergraduate students at a HEI in Hanoi.

Based on that investigation, the author proposed an experimental teaching unit to examine the affordances and challenges of teaching Vietnamese compliments and compliments responses for Korean students, using explicit pragmatic instruction and intercultural approach. The experiment includes designing a pre-class survey for target groups of learners, then designing a detailed lesson teaching the language content while considering the specific background and previous knowledge of learners. The experimental classes were observed and followed by semi-structured interviews with learners and teachers after the class.

The experimental analysis suggests that the intercultural approach is effective in teaching pragmatic concepts to learners of diverse backgrounds, such as Korean learners in the study. The intercultural implied learning design has shown to improve

the openness of learners in sharing their own cultural perspectives and come to respect the differences of others, hence gaining meaningful learning experiences.

Teaching a Foreign Language: Requirement of a Teaching Model for Cross-Pragmatic and Individualized Learning

Discussion of foreign language education is tightly linked with the view of language and the nature of language acquisition. Because of English as a lingua franca, it is not surprising that research on teaching English as a foreign language has set the dominant paradigm in the field of foreign language education. This discussion is heavily drawn from the literature on teaching English.

Traditionally, language has been considered as a system of *codes* for information exchange. Therefore, language was seen as fixed, and learning a foreign language meant understanding and repeating those patterns of words and word combinations. Then, pragmatic scholars proposed that language includes not only lexical and grammatical principles, but also pragmatic rules (the use of language determined by social conditions like gender, age, intimacy of participants), which adds complexity and challenges for foreign language learners. Thomas (1983) pointed out that foreign language learners often experienced pragmatic failure in using foreign languages: (1) pragmalinguistics (translating utterance from their native language or previous learning language to the target language); (2) sociopragmatics (referring to the social conditions such as gender, age, intimacy to choose what to say and how to say it). Pragmatic failure can lead to problematic communication between interactants (Manes, 1983).

Explicit pragmatic instruction is considered an effective pedagogical methodology in teaching English (in different host countries) compliments and compliment responses to English learners from different source cultures (Chen, 2011; Grosi, 2009; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011). It means language learners are provided not only lexical and grammatical knowledge of those compliment actions but also their pragmatic knowledge regarding social conditions through language courses.

Recently, intercultural approach has been increasingly investigated in general foreign language courses (Stoian, 2020). Barraja-Rohan (2011) proposed a detailed teaching plan based on intercultural teaching approach, inspiring other scholars to experiment in different topics of foreign language education (Jany, 2019) and intercultural communication education (Allen, 2021).

Lesson phases according to Barraja-Rohan (2011: 488)

Reflection on how language works

Contrastive analysis of L1 and L2 structures with a specific learning objective

Analysis of L2 structures based on authentic conversation templates

Practice these structures in written and spoken forms

Translingual/intercultural discussion and reflection

Following Barraja-Rohan (2011), Jany (2019), Stoian (2020), we consider the possibilities of applying intercultural approach in the teaching design. This shift away from structural and communicative viewpoints has led scholars to propose second language development to be “the emergence of language ability through use in real time” (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 494), which highlights the constructions of language from bottom-up manner, through frequent use in various places and times. Consequently, the language learning process in the class is interactive, with linguistic structure being used by learners to actively construct reality in interaction with others (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008).

With this view, learning practices are considered to be experiential. The affective dimension of learning is emphasized, referring to learners’ feelings relating to self and others, which emerge when engaging with class activities, which are emotionally and motivationally loaded (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 797). Experiential learning theories prioritize *what is lived* over *what is done*, seeking meaningful intercultural interaction in the classroom and co-construction of meaning (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Within an intercultural orientation, language learning is proposed as a process of becoming, where learners’ identity is considered in a learning plan that includes multilingual and multicultural aspects (Byram & Wagner, 2018, p. 147). To adopt an intercultural language teaching orientation, concept-based planning is proposed to address ideational, linguistic and textual content, as well as language use through interactions and experiences (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

We propose that the concept of “language” in intercultural language education should shift away from “language as a code” to being seen as something *lived* in learning. In a Vietnamese class, where both teachers and learners having limited knowledge about other languages, Vietnamese is also used as the medium of instruction. The Vietnamese language is *lived* in learners’ experience as they think through their own language and the target language, relate to others, reflect on intercultural exchanges, and develop their sense of self through those processes. The following parts will first step by step understand “language as a system”, then move to designing a lesson to enable “language as experience” (Kohler, 2020).

The Story of Teaching Vietnamese as a Foreign Language at Binh Minh University

This section introduces the institution where we conducted our case study. Consistent with academic norms to ensure continuity and comparability in scholarly discourse, we adopt the anonymized name ‘Binh Minh University’. This designation was first introduced by Phan et al. (2022) in their research on the internationalization process at this university, particularly within the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies (2022). Utilizing the same pseudonym as established in previous research allows for a coherent and cumulative understanding of the institution’s evolving dynamics. It also aligns with

the ethical practice of preserving confidentiality while facilitating cross-study analysis. This approach not only respects the anonymity established in prior scholarly work but also aids in constructing a comprehensive narrative of the institution's development across different research projects, as partly mentioned in chapter 2 of this collection. In Vietnam, Binh Minh University is renowned in the education field for its long training tradition. It offers training programs from undergraduate to higher education in more than 30 fields of studies, with dozens of research institutions acting under the university's management. Historically, its students were mostly domestic until the last decade of the twentieth century, when foreign students began coming to Binh Minh for education, and teachers at the institution started teaching Vietnamese abroad.

As Ms. Han's recalled, the first Korean exchange students came to Binh Minh's Department of Linguistic to learn Vietnamese in the late 1990s, while the university also sent its teachers to Korea and Japan to teach Vietnamese. Then, in 2002–2003, a surprising increase in foreigner student enrollment occurred, which was considered a "strange phenomena" among the teachers.

This emerging demand has contributed significantly to the foundation of the Department of Vietnamese Studies at Binh Minh University. By 2021, the department has provided training for more than 700 Korean students enrolled in both language courses and an undergraduate program. Ms. Han's Department had about 30 staff members, who covered 70% of the Vietnamese Studies programs. The language teaching group constituted one-third of the staff, mainly trained in Literature and Linguistics. Ms. Han was the team leader of this language training group, responsible for proposing textbooks, coordinating curriculum development, conducting course evaluation, and monitoring teaching quality.

The example at the beginning of this article is mentioned in Ms. Han's report for a department's professional development conference. It is used to emphasize two issues of teaching Vietnamese for speakers of other languages (TVSOL) at the department: firstly, the teaching materials were all in Vietnamese, using a grammar-translation approach and centering on the target language (Pham & Tran, 2009); secondly, teachers had limited or no knowledge of learners' native language (Korean) to understand the challenges in learning Vietnamese, and both teachers and learners had limited knowledge about other languages (like English, Chinese, or French) for cross-linguistic comparisons. Hence, often in classes, teachers found it difficult to explain, and learners found it similarly difficult to express themselves.

Echoing what has been found by teachers at Binh Minh University, the teaching of Vietnamese as a foreign language is stated as relatively under-researched (Ho, 2011). The initial discussion of teaching Vietnamese in English materials was found in the context of Vietnamese refugees teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language in countries like the US or France (for example, Lam, 2006; Tran & Reid, 2006). Some research has called for attention to explicit instruction pedagogies in TVSOL, like Nguyen & Macken (2008) focused on errors in learning Vietnamese tones; Ho (2009) investigated the application of blog writing in developing students' reading and writing skills while fostering their knowledge of the Vietnamese culture. Significantly, Nguyen and Ho (2013) showcased the communicative approach in teaching

request-giving expressions and politeness strategies in Vietnamese (Nguyen & Ho, 2014).

While proving the role of explicit pragmatic instruction, these works have not yet fully considered the learners as individuals, often missing the voices of learners in their own learning experience. Hence, in this research, we worked with teachers like Ms. Han to develop a more responsive teaching approach that considers both targeted linguistic content and specific groups of learners. The following part conducts a thorough comparison on teaching models for speech acts, investigates cross-pragmatic compliment and compliment responses, before moving to our teaching design experiment.

Teaching Compliments and Compliment Responses in Foreign Language Class

According to Manes (1983), compliments and compliment responses are speech acts that reflect and express cultural values. Therefore, foreign language learners usually obtain pragmatic failure in the use of these actions in the foreign languages. Thomas (1983) distinguishes two types of pragmatic failure: (1) pragmalinguistic (translating utterance from their native language or previous learning language to the target language); (2) sociopragmatic (considering social conditions such as gender, age, intimacy to choose what to say and how to say it). Pragmatic failure can lead to prolematic communication between interactants. Hence, investigating how to teach compliments and compliment responses effectively can help language learners understand these speech acts and feel more comfortable in using them in their conversations in the target language.

Given English's status as a lingua franca, it is not surprising that teaching compliments and compliment responses in English has been extensively studied. Contrasting studies (Azam & Saleem, 2018; Chen, 2011; Ibrahim & Riyanto, 2000) argued that teaching pragmatic competence is essential for developing communicative competence. These studies also sought effective teaching methods to instruct for imparting this knowledge and skill.

Grosi (2009) examined whether explicit pragmatic instruction positively affects teaching and learning speech acts, using naturally occurring oral examples of the acts collected in various settings (workplace, home) as teaching resources in the English classroom. Explicit pragmatic analysis was provided during lessons, and the results indicated that this teaching method effectively acquires the speech acts.

Similarly, Chen (2011) designed an experiment on explicit instruction in teaching American English compliments and compliment responses to Chinese students. An eight-hour intervention with 40 university students and three DCT task tests (pretest, posttest and delayed posttest) were designed. The study suggested that pragmatic instruction had a positive effect on the learners' pragmatic ability to produce

compliment exchanges in English, and this competence could be partially retained over time.

While the courses of Grosi (2009) and Chen (2011) did not detail whether they analyzed only pragmatic functions or also included cross-cultural exchanges, some intercultural knowledge appears to have been exchanged, at least from the teacher's instruction.

Recently, intercultural approach has been increasingly implemented in teaching compliments and compliment responses. Romanchuk and Perea (2019), Jany (2019), and Stoian (2020) suggested intercultural exchange models to teach compliments and compliment responses in English courses (Romanchuk & Perea, 2019), and in German courses (Jany, 2019).

Romanchuk and Perea (2019) proposed a detailed suggestion for teaching compliments and compliment responses in the English classroom in Ukraine, based on intercultural pedagogy. Initially, the study focused on awareness-raising tasks about the similarities and differences between compliments and compliment responses in Ukrainian and American cultures (for the upper-intermediate level). These tasks included discussion on the most interesting/surprising facts, students' experience of giving and receiving compliments, compliment stereotypes in their native languages, and students' perceptions of compliment acts with given data. Romanchuk and Perea (2019) also recommended teaching techniques for primary, middle, and high school students, mainly encouraged them to participate in lessons and share their ideas, emotions, and perspectives, with specific tasks for understanding, exploring, and creating compliments and compliment responses in English compared to their native language.

In the same line, Jany (2019) provides a link between compliments, compliment responses and the feeling of social belonging in teaching German as second language (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, or DaF). The paper focused on the importance of understanding and using compliment speech acts to foster social belonging. It highlights that students need basic knowledge about the lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and socio-pragmatic aspects of compliments and compliment responses to avoid misunderstandings and perform these speech acts effectively in the target language. Like Grosi (2009), Jany (2019) believed that naturally occurring language data and explicit pragmatic instruction are appropriate ideas for having positive effects on the compliment acquisition of German language learners. Jany (2019)'s plan for teaching compliments and compliment responses is:

- Activating prior knowledge about compliments through icebreaker questions (When did you receive/give the last compliment? Or how often is compliment act used in your culture?)
- Discussing other speech acts (greeting, apology, ...) to raise awareness of interaction rules.
- Giving concrete examples of compliments.
- Practicing with visual materials in specific contexts.
- Raising awareness of language factors in compliments and compliment responses (grammatical and lexical aspects).

- Discussing intercultural exchanges between native and target languages.
- Emphasizing the non-existence of fixed rules in speech acts usage.

Additionally, Stoian (2020) proposed five activities to teach compliments and compliment responses from a cross-cultural and inter-linguistic perspective: (1) raising awareness of the importance of compliments for successful communication through discussing about the relationship between compliments and their responses with cultural patterns and values (the relationship between cultures and compliment topics, addressees, understanding, and response); (2) raising awareness of compliment patterns and topics (suggesting several possible ways of giving compliment responses, compliment structures, and sharing compliment topics in pairs); (3) raising awareness of the compliment patterns in one's own culture (asking students about compliments in their own languages through brainstorm and discussion in the class, and assigning a mini project for students to collect data); (4) raising awareness of the compliment patterns in other cultures (sharing knowledge about compliments in many other languages); (5) discussing possible strategies to respond compliments. During describing five specific and detailed activities, Stoian (2020) emphasized several times that the given knowledge on compliments and compliment responses was intended to help students understand more these speech act expressions rather than to reduce stereotype behaviors. Therefore, Stoian noted that it is important to pay attention to many different variables of the communication context in order to decide how to use different variations of compliments and compliment responses.

The existing research and detailed teaching plans of compliments and compliment responses based on explicit pragmatic instruction and intercultural approach have suggested using naturally occurring data, pragmatic analysis, contrastive/meta pragmatic analysis, and encouraging students to really participate and create the content of teaching under guidance of the teacher. The above-mentioned studies stated that explicit pragmatic instruction and intercultural approach bring positive effects on the learners' acquisition of compliment and compliment responses in Vietnamese. Our study attempts to apply this approach to examine whether they work in teaching Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses. In addition, we will pay more attention to the feeling of the interactants in a cross-cultural conversation because the most important aspect of communication is understanding and feeling comfortable. Language is changing and people's perspective and attitudes are also regularly changing. It means the success of a conversation depends on more factors than just the grammatical, lexical or even pragmatic rules. Jany (2019) just proposed this idea, but it has been not received much attention in the reviewed research. We will consider this factor in our present study when designing teaching lesson, conducting survey, and interview.

Cross-Pragmatic Compliments and Compliment Responses

Compliments and compliment responses are social actions that are strongly related to politeness norms in communication. These social actions are negotiated among people who employ various strategies from different languages and cultures. Feelings of disconnectedness or misunderstandings can occur between interactants if there is a lack of knowledge about the communicative strategies of the cultural and intercultural background of communication attendants. Therefore, understanding the norms in different cultures and people's responses and expectations to the way of interaction is considered a key to have an effective communication (good feelings between interactants). This section provides a review about compliments and compliment responses across cultures based on previous social, pragmatic, anthropology, and linguistic studies.

Compliments and Compliment Responses in Different Languages

Chen (2010) provided a comprehensive literature review of research on compliments and compliment responses across different cultures. Through this work, strategies in compliments and compliment responses in different cultures show both similarities and differences at various aspects. Understanding the taxonomy of these social actions in learners' cultures is important for researchers, educators, and teachers to plan a "bottom-up" and intercultural lesson plan. Due to the lack of studies on this issue in Korean culture, a survey on the intercultural background of students was conducted before developing the lesson plan. The results of these surveys showed that the majority of Korean students have learnt English. Their experiences with different cultures through learning a foreign language can be seen as an influencing factor in acquiring other languages and cultures. In order to have a comprehensive theory background to analyze our data of Korean students learning Vietnamese language, this section reviews features of compliments and compliment responses in English based on Chen (2010), in Vietnamese based on Pham (2020), and Korean based on the survey, the interviews, and sharing during the learning time of this present research. It is noted that language is viewed as communicative strategies that include verbal and non-verbal forms.

Based on the main categories in Chen (2010), Table 4.1 summarizes the characteristics of compliments and compliment responses in English language in different variations (American English, New Zealand English, and so on) and other native languages of target groups. English has received much more attention than other languages and due to the little research on this topic in the concerning languages, information about each language will be not equally demonstrated.

Table 4.1 summarizes general information of compliments and compliments responses across cultures. In fact, compliments and compliment responses are more

Table 4.1 Compliments and compliment responses across cultures

Language	Compliments			Compliment responses				
	Formulaic utterances	Gender	Topics	Interlocutors	Accept	Reject	Deflect/Evade	Others
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A small set of structures: NP is/looks (really) adj I (really) like/love NP - Common adj: <i>nice, beautiful, good</i> - Common verbs: <i>like, love</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women pay and receive more compliments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appearance and/or possession - Ability and/or accomplishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More between people of equal status (colleagues, casual friends, acquaintances) - Rarely among intimates (family members) 	High (36%–60%)	Low 10%	Middle 40%	14%

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Language	Compliments			Compliment responses				
	Formulaic utterances	Gender	Topics	Interlocutors	Accept	Reject	Deflect/Evade	Others
Vietnamese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A set of structures (short and long sentences) and additional information: Ông tô đẹp quá. Ông tài thật đấy (The car so is beautiful. You are so good.) - Positive adjectives: <i>xinh</i> (beautiful), <i>tốt</i> (nice, good) etc - Verbs: <i>ngưỡng mộ</i> (admire), <i>thích</i> (like), etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women compliment and receive more compliments than men. - Women compliment men's ability firstly, then their appearance. - For men complimenting women, it is the other way around. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men: possession, health, ability Women: appearance, dress Men: direct Women: indirect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More between people of equal status (colleagues, casual friends, acquaintances) - Rarely among intimates (family members) 	High 53.2%	Low 24.8%	Low 13%	Low 21.9%
Korean	Similar to English and Vietnamese	Women pay and receive more compliments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability Appearance Men: Ability Women: Appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use short structures for intimate relationship - Use full structure for loose/formal relationship 	High (63.6%)	Low (18.2%)	Low (18.2 %)	

complicated because of language change (Chen & Yang, 2010) and their relation to different indicators. For example, in English language, if compliments on appearance can be delivered freely, compliments on ability usually occur in particular situations from people with higher status to those of lower one (Chen, 2010, p. 80). Compliment responses are also more complex with more than four general categories (Pham, 2020). The variables such as topics, gender, distance, age, and experience are mutually associated with each other in delivering compliments and compliment responses in different languages (Tran, 2011).

Through Table 4.1, we can find similarities in compliments and compliment responses among three languages in general: English, Vietnamese, and Korean. However, these results should be interpreted with care because of the limitation of survey answers from the in Korean group. Compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese as a target language will be described in more detail in the next separate section.

Compliments and Compliment Responses in Vietnamese

Compliments in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese, the compliment wording *khen* is explained as “good evaluation” (Hoang, 2010, p. 643). Like other languages, with regard to pragmatics, *khen* is a grammatical verb reflecting politeness norms (Manes, 1983). Compliment topics have a very wide range from appearance, ability, belongings, talents, etc. in order to fulfill the most important function of these actions that is to establish and/or enhance solidarity and camaraderie (cf. Chen, 2010, p. 80).

Combined with the result of an authentic speech survey (Pham, 2013c), the purpose of compliments in Vietnamese can be generalized as follows:

- (1) Show sympathy, support, admiration. For example:
 “*Siêu thế! Động lực gì mà siêu thế!... Hu hu hu, bao giờ tớ mới thoát cái món nợ đời này đây?*” [*Super! What motivation is for that super! ... (Crying), when would I escape from this life's debt?*] (Two female graduate students chatting with each other).
- (2) Be social to maintain the relationship or replace the meeting ceremony, break up, thank you, apologize, ... or open, connect, and maintain the conversation. For example: “*Hôm nay trông bánh quá! Có cô nào để ý à?*” [(you) Look cool today! Any girls paying attention (to you)?] (A woman and men meeting, instead of greeting, the woman gives a compliment).
- (3) To avoid face-threatening behaviors. For example:
 “*Tốt hơn trước nhiều rồi. Nhưng mà vẫn phải gia công thêm.*” [*Better than before. But still have to improve more.*] (Professor X commenting on the student's work).
- (4) Threatening the face of others (criticism, mockery, sarcasm). For example:

“Vâng, bà thì đương nhiên lúc nào cũng là number one rồi! Bọn tớ chỉ dám ếch ngồi đáy giếng thôi!” [Yes, you are certainly a number one as always! We just dared to be as the frogs sitting at the bottom of the well!] (One of the female friends said to the person who just spoke).

According to Pham (2020), compliments can be delivered by linguistic expressions including or not including the speech act verb. For example:

Example 1:

- A teacher said: “*Cô khen bạn Anh Thu trước lớp về tinh thần học tập; hăng hái phát biểu*” [I praise Anh Thu in front of the class for her learning spirit and eagerness to speak up]. (p. 69).

Example 2:

- An adult said to a baby: “*Cháu giỏi lắm! Ngoan nhất nhà đấy!*” [You are such a good girl! You are the best at home!] (p. 70).

Example 3: (Seeing Vân wearing a new dress) An said: “*Chắc lại có chàng nào viện trợ từ nước ngoài về, Việt Nam làm gì đã có!*” [Must be a guy providing aid from abroad, as if Vietnam does not have it!] (p. 70).

The delivery of a compliment can be explicit (Examples 1 and 2) or implicit (Example 3). Direct compliments containing speech act verbs (*khen—compliment, khen ngợi—compliment, biểu dương - glorify, tuyên dương—honor*), are often used in formal communication. For example:

Example 4:

- “*Tôi xin thay mặt lãnh đạo công ty, nhiệt liệt biểu dương tinh thần hăng say làm việc, hoàn thành vượt mức kế hoạch của toàn bộ cán bộ công nhân viên chức trong công ty*”. [I, on behalf of the company leadership, would like to give an appraisal to the enthusiastic spirit of work and the achievement exceeding the plan of all officials and employees in the company”. (p. 82).

Interestingly, in Vietnamese daily life communication, the compliments containing the verb *ngưỡng mộ* (admire) are used differently between men and women. Men utilize this verb more frequently than women to compliment on many different topics and in different situations. For example:

Example 5:

- *Female*: “*Sếp mình xinh nhỉ!*” [My boss is pretty!].
- *Male*: “*Mình ngưỡng mộ từ lâu rồi!*” [I have admired her for a long time!] “. (p. 83).

In Vietnamese language, there are many linguistic structures to deliver direct compliments such as following: (1) A complete sentence: (“*Anh thấy em hôm nay lộng lẫy quá!*” [I find you gorgeous today!]); (2) A short phrase with the evaluated words (“*Giỏi thật đấy!*” [Good job!], “*Giỏi!*” [Great!]); (3) A comparison structure (“*Xinh như là mình tinh màn bạc!*” [Pretty like a pure silver screen!] (compliment on appearance)).

Like other languages, indirect compliments consist of: metaphor (“*Anh có biết anh đang là cục nam châm không?*” [Do you know you’re a magnet?]); encouragement (“*Giữ vững vị trí này nhé!*” [Hold on to this position please!]); and many different implications such as question, advice, assumptions, wish, request, suggestion, announcement, thank, etc.

Specifically, compliments can be delivered in a structure with only the compared phrase (“*Như Tiên giáng thế*” [Like the Fairy descending from Heaven] (compliment on appearance); “*Đúng là con nhà nòi*” [rightly the child of the master] (compliment on intelligence or talent)).

Pham (2020) also suggested several common wording categories in compliments: (1) verbs of five senses: *thấy*, *trông*, *nhìn*, *ngắm* (look, see), *nghe* (listen), *ngửi* (smell), etc.; (2) adjectives indicating positive evaluation such as *tốt* (good), *hay* (interesting), *xinh* (pretty), *đẹp* (beautiful), *giỏi* (mastering), etc.; (3) words indicating the degree of the adjectives, *hơi* (slightly), *tương đối* (relatively), *rất* (very), *lắm* (too), etc.; (4) words indicating emotions *ôi chao* (surprising), *đấy* (indicating), *đúng là* (emphasizing), etc.

Compliments in Vietnamese in daily life are very diverse because of associated variables such as age, relationship, purpose, etc. Gender is also one of influencing factor on compliments in Vietnamese. Pham (2020) argued that men use direct compliments more than women, while women use indirect compliments more than men. This statement has been explained by traditional Vietnamese culture: women prefer to be discreet, delicate and therefore are always able to control actions in general and speech-language behavior, while men are more direct, more proactive in expressing their opinions and feelings. Vietnamese men do not find it difficult to compliment a woman. In contrast, Vietnamese women, though they respect the ability and/or possession of a man but they often do not speak it out. In order to compliment a man, women often have to choose an appropriate opportunity/situation.

Compliment Responses in Vietnamese

Compliments and compliment responses are social actions existing in a communication process. The interactants can respond compliments by verbal, non-verbal elements, or both, or possibly a “gap” (silence)... (Holmes, 1988, p. 445).

If compliment serves as an introduction, accepting/reacting to a compliment as a response, from which they form an adjacent pair in a conversation. Therefore, compliments may be considered “active” status while compliment responses may belong to “passive” status. A complimenter has the right to compliment someone due

to his/her intention. It requires the complimentee to respond appropriately. Pomerantz (1978) stated that the complimenter puts the complimentee into an awkward situation: how to avoid conflict, disagreement with the appraisal, and avoid self-praise (p. 80).

Based on different investigations on authentic Vietnamese language, Pham (2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015) suggested following common structures of compliment responses: (1) Just say “Cảm ơn/cám ơn” [Thank you]; (2) Confirm and/or improve the level of appraisal; (3) Praise back the person who praised him/her; (4) Say “Cảm ơn” [Thank you] and share the information about the praised content; (5) Express feelings; (6) Reject compliments; (7) Ask back about compliment content; (8) Silence; (9) Talk about other things; (10) Reduce the level of appraisal.

The compliment and compliment responses in Vietnamese obtain both universal and linguistic and cultural specific features. Teaching Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses, therefore, needs to pay attention both aspects to help students get to know these social actions effectively. Therefore, the present study aims to answer research questions:

How can explicit cross-cultural pragmatic instruction in Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses be implemented in an Vietnamese as a foreign language classroom in Vietnam? How do the learners feel after the cross-cultural pragmatic instruction? How do the teachers feel after the cross-cultural pragmatic instruction?

The study can be considered a pilot study for a long-term study to know whether the mentioned approach improves performance of Vietnamese speech acts of students at different language levels, different ages (children, adolescents, adult), different learning environments (in Vietnam, in other countries, online, offline, homogenous class, mixed class).

Research Design

Participants

Targeting Korean students and their learning experiences, the present study conducted surveys, interviews, and provided a teaching lesson (Table 4.2).

Participants generally fall between the ages of 19 and 43. The students in Korean groups are first to third-year university students at the faculty of Vietnamese Studies at Hanoi National University of Education. They belong to upper intermediate and advanced learners.

Their additional languages are usually English and Vietnamese, but the duration of learning these languages is not homogeneous. They have intercultural experiences

Table 4.2 Summary of number of Korean participants in this research

Survey attendance	Lesson attendance	Interview
20	21	5

mostly through learning foreign languages and working. Because of varying cultural backgrounds and other variables related to intercultural background, this information needs to be interpreted carefully.

Materials

In this study, a questionnaire was designed to gather information about participants' personal information, their intercultural background and experience, the knowledge on compliments and compliment responses of participants' languages, and a discourse completion test (DCT).

The questionnaire consists of 23 questions in total. Ten of these questions address intercultural background and experience such as foreign language learning history and intercultural encounters. Two questions focus on their feeling of compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese. Due to limited pragmatic research on compliments and compliment responses in the Korean language and the need to understand Korean intercultural norms, the remaining eleven questions deal with compliments and compliment responses in Korean language and culture.

The DCT consists of eight hypothetical scenarios prompting compliments or compliment responses. Four situations involve compliments, and four involve responding. These scenarios reflect common communication context, focusing on topics: competence, appearance, clothing, possessions, and work effort. They encompass various settings (family or public) and relationship (hierarchical, or non-hierarchical, intimate or non-intimate). Under each DCT situation, participants are asked to explain the reasoning behind their choices in each scenario.

Additionally, a guideline for semi-structured interviews was developed to conduct in depth interviews with select participants and teachers after teaching lesson. The open questions for students consist of information about their experience on learning Vietnamese, their intercultural experience, their feelings and comments about teaching lesson, their demands on learning Vietnamese in the future, even their recommendations. The open questions for teacher include their feelings after instruction, the advantages and disadvantages when implementing intercultural approach in teaching, their feelings with reaction of students (agree, disagree, active, passive), the advantages and disadvantages for the educational institutions in Vietnam, teaching staff, learners in the implementation the intercultural approach in teaching, as well as the future of long-term treatment regarding intercultural teaching.

Lesson Design

As suggested in the review of the teaching of compliment and compliment responses in foreign language classes, in a teaching design, the explicit instruction is useful

for teaching language features, but more is needed to encourage cross-pragmatic learning and individual appropriateness.

To facilitate this teaching model, we borrow Jany's (2019) experimental design for intercultural approach teaching, aiming to create classroom interactions that foster meaningful learner participation. Here's the breakdown of a 2-hour lesson about Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses, designed for Korean students with upper intermediate Vietnamese proficiency:

1. **Warm up:** Activate prior knowledge of Vietnamese compliments using a questionnaire.
2. **Example:** Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses.
3. **Contrastive analysis:** Facilitate discussion comparing students' native language (L1) compliments to Vietnamese (L2), emphasizing perspectives like gender.
4. **Practice:** Provide opportunities for students to practice giving and receiving compliments.
5. **Reassessment:** Giving the questionnaire again to gauge post lesson changes).
6. **Feedback:** Collect the student comments, feelings, and suggestion on Padlet.

Procedure

At the beginning, the survey with a questionnaire and a DCT was distributed to the learners. The lesson was taught by a Vietnamese native speaker. The entire instructional session lasted two class hours. The proposed teaching lessons as mentioned above aim to "wake up" the demand and the voice of the learners and teachers with the intercultural approach in teaching language and culture through the case teaching compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese. Immediately after the completion of the instruction, the learners were asked to write their feelings, demands, and comments on Padlet anonymously. Some learners and the teacher were asked to do a semi-structured interview.

Data Analysis

Survey Analysis

Apart from the questions dealing with personal information and intercultural background, question 9 and question 11 reveal the attitudes of participants towards using compliments and compliment responses with people from different cultures in Vietnamese (from 1 very uncomfortable to 5 very comfortable). Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the results of these two questions.

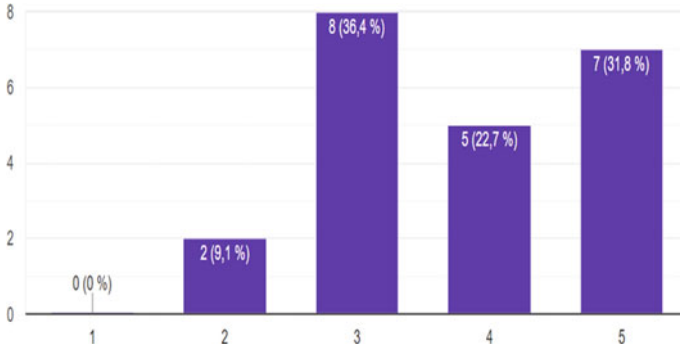


Fig. 4.1 Attitudes of Korean students in using compliments and compliment responses with people from different cultures

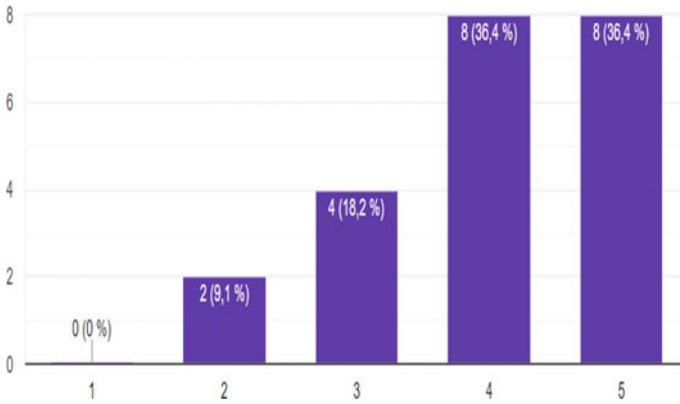


Fig. 4.2 Attitudes of Korean students in using compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese language

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show that for both people from different cultures and in situations using Vietnamese, Korean participants mostly feel “normal” and even “comfortable” using compliment or responding to compliments. However, in the situations using Vietnamese language, they seem to feel more “comfortable” (level 4), even more “very comfortable” (level 5).

The survey also explores the understanding of the students’ cultures of compliments and compliment responses through seven multiple and open-ended questions. Figure 4.3 demonstrates the responses of students for the question 13 “How often do Korean people compliment?”. The answers range from “very rarely” to “very often”). Figure 4.3 indicates that in Korean culture, compliments are used “often” and “very often”.

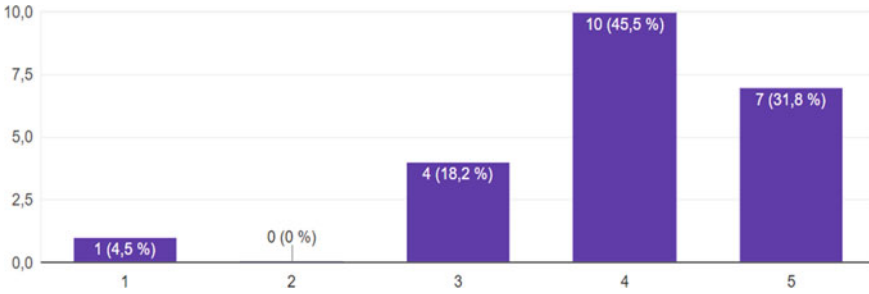


Fig. 4.3 Frequency of using compliments in Korean culture

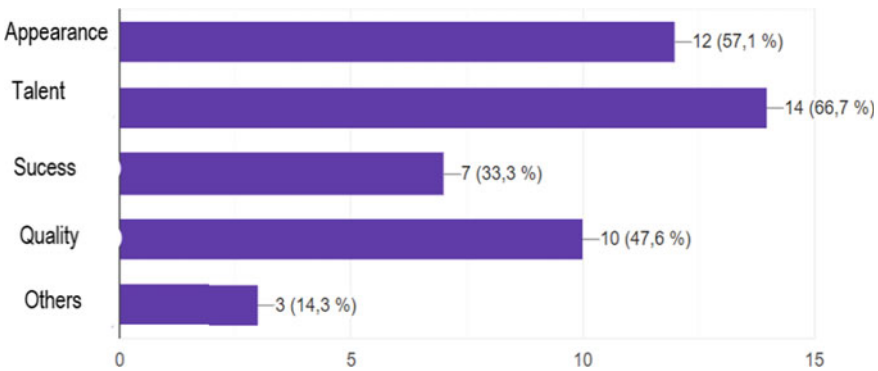


Fig. 4.4 Frequency of compliment topics in Korean culture

Figure 4.4 illustrates the topics of compliments in Korean culture. It shows that the most favored topics in compliments in Korean culture are talent, appearance, then quality respectively.

Specifically, the relationship of gender and compliment actions is illustrated in Fig. 4.5 as follows.

In Fig. 4.5, the statement 1, 3, and 4 which refer to women receiving compliments, seem to be largely agreed upon by participants. Statements 2 and 5, dealing with man and compliments, may be difficult for participants, leading them mostly to choose “no opinion”. However, the sum of “right” and “absolutely right” is higher than other choices in all five statements.

The strategies in compliment responses in both cultures are illustrated in Fig. 4.6. It shows that Korean students tend to accept the compliments more than refuse or evade this action. This is similar to the practice in English-speaking cultures regarding compliment responses.

In general, the survey of Korean students in the experimental class echoes the general findings presented in Part 3 on cross-pragmatic comparison. Korean students in this class respond positively regarding giving and responding to compliments within their own culture. They even perceive that complimenting behavior is more

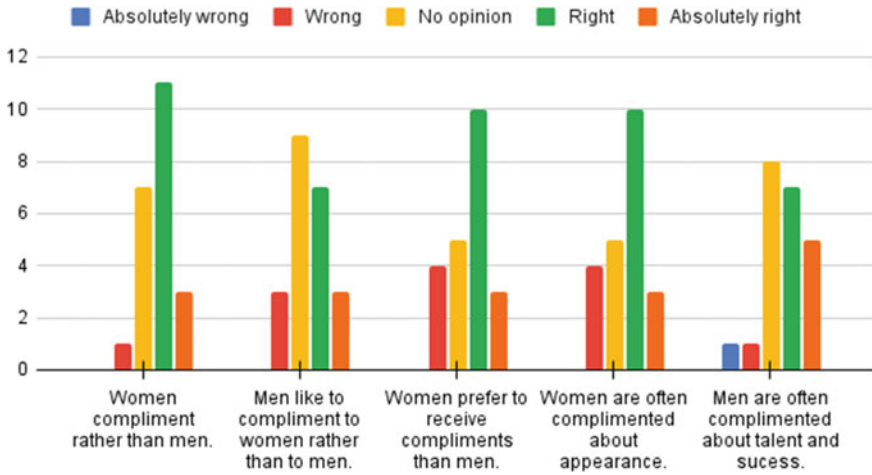
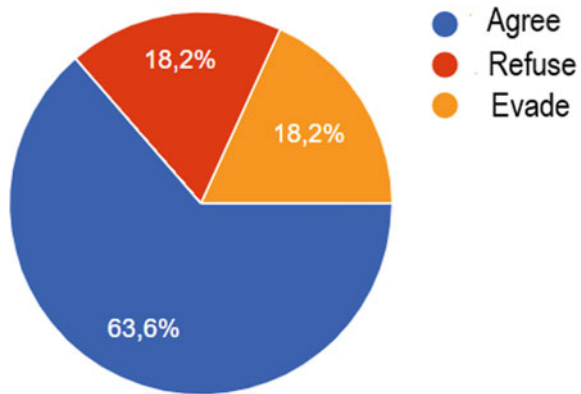


Fig. 4.5 Gender and compliments and compliment responses in Korean culture

Fig. 4.6 Compliment responses in Korean culture



acceptable in Vietnamese culture (Fig. 4.3). Students in this class also consider talent and appearance as the most two popular topics for compliments. However, the combined focus on talent, success, and quality shows that students give relatively less attention to compliments on ability and success (Fig. 4.4). Figure 4.5 also suggests a slight difference in opinions regarding gender. There’s a higher percentage of students giving “no opinion” to the statement that men received more compliments on ability and success, and that men give compliments to women more often than to men. This difference will be further discussed in our analysis of students’ interviews after the lesson. This analysis of students’ backgrounds before the lesson provides valuable context for understanding the lesson practices and students’ learning experience.

Experimental Lesson Observation Analysis

One trained Vietnamese teacher was recruited to observe and write a report. This individual also conducted interviews with students and the instructor after the lesson. The online lesson followed the preliminary plan.

The instruction proceeded at slow tempo, gradually creating a comfortable atmosphere. To facilitate open discussion, the teacher frequently asked students, how Korean people typically compliment or response in specific situations, and how a student personally acts in these specific situation. The teachers encouraged students to be confident in their choice and use of Vietnamese compliments. Interestingly, through discussion rooted in the students' personal experiences, they expressed opinions that were different from both the general findings in Part 3 and the pre-survey discussed earlier. In the class discussion, some students stated that (they believed) Korean people hesitate to compliment due to shyness. Additionally, they felt that Korean avoid appearance-based compliments, as these could imply the recipient doesn't possess other praiseworthy characteristics. They asserted that the most frequent compliment topic in Korean culture focuses on hard work and that men often respond to compliments with smiles and silence.

With these new insights from discussion, the teacher suggested that the students tried to implemente Korean strategies on compliments and compliment responses to the Vietnamese conversation. Surprisingly, unlike the pragmatic challenges and failures outlined in Part 2, these Korean students found that their Korean communication styles were well-received by Vietnamese speakers. This result helped Korean learners feel less shy in making conversation with Vietnamese friends, and more comfortable expressing their cultural values and opinions.

Interview with Students After the Experimental Lesson

At the end of the lesson, students anonymously shared their comments on Padlet. Then we followed up with one-to-one interview with students and the teacher. Five interviews with students were conducted by a Vietnamese native speaker who observed the lesson and was trained in interview techniques.

Although the interviewees have different history of learning Vietnamese, they all expressed their enthusiasm for discussing cultural differences between Korean and Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses during the semi-structured interview. The lesson's energy lingered, with some students continuing to share their changing perspectives on the Korean customs of compliments and compliment response, and their personal experience of giving and responding to compliments.

Mon said that Korean men generally don't want to receive the compliments about appearance, even though they look good, as it makes them feel they lack other noteworthy qualities to be complimented on. However, he emphasized that compliment

culture is changing. Now he can accept compliments on appearance like “so beautiful” and “so nice”. Regarding the same topic, Kin shared that he felt quite uncomfortable when he had to give compliment to someone. This, he explained, might be due to the fact that his parents did not compliment him much, which he perceived as a reflection of the more reserved nature of Korean culture. Lee found that although people come from different cultures, their thoughts and behaviors are similar in many situations. However, there are still differences between Vietnamese and Korean compliment practices. In contrast, Jung found the exploration of similarities between Korean and Vietnamese compliment cultures.

All students found that the instruction of compliments and compliment responses was explicitly useful and immediately applicable in everyday life. Further elaborating on this point, students shared that the most influential factor on learning Vietnamese for them was friends and neighbors (Kin, Lee, Hien, Jung), motivation (Mon), independence (Kin), Viet books (Mon). Therefore, any new learning point that helps them use the language more exactly outside the classroom such as pronunciation, and vocabulary (Kin) and to gain deep knowledge about culture and language (Jung).

With regards to their experience of intercultural communication, Jungo provided a significant sharing. She said that she used to feel ashamed because her Vietnamese was not so good; yet the teacher made her believe that the expectation for her is not to be “like a native”, but to be herself as a Korean learning Vietnamese. Hence, she gained the confidence to speak out.

Especially, many students recognized the similarities between Vietnamese and Korean language and culture, and they leveraged these insights to deepen their Vietnamese learning. Hien, Jung, Mo felt particularly excited during the class discussion, discovering that both Vietnamese and Korean cultures value idioms and share a substantial amount of Sino-influenced vocabulary.

They also found that in this lesson, there were far more contributions from students than other previous lessons (Hien, Jung). Most of them felt comfortable, even though there were students from different courses attending this lesson. Only Mon felt more “a little bit stressed” because of the attendance of students from other grades. Many of them thought they needed more lessons like that. Ki simply said: “I felt it was not enough”. Hien expressed that she liked it more than ordinary lessons and “I want to have more lessons like that with different topics”. They mentioned the need for teachers to care for diversity of students. Mon thought that teachers should help Korean students to overcome their shyness and fear of being evaluated to participate. He also suggested that he felt motivated when his interests and level were paid attention. He thought that teaching Vietnamese as a second language in Hanoi (where he has learnt) lacks study on this issue.

Interview with the Teacher After the Experimental Lesson

The interview with the teacher was conducted by the same interviewer who observed the instruction and interviewed the attending students. The teacher was

not completely satisfied with the instruction. However, she was surprised at the informative contribution of the students, which was far more than her expectation.

The cross-pragmatic research on the topic of compliments and compliment response has given me such a deep understanding of teaching Vietnamese language for foreigners. The comparison was such a useful way to tackle the challenge that Korean students had when learning Vietnamese. But it is a hard job that requires a lot from teachers.

Ms. Han reported that the implementation of explicit pragmatic and intercultural approach has not been applied regularly in teaching Vietnamese for international students in her institution and neighboring ones. She invested significant time and effort in planning this experimental lesson. But as the team leader of the Vietnamese teaching team, she felt it was her responsibility to explore this issue.

Ms. Han was initially disappointed by the limited pragmatic research on compliments and compliment responses. However but when the idea of using students as a source of information came up, Miss. Han was very delighted because she found a valuable technique for teachers to navigate the complex nature of multilingual classrooms. This approach emphasized the importance of teachers acquiring cross-pragmatic knowledge of the teaching topic, but even more significantly, understanding their students' linguistic backgrounds and using cross-pragmatic comparison activities in the language classroom.

The intercultural teaching approach seems to be new for all of us, but the students embraced it finally, we ended up sharing so much interesting things from all perspectives... I didn't know the students like that before.

In this case, the teacher and the students had established a strong relationship after two years at the institution. The students were accustomed to the teacher's existing methods; therefore, introducing a new teaching approach initially created some uncertainty. When the students did not response to her ideas, it affected her mood and made her feel discouraged. This experience highlights the importance of intensive staff training that addresses not only teaching methodology but also teachers' well-being and resilience when implementing change.

During instructions, students may have felt more comfortable, therefore they could contribute more to the lesson and create more output. Students were opened to discussing about themselves. The open discussion that linked explicit comparison of two pragmatic rules with the socio-cultural features of the two languages had deepened students' knowledge, encouraged high order thinking, and made learning meaningful and relevant.

Therefore, with respect to the implementation of this teaching method in her institution, Miss. Han believed that it improves the students' learning experience. However, there were still many difficulties in implementing this teaching method because of such disadvantages that she also has faced: lack of understanding about students' cultures and languages and understanding about the teaching method. After that, she said that the difficulties from students could be solved by spending time to understand more about interests, motivation and demand of the students.

Discussion

This research investigated and experimentally applied the explicit meta-pragmatic instruction and intercultural teaching approaches proposed by Chen (2019) and Stoian (2020) in teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language. The lesson design for compliments and compliment responses, tailored for Korean learners, was based on both approaches. During the teaching process, students actively contributed a lot of information to build the learning content. They were not only receiving information from the instructor but also providing the main content for the learning. The relationship between students and teachers became collaborative.

First, the survey results revealed a surprising number of many similarities between compliments and compliment responses in Vietnamese and Korean cultures. These similarities might even extend to universal features across different languages, as evidenced by comparisons with English, including the formula for compliments, the favoring of women with compliments, the relationship between favorite compliment topics and gender, and the frequency of agreement in responding to compliments.

However, during the discussion and interview, many detailed and interesting pieces of information emerged that contrast with the characteristics collected through the survey: shamefulness when giving and receiving compliments; a preference not to receive the compliments about appearance. Moreover, the interview showed that the attention of personal and cultural identities that conceptualize their emotions, feelings, interests, and motivations, is important for teaching success, or at least for encouraging the active participation of students.

In the previous studies on teaching compliments and compliment responses, Stoian (2020) emphasized that the contrastive analysis of different languages can help students understand more about these speech acts rather than reduce stereotype behavior. The contributions of students, therefore, can fill in the gap of the teaching only from contrastive analysis. However, the form of contrastive analysis has its own issue, by framing and contrasting the analysis categories. Our research group was “homogenous” since they are all Korean learners but the results with focused interview showed that the group was still very diverse as each of them shared a distinct experience of language and about language use.

The instructor and the students all mentioned that they found the teaching lessons are useful and practical. Inspire of limitation of training on intercultural approach and the knowledge of Korean language and culture, the instructor felt more comfortable than she expected. She found that students could offer a lot of different views on an issue, encouraging them to talk more, to be really active and to contribute to building up the lesson. The previous teaching design on compliments and compliment responses based on explicit meta-pragmatic instruction and intercultural approach in the review focused on the instruction of the teacher, and the comparative knowledge that teachers can provide more than the “lively information, fresh information” that comes from the discussion with students. Although (Jany, 2019) noted that there are no fixed rules in the use of speech acts, her teaching design still emphasized “language as code”.

Our teaching design was based on the voice of the learners more than the profound knowledge of teachers. The teaching lesson became an adventure that makes both teachers and learners to be eager with much different unpredictable new knowledge from other perspectives. The acceptance, the empathy, the understanding about the non-existence of fixed rules (stereotypes).

One of factor that previous experiment studies regarding intercultural approach in teaching have not mentioned is emotion, feeling, and reaction of the interactants in the communication. Language and culture do not only work like described stereotypes and fixed rules in the contrastive analysis, but more diverse. Moreover, sometimes, the language form at all linguistic levels doesn't play the most important role for the success of the communication. The classroom communication is self-motivated, filled with emotions and feelings, hence creating a "language as experience". The feedback from Jung and Mo supports this argument.

In the interview, most of the students requested more time to experience Vietnamese like the demo lesson. It is evident that the applied teaching lesson plan and teaching methodology are effective to teach Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses, and potentially applicable for other content areas of teaching Vietnamese as a second language. However, the duration of an intervention should be longer. This has led us to consider developing another long-term study to obtain precise results in near future.

In the interview, the learners mostly expressed their positive attitudes toward the lesson and felt very comfortable having the chance to share their ideas. However, they still did not directly mention to the difference between this teaching lesson and other lessons, nor did they discuss intercultural competence. Therefore, intercultural training will be made more explicit in the long-term course. The suggestion of a student, Mo, regarding the appropriate implementation of intercultural approach for student group will be considered in the next lesson plan.

Conclusion

The current study aims to examine the effectiveness of using of intercultural approach to teach Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses for Korean learners. To achieve this, a pre-survey and an empirical teaching design were implemented with Korean learners as the target group.

To experiment with this proposal, we initiated the study with a linguistic analysis of compliments and compliment responses, which have been chosen because of their common and diverse features in many languages, including Vietnamese, English, and Korean. From this, we conducted a survey with our 20 potential Korean students and analyzed it to understand their perspective of using compliments and compliment responses in their language knowledge and their previous living experiences. Based on our linguistic understanding and explicit pragmatic instruction, our knowledge about learners, and our understanding of the intercultural teaching framework, we then designed an experimental lesson. The experimental class was observed, and

the teachers and students were interviewed after the lesson; with this qualitative analysis, the article discussed the affordances and challenges of applying intercultural approach in teaching Vietnamese to Korean students at Binh Minh University and expanded beyond that boundary.

It is noted that although the target group seems to be homogenous with their Korean cultural background, their previous intercultural experiences and personal identities play a significant role in their learning of Vietnamese compliments and compliment responses. Most learners want to have their voices included in the learning process. The intercultural adjustment in teaching has helped them to feel “comfortable” in learning, “opened to others”, and be more confident in talking in Vietnamese with Vietnamese people. A comprehensive treatment within a minimum of two or three 20-min sessions to a maximum of 9-week sessions depending on the complexity of the targets to be taught (Rose, 2005) will be developed in the near future to know more exactly about the effectiveness of the teaching method and the maintenance of the competence after the intervention. This result reveals further ground data for the need of intercultural approach in teaching Vietnamese for speakers of other languages in Vietnam and can be applied to other contexts of teaching Vietnamese in other contexts.

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Chapter 5

Language Ideology and Its Educational Impact: Insights from Vietnamese Community Language Schools



Hoa Do

Abstract Drawing on Gal and Irvine's (1995), (Signs of difference: Language and ideology in social life. Cambridge University Press, 2019) concept of linguistic differentiation, this chapter examines if and how teachers, principals and stakeholders at Vietnamese community language schools (CLSs) in Australia were engaged in linguistic differentiation and the extent to which their engagement influenced their decision-making and classroom practices. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews demonstrates that the participants were actively engaged in noticing and justifying linguistic differences. Language-in-education planning wise, it is argued that the teaching of Vietnamese at the CLSs under study was, to some extent, politicized, evidenced by the participants' language standardization and low interest in resources developed inside Vietnam.

Introduction

The postcolonial approach to language-in-education (LIE) policy has highlighted the ideological, discursive and negotiating nature of educational language planning, considering it as a practice distributed to and conducted by different actors at different levels in the society, i.e. the micro, local level and intervening level, as opposed to being exclusively taken charge of by governmental and institutional bodies at the macro level (Baldauf, 2006; Canagarajah, 2005; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021; Spolsky, 2009). Canagarajah (2005) further argues that LIE planning should take a "ground-up" approach (p. 195) when developing and executing policies considering how multifaceted and ideological sociolinguistic identity, language attitudes and loyalty are and how mixed community needs can be in the current era of globalization and transnationalism.

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© The Author(s) 2024
Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_5

In one of his influential essays to argue for micro-language planning, Baldauf (2006) makes an essential distinction between micro-implementation of macro policies and micro-language planning at specific sites, which he respectively terms “implementation studies” and “micro-centric LPP studies” (p. 154, 158). According to this distinction, the former looks at the instrumental role of bottom-up work in carrying out top-down policies, which is the traditional direction in goal-oriented LIE scholarship. The latter encompasses cases where individuals and/or groups and organizations take initiative and exercise agency to develop their own language policy and planning, which is not necessarily an outcome of a macro policy, but more of a response to their own language needs and issues. In arguing for micro-level LIE planning and teacher agency in multilingual education and community language maintenance, Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech (2014) point out that the absence of or inconsistencies in macro-level frames and guidelines often result in community- and language-specific needs and issues left unattended, prompting local actors to develop and execute their own language planning activities to deal with the perceived issues. Some may be tempted to think that this distinction goes against the micro–macro continuum or the onion layers metaphor in LIE (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). However, this view of micro-centric language planning helps include minority communities and their languages and aspects of minority languages which are small and highly negligible in macro-level planning (Baldauf, 2006). It is, thus, sensible to consider micro-centric language planning as complementary to micro-implementation of macro policy and recognize it as a valid branch in LIE scholarship. This further embraces the discursive and inclusive goal of LIE (Baldauf, 2006; Spolsky, 2009) and closely resonates with the “localized orientation” Canagarajah (2005, p. 195) suggests.

Language Ideology in Micro-centric LIE

Central to micro-centric LIE is the discussion of the relationship between local language planning work and local stakeholders’ language ideology.¹ Language ideology has been defined as sets of beliefs that language users articulate to justify and rationalize their language use (Silverstein, 1979 cited in Woolard, 1998), and these beliefs closely concern the role of language in language users’ individual and group membership (Woolard, 1998). In the LIE literature, Shohamy (2009) explicitly endorses a highly similar view, according to which language is considered a marker of nationhood, loyalty and conformity, and that language policies, rules and regulations at any level are formulated based on stakeholders’ ideologies about nations and groups, and about “who belongs, who doesn’t [...] and who should not belong” (p. 186). These comments lend themselves neatly to the ideology of linguistic differentiation, an influential theme in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics.

¹ While the distinction between the two terms “linguistic ideology” and “language ideology” is worth discussing, the scope of this chapter does not permit it. They are, therefore, used interchangeably in this chapter.

Linguistic differentiation is, by definition, an ideological process in which linguistic differences and language varieties are noticed, commented on, rationalized, justified and mapped on to perceived relevant and significant social groups and events (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Irvine and Gal (2000) and Gal and Irvine (2019) identify three linguistic differentiation processes: rhematization, erasure and fractal recursivity. Rhematization, previously termed iconization, involves viewing linguistic features as representative of “a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (p. 37). Erasure entails linguistic features that do not fit or is inconsistent with a social group’s ideological scheme being made invisible or unnoticed (Irvine & Gal, 2000). They define fractal recursivity as the projecting and/or performing of linguistic differentiation at one level to another. The three processes of rhematization, erasure and fractal recursivity do not happen in a linear sequence but are intertwined with one inviting the other(s) (Gal, 1998).

The maintenance of a minority community’s language at community language² schools (CLSs), not-for-profit community-based organizations offering language programs for school-aged children outside school hours, is a prime example of micro-centric LIE planning. This is because volunteer teachers, principals at CLSs and interested community stakeholders take initiative to plan and implement measures to address their own community- and language-specific needs which, in most cases, are neither visible nor taken up at macro-level LIE planning and policies (Baldauf, 2006; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014). Local language planning at individual CLSs is best observed in such culturally and linguistically diverse migrant countries as Australia where more than one in every five Australians, or 22.8% of the population, reported speaking a language other than English at home (ABS, 2022). Along with mainstream schools and government specialist language schools that provide foreign and community language programs, there are currently 738 CLSs teaching 93 community languages to more than 105 thousand students in Australia (CLA, 2021). CLSs have been found to play a pivotal role in helping students negotiating their identity and developing stronger migrant communities and greater social cohesion for the host country (Cruickshank et al., 2020). However, they are still marginalized, with their operation and teaching activities generally considered a community’s private issue (Liddicoat, 2018) and their volunteer staff and their language ideologies being peripheralized (Nordstrom, 2020).

To offer a nuanced understanding of volunteer teachers and principals and their decision-making process regarding planning and implementing local community- and language-specific rules at CLSs, this chapter approaches the topic from a language ideology perspective. Drawing on the concepts of linguistic differentiation (Gal & Irvine, 1995, 2019; Irvine & Gal, 2000), this chapter seeks answers to the following questions:

² The term “community languages” is the Australian counterpart of heritage languages, which is more commonly used in Northern America and other parts of the world. It implies a sense of belonging and contemporaneity when it comes to language in education and language maintenance (Lo Bianco, 2020), and is used in this article.

1. In what way do Vietnamese CLS teachers, principals and community stakeholders justify variants and differences if they notice them in the Vietnamese language?
2. To what extent does their justification impact their decision-making process and classroom practices at CLSs?

This chapter continues with an overview of the research context, i.e. the Vietnamese community and Vietnamese CLSs in Australia. The methodology section reports the way in which the participants were recruited, data were collected and analysed, followed by the findings and discussion section. The chapter concludes with a summary of the project and some implications for future research.

Research Context

It is generally accepted that the Vietnamese community in Australia is comprised of war refugees and their relatives and offspring and a more recent wave of skilled migrants, partner migrants, and graduates gaining permanent residency (Carruthers, 2008; DHA, 2019, 2020, 2022; Thai, 2007; Nguyen, 2012). There are stark differences between the two subgroups in their migration motives and pathways, aspiration, attitudes towards and connections with the home and host country (Baldassar et al., 2017). Despite the intragroup differences, the displaced and diasporic discourse of the whole Vietnamese community is firmly instilled, evidenced by the prevalent collective memory of the first generation's trauma and refugeehood and the unrelenting anti-communist attitudes and distancing from the current regime in Vietnam (Baldassar et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2013).

Vietnamese has been among the top five languages other than English (LOTEs) spoken at home in most recent censuses (ABS, 2022). The maintenance of Vietnamese has often been attributed to Vietnamese CLSs. Data collated from relevant state and territory government bodies and from Community Languages Australia (CLA) show that there are some 50 Vietnamese CLSs in five states and one territory in the country offering outside school hours Vietnamese lessons to some 8,800 students³ (CLA, 2021; CLSSA, 2023; DOET, 2021, 2022a, b; OMA, 2021). While there is no official record of the first Vietnamese CLS in Australia, some schools report that they started offering Vietnamese language lessons to children of Vietnamese origin in as early as 1978 and the early 1980s. As such, most CLSs were pioneered, and some are currently managed by first-generation Vietnam-born refugees (Table 5.1).

Vietnamese was identified as an “at risk” language whose enrolments dropped by 32% in a recent study on CLSs in New South Wales (Cruickshank et al., 2020, p. 18). Considering these numbers and the fact that the Vietnamese community is now in its third generation, a critical point where language shift is most likely to happen

³ There may be discrepancies in the number of schools and enrolments recorded and reported by different departments and organizations. These discrepancies, to a certain extent, indicate the peripheral status of CLSs in comparison with mainstream schools.

Table 5.1 Number of Vietnamese CLSs and their enrolment

State and territory	Number of Vietnamese CLSs	Enrolments
Australian Capital Territory	1	86
New South Wales	20	2,305
Queensland	3	NA
South Australia	4	1,535
Victoria	12	4939
Total	40	8,796

Source CLA (2021), DOET (2021, 2022a, b), OMA (2021)

(Fishman, 2001), it is timely to examine factors affecting the teaching of Vietnamese at CLSs.

Method

Participants

Presented in this chapter is data taken from semi-structured interviews with 11 Vietnamese volunteer teachers, principals and directors from nine CLSs. Most of the participants were recruited through the snowball technique (Milroy, 2008). This technique helps accelerating the establishment of trust between newly recruited participants and the researcher (O'Connor, 2004). New informants were also recruited after an interview where it was decided that more interviewees were needed to contribute to the exploration of new understanding and meaning of the topic under study. While this theoretical sampling required data analysis to be done concurrently with data collection, it was worthwhile since combining snowball sampling and theoretical sampling could ensure both diversity, transferability and theoretical saturation (Conlon et al., 2020). Table 5.2 outlines the interviewees' demographics.

Interviews were conducted via either Zoom meeting or telephone during the period from May to September 2021 due to the COVID-19 restriction on travelling. Written participant consent forms were sent in the email invitation and verbal consent to recording was gained at the beginning of each interview. Ten interviews were in Vietnamese and one was in English. Interviews varied in length since they were mainly interviewee-led.

Table 5.2 Interviewees' demographics

#	Code	Role	Gender	Years in Australia	Migration pathway	Language	Interview length mode
1	TMS2	Teacher	M	>10	Skill	Vietnamese	35 min/ Telephone
2	TFS3	Teacher	F	9	Skill	Vietnamese	30 min/ Telephone
3	TFS5	Teacher	F	23	Skill	Vietnamese	84 min/Zoom meeting
4	TMR6	Teacher Principal	M	33	Refugee	Vietnamese	40 min/ Telephone
5	TMR7	Teacher	M	41	Refugee	Vietnamese	63 min/ Telephone
6	TMR8	Ethnic group stakeholder	M	>40	Refugee	Vietnamese	65 min/ Telephone
7	TFR9	Teacher	F	34	Refugee	Vietnamese	95 min/Zoom meeting
8	TFR10	Teacher/ principal	F	44	Refugee	Vietnamese	51 min/ Telephone
9	TFR11	Teacher/ principal	F	40	Refugee	English	82 min/Zoom meeting
10	TFR12	Retired teacher/ principal consultant	F	>40	Refugee	Vietnamese	71 min/Zoom meeting
11	TFR13	Teacher/ principal	F		Skill		

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed automatically on Transwreally.com. The transcripts were then checked manually and revision was made where needed. Thematic data analysis (Braun, 2022) was conducted on the original transcript in Vietnamese. Interview extracts quoted in this chapter were translated into English by the researcher.

Positioning: The Outsider, the Insider and the Critic

Since interpretation of qualitative data is significantly influenced by the investigator's background, social position and perspective in the research process (Malterud, 2001; May & Perry, 2014), it is essential at this point that I briefly describe my positioning. I considered myself an outsider of the Vietnamese diaspora in Australia in that I did not

share their migration trajectories, their lived experiences of the Vietnam war-related events and emotions and feelings. I considered myself an insider in that we are all native Vietnamese speakers and are involved in maintaining Vietnamese despite our differences. I was a critic of what I observed in my two other roles in that every now and then I stepped back and used my research questions and my prior training as a language teacher and teacher trainer to guide my listening and interpretation. The knowledge and findings presented in subsequent sections are situated and described in close relation to my positioning and lenses.

Findings

Interviews with the participants covered a range of topics related to maintaining Vietnamese as a community language in Australia, challenges and opportunities for this maintenance work, pedagogy and curriculum and other related topics. Relevant to this chapter is the discussion of teachers', principals' and stakeholders' language ideologies and how such ideologies affect their local language planning and teaching activities.

Linguistic Differentiation as a Common Practice

A strong theme emerging from the data is the interviewees' critical comments on different linguistic features they noticed. The interviewees differentiated and labelled two varieties of Vietnamese: *tiếng Việt hải ngoại* (overseas Vietnamese or OV) and *tiếng Việt trong nước* (domestic Vietnamese or DV). OV is the Vietnamese brought to the diaspora by the first generation and has been used since; DV refers to the Vietnamese that is contemporarily used inside Vietnam and recently enters the diaspora. Most comments on OV and DV focused on the lexicon including semantic changes, etymology and orthography.

Senior teachers and principals expressed their strong criticism for some DV lexical items for their overuse and irrational semantic changes. Table 5.3 outlines some of the most problematic items perceived by the interviewees and the justification for their criticism. Among these items, the word “hoành tráng” was repeatedly criticized by many senior interviewees. They believed that speakers inside Vietnam and recent arrivals in the community used the word excessively in almost any context. This made the Vietnamese language less rich.

A teacher frankly criticized DV as “*rất tệ*” (*very bad*) and not as “*phong phú*” (*rich*) as OV.

Table 5.3 Critiqued DV lexical items

Differentiated item	Critique	Justification/perceived standard meaning and use
Hoành tráng as in “bữa ăn hoành tráng”; “ngôi nhà hoành tráng”	Overuse	The item is used in almost any situation concerning a degree of grandeur, making the range of Vietnamese adjectives less rich Corrected use: Ngôi nhà hoành tráng – > ngôi nhà nguy nga (a majestic house) bữa ăn hoành tráng – > bữa ăn thịnh soạn (a sumptuous meal)
Vô tư	Irrational semantic change	The word originally means naive or without any bad thoughts or opinions, and should be used as such Now it is used to refer to things that are free, which is incorrect and unacceptable by the interviewees
Tham quan as in “đi tham quan”		The word originally means “a corrupted governmental official”, and should be used as such Now it is used to refer to a visit to some place or to sightsee/go sightseeing, which is hard to explain
Khẩn trương As in “Ăn khẩn trương”		The word is used to describe an important or urgent situation, and should be used as such Now it is used as quickly as in the command “ăn khẩn trương” (eat quickly). This is incorrect

“Tôi cho rằng sau 1975 cho đến 1997 tôi thấy tiếng Việt vẫn còn rất là tốt, vẫn còn ảnh hưởng trước 1975, miền Bắc và miền Nam. Nhưng mà sau 1997 thì tiếng Việt trong nước rất là tệ. Cái lý do là tại vì họ đổi chữ, đổi từ ngữ[...]. Tôi không thể dùng mấy cái chữ đó.” (TMR7)

“I find that after 1975 to 1997, the Vietnamese language was still very good, still influenced by pre-1975(language), in the North and the South. But after 1997, the Vietnamese language inside Vietnam has become very bad. The reason is that they changed the words. [...]. I can't use those words.” (TMR7)

TMR7’s reference to “the influence of pre-1975” suggested his recognition of a variety of Vietnamese he was familiar with as the standard for the Vietnamese language as a whole. In doing this, he was conducting the process of erasure by simplifying the sociolinguistic field of Vietnamese and drawing attention to only one of its aspects, the pre-1975 variety, and rendering linguistic forms appearing after a

perceived point in time invisible. Similarly, his firm decision to not include perceived wrong words in his own linguistic repertoire clearly reflected the working of erasure in which Vietnamese was considered homogeneous with internal linguistic variations being disregarded and vocabulary items that did not fit a standard being eradicated.

TFR10, a retired teacher-principal referred to post-1975 vocabulary items as “*từ cộng sản*” (*communist words*). These vocabulary items were brought to the South by northerners after April 1975 and later brought to the diaspora by later arrivals.

“[...] Nhưng với những người mà họ có mỗi thù nó quá sâu nặng thì họ nói về những cái đó thì họ điên lên, nó sùng sục sùng sục trong con người họ, nhất là những người hồi xưa là sỹ quan hay những người mà trong gia đình họ bị cộng sản nó áp bức hay cái gì đó. Con biết là ở bên nước ngoài này những người đó không ít đâu, rất là nhiều đó. Rất là nhiều gia đình bị như vậy.” (TFR10)

“[...] However, for people who have too bitter feud (with the communist regime), particularly those former officers (in South Vietnam’s army) and those whose family were suppressed by the communist side or something like that, just the use of those words could drive them nut and their anger bubbled up. You should know that there are not a few, but so many of them living overseas. A lot of families were treated so. (TFR10)

The label “*từ cộng sản*” (*communist words*) was a typical example of linguistic differentiation where both rhematization and fractal recursivity were at play. Unfamiliar vocabulary used by northerners indexed communism and reminded some people from the South of all the suffering and trauma they had been through. Labelled “*cộng sản*” (*communist*), newly introduced lexical items were considered as having the essence of communism, the perceived cause of all pains and trauma overseas Vietnamese experienced. Since communism was believed to be “*không bao giờ tốt*” (*never good*) (TMR6), communist words were not good either. This absolute generalization and “totalizing vision” (Gal & Irvine, 1995, p. 974) was a textbook example of rhematization where language use of the other is believed to originate from their virtues not historical events (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

Fractal recursivity was also apparent in the label “*từ cộng sản*” (*communist words*). During the Vietnam war, there was an opposition between the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and the communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). This political opposition was reproduced and projected onto a linguistic level where communist words used in the North were contrasted with non-communist words used in the South. This intergroup opposition happening inside Vietnam then was brought outside Vietnam to Australia and recurred as an intra-group opposition within the Vietnamese community. In this sense, the dichotomizing process originally involving the opposition against communism inside Vietnam recurred at both linguistic level and geographic level.

Linguistic differentiation was recorded among recent migrant teachers too, though at a much milder degree. Junior teachers who migrated to Australia from Vietnam as skilled workers, partners or who gained residency after their education also noted

Table 5.4 Critiqued OV lexical items

Differentiated item	Critique	Justification/more contemporary alternative
Tam cá nguyệt	Archaic lexicon	The word sounds highly archaic since all three elements are Sino-Vietnamese More contemporary alternative: Quý (a quarter) 3 tháng (3 months)
Lễ mãn khóa		The word sounds highly archaic since all three elements are Sino-Vietnamese More contemporary alternative: Lễ tổng kết năm học/Lễ bế giảng (End-of-course ceremony)
Tu nghiệp	Archaic lexicon Semantic change	The word is nowadays used to refer to professionals going abroad for further studies, usually for a long time In OV, it is used to describe a professional development activity such as a workshop or a short training session More contemporary alternative: Tập huấn/đào tạo
Tầng	Archaic orthography	“Tầng” is not up-to-date orthography of the word meaning floor or level More contemporary orthography: Tầng

that some lexical items used by their senior colleagues’ language use and in the textbooks and materials were archaic, mainly due to their etymology.⁴ For example, in Table 5.4, in each of the three words “tam cá nguyệt”, “lễ mãn khóa” and “tu nghiệp”, all elements are Sino-Vietnamese. Sino-Vietnamese elements invoke abstractness, archaism and elegance and are typical of formal language register. Perception of and attitudes towards Sino-Vietnamese elements in Quốc ngữ—the current official language of Vietnam are ambivalent. While Sino-Vietnamese elements are widely considered an important part of the Vietnamese language lexicon, using them excessively is sometimes considered out-of-date and met with negative attitudes. Nguyen (2013) argues that speakers of Vietnamese have a strong tradition of preserving their language as a way of confirming and maintaining their identity during times of colonization and liberation.

In their commentary on OV, more recent migrant teachers like TFS3 showed their understanding of the features of OV and their reluctant acceptance and gradual use of some OV lexical items.

⁴ It is estimated that the Vietnamese language borrows some 30%–60% Chinese words/elements in the current lexicon (Le, 2002; Nguyen, 2000; Pham et al., 2019). With almost a thousand years under Chinese rule, countless Chinese words entered the Vietnamese language. Vietnamese speakers developed their own way of pronouncing these Chinese loanwords. They have also coined new compound words from Chinese loanwords/elements besides borrowing complete words from Chinese.

Cái chỗ chị dạy thì cái thầy hiệu trưởng mở trường từ năm 1984, tức là (trường) hơn chị 1 tuổi. Thế hệ chị em mình là ở Việt Nam nên là cái ngôn ngữ nó hiện đại đúng không? [...] Nên là ví dụ nhé, ví dụ thôi, ngôn ngữ họ dùng rất là cổ xưa, mình cũng chẳng blame ai đâu nhưng mà lúc đầu mình cũng hơi khó chịu một tí, nhưng mà về sau thì mình cũng phải tìm cách để mình cố nói như người ta, nói bằng thứ tiếng Việt cổ mà của miền Nam (TFS3)

“The place where I taught was established by the principal in 1984, a year older than me. Our generation (growing up) in Vietnam so our language is modern, right? [...] So for example, their language was very ancient. I don’t mean to blame anyone but at first, I was a little uncomfortable, but later I had to find every way to try to speak like them, speak the ancient southern Vietnamese dialect.” (TFS3)

In this comment, OV was described as ancient as opposed to the perceived modern DV. These features of OV were mapped onto first-generation migrant teachers who established CLSs a long time ago. It is important to note that, unlike their senior colleagues who labelled problematic items or excluded them from their own repertoire, TFS3 reported gradually familiarising herself with a different way of speaking despite her initial reluctance. This means that the working of erasure was not present in the case of TFS3. Her assimilation into the community of practice at CLSs could be explained by their identity and power, which, due to space limit, cannot be fully discussed in this chapter.

In short, both senior and junior teacher interviewees in this project were engaged in the ideological processes of linguistic differentiation: rhematization, erasure and fractal recursivity. Two varieties of Vietnamese, OV and DV, were identified and contrasted. Linguistic differences between OV and DV were mainly lexical ones and comments focused on their etymology, orthography and semantics. OV was praised by senior teachers and principals for being better and richer but was criticized by younger teachers as too archaic. DV was condemned by senior interviewees for its semantic changes.

Language Standardization at Varying Degrees

This section focuses on the educational impact of the three linguistic differentiation processes analysed earlier. Showing awareness of inevitable language change and coinage of new words, senior volunteer teachers, however, seemed to strongly hold on to prescriptivism and language standardization.

Some vocal teachers firmly reported their complete eradication of perceived misused or oversued lexical items such as “*vô tu*” (*naive*), “*khẩn trương*” (*hurry/urgent*), “*tốc hành*” (*express*), “*hoành tráng*” (*majestic*), “*tham quan*” (*sightsee*), arguing that they interfered with students’ acquisition of new vocabulary and their language learning.

“Tôi không có thể soạn giáo án rồi cho chữ “hoành tráng” vào đó. Cái gì cũng để hoành tráng thì học sinh nó đâu có hiểu đó là cái gì. [...] Cái gì mà cũng hoành tráng thì ý nghĩ của các em nó bị frozen, bị đóng băng đó. Có nghĩa là nó không tưởng tượng được.” (TMR7)

“I can’t use the word “majestic” in my lesson plan. If everything is majestic, students will not understand what it means. [...] If everything is majestic, their thinking will be frozen. It means that they cannot imagine.” (TMR7)

In this example, TMR7 mentioned the interest of his students to support his decision to exclude certain vocabulary items from his lessons, which may sound educational to a certain extent. However, language education-wise, this decision-making process clearly illustrated the prescriptive approach TMR7 took in his lesson planning, which has been unanimously considered detrimental to students understanding of how a language works and how to use it (Curzan, 2019). The adoption of this prescriptive approach to teaching Vietnamese at CLSs raised concerns over the knowledge and skills of volunteer teachers who may or may not have proper training and expertise in linguistics, language education and pedagogy. This concern, in fact, has been frequently discussed in studies on CLS volunteer teachers’ training, qualifications and professional development (Cruickshank et al., 2020; Cruickshank et al., 2018; Nordstrom, 2020; Scarino, 2017).

Commenting on material development, other volunteer teachers shared a similar approach to compiling and editing handouts or textbooks, according to which perceived strange or sensitive words were avoided altogether and removed upon being spotted in subsequent editions.

“[...] Cô giáo mà đi kiếm tài liệu thì cũng phải kiếm tài liệu nào trước năm 75. [...] Những người soạn sách họ biết nên họ cũng tránh dữ lắm.” (TMR10)

“[...] When looking for materials, teachers would find materials that are pre-1975. [...] Textbook writers all know (this), so they try hard to avoid it.” (TMR10)

This extract highlighted the direct influence of language standardization and the ideology of erasure in language planning activities at CLSs. The reported intentional search for pre-1975 materials and language and avoidance of unfamiliar words suggested that changes in the Vietnamese language would not be made available to CLS students. It seems apparent that these practices were supportive of maintaining an acceptable variety or version of the language, not a living and evolving Vietnamese nor the one used inside Vietnam.

The highest level of selectivity and standardization was recorded when an exclusive adoption of pre-1975 language was endorsed by community stakeholders in leadership roles. The justification for this endorsement was that language taught at CLSs must be the one officially approved of by a perceived valid authority and should not go against the expectations of parents and other community members. TMR8, for example, only accepted vocabulary that he believed had been approved of by “Viện Hàn lâm” (the Academy), an authority under the former South Vietnam government,

and ignored items that were “*không có trong từ điển*” (*not in the dictionary yet*) despite them being used widely.

“Là bởi vì trước năm 75 nước Việt Nam chúng ta có cái Viện Hàn lâm và khi mà Viện Hàn lâm là nơi mà người ta quyết định tất cả những từ ngữ và những cái chữ mà dùng rất chính xác mà mình dùng để ám chỉ hay chỉ định một cái món vật hay ý định gì. Nhưng mà sau 75 tôi đã nhìn thấy rất nhiều từ ngữ nó được sử dụng rất quen thuộc nhưng mà chưa được chính thức phê chuẩn để mà chữ đó ám chỉ hành động hay là những cái vật đó nó đúng hay sai. Chính vì vậy cho nên tất cả các sách giảng dạy ở X đều dùng những cái từ ngữ của trước 1975 mà thôi.” (TMR8)

“This is because before 75 our country Vietnam had the Academy and it was where people decided all words and accurate words to describe or denote an object or an intention. But after 75, I have seen so many words being widely used but they have not been officially approved of as right or wrong terms/words to denote an action or object. Therefore, all textbooks in X use pre-1975 words only.” (TMR8)

The interviewee insisted on exclusively using approved vocabulary and those listed in a dictionary and his distinction of right and wrong vocabulary clearly indicated his strong prescriptivism, standardization and codification. Actual use of new vocabulary, though acknowledged, was not considered sufficient for lexical items to be included in textbooks. The interviewee’s sole recognition of a past body and the refusal of a current one signalled their political stance which intertwined with their language ideologies. Despite their claim that “*Chúng tôi dạy ngôn ngữ và văn hóa và không bàn về chính trị hay tôn giáo*” (*We teach language and culture and don’t talk politics and religion*). (TMR8), politics seemed strongly influential in this local actor’s decision-making at the CLSs.

While senior CLS teachers firmly expressed their resistance against perceived problematic linguistic differences in both their own language use and teaching activities, recent migrant teachers tended to approach variants and differences they noticed in the textbooks with understanding and a descriptive perspective.

“Tại vì họ soạn sách từ lâu rồi và hồi đấy là hồi họ đi vượt biên, ở Sài Gòn họ dùng như thế nhưng bây giờ thì nó khác rồi. Nhưng mà họ đâu có về Việt Nam mà họ biết đâu. Cũng chẳng biết, toàn dân miền Nam, mà dân miền Nam từ hồi xa xưa ấy, nên không có có gì mà mình phải bắt họ nói theo thứ ngôn ngữ tiếng Việt hiện đại. Họ đâu có về đâu, họ ở bên này họ vẫn sử dụng như là thời xưa thôi.” (TFS3)

“Because they developed their textbook a long time ago since they crossed the border. Back then in Sai Gon they used (language) that way, but now it is different. But they don’t come back to Vietnam so they don’t know (about it). I don’t know. They are all southerners, southerners from long long time ago, so we have no reasons to force them to follow the modern Vietnamese. They do not come back; they stay here; they keep using (language) like the old times.” (TFS3)

It seems evident from the explanation that as a later arrival, TFS3 acknowledged the validity and the continued use of the archaic Vietnamese in the diaspora. Her belief in not imposing DV or modern Vietnamese in the diaspora could be closely

linked to her reluctant acceptance and use of OV discussed earlier. This signals her open and descriptive attitudes towards language change and variation, and her weaker language standardization than that of that her senior colleagues.

When it comes to classroom practices, instead of explicitly denouncing differences in language use in textbooks and materials, junior teachers like TFS3 reported their descriptive classroom practices where they advised their students of different ways of speaking available for them to choose from.

“Chị không có ý blame là giáo trình ấy không được, chị chỉ thấy nó không giống với thứ tiếng Việt hàng ngày mình dùng ở Việt Nam. [...] Chị điều chỉnh để làm sao cho giống giáo trình, mặc dù đôi khi mình thấy là sai nhưng mình không nói là sai, mà mình nói là hoặc là nói thế này, hoặc là nói thế kia. Đó, kiểu thế.” (TFS3)

I do not mean to blame that the textbook is not good, I just find it different from the version of Vietnamese I use in Vietnam. [...] I adjusted to stay close to the textbooks. Even though sometimes I find it wrong, I don't say it, but tell (students) that we can either speak like this or like that. Like so.” (TFS3)

In this example, even though TFS3 personally identified right and wrong ways of speaking, she did not exclude any from the materials but introduced them to her students and gave them alternatives. This, in a sense, enriched her students' language input and repertoire.

Low Interest in Resources Generated in the Home Country

Closely linked to the interviewees' selectivity and standardization when it comes to developing classroom materials and their reported classroom practices was their lack of interest in resources for teaching Vietnamese as a second/foreign language developed in Vietnam. Discussing the time and effort invested in designing their own curriculum and developing materials, the informants shared that they did not find the textbooks currently produced in Vietnam relevant to their context, mainly due to political reasons. TFR12, a senior consultant who used to work as a principal, described textbooks made in Vietnam as highly political and not age-appropriate for their students.

“Tại vì một số phụ huynh của tôi là gốc tị nạn không à, nếu mà xin lỗi cô nhé, đưa sách bên Việt Nam qua dạy nói về chính trị nhiều quá con nít nó không (học được). Ở đây nó phải ngây thơ, nó phải học hỏi những cái gì cho nó trong sáng, không có nghĩ tới thù hận, không có nghĩ tới những cái chuyện gì hết. Thành ra những gì chúng tôi dạy bên đây rất thoải mái, không có áp đặt về tư tưởng hay tôn giáo” (TFR12)

Because some of the parents at my school are refugees, excuse me for saying this, if we use textbooks from Vietnam, which talks too much about politics, to teach their children, they can't learn. Children are naïve here; they have to learn things that are innocent and without hatred or that stuff. So what we teach here is light-hearted and (e don't impose religion or ideology. (TFR 12)

Referring to the origin of the parents, TFR12 highlighted their diasporic nature and assumed the opposition between them and the current Vietnam, implying parents were a contributing factor in their disinterest in materials from Vietnam and their general decision-making. What also stood out from this example was the interviewee's perception of textbooks produced in Vietnam: political and not age appropriate. It is important to point out that the textbook mentioned in the extract was the one TRF12 got to read more than 10 years ago when she visited Vietnam. It was designed to teach Vietnamese as a first language for primary school-aged children born in Vietnam. It seems then that their impression of and knowledge about language education and teaching resources inside Vietnam was not updated.

In the same vein, TRF11, who was a teacher-principal at a CLS she attended when younger and came to the leadership role out of gratitude and respect for their former teacher, elaborated on the pressure from senior community members on her decision-making on certain resources from Vietnam.

“And you should also understand the underlying pressure we would be under if we were to use textbooks from the current regime in Vietnam. We would be under a lot of backlash from our elders and senior citizens because we’re not teaching the history of the country in its origin, but teaching a brainwashed version of it, or a version that wouldn’t be accepted by Vietnamese abroad.[...] It means out of respect for them. If they say: T, this particular textbook disrespects them or their heritage, their upbringing and the trauma they went through, then as a leader I would support that generation because they are my teacher.” (TRF11)

This extract illustrated more than just a significant homage paid to senior members and former CLS teachers. It highlighted the powerful impact of the community's collective memory (Agnew, 2005; Cohen, 2008; Nguyen, 2013) on contemporary community language maintenance. As a discourse, senior members' collective memory of the Vietnam war, their escape from Vietnam and all the sufferings they went through connected past and present and individualized the whole community. This is evidenced by the decision-makers at the CLSs in this study upholding their seniors' values in their own language planning activities. It seems then that the maintenance of Vietnamese as a community language at the CLSs under study was essentially about whose language and whose heritage.

Despite their initial disinterest in resources and textbooks from Vietnam and their considerable respect to parents and senior community members and former teachers, the interviewees reported taking a more independent, informed and pedagogical approach to utilizing and exploiting external materials and resources. It appears essential to them that resources undergo thorough validation if and before they could be used at their schools.

“I would be using parts of materials that are useful and validated from Vietnam textbooks no matter what year they were made, before or after 1975. [...] As a teacher and teaching culture of origin, I would teach what would be relevant in our Australia, the current society of Australia: freedom of speech, democracy and the ability to understand the quality of life. I think if we can take resources from textbooks there that are relevant and filter out the bureaucracy or the red tape and the politicalness of it and provide children with that experience of learning that does not connect them to the war or the thing they are not exposed to, then that would be my approach to it.” (TFR11)

The extract points to two important aspects in the informant's language education ideology. On the one hand, validating and cherry-picking relevant and quality activities and details from different sources was a sound pedagogical principle. On the other hand, the contrast between textbooks made in Vietnam and the Australian values of democracy and freedom can be interpreted as an overgeneralization. This overgeneralization was supported by her impression of textbooks specifically designed to teach Vietnamese as a first language to children in Vietnam.

Nhập gia tùy tục: Entering a House, Following Its Rules

CLS principals and community stakeholders also explicitly shared their expectations of teachers regarding their language use and practice while teaching at CLSs.

TFS3, the only northerner teacher at her CLS, recalled her job interview with the principal. At some stage during the interview, the principal asked if she could drop her northern accent and mimic the southern accent while in class, at which she was shocked and politely refused. Although there are officially three main regional dialects in Vietnamese, including the northern (Ha Noi) accent, the central (Hue) accent and the southern (Sai Gon) accent, the northern accent of TFS3 was requested to be made invisible. This was most likely because it was different from that of the majority of the community and did not fit their expectations and beliefs. This request exemplified erasure and totalization where internal variation, particularly those that do not fit the structure, is disregarded.

A similar expectation was shared when a community member stakeholder firmly expected later arrival teachers to follow and respect CLSs' program.

“Đương nhiên mỗi người có một quan điểm sống khác nhau. Tôi không bao giờ bảo mọi người là: Tôi thấy cái này là trắng thì mọi người cũng phải bảo là trắng. Không, Tôi không bao giờ có cái quan điểm như vậy. Mỗi người đều có những cái quan điểm sống khác nhau, Nhưng có 1 điều tôi yêu cầu và tôi chỉ xin tất cả mọi người “Nhập gia tùy tục”. Có nghĩa là khi mà qua tới đây thì nên chịu khó theo những cái gì mà bên này người ta đang có, đang sinh hoạt, đang sống. Có nghĩa là khi mà đồng ý vô trong trường Việt ngữ ở tại X thì cái ngôn ngữ và chương trình giảng dạy mặc dù nó có thể khác với những gì mà những người này đã từng học hay từng giảng dạy, hay từng làm ở Việt Nam, nhưng mà mình qua tới đây thì mình nên tôn trọng những cái ngôn ngữ và chương trình các trường bên này người ta đưa ra.” (TMR8)

“Of course, people have different viewpoints. I never tell people: I see this as white, so you have to see this as white too. No. I never have that viewpoint. People have different views on life. But the only thing I require and beg of everyone is “When in Rome do as Romans do”. This means, once you have arrived here, you should try to follow what people here are having and the way they are doing things and living. This means once you accept to work in a Vietnamese community language school, you should respect the language and curriculum schools here issue, despite the fact that they may be different from what you learnt or taught back in Vietnam” (TMR8)

In this comment, that later arrivals were expected to follow the perceived norms at work, implying abandoning their prior social and linguistic experiences, could be considered an endorsement of assimilation of CLSs' ideologies. An important point in this extract was the strong assertion of the Vietnamese community and Vietnamese CLSs in Australia as a legitimate and independent entity from Vietnam. This assertion echoes Baldassar et al. (2017)'s observation of the community's complete distancing practice from the political leadership involved in its refugeehood. This case is similar to what Alfaraz (2018) observed in her study of the Cuban diaspora in the United States. Through the same process of erasure and rhematization, the Cuban diaspora confirmed their legitimacy and authenticity in relation to their homeland.

Competing sets of ideologies can be seen in the extract. On the one hand, the participant acknowledged differences, freedom of beliefs and reported their practice in line with their belief. On the other hand, he exercised his belief and power and expected others to give up on differences and follow the perceived norms. This stood in stark contrast with his other ideology. It seems then that the latter ideology dominated the former and reshaped the participant's practice. This also highlighted the pluralistic and dynamic nature of language ideologies (Gal, 1998; Pennycook, 2004; Rampton & Holmes, 2019).

Discussion

Dabene and Moore (1995) cited in Gardner-Chloros (2009) discuss key linguistic features of a migrant community. They state that there are disparities in language use among migrant community members resulting from their different levels of engagement with both the home and host countries. While linguistic differences can be explained by drift and separation (Irvine & Gal, 2000), the case of the Vietnamese community is more complex considering the historical and political events involved in the community vintage.

In one of the few essays on language planning in Vietnam, Nguyen (1997) discusses different language policies adopted by North and South Vietnam during the division of the country. Both North and South Vietnam conducted their own language planning and employed certain propaganda mechanisms whose tasks, among other things, were to coin new vocabulary items to emphasize the dark nature of the other side and highlight their superiority. In the North, lexical items such as "*Ngụy quân, ngụy quyền*" (*puppet army, puppet government*), "*nợ máu với nhân dân*" (*owe blood debts to the people*) or "*tay sai*" (*henchman*) were used widely to paint a picture of an inhumane and ruthless South Vietnamese government (Nguyen, 1997, p. 154). Similarly, in the South, such terms as "*Cộng sản 3 vô: vô tổ quốc, vô tôn giáo, vô gia đình*" (*Communists with 3 Nos: No nation, No religion and No family*); "*Cộng sản bán nước cho Nga, Tàu*" (*Communists sell Vietnam to Russia and China*) (p. 145) were widely spread to defame the Northern regime. While Nguyen (1997) notes a reconvergence of Vietnamese language planning inside Vietnam in the past three decades,

one cannot deny the far-reaching impact of former planning, leading to the pervasive use of political and sensitive vocabulary items by Vietnamese living overseas, clearly evidenced by the label “communist words” some 46 years after the fall of Sai Gon. In her project with the Vietnamese diaspora in Canberra, Nguyen (2020) also found that the participants in her project, who were first-generation refugees, explicitly supported and only used the ancient Sai Gon dialect (Tiếng Sài Gòn xưa) and disapproved of the communist Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt cộng sản). It seems apparent that the ideology and practice of linguistic differentiation, particularly through the working of erasure and rhematization was a typical feature of the diasporic segment of the Vietnamese community in Australia. This feature was consistent with Gal and Irvine’s (2019) notes that people in the diaspora are most attracted to differences in language use of the others “whose biographies differ from their own” (p. 229).

In the present project, senior first-generation CLS teachers were, understandably, more actively engaged in linguistic differentiation than their junior colleagues, causing them to directly equate linguistic features with the nature of their speakers (rhematization), and firmly excluding lexical items that did not meet their standard and norm (erasure). It can also be seen that the interviewees’ language ideologies were entangled with their political ideologies and stances, so much so that any comment on Vietnamese as a community language in the project ultimately ended up in a discussion on the formation of the diaspora and the Vietnamese language as part of the heritage they brought with them in their boat journey. This means while the CLS teachers claimed that they did not talk politics and religion in language teaching, their decision-making and reported classroom practices were tightly intertwined with their political stances and were used as a marker of their “political loyalty and identity” (Gal, 1998, p. 317). In other words, Vietnamese CLSs are not just a provider of Vietnamese language programs but also a means to maintain and transmit the community’s legacy and heritage. The foundational generation’s shared discourse of resisting and distancing from the political leadership in Vietnam was reflected in their micro-centric language planning and policies. It can be concluded from the analysis above that micro-centric language planning activities at the CLSs in this study were, to a large extent, political.

Regarding the teaching of Vietnamese as a community language, there is a felt need for Vietnamese CLS volunteer teachers, principals and local stakeholders to reconceptualize the nature of language learning, and to redefine goals and pedagogies for their community language education. In recent years, researchers and policymakers have highlighted the nature of language learning as intercultural, interlinguistic and meaning-making and specified the goal of teaching students language variation in macro-level documents guiding the teaching of community languages including Vietnamese in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2022; Lo Bianco, 2020; Lo Bianco & Kathryn, 2014; Scarino, 2017, 2021). However, it seems that such changes are yet to be internalized and effectively implemented at the CLSs in this project. Findings from this study reveal that the goals of teaching and learning Vietnamese were mainly linguistic and communicative competence within the Vietnamese community overseas. Given the changing composition of the Vietnamese community, these goals place the language outside learners’ sociological world (Lo

Bianco & Slaughter, 2009). This is likely to result in their lack of interest in and motivation for learning the language and can even explain the drop-in enrolments at Vietnamese CLSs as discussed in the literature (Cruickshank et al., 2020; Nordstrom, 2020).

In approaching linguistic differences between OV and DV, it is recommended that CLS teachers, especially senior ones, take a more descriptive lens in their lesson planning and classroom practices. This will lead to varieties and dialects of Vietnamese being used as educational resources, rather than obstacles, in the teaching and maintaining the language. Another recommendation would be for the CLSs to update on and utilize relevant materials from their home country to enrich their resources to teach Vietnamese.

In the context of the peripheral status of CLSs in the education system, there have been concerted efforts to advocate for CLSs in Australia in more recent years. There have been strong calls from researchers for an ecological view (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014, 2021) of and a “differentiated approach” (Scarino, 2021, p. 21) to support CLSs. Such a view and approach would mean differences among and within communities, their community languages and individual learners are all thoroughly considered. This means that language specificity, a community’s history and changing composition and learners themselves are considered the teaching of a community language. A differentiated approach is then closely linked, if not similar to micro-centric language planning at CLSs, in that community- and language-specific features, which are less likely to be visible and taken up by macro-level LPP, should be thoroughly examined and addressed when local language planning is developed and executed. In the case of the Vietnamese CLSs, it is suggested that future training and professional development activities should also adopt an individualized approach. By doing so, volunteer teachers and principals’ awareness of the interrelationship between language ideologies and classroom practices, the changing nature of language learning and community language education can be heightened. This is likely to help them internalize and implement changes in their classroom practices effectively.

Conclusion

This paper has illuminated micro-centric LIE planning at Vietnamese CLSs by analysing the CLS teachers’, principals’ and community stakeholder’ decision-making and reported classroom practices from the perspective of language ideology. It has highlighted the prevalence of linguistic differentiation among CLS stakeholders and the interrelationship between language ideologies and political ideologies. Micro-centric LIE at the Vietnamese CLSs in this project mostly concerned with sociopolitical and sociolinguistic issues of the Vietnamese community as a diasporic group and some technicalities of the Vietnamese language spoken overseas and inside Vietnam. It has also recommended that Vietnamese language varieties and differences should be celebrated and used as teaching resources, rather than being

viewed as a divider. Vietnam CLSs should continue cherry-picking relevant materials from their home country to enrich their resources. Professional development activities for CLS teachers and principals should focus on individual communities' history and development and their language technicalities to guide their classroom practices.

While the absence of classroom observation and the small number of participants in this project may limit the findings and implications, this study does contribute to the depth of available literature on individual CLSs. It is recommended that future studies can take an ethnographic approach to closely examine CLS teachers' language ideology, reported and recorded classroom practices and students' perception and reaction to have a more comprehensive picture of community language education. Another topic worth examining is the opinions of experts, language educators and language policy makers on language and community-specific issues in relation to the host country's macro-level directions and objectives to examine the status of community language education.

Acknowledgements I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Professor Kaori Okano, Professor James Walkers, Professor David Bradley, Professor Marija Tabain and the reviewers for their constructively critical feedback in the writing of this chapter. All remaining shortcomings are my own.

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Chapter 6

Family Language Policy Among Vietnamese Sojourner Families in Australia the “What”, the “How” and the “Why”



Ha Thuy Dam

Abstract Using semi-structured interviews, the current study investigates how twelve Vietnamese sojourner parents perceived and performed family language policy and practices with their primary school children during their temporary residence in Australia. Results reveal that translanguaging was commonplace in family settings. It was a challenge for parents to systematically practise any particular language use rules to assist their children’s maintenance of their mother tongue. Anxiety about future reintegration into formal schooling back in Vietnam and reluctance to send the children to Vietnamese community language classes were also major themes. This reflects how family language policy and practices were shaped by parents’ language and cultural ideology and imagined communities. The chapter raises issues and provides several suggestions that stakeholders may need to consider about community language education to accommodate sojourners’ language needs, too.

Introduction

In the era of globalisation, the inevitable emergence of a broad range of fluid multilingual and multicultural contexts that occur across borders requires renewed perspectives on multi/bilingual language users. There are permanent immigrants who are positioned in a context that requires the restructuring of their relations of power in order to fit in with the cultural and occupational norms of the host country (Norton Peirce, 1995). There is another increasingly large group which include short-term residents or sojourners whose attachment to the home community differentiates them from any other immigrant groups (Chao & Ma, 2019). As they are not destined

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© The Author(s) 2024
Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_6

to mingle with the host culture for good or at least their future trajectories are “transitory in nature”, the way in which their linguistic behaviour is influenced by it does not necessarily replicate what immigrants experience (Song, 2012, p. 508).

Along with the waves of transnational travellers, Vietnamese citizens work and study all over the world, with Australia being one of the favoured destinations. According to the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2021), in the financial year of 2020–2021, more than 300 child dependants accompanied their parents to Australia during their parents’ pursuit of higher and/or further education opportunities. Nearly one-third of this number attended primary schools Australia-wide. Departing from their home country where English is now considered “as a symbol of quality education and as a mechanism for fuller participation in national and international opportunities” (Bui & Nguyen, 2016, p. 367), these sojourner children have been given a once-in-a-lifetime chance towards an imagined successful future. This early opportunity enables the children to be fully immersed in an English-speaking environment, yet at the same time accentuates the role of families in general and parents in particular in sustaining their first language.

Although there have been numerous research projects on the way multi/bilingual families use and learn their languages in home settings and the immediate and long-term effects of these practices on children’s language use and development, most of these studies have centred on long-term or permanent immigrant families and the language practices performed in the second or third generation. Among the few existing studies accommodating family language practices in short-term residents, the authors tend to focus on family contexts from East Asian backgrounds (e.g., Chao & Ma, 2019; Kanno, 2003a; Song, 2012). There seems to be no substantial study into Vietnamese sojourner families the world over in general, and in Australia in particular.

My research project, which aims to investigate family language policy and practices in Vietnamese sojourner families in Australia, may be considered basis for researchers of other less dominant ethnicities (in terms of worldwide population distribution) to develop their interest in this subject matter. This research project also hopes to serve as an evidence-based reference for relevant stakeholders (families, schools, and policy makers) in similar contexts to make decisions related to language education and language support programmes for the increasing population of school-aged sojourners. This overarching research purpose is specified in the following three research questions.

- a. How are family language policy and practices performed at sojourners’ home?
- b. What reasons do the sojourner parents give for their family language practices?
- c. How do parents’ beliefs and the future socio-cultural contexts impact on sojourners’ family language practices?

Family Language Policy (FLP) and Key Concepts

Family Language Policy

The broad field of language policy, according to Spolsky (2012), constitutes three elements—the actual language practices of a speech community, the values assigned to each language variety and the beliefs of those values, and the efforts by the authority to influence the language practices of the community members. In line with that definition, FLP focuses on what families *believe* about language and language use; what they *do* with language in everyday interactions; and what *efforts* they make to achieve outcomes related to language use and language learning (King et al., 2008). The authority in the case of FLP as a bounded community on its own is generally understood as parents and/or caregivers. Language planning within the context of family is often “not consciously planned” and prone to external conditions “beyond the family’s control” (Caldas, 2012, p. 351).

Research on bilingual families and their language policy and practices showcases three major themes: the role of parents and other family members in the language development of the children (King, 2013); the influence of the surrounding communities on the implementation of individual family language policy (Oriyama, 2016); and the connection between past experiences and future projections each family imagines for themselves and the way FLP is practised (e.g., Chao & Ma, 2019; Song, 2012). Among these factors, future projections appear to trigger the greatest divergence between the way that permanent and temporary immigrant families treat bilingualism and biliteracy in their home language practices (Refer to Dam, 2021 for a more detailed review). Generally, permanent immigrant families tend to treat the majority language as a resource for survival and pay particular attention to the minority language mostly as an emblem of ethnicity (Chao & Ma, 2019). In contrast, sojourner families try to take advantage of their stay to master the majority language of that community for the imagined economic and educational benefits it might bring upon their return (Song, 2012).

FLP research has recently underlined child agency in the communicative practices of mixed-language families. This body of research pinpoints the agentive and creative role of children in influencing how languages are used and learnt in family contexts (for a detailed review, refer to Smith-Christmas, 2020). For example, Said and Zhu (2019) found that school-aged children in an Arabic family in the UK actively took up a multilingual agentive position in their mixing of English and Arabic in family conversations as they were fully cognizant of their parents’ flexible FLP; there seemed to be a correlation between an open FLP and the children’s positive experiences with both languages. Crump (2017) also concluded in her project with three multilingual families in Canada that the participating pre-schoolers’ language practices are reflective of both their understanding of parents’ language planning and their own agencies and individualities. The hierarchical order for their language of preference was negotiated according to with whom, where and when they could do so, representing their ability to position themselves as confident multilingual speakers in broader social

contexts. These studies suggest the importance of taking child agency in FLP into consideration and extending the concept of authority in FLP to include children as equally powerful agents.

Translanguaging in Home Settings

Since its original definition by Cen Williams in 1994, translanguaging has been conceptualised and applied in an extensive body of research on language use and language learning by multi/bilingual speakers (for a detailed review, refer to Xin, Ping & Qin, 2021). As the focus of this project is on the use of two named languages (English and Vietnamese) in family contexts, Otheguy et al.'s (2015) definition of translanguaging is highly relevant: “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (p. 281). This conceptualisation highlights the contrast between an outsider’s view of a bilingual’s linguistic repertoire as a sum of two named languages and an insider’s (or the speaker’s own) view of his/her own linguistic repertoire as the one and only entity. It also challenges the social and political constraints put on named languages, especially minoritized ones, and therefore helps dismantle the “socially constructed language hierarchies” (p. 283). Such a postulate is extremely meaningful to research on multi/bilingualism in general, and research on FLP in multi/bilingual home contexts in particular, during this era of transnational travel and immigration.

With regard to family language policy and practices, translanguaging has been extensively researched in various family-related contexts. It was reported as an effective method used by young multi/bilinguals to showcase their linguistic ideologies and cultural identities which diverge from their parents (Zhu, 2014), and their metalinguistic awareness and mobilisation of available linguistic resources depending on interlocutors and places (Paulsrud & Straszer, 2018). It has also been successfully employed to improve children’s multi/biliteracy by parents (Song, 2016) or on a larger scale, by the collaboration between family, school and community (Kim et al., 2021). When combined with support materials/devices, translanguaging proves a powerful tool to transfer cultural heritage from parents to children when learning about the home country’s culture and history (Kwon, 2022).

Despite being advocated by researchers in the discipline, translanguaging still provokes mixed reactions from parents, which results in incongruences among families in their FLP and the actual approaches to children’s language development. For example, many multi/bilingual parents choose to follow the One Parent—One Language (OPOL) as they believe that language separation ensures a “balanced and fluent” acquisition of the two languages by avoiding as much confusion as possible from “mixed language use” (Park, 2008, p. 636). Even those who claim to be supportive of a language mixing perspective actually perform language separation with their children at home, suggesting that translanguaging or language separation is not necessarily done on the basis of parents’ heteroglossic versus

monoglossic language ideologies (Wilson, 2021). These findings call for a more holistic consideration of parents' beliefs in their FLP practices.

Investment and Imagined Communities

In order to understand the effect of FLP on children's use of languages, it is necessary to mention the concept of investment (Norton, 2013) which initially highlights "the connections between a learner's desire and commitment to learn a language, and their complex and changing identity" (p. 6). As language learners' desires to learn a language fluctuate, depending on their perceptions of the social interactions and the classroom settings that they are situated in, learners' sense of themselves and their desires for future attainments also vary considerably by context. Fielding (2015) emphasises that investment should come from both language learners and the community in order for the individuals to develop language proficiency and the desired cultural identity.

Inspired by Anderson's (1983) original notion of "imagined communities", Norton (2001) developed her conceptualisation of imagined communities which refers to language learners and their desire to integrate with the target language community. In her wake, there has been a great deal of research exploiting these two notions to account for a variety of phenomena in Second Language Acquisition and education (e.g., Norton & Kamal, 2003). I would argue that imagined communities are not only formed by the language learners themselves, but that the communities and all other stakeholders are in turn able to form an imagined image of the language learners. Therefore, there is a likelihood that the imagined vision formed by different groups about one single language learner or one particular community might not match or may even contradict each other, which consequently influences the practice of FLP. Thus, I intend to also explore the parents' imagined community before they depart Australia.

In Kanno's (2003a) project which was conducted over seven years with four Japanese adolescents from when they attended secondary schools in America until they returned to Japan for tertiary education, she discovered that while one of her participants had formed an idealised imagination about his home country before his return, it turned out to be so far removed from his imagination that he did not want to identify as Japanese anymore. Kanno (2003b) also comments that the two institutional settings (America and Japan) did not provide sufficient support and acknowledgement for these students to develop their bilingual and bicultural identities. Although Kanno (2003a) did not utilise Norton's notions of *investment* and *imagined* identity and community in her original research, she did later use them to explain part of her research results in their co-authored article (Kanno & Norton, 2003), suggesting the possibility of looking at stakeholders' expectations from the perspective of imagined identity and community.

Methodology

As the current study aims to investigate how FLP is practised in home settings and what reasons parents give for such practices, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents individually. The data collected were then analysed and thematised based on the recurring concepts in the dataset.

The Participants

The parent participants were chosen based on a screening questionnaire delivered on Qualtrics. Those who were willing to be interviewed filled in the form with their contact details for further communication. Among the parents who agreed to follow-up interviews after answering the questionnaires, twelve parents were invited for interviews. At the time of interview, the participants were either reaching the end of their sojourn in Australia or had recently returned to Vietnam within six months and had one child or more who had been/were going to primary schools for at least two years. The description of the family backgrounds in this section is based on the parents' questionnaires and interviews. All participants are given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Although the twelve families were located in different states of Australia, they shared several defining characteristics that differentiate them from other groups of immigrants. First, all the parents were currently or had been a PhD candidate at an Australian university. Second, the twelve parents were sponsored by the Vietnamese government for their PhD study, which mandated their commitment to return and work in Vietnam upon the completion of their course. Third, they were all living in Australia with their child(ren) (with or without spouse accompanying). The educational qualifications of the spouses ranged from Bachelor to PhD degrees. One last feature that most of these families had in common was the family structure which included both parents and one or two children (only one out of twelve interviewed parents did not live with their spouse during the sojourn).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

Parents voluntarily completed the survey on Qualtrics. The researcher screened through their responses to select cases for the research project. There were thirty-three questionnaire responses from parents. Among them, twelve parents agreed to proceed with interviews. All interviews were done in Vietnamese—the parents' mother tongue—to ensure they were able to fully express their thoughts.

Data Analysis

The extracts presented below were first translated by the researcher and cross-checked afterwards by a colleague who holds a Master's degree in Interpreting and Translation to ensure accuracy. The interpreted meanings behind each story told were then classified by theme as in the "analysis of themes" that occurs across interviewed cases (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). According to Creswell (2007), thematic analysis is not for the purpose of generalising the results to a broader context, but for "understanding the complexity of the cases."

The coding process followed what is proposed by the grounded theory approach in which coding is divided into stages in order to "illuminate the logic that underline analysis" (Benaquisto, 2012, p. 87). The coding process therefore took place in three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the first step of open coding, transcripts were initially reviewed to identify as many ideas and concepts as possible even if they were not directly related to the aspects set in the interview questions. In the second step of axial coding, specific ideas and concepts identified in the open coding step were reassembled and related to each other. The last step of selective coding was done through a process of re-reading and re-examining the dataset (with translated extracts used as examples) from the very start of the data analysis until categories were merged into umbrella themes which offered a systematic presentation of research findings. The selective coding step yielded five major themes, including: translanguaging as a common practice; children as English-speaking role models; Vietnamese language learning; concerns about Vietnamese community language schools; and the overall influences of parents' ideologies and imagined communities on their family language policies and practices.

Findings and Discussion

There are five outstanding themes that recur in the data regarding how the parents perceive and practise language use at home. First, translanguaging is considered a norm in communication among family members with constant switching between the two languages. Second, the fact that the children are proficient in English is taken advantage of by their parents, turning the young English speakers into role models for their parents' language learning. Third, an opposite scenario is witnessed when it comes to the children's Vietnamese learning, where a lack of investment and enthusiasm is evident from both parents' and children's sides. Fourth, the parents show hesitation in sending their children to Vietnamese community language schools in Australia and instead opted to teach their children themselves even though the results do not reach their expectations. These practices are significantly influenced by parents' ideologies and the imagined communities they plan to be part of upon return to their home country of Vietnam.

Translanguaging as a Common Practice

Interactions among family members created a “translanguaging space” (Wei, 2011), where family language practices are negotiated over time according to the children’s language development. Language use at home between adult family members and children seem to depend on the children’s language of preference. While parents still maintain communication amongst themselves in Vietnamese, they tend to switch the language to fit the children’s preferred language when talking to them. In the following extract, one mother acknowledged the gradual switch in language use at home due to her child’s increased proficiency in English.

When we first came here, our family still talked in Vietnamese. But after that, Helen (the daughter) went to school and brought home new concepts she learnt from school. And her communication with us gradually changed. Her English concepts increased and there were no Vietnamese equivalents. That’s why we gradually turned to English. (Hanh)

The extract suggests that it is more convenient for family members to use English with the child because the girl could not find words with similar meanings in Vietnamese. On one hand, this indicates the child’s improvement in English, thanks to schooling in the host country of Australia and the levelling-off or even worsening of their Vietnamese proficiency due to lack of formal education in the Vietnamese language. This is in line with the findings in Lee et al.’s (2021) project where the author followed three Korean sojourner families in the U.S. and found that the child participant’s use of English at home increased over time thanks to his involvement in the outside environment. On the other hand, the situation points to a scenario where the children exercise their agency in deciding which language to use in the home settings. Though the power they have over in-home language practices is not overtly renounced, their parents seem to easily compromise with a view to facilitating communication with the children.

In tune with this practice, another mother confessed:

His father had to teach at the university, so he wanted to practise English with him. That’s why he spoke English with his father at first and I tried to continue using Vietnamese with him. But now that we have to explain too much when speaking Vietnamese with him, it’s too tiring that most of the time we use English. (Nhan)

The starting point of this family is different from the first one in that the parents actively encouraged their son to use English with the father and Vietnamese with the mother (as an example of the One Parent One Language - OPOL approach). Although this OPOL practice is not totally for the child’s benefit but partly for the father’s teaching, it does reflect the parents’ awareness of the necessity and the initial intention to support their son’s maintenance of Vietnamese. However, like the first family, together with the child’s improved English and the comparably less used Vietnamese, English has become the dominant language of parent–child communication in the interest of convenience.

Parents’ intended FLP seems open for negotiation because of the children’s actual choice of languages. Even in cases where parents aim to maintain family interactions

in Vietnamese, their goals are hindered by the children's inability to perform up to their expectations. A mother of a seven-year-old girl stated:

We wanted to use Vietnamese only. But she couldn't. So we have to *mix* [in original] because it's too time-consuming. Anyway, it's better than finishing in Vietnamese and then explaining all again in English. (Ngan)

Once again, the children's role in deciding their family language policy and practices might not be active in its real sense. Yet, the fact that they cannot fully understand and maintain the conversations in Vietnamese is a determining factor in their parents' switch to English. In this case, the ones who are more bilingually flexible (the parents) tend to be the ones who accommodate to the less flexible ones' language needs (the children).

While the prevalence of English over Vietnamese in parent-child communication in home settings is obviously represented through the parents' interviews, they also acknowledge that there are constant switches between the two languages, with English used for more sophisticated topics and Vietnamese for more casual ones:

When I ask him to talk about a book he's reading, he uses English. But when I ask him if something is delicious or not, he uses Vietnamese. (Lan)

Such situations can be justified by the frequency of contact that the children have with the two languages. While Vietnamese tends to be used only within family settings, the children have significantly more contact with English, especially through their schooling which is exclusively done in this language. Accordingly, they would gradually find it challenging to find the Vietnamese equivalents for the concepts they have internalised in English. It would be a hasty conclusion that their Vietnamese has waned; yet, it is obvious that English has gradually taken over Vietnamese to function as the children's preferred language. A case in point can be seen in the following excerpt:

She learns English concepts from school and there are no equivalents in Vietnamese. (Hanh)

Translanguaging is performed in different contexts among family members. The switch between languages is not always as impulsive as commented but sometimes is done strategically. For instance, one mother revealed that:

When the whole family's together, we encourage him to speak Vietnamese. But when we go out and there're people around, we switch to English for politeness. (Sinh)

In this case, translanguaging appears to be a powerful tool for bilingual speakers to take on different social roles to fit in with different social settings. In more detail, in order to be considered legitimate and polite social actors in an English-speaking country, the mother switches to English to talk to her son; and in order to maintain their first language in home settings, she creates opportunities for her son to practise Vietnamese. She further explained the technique she uses with her son:

I often ask him like, "what does it mean in Vietnamese?" or "please explain it to your Dad in Vietnamese". (Sinh)

As the father's English is not very good, the child is placed in a situation where he has no other choice other than to try to use his own Vietnamese to explain things to his father. Interestingly, the mother commented that this method did not work for her because her son knew that she understood English. This also suggests the child's consciousness of with whom and when he needs to adjust his language use and his dynamic role in creating FLP through his resistance to using Vietnamese with a competent user of English. This is in line with Miller's (2017) findings about children's awareness of others' language preferences and the need to adjust their language use accordingly, or Crump's (2017) conclusion about children's self-positioning as "confident multilinguals" who language flexibly with different interlocutors in different places (p. 172).

Language selection is not only seen between father-child or mother-child interactions but also between siblings and grandparent-grandchild, further substantiating child agency in determining family language resources by considering "people, space, and purpose" (Paulsrud & Straszer, 2018, p. 64). While the choice of languages between parents and children can be reasoned by either parents' proficiency in English or communication purposes, language choice in siblings' or grandparent-grandchild communication is solely accounted for by the competence of the other interlocutors in English and Vietnamese. It is typical for the children to converse with their brothers or sisters in English as they feel more comfortable talking to each other in this language. However, in situations where they need to talk to their grandparents, Vietnamese appears to be the only means of communication as they are aware that it is the only language their grandparents can understand and use. A mother elaborates on this point:

When our parents visited us, I could see that his Vietnamese improved a lot because he had to use Vietnamese to talk to them. But after they came back to Vietnam, his Vietnamese deteriorated very quickly. (Nhan)

In these parents' view, grandparents play a significant role in preserving not only the Vietnamese language but the traditional culture among their grandchildren as well. This is in keeping with Fielding (2015) who investigated English-French bilingual children's identity. These children also commented on how their grandparents helped them connect with the more distant language and culture of France while the seniors were visiting their families in Australia.

Children as English-Speaking Role Models

Another prominent theme in the interviews is that the parents have taken advantage of their children's proficient English in different ways. It is commonly believed that these bilingual children would help their parents best in social interactions where they become the main language brokers on behalf of their parents (Bauer, 2016). In this study, they are also considered language teachers or experts who provide language examples for their parents to follow, which resembles what Lee et al. (2021)

found where parents assumed the role of language learners in discussions with their children about the meaning of the expression “what the?”.

The less proficient parent in the family may learn how to speak English with the child not only for general communicative exchanges or “to practise pronunciation” but also for academic and professional purposes as presented in the following example:

His Dad has to teach at the university. So he [the Dad] wants to practise English with him. Then it turns into a habit. (Nhan)

Interestingly, if the parents are engaged in finding a way to encourage the children, the young ones can become unofficial teachers of English in the family in language skills other than just oral communication. One such parent shared:

I often tell him to teach his Dad English at certain times. Like he asks his Dad to read something and then he asks his Dad about that. At that time, he is allowed to speak English. My husband’s English is at basic level. So, he likes to teach his Dad English very much. (Sinh)

In this case, the child was motivated to teach his father how to read and understand English because he was given a more powerful position over his parents where he was the one to instruct and tell his student father what to do with his English.

Vietnamese Language Learning

As opposed to their confidence and proficiency in English, the children were said to feel much less motivated to learn Vietnamese, which might be due to the limited investment and rather traditional teaching methods that their parents use in teaching them this language.

Almost all parents said that they did spend time teaching their children at home with materials and coursebooks brought from Vietnam. However, when asked about the effectiveness of these home-schooling practices, they accepted that the children often showed limited enthusiasm. For example, one mother confessed:

Sometimes we teach her Vietnamese with the books we brought from Vietnam. But she has no interest in learning Vietnamese. All lessons are like a battle. She cries, and I’m tired. So we don’t teach much. And she understands nothing. She can spell and write some words but doesn’t understand. She doesn’t know what she has been reading or writing out. (Mai)

The unexpectedly negative reactions from the children can be attributed to the traditional teaching approach as the parents said they all taught by using Vietnamese textbooks and followed the lessons in the books. It might also be due to the difficult phonemic and tonal system of the language that discouraged the children from learning this language as commented by another mother:

And a, ă, â, o, ô, ơ, u, ư all mixed up. She can spell very simple words and simple math questions but she just can’t understand the meaning. (Ngan)

In the above extract, the girl confused similar vowels in Vietnamese which are not available in English (for example, /a/-/ă/-/â/ or /o/-/ô/-/ơ/). Not only did the children meet with difficulty in differentiating between similar vowels, they also struggled with the five tone marks when learning writing skills. Even children who had gone to school in Vietnam before their sojourn in Australia quickly forgot the Vietnamese writing rules. One father talked about his daughter who had nearly finished grade one in Vietnam and had been able to read and write well in Vietnamese before departing for Australia:

She can't remember the / ~ / symbol. She calls it the "wave" [original in English]. (Tuan).

Apart from teaching the children by themselves, these parents also sought support from other sources to help their children develop Vietnamese literacy skills. They might send the children to private tutoring sessions in which a native Vietnamese teacher taught the students literacy skills or arts lessons. One mother who sent her daughter to a tutoring group said that it would be nice if the girl could learn something before the departure:

It's good for her to know something to go back rather than know nothing. If so, then she's completely done for. (Ngan)

In an exceptional case, one mother applied almost every available method in her attempt to maintain her daughter's Vietnamese. Following are her comments on why she hired a Vietnamese piano teacher for her daughter:

When we first came here (Australia), I hired an Australian teacher. But after a year, I have been hiring a Vietnamese one so that she can learn more Vietnamese and to diversify her Vietnamese learning channels, not only from my accent but from others too. (Anh)

The mother tried to adjust her daughter's contact with English and Vietnamese at different points in time during their sojourn in Australia. At first, in order to improve the girl's English, she hired an English-speaking piano teacher. When she felt that it was the right time to maintain her daughter's Vietnamese, she switched to a Vietnamese teacher. By increasing the girl's contact time and diversifying the content and speakers' accents the girl was exposed to, the mother hoped to achieve better results from her investment in her daughter's Vietnamese learning. She was also the only parent who registered her daughter for online Vietnamese courses. The daughter started her online courses after the community language school in the neighbourhood closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Australia. Although this study does not aim to investigate the connection between the parents' investment and their children's level of proficiency in Vietnamese, it is worth highlighting this particular case as this girl was the only child participant who filled in a journal with Vietnamese handwriting (as part of a larger project).

As can be seen, all parents were highly conscious of the importance of providing the children with some Vietnamese literacy skills to work as a buffer against the shock they might encounter when going to school in Vietnam. However, except for the case above, due to the limited success of their teaching and the children's resistance to the learning, the parents' common reaction was reduced investment or even discontinued teaching.

Concerns About Vietnamese Community Language Schools

Although the parents placed great emphasis on their children's learning Vietnamese, they showed hesitation in seeking help from community language schools (CLS)—an official destination where Vietnamese immigrants send their children for Vietnamese language learning. It is this reluctance that differentiates sojourners, or short-term Vietnamese immigrants from permanent Vietnamese immigrants in Australia.

Most of the parents shared that they could not send their children to CLS because they were too far from their places of residency. Even the one mother who sent her daughter to the school for one term talked about the distance:

The school is about four kilometres from my house. I booked Uber for her. It cost about twenty dollars for a return trip. (Anh)

Apart from the distance, the parents expressed more concerns over the content of the lessons taught at CLS. Firstly, their concerns went to the language itself. They commented that the language at those schools did not conform with modern Vietnamese used domestically and that people in Vietnam “no longer use those archaic words.” They also noticed that CLS often teach only the Southern Vietnamese dialect. As the Vietnamese language has three distinct dialects (Northern, Central and Southern Vietnamese), people from different geographical regions might have difficulties in understanding people from other areas. Such differences discouraged parents from North and Central Vietnam from sending their children to CLS in Australia. One mother shared:

I saw their books. They (CLS) only teach the Southern dialect. She can't use it when we get back. I think it doesn't help. (Ngan)

Besides, the parents expressed concerns about the possible religious and political content of the lessons taught at CLS. In some states, community language classes are organised by the regional churches. One of the mothers who knew about such classes cited religious connections as the major reason why she refused to send her child to those classes even though the price, in her opinion, was “very cheap.” She said:

If we lived here, we might choose a religion. But we'll come back. I want our mind to be free. (Ha)

This mother distanced herself and kept her daughter separate from any religion because the family planned to return to Vietnam. Bearing in mind that up to 86% of the population in Vietnam follow no religion and only 6% consider themselves Catholic and 1% Protestant (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2019), it is understandable that the mother did not see a necessity to be affiliated to any particular religion.

To Vietnamese sojourners, the political content of the lessons taught at CLS was also one of their major concerns. The history of the Vietnamese community in Australia dates back to the Vietnamese refugee waves after the Vietnam War in 1975 (National Museum Australia, 2021). The content of what is taught at CLS might to some extent have been influenced by this historical moment. Thus, these

Vietnamese sojourner parents, all of whom were sent to Australia by the Vietnamese government offices and institutions, have a critical evaluation of what is offered at CLS. One mother mentioned this as one of the reasons for not sending her daughter to a CLS after one term:

They (CLS) bring bits related to pre- and post-1975 into the lessons. I don't like it. (Anh)

Together with the lesson content, CLS teacher qualifications were also what the parents cared about. Ten out of twelve parents in this project worked as university lecturers before pursuing their PhD in Australia, which might account for the high expectations they set for the teachers at CLS. One mother revealed that she would rather teach her son herself than send him to CLS because she knew that “many of the teachers there are volunteers” and they do not possess the right qualifications for teaching languages to children.

Those concerns have discouraged sojourner parents from using CLS as an official channel of Vietnamese language maintenance for their children, which in turn contributes to the unsystematic and impulsive learning and teaching of this language within the home settings and partly results in the counter-effectiveness of the process. What the parents have done with in-home translanguaging, with their children's Vietnamese learning, and with the concerns over CLS can be attributed to what they believe about language and language learning and also their ideologies related to cultural and familial values and the imagined communities (IC) that they have sketched out for their children upon return.

From the perspective of IC, the parents' opposition to sending their children to CLS can be considered an indication of their insistence on excluding these language programmes from the imagined community of Australia which they hope to be part of when residing in the country. Even the mother who reached out for a CLS programme later found out that it should not be part of her and her daughter's desired target community due to conflicting ideologies. As can be seen, the act of envisioning and getting immersed in an imagined community appears to be a selective process in which its members/members-to-be can actively include a particular group of the target community in or exclude it from their IC. They may accept or refuse membership of that group, depending on their ideologies and beliefs and their future ICs, too.

Parent's Ideologies and Imagined Communities

What the parents do with their children's use of languages at home vividly reflects the beliefs they hold about different fields of life.

For those who put a great effort to maintain Vietnamese among their children, they attach familial and traditional values to this language—a cultural function that many parents in multilingual families assign to their mother tongue (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). They believe that Vietnamese can serve as a bridge that connects their children with family members back in Vietnam and narrows down the generation gap between

themselves and the children when the young ones grow up. In the following example, one mother has employed a variety of methods to help her daughter improve her Vietnamese so that the familial connection with her extended family is sustained:

She must understand her family members in Vietnamese. And when she grows up, there are things she needs to confide in me like women's stuff, love, etc. I don't want to see a big generation gap. (Anh)

For those parents who did not show great investment in teaching their children Vietnamese and let the children use their preferred language of English, they believed in a more flexible approach to language use. Interestingly, nine out of twelve parents have a professional background in English language teaching. However, their family language practices are mostly based on their observations, subjective beliefs or personal exchanges with other Vietnamese sojourner parents rather than the language teaching and learning theories in their field of expertise. One of them shared in the interview:

She refuses to learn Vietnamese at home. But I'm not worried. Anyway, we are going back soon and she did learn a little bit at school in Vietnam. And she has an aptitude for languages, so she can catch up with others quickly. (Tuan)

As the father believed that his daughter had an aptitude for languages, he thought she would not have many difficulties in learning Vietnamese once she returned to school in Vietnam.

Apart from the cultural and language ideologies, these parents also transferred their political and religious beliefs into family language practices. As discussed in the previous section, they explicitly expressed their concerns over community language schools due to the possible religious and political content of the lessons provided there. Considering their future reintegration in Vietnam, they were not willing to have their children get involved in what they saw as sensitive topics. This reluctance contradicts the positive link found between religious factors and the maintenance of heritage languages among immigrants (Revis, 2017), suggesting the need for a multidimensional research lens on this topic among various groups of immigrants.

Parents' imagined future also has an enormous influence on their family language practices in Australia. The fact that many parents have a flexible approach to their children's language use can be attributed to their plan for the young ones' future schooling and reintegration in Vietnam. For example, a mother intended to send her son to a private bilingual school upon return, which lessened the pressure placed upon the child to improve his Vietnamese before going back because the school programme would allow a great deal of content to be taught in English. She said:

When we go back, I will hire a tutor to teach him Vietnamese. We'll send him to a bilingual school, so I think he won't have much problem re-integrating in Vietnam. (Hang)

Together with choosing a bilingual school for her son, the mother planned to hire a tutor for him on their return so that the boy could feel more prepared for school. This, however, created a more relaxing family atmosphere in Australia as the preparations were delayed until their return to Vietnam.

In contrast, for another family who do not live in a big city in Vietnam, there were limited choices of school for their son upon return. The mother confessed that international schools in her province are expensive but the quality might not be as good as state schools. They were therefore more serious about the maintenance of Vietnamese for the boy so that he would be able to attend a state school later. His mother stated:

Teaching him Vietnamese now is influenced a lot by our decision to go back. We have to teach him how to read and write, and to communicate so that he can talk in Vietnamese. If he can't, how can he survive upon return? (Sinh)

These competing beliefs coincide with what the literature about ICs among sojourners suggest (Chao & Ma, 2019; Song, 2012). Parents' ICs depend on the coming societal conditions in which the families decide to settle down. If their ICs appear to facilitate the children's continued use of English, the parents seem to feel less pressured about the children's Vietnamese learning while in Australia. While the parents' ICs still function as an influencing factor on their family language policies and practices in general and their children's learning in the host country in particular, the stress among the parents with more schooling choices for their children upon return seem to diverge from that among those with fewer choices.

Implications

Employing the conceptual framework from the perspective of family language policies (King et al., 2008) and the notion of investment and imagined communities (Norton, 2001, 2013), this study has both aligned itself with the body of research on what immigrant families do with their home language use and learning and provided an insightful explanation for the distinctive language practices that short-term immigrants might perform differently from permanent immigrants. Several essential implications have emerged from the analysis, which might be helpful for relevant stakeholders to provide adequate support for language maintenance and development among sojourner families.

First, although all parents are well aware of the importance of the maintenance of Vietnamese for their children, their language use is often negotiated to match the children's preferred language, which is in line with existing research. Even with parents' occasional interventions, children have apparently become an active agent in moderating the language practices at home with or without their own noticing. Thus, while research often highlights the role of adult family members in family language policy and practices (King, 2013), it is suggested from these observations that child agency in FLP should be more carefully attended to so that efforts in language maintenance and development pay off. Boosting up children's motivation, therefore, appears to be the key to home language maintenance. As traditional teaching seems less effective, incorporating web-based courses and age-appropriate entertainment and media

content in the children's learning experiences should be encouraged. Media consumption has been proved effective in enhancing heritage language learners' proficiency (Ardakani & Moloney, 2017). As there is a strong correlation between home language maintenance and ethnic identity (Tran et al., 2021), regular practices of traditional customs within family settings and active participation in Vietnamese community events would also provide opportunities for the children to cherish the Vietnamese culture and appreciate both the language and cultural value.

Second, translanguaging is a common practice among all the families, reflecting parents' tolerant attitudes towards translanguaging (Wilson, 2021). However, it is often viewed as instances of code-switching or code-mixing, which to some extent suggests a conventionally perpetuated monoglossic perspective when dealing with this phenomenon in bilingual speakers (García & Lin, 2016). In order to understand these sojourner children's bilingual and bicultural identity negotiation in transnational settings, it is advisable to use a translanguaging mindset to look at bilinguals' language use. A translanguaging mindset contends that children are able to mobilise their one integrated linguistic repertoire to accommodate their communicative needs in myriad situations with a variety of interlocutors, instead of thinking about them as having "two separate linguistic systems" which are switched on and off continuously (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 282). In fact, the ability to flexibly perform translanguaging practices in their language learning process is said to be useful for the construction of positive bilingual identities (Rabbidge, 2019). Flexible language use and meaningful transition between the two languages in family conversations might facilitate the development of both English and Vietnamese. Given that children are active agents in home language maintenance, open discussion with them on how, when and with whom which language (or a combination of them) to be used would increase their cooperation in following family language policies. This can also be done with home literacy activities such as bedtime reading where translanguaging is employed to promote Vietnamese language learning while still allowing space for the use of English.

Third, family language policy and practices are shaped by parents' ideologies and imagined communities, which resonates with the extensive research on ICs. This finding also expands on existing literature on FLP at sojourners' homes, especially at the end of their short stay in the host country, which varies according to the parents' imagination of their future communities, societal conditions and the children's schooling environment. This will in turn influence the amount of investment they make in maintaining and developing their children's Vietnamese language. While it is acknowledged that parents might not provide sustained support for home language maintenance due to their specific relational or educational goals (Park et al., 2012), short-term immigrant children should be well-prepared for the future transition to their home country when the sojourn ends. Raising parental awareness of the importance of maintaining home language and promoting positive bilingual identity for their children is essential to a successful journey home.

Fourth, the Vietnamese community language programmes seem to have not fully accommodated the needs of short-term immigrants. Home/heritage language maintenance is said to be best achieved through linguistic exposure in both informal (i.e.

home environment) and formal educational contexts (Chik et al., 2017). However, some geographical, administrative, cultural and political issues have prevented sojourner parents from sending their children to community language schools. This might require stakeholders to reflect on the implementation of community language education. Such programmes should not only address the needs of second or third generation long-term immigrants as has traditionally been the case, but also attend to the complex backgrounds of short-term immigrants and skilled immigrants who have recently arrived in Australia. Updating teaching materials, providing additional specialised professional training for teachers in the areas seen to be lacking, and ensuring appropriate distribution of classes among residential areas might be some possible considerations as a first step to make community language programmes more accessible to immigrants of varied backgrounds. The involvement of more public schools in delivering community language courses as part of formal education would also make the goal of home language maintenance more achievable to various groups of immigrants.

Finally, support should be offered by the home country's government as well. The State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese —Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also provided regular training courses (both online and offline) for those who want to teach Vietnamese to the Vietnamese community and interested individuals worldwide. However, this initiative has not been widely known to its intended beneficiaries. Such initiatives should be further promoted to attract a larger number of Vietnamese language teachers and learners overseas. The Vietnamese embassy in the host country could also assist home language maintenance by coordinating and facilitating accredited learning groups and cultural events where children are given the opportunities to develop their mother tongue and sense of cultural identity.

Conclusion

Responding to the call for a qualitative study into parents' attitudes towards home language maintenance and associated factors by Tran et al. (2021) and extending to an under-researched population of temporary immigrants, this chapter has provided an insightful analysis of the family language practices of Vietnamese short-term residents in Australia. The current research, however, is limited in some aspects, given the fact that it is conducted on a small population of Vietnamese sojourner parents at a certain point of time during their stay in Australia. Further studies on sojourner children's attitudes towards their parents' FLP should be encouraged so that the picture could be fully captured. Longitudinal research is also recommended to investigate how home language policies and practices are adapted by families in pre-, while- and post-sojourn stages.

Despite these limitations, the study has contributed to a further understanding of family language policies and practices in an increasingly large group of short-term immigrants. It has revealed that parents' ideologies and imagined communities are closely related to the way they provide scaffolding for their children's home

language maintenance and preparation for future return. As such, family engagement (through direct language support and informal learning experiences), pedagogical and curriculum innovation, and top-down involvement from both the home and host governments (in the form of language education policies and support initiatives) are necessary for promoting a favourable environment to nurture multi/bilingualism among children with immigrant backgrounds in general and sojourner children in particular.

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Chapter 7

Vietnamese Heritage Language: From Silence to Voice



Thi Minh Tran

Abstract Immigration and emigration shape unique language contact environments and multilingual settings, intertwined with language ideologies, attitudes, practices, and the emergence of new contact languages. Heritage languages, spoken by immigrant children or individuals who migrated at a young age, have garnered attention, particularly in the United States and Canada since the 1960s and 1970s, and later in Europe and elsewhere. However, despite approximately 4 million individuals with Vietnamese immigration backgrounds worldwide, research on the Vietnamese language has only spanned since the 2000s. This review assesses the current state of Vietnamese heritage language studies, identifying topics explored, their development, existing gaps, and potential research directions. It synthesizes diverse findings, highlighting recent focus areas on heritage language loss, maintenance, ideology, education, proficiency assessment, and linguistic characteristics. The review identifies limitations in existing literature and offers recommendations for addressing them.

Heritage Language and Vietnamese Heritage Language: Term and Principle

Ngoc Müller-Tran holds a Ph.D. in education studies and serves as the director of a cultural program in Germany designed for individuals with immigrant backgrounds. She arrived in Germany at the age of five, along with her parents, who were both contract workers. Nga Schwenke, an IT professional, also arrived in Germany at the age of five, the same as Ngoc. While Ngoc bears a Vietnamese first name and a surname that blends Vietnamese and German heritage from her husband, Nga opted to relinquish her original Vietnamese surname after her marriage. Both Ngoc and Nga belong to the 1.5 generation of Vietnamese immigrants.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_7

Ngoc possesses a strong command of the Vietnamese language, having pursued additional Vietnamese language courses in school and even selecting Vietnamese as a subsidiary subject during her university studies. She has a deep affinity for the Vietnamese language and culture, actively passing on her knowledge to her child. Occasionally, she encounters challenges in formal writing, however her current time constraints limit her pursuit of further improvement. Conversely, Nga exhibits proficiency in understanding and speaking Vietnamese, but her writing skills remain underdeveloped. Consequently, she enrolls in a virtual Vietnamese class for overseas Vietnamese. Nga welcomes the opportunity to delve into the intricacies of this heritage language and culture, as it allows her to engage in discussions about music and poetry with her Vietnamese language teacher.

Ngan Ha Nguyen, an eight-year-old born in Germany, retains her pure Vietnamese name, which poses a challenge for her teachers and friends when attempting to pronounce it correctly in her native language. Nevertheless, this does not hinder her effective communication within her school environment, as she converses fluently in Vietnamese with her mother at home. Additionally, she contacts her grandparents in Vietnam every weekend, further solidifying her grasp of the language. While she can read Vietnamese to some extent, writing remains a significant challenge due to the absence of Vietnamese language classes in her school system. She doesn't dwell on this issue, however her mother has plans to provide her with additional instruction at home.

Harry Tran, a nine-year-old born in Germany, comprehends Vietnamese well but struggles with both speaking and writing in the language. He shows reluctance to use Vietnamese and adamantly refuses to attend Vietnamese weekend classes.

Danny Schöning has a Vietnamese mother and a German father. He converses in Vietnamese with a slight German accent and is currently enrolled in a virtual Vietnamese class due to his mother's insistence. Initially resistant, he has grown more comfortable and now actively participates in discussions in Vietnamese within the class.

These life stories, exemplified by Ngoc, Nga, Ngan Ha, Harry, and Danny, resonate not only in Germany but also in many other countries with immigrant communities. The choices they make regarding their names, either self-selected or given by their parents, can influence their connection to their heritage language and culture. These individuals exhibit a spectrum of proficiency in Vietnamese, ranging from limited understanding like Harry and Danny, to greater proficiency demonstrated by Ngoc and Nga. Numerous factors contribute to their heritage language proficiency and motivation for its maintenance.

These individuals, along with millions of others who share similarly diverse life experiences, are collectively referred to as heritage speakers of Vietnamese. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vietnam (2012), Vietnamese is spoken in the homes of approximately four million individuals residing outside Vietnam, making it a significant subject of interest in linguistic, cultural, and educational research.

The Vietnamese language is one of many heritage languages outside borders of origin countries. The term *heritage language* appeared in educational research on

the acquisition of languages other than English and French by bilingual students in Canada in the 1970s. Later, in the late 1990s, this term was broadly used in the United States to refer to ethno-cultural languages (Cummins, 1983, p. 7; Cummins, 2005, p. 585). Heritage languages may include immigrant languages (e.g., German in the United States, Vietnamese in Germany), national minority languages (e.g., Basque in Spain, Hmong in Vietnam), and aboriginal languages (e.g., Navajo in the United States, Dyirbal in Australia). More precisely, Rothman (2009, p. 156) defines a heritage language as follows:

A language qualifies as a *heritage language* if it is a language spoken at home or otherwise readily available to young children, and crucially this language is not a dominant language in the larger (national) society. Like the acquisition of a primary language in monolingual situations and the acquisition of two or more languages in situations of societal bilingualism/multilingualism, the *heritage language* is acquired on the basis of an interaction with naturalistic input and whatever in-born linguistic mechanisms are at play in any instance of child language acquisition. Differently, however, there is the possibility that quantitative and qualitative differences in *heritage language* input and the introduction, influence of the societal majority language, and differences in literacy and formal education can result in what on the surface seems to be arrested development of the *heritage language* or attrition in adult bilingual knowledge. (Italics in the original)

Other commonly used terms to refer to the heritage language of bilinguals are first language (L1), mother tongue, ancestral language, ethnic language, third language, non-official language, etc. (Cummins, 1983, p. 7; Montrul, 2016, p. 13).

In many countries, especially in the United States and Europe, languages other than the official language are often considered “foreign” languages. Nevertheless, these languages are not “foreign” to many individuals or communities because many people who live in those countries have cultural connections to them and know languages other than the official ones (Cummins, 1983). Whether these people have a high proficiency in these languages or cannot understand them, they always belong to a family or a community where the language is used (Montrul, 2016). Kelleher (2010, p. 1) emphasizes: “The term ‘heritage’ language can be used to describe any of these connections between a non-dominant language and a person, a family, or a community”. The literal meaning of the term *heritage language* already expresses the connection of the immigrant group with the home country and the language of their country of origin.

In Germany, the term *Herkunftssprache* (heritage language) has been used in studies on multilinguals and multilingualism since the early 2000s (Flores & Rinke, 2016, p. 22) to define the special acquisition conditions of a minority language in the context of migration. Reich (2009, p. 445) defined “Herkunftssprache” (language of origin) to be migrants bring their mother tongues to other immigration countries (“Migranten als ihre Muttersprachen in anderssprachige Einwanderungsländer mitbringen”). However, Fürstenau (2011, p. 31) criticized the term “Herkunftssprache” because the regional origin does not always imply the actual language used, for example, there is a sharp separation between the Turkish populations due to their 40 minority languages (Brizić, 2006, p. 36). In addition, the language of an emigrated group may differ from the language used in the country of origin (Lüttenberg, 2010,

p. 306). For these reasons, in studies on the language of origin of migrants, the terms “Muttersprache” (mother tongue), “Erstsprache” (first language), and “Familiensprache” (family language) have often been used in Germany despite their differently potential meanings, which can include the language that was first acquired, the language that is frequently used in everyday communication, the language that is used fluently, the language that was preferred, or the language that can link migrants with their specific cultural affiliation (König, 2016, p. 286; Lüttenberg, 2010, p. 307). Meanwhile, the English term “heritage language” refers to the connection between the migrants with their home culture and language (König, 2016, p. 286).

In studies on the Vietnamese language of immigrants in different countries, the term heritage language may have been first used to refer to the Vietnamese language in the United States in the study of Maloof et al. (2006). Some other studies related to the Vietnamese language of Vietnamese immigrants around the world also utilize this term (Nguyen, 2020; Phan, 2017, 2018; Tran, 2018, 2019). Many different terms have been used to refer to the Vietnamese language abroad, for example, home language (Tran et al., 2021a), first language (Nguyen et al., 2001), and immigrant language (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). The present study uses the term heritage language to refer to the Vietnamese language of immigrants abroad to express the connection between Vietnamese migrants and their home culture and language (König, 2016).

Heritage Language Studies: From the Margins to a Central Focus

Nowadays, thanks to the so-called “social turn”, “the acquisition of heritage languages has moved from the margins to become a central focus of study within linguistics and applied linguistics” (Montrul, 2016, p. 6; Page & Putnam, 2015). While only a few European languages such as Spanish and German heritage languages in the United States were extensively investigated in the last decades, there has recently been a series of publications concerning Asian languages such as Korean, Japanese, and Chinese (He & Xiao, 2008; Lee, 2002; Mu, 2015; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009). In addition, the list of dissertations on heritage language education from 2000–2012 by the *Alliance for the Advancement of Heritage Languages*, Center of Applied Linguistics, impartially supplies evidence for this trend. Moreover, the *Heritage Language Journal* (HLJ) was released in 2002 to provide a forum for researchers to exchange research results and knowledge about heritage languages.

The dramatic change in research on heritage languages may have emerged from the argument of language as a resource since 2001 (Nguyen et al., 2001). The benefits of multilingualism for individuals and societies are manifold, including the realms of intellectual life, culture, family, and economy. Lo Bianco (2017, p. 65) argues that multilingualism benefits cultural diversity for both entire societies and minority communities, due to the increase intercultural understanding

through learning and practicing languages. Multilingualism, especially the maintenance of heritage languages, entails strong intergenerational ties for immigrants who can benefit substantially in terms of health and psychological development, such as sharing emotions and maintaining the authority of parents and caregivers. Aiko (2017, p. 106) states that learning heritage languages and cultures helps heritage speakers gain a sense of belonging, which supports a positive sense of identity and the development of self-confidence. Therefore, heritage language use encourages learners to transmit their own cultures from one generation to the next. However, it is very difficult to maintain a language and a culture in an inappropriate educational context. A question that emerges in this context is to what extent the maintenance of a heritage language should or can be encouraged, for example, by organizing a formal learning environment or offering interesting learning activities.

One of the most widely studied topics of heritage language concerns the attitude of heritage speakers towards the maintenance of a heritage language from different perspectives, because “language attitudes are collectively historically shaped and can also be politically co-determined” (Franceschini, 2011, p. 346). Attitudes are considered “powerful variables” (ibid., 346) that co-govern the development of multilingual language use. Numerous studies have investigated the attitude towards heritage language from parents’ perspectives (Nesteruk, 2010; Tran et al., 2021a; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009), teachers’ perspectives (Cummins, 2001; Liu, 2006; Rodríguez, 2007), and students’ points of view (Liao et al., 2017; Oh & Nash, 2014). Cummins (2001) noted that international students enrolled at the University of Toronto (Canada) frequently complained about their elementary school children rejecting their home language and culture. Many children refuse to use the first language at home and want to anglicize their names in order to belong to the culture of the school and peer group. In the case of immigrant parents with a low proficiency in the languages of host countries, the rejection of the home language of children and adolescents often leads to parent–child conflicts, decreased levels of parental authority, and overall family cohesion issues (Chapman & Perreira, 2005; Driscoll & Torres, 2013). However, the attitude of heritage speakers may change in the course of their lifespans. For example, in a study on Chinese heritage language, Mu (2015) cited a statement by an Australian-Chinese young adult:

I am completely lost. I am struggling with my belongingness. I am different in Australia because I look Chinese. I am also different here because I look Chinese but I can’t speak Chinese. I wish I had learned (Chinese) harder when I was in Saturday schools.

(Mu, 2015: xxi)

Regarding the educational perspective, all bilingual programs in the United States and Canada function very well and have proved that children can acquire two languages well at the same time (Cummins, 2001, p. 10). Therefore, there has been an increasingly large number of studies on heritage language education (e.g., Cummins, 2001; Nguyen et al., 2001). However, heritage language instruction has still been considered similar to foreign language teaching (Fishman, 2001; Valdés, 2001). The need to develop new programs and pedagogical materials to address the

specific requirements of heritage speakers has been shared by many language practitioners (Brinton et al., 2008). Learning a heritage language is a necessary right for all learners, because it can be a resource for individuals and society (Busch, 2011, p. 544). One of many new pedagogical approaches that have been approved is service learning (Moreno & MacGregor-Mendoza, 2017, p. ii). Heritage language studies has become a central focus in linguistics and social studies in the last two decades (Montrul, 2016, p. 45).

As per Boom and Polinsky (2014), despite heritage language research being a relatively new field, it has garnered significant attention due to its relevance in today's multicultural society. Consequently, heritage languages have become a subject of exploration across various disciplines. This inquiry ultimately equips heritage speakers, often accustomed to linguistic silence in their first language, with the tools to bridge the gap from silence to expression. Heritage language research grants these individuals a new voice, enabling them to become truly bilingual and bicultural (p. 17).

The concept of transitioning from “silence to voice” (Boom and Polinsky, 2014) serves as an inspiration for delving into Vietnamese heritage language research. This endeavor seeks to understand the scope of studies in this field, assess their level of establishment, identify existing gaps, and determine potential directions for future research. Such a review can shed light on the voices of heritage speakers, offering insights into their experiences growing up with the Vietnamese heritage language in Western countries across various aspects of life.

Vietnamese Heritage Language—Common Research Topics in Western Countries

Despite the significant presence of approximately 4 million individuals with Vietnamese immigration backgrounds worldwide (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vietnam, 2012), research on the Vietnamese heritage language has yet to transition “from margins to a central focus” as observed with other heritage languages (Montrul, 2016, p. 45). In a comprehensive study by Wiley et al. (2014), spanning 300 years of heritage language research in the United States, Vietnamese received only cursory mentions within statistical tables, such as those detailing the most commonly spoken languages at home among different age groups (“Language other than English most commonly spoken at home” (2005–2009; 2010–2011), and “Language most commonly spoken at home for 5–18 year olds” (2007–2011)). Although ranking seventh, sixth, and fifth in importance in these tables, the Vietnamese heritage language did not receive a dedicated section. However, research on this heritage language has been ongoing for over two decades in Western countries. This paper aims to provide an overview of common themes in the literature on the Vietnamese heritage language, particularly in the United States, Australia, and Europe.

As previously mentioned, the study of Vietnamese heritage language emerged in the United States in the early twenty-first century. In recent times, research on Vietnamese heritage language has extended to various host countries. Table 7.1 outlines the prevailing themes in research within this field.

Table 7.1 illustrates that research on the Vietnamese heritage language commenced approximately two decades ago. Notably, many of the authors conducting these studies possess names that suggest Vietnamese origins. Since its inception, this field has consistently explored different facets and perspectives of the language, with a gradual upward trend in research activity over time. Figure 7.1 visually depicts the evolving research trends within the realm of the Vietnamese heritage language.

Figure 7.1 presents a clear trajectory of the evolving landscape of research on Vietnamese heritage language. Notably, in recent years, particularly since 2011, there has been a noticeable increase in both the quantity and regularity of studies within this field. On average, 2.6 publications related to this topic have appeared each year. This trend signals a positive and growing interest in gaining a deeper understanding of Vietnamese heritage language.

The study of Vietnamese heritage language has witnessed significant growth and development over the past two decades. Originating primarily in the United States, this field has expanded to encompass various host countries, reflecting a broader global interest in understanding and preserving this cultural and linguistic heritage. The increasing number of publications in recent years, averaging 2.6 per annum since 2011, underscores the growing significance and commitment to exploring different facets of Vietnamese heritage language. In Asia, such as in Japan and Taiwan, studies

Table 7.1 Studies on Vietnamese heritage language

Theme	Study
Vietnamese heritage language loss and shift	Ben-Moshe et al. (2016), Maloof et al. (2006), Zhou (2001)
Vietnamese heritage language maintenance	Beth and Tuckermann (2008), Lewis et al. (2011), Nguyen et al. (2001), Schnoor et al. (2017), Tran et al. (2021a), Young and Tran (1999)
Vietnamese heritage language ideology and language practice	Ben-Moshe et al. (2016), Bui (2016), Gogolin et al. (2017), Hegele (2014), Heller (2012), König (2014), Nguyen (2011), Pham (2015), Tran (2006, 2013)
Heritage language education and policy	Lam (2006), Potter (2014), Tran (2008), Tran et al. (2021b)
The Vietnamese heritage language proficiency assessment	Maloof et al. (2006), Nguyen et al. (2001), Tran (2019)
Characteristics of the Vietnamese heritage language	Dao (2012, 2016), Dao and Nguyen (2015), Ho-Dac (2003), Hoang (2013), Nguyen (2012), Phan (2017, 2018), Thai (2007, 2014), Tran (2013), Tran (2018, 2019)



Fig. 7.1 Number of research on Vietnamese heritage language in Western countries over the last two decades

on Vietnamese as a heritage language or an inherited language have also started to gain more attention (Yu-ching et al., 2015; Đỗ, 2023). This research trend bodes well for enriching our comprehension of this unique language and its role within diverse diaspora communities around the world. As studies continue to evolve and expand, they contribute to bridging the gap between silence and voice for heritage language speakers, empowering them to embrace their bilingual and bicultural identities.

Following are the main topics of research on Vietnamese heritage language up to date.

Vietnamese Heritage Language Loss and Shift

The topic of language loss and shift has been studied earlier than other topics and primarily introduced by Zhou (2001) in the United States. She designed a study with 363 Vietnamese teenagers in San Diego, using questionnaires and self-reports. This study revealed a crucial aspect of language loss and shift: the timeline of change. The result indicated a decline in the use of Vietnamese heritage language among Vietnamese youths aged 14, with English proficiency increasing inversely to the decline in Vietnamese heritage language literacy skills.

Another study in the United States, Maloof et al. (2006) argued that Vietnamese heritage language loss usually occurs within 1.5–2 generations of residing in this country. The convincing evidence for this loss is that only 15% of participants who belong to the second generation still use Vietnamese with siblings. Further evidence for this argument comes from the experience of many people living in the United States. During the high school years, Andrew, a Vietnamese-American writer, lost his grasp on Vietnamese (Lam, 2005). “Mouthfuls of consonants began to reform his

tongue, his teeth, his lips” (ibid., p. ix). Despite writing many books about his Vietnamese and American worlds, he used only English, the language that gave him confidence to write.

Pham (2011) collected Vietnamese and English data from Vietnamese bilinguals in the United States at four different times to examine the language change of this target group. The results showed that one of the two languages of the children at school-age time grew positively. Particularly, during the middle childhood, the dominant language shifted from the L1 (i.e., Vietnamese) to the L2 (i.e., English) (p. 67).

Despite being an important home language of about 300,000 speakers in Australia, Vietnamese is reported to be lost among the second and third generations (Tran et al. 2021a). Verdon et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study with 4252 young children from different immigration backgrounds to identify patterns of language maintenance and loss. The loss of other languages than English (heritage languages) including Vietnamese heritage language occurred over the first five years of life regularly. Between 3 waves (0–1 year, 2–3 years, 4–5 years), the maintenance of speaking heritage languages decreased to 86.6%.

In summary, while there is a body of research on Vietnamese heritage language loss and shift, its scope remains relatively limited, especially considering the various ages and circumstances in which these changes occur. Existing studies have primarily focused on identifying the timeline of language loss, but it is essential to acknowledge that these dynamics are influenced by a multitude of environmental and personal factors, including parental language use, family language policies, cultural connections, and language learning (Verdon et al., 2014; Tran et al. 2021b). A comprehensive understanding of these intricate dynamics is crucial for addressing heritage language preservation challenges effectively.

The findings of collected publications revealed a decline in Vietnamese heritage language proficiency among Vietnamese heritage speakers, with an inverse relationship observed between the decrease in Vietnamese literacy skills and an increase in English proficiency. It brings “a voice” refers to the capacity or ability of Vietnamese heritage language speakers to use and maintain their language skills, specifically their proficiency in Vietnamese, amidst the influence of English proficiency. The decline in Vietnamese language proficiency represents a weakening or loss of “the voice” of the Vietnamese heritage language within this population.

Vietnamese Heritage Language Maintenance

The loss and transformation of heritage language within diasporic communities can vary based on individual perspectives and the attitudes of parents of heritage language speakers towards the preservation of the Vietnamese heritage language. This particular aspect has been a focal point of research within the field of Vietnamese heritage language studies, as evident in Table 7.1. Pioneering studies by Young and Tran (1999) and Nguyen et al. (2001) represent early efforts to explore these attitudes

regarding the Vietnamese heritage language. In their research involving 588 first- to eighth-grade students of Vietnamese descent in California, United States, and relying on self-reports, Nguyen et al. (2001) reported that a majority of participants (80%) emphasized the significance of preserving their Vietnamese culture and language. Furthermore, 91% of these students deemed learning Vietnamese in school as highly important, with 67% expressing a strong desire to receive formal Vietnamese language education in school settings.

In addition, the findings showed that there is a correlation between the high levels of spoken Vietnamese competence, as well as the high levels of communication with parents of heritage language speakers in this heritage language, and English competence. First-language use is, therefore, not detrimental to the development of spoken English. Additionally, the correlation between English literacy and self-reported competence in Vietnamese was close to zero, indicating that there is no evidence of Vietnamese impeding English language literacy development.

Similarly, Ho-Dac (2003) did not find any evidence of a relation between the intense contact between Vietnamese and English and the decline of the Vietnamese language. In his study, code-switching was viewed as a strategy to overcome communication difficulties for Vietnamese immigrants living in Australia. In the same vein, Pham (2011) found that children in bilingual contexts can develop both languages, the heritage language, and the societal language at the same time (p. 68).

In the same vein, Maloof et al. (2006) selected 50 registered students at the Vietnamese Outreach Center in Atlanta, Georgia, which was developed to foster the maintenance of Vietnamese culture and language, and to promote biculturalism, to explore students' integrated cultural identities. Participants ranged in age from 9 to 18 and had lived in the United States for at least two years. The research employed a questionnaire to access bicultural competencies and cultural identities as well as background data such as class participation, length of attendance and pattern of attendance. The findings showed a positive correlation between a strong cultural ethnic identity and the ethnic language proficiency as well as English language proficiency. Students who particularly have positive attitudes toward the ethnic culture tend to have especially positive attitudes toward the English language use. Therefore, it is undoubtedly true that positive feelings towards their home cultures enable students to more readily embrace the host country's language.

In the same vein, a study by Beth and Tuckermann (2008) in Germany argues that maintaining a heritage language is key to cultural preservation. The stories of participants provide evidence for this argument, as highlighted by Beth and Tuckermann (2008). One of the most fascinating stories involves a 20-year-old woman who strived to create a pleasant and supportive learning environment for her younger sister to maintain their heritage language. The older sister was motivated by her discomfort and distress seeing her sister's detachment from their culture, evidenced by her limited Vietnamese proficiency (about 10%) and having a German boyfriend). She believed that learning Vietnamese would remind her younger sister of her root (Beth & Tuckermann, 2008, p. 319). The older sister conveyed that Vietnamese language competence is an important part of retaining the heritage culture and should be maintained for future life and career prospects. She expressed, "Of course, in Germany, Vietnamese

is not as necessary as German. However, I told her that it is our language. She can do it. It's in her essence. If she forgets or unlearns it, then someday she will not be able to do that anymore. And that is just too bad, because she never knows when she will need it again. She never knows if she might come back to Vietnam later. Not now, but to work or in a relationship" (ibid.).

In 2011, Lewis et al. designed two case studies on Vietnamese heritage language maintenance, the first being "The role of parent involvement in heritage language maintenance within a Vietnamese heritage language school setting", the second being "Vietnamese American parents' and students' attitudes toward maintaining Vietnamese as a heritage language". The findings from the above case studies showed that parent involvement and heritage language maintenance are key components for preserving cultural identity and for academic, and economic success.

In the same year, Lam (2011) examined the experiences of parents in mixed marriages (Vietnamese married to non-Vietnamese) regarding their efforts to maintain of the Vietnamese heritage language also in the United States. Although there were at least three different family types where language shift occurred, parents were still trying to pass on the heritage language to their children.

Tran et al. (2021a) identified factors associated with language use of parents and attitudes towards Vietnamese heritage language maintenance through a survey. A analysis of 151 Vietnamese-Australian parents with children under 18 years old showed that parents' language use with their children and in social situations strongly correlates with attitudes towards the heritage language of their children. The attitudes of parents towards the heritage language have strong influence on language ideology factors of children (the perceptions of cultural identity, the role of learning new language, and the potential resources for future career). The results of this study are consistent with existing research and argue strongly that Vietnamese heritage language maintenance is not a barrier to learn the language of host countries, but it is a potential resource for learning different languages and developing intercultural skills.

In summary, the current body of research consistently champions the preservation of the Vietnamese heritage language, highlighting its myriad benefits for individuals, immigrant communities, and host societies. Nonetheless, the bulk of these studies have been confined to the United States and Australia, underscoring the imperative for additional investigations in diverse host countries. This collective "voice" resounds with advocacy and endorsement for the safeguarding and nurturing of the Vietnamese heritage language within diasporic communities. It underscores the heritage language's intrinsic worth in fostering cultural identity, cultivating intercultural proficiencies, and bestowing overarching advantages upon individuals, immigrant groups, and host societies. The extensive evidence in existing research overwhelmingly supports heritage language maintenance and convincingly dispels any notion that it impedes the acquisition of the host country's languages. In essence, this resounding "voice" unambiguously promotes the preservation of the Vietnamese heritage language and fervently calls for further exploration of this pivotal subject.

Language Ideology and Language Practice

Attitudes towards the maintenance of the heritage language are strongly related to the language ideology and language practice. Tran (2006, 2013) paid attention to language practice of the Vietnamese diaspora community through the analysis of communication between family members in Vietnamese immigrant families in Nice, Paris and Lyon (10 registered families). Through the semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the study proposed a detailed picture of language practice of Vietnamese families in France: in order to overcome difficulties in Vietnamese communication at home, the children used various strategies, for example, generalization, approximation, borrowing, structuring, and code-switching.

König (2014) examined the language setting of bilingual Vietnamese-German adolescents during language biographical interviews to explore the linguistic construction of different “language spaces”, in which the participants positioned themselves as multilingual individuals. She found that the parents wanted their children to be proficient in both languages, Vietnamese and German; however, practicing German to adapt at German schools was more important (p. 298). In addition, she examined the motivation of the teenagers and young adults to maintain their heritage language. The case of Andrea showed that despite frequent use of the heritage language before going to school, she had to give up learning it because she did not have enough time (p. 304).

KiBis (Kinder auf dem Weg zur Bildungssprache) is another study in Germany that sought to describe the heritage language literacy practices of Vietnamese-German teenagers through qualitative analysis. As a case study, this research introduced the cases of Tai and Trang. In Tai’s case, he wrote Vietnamese without diacritics or tone marks and could not distinguish between tones such as thanh huyền (falling tone) and thanh sắc (rising tone). His writing style in Vietnamese mirrored his German writing (Gogolin et al., 2017, p. 42). Unlike Tai, Trang had to learn to write correctly in both German and Vietnamese. Her parents checked her spelling in both languages. In addition, she practiced dictation with Vietnamese children once per week and therefore, she could write quite well in Vietnamese.

Particularly, Tran (2021b) describes the family language policy of the Vietnamese community in Australia. The analysis reveals that a third of the participants (35.6%) had a family language policy and 72.5% of those consistently implemented it. Significantly, the parents in families with a family language policy obtained higher Vietnamese proficiency, used Vietnamese more frequently with their children and often intended to come back to Vietnam.

In examining the intricate interplay between heritage language attitudes, language ideology, and language practice within the Vietnamese diaspora, a resounding voice emerges. It underscores the dynamic nature of heritage language maintenance and the complexities faced by individuals and families navigating this linguistic journey.

This voice emanates from Tran’s (2006, 2013) meticulous investigation of Vietnamese immigrant families in France, revealing the ingenious strategies employed by children to overcome communication barriers within their own homes. It resonates

in König's (2014) exploration of bilingual Vietnamese-German adolescents, where the aspiration for proficiency in both Vietnamese and German clashes with the practical demands of academic success in Germany. It is also evident in KiBis study's (Gogolin et al., 2017) depiction of Tai and Trang, two contrasting cases that illuminate the challenges and successes in heritage language literacy. Moreover, this voice finds resonance in Tran's (2021b) description of family language policies within the Australian Vietnamese community, where a commitment to such policies correlates with enhanced Vietnamese proficiency and a profound connection to Vietnamese culture. Throughout these narratives, the voice is one of resilience, adaptability, and the enduring significance of heritage language in the face of evolving sociolinguistic landscapes. It calls for continued exploration, recognizing that the intricate relationship between attitudes, ideology, and practice holds the key to preserving the Vietnamese heritage language within diasporic communities worldwide.

Vietnamese Heritage Language Education and Policy

Heritage language schools or programs of heritage language education have also received attention from researchers. The language use and cultural programs have been examined in terms of their quality. Maloof et al. (2006) stated that heritage language and cultural programs can promote the advantage of maintaining heritage languages. However, the Vietnamese heritage language programs in the United States still faced many difficulties as follows:

(1) a broad, uneven range of instructors' skills levels and pedagogical training, (2) a diversity of students' skill levels and immigration patterns, (3) a lack of cultural sensitivity to diasporic acculturation issues regarding homeland politics, (4) the U.S. national neglect of embedded regional politics that play out in the classroom, (5) the possible geopolitical slant of resource and instructional materials, (6) U.S. federal and local funding systems, and (7) academic institutional infrastructural problems that affect interest in language study.

(Lam, 2006, p. 2).

Tran (2008) introduced Vietnamese language education in the United States in language schools and teaching programs at some institutions, such as the Vietnamese literacy training program of the Parker Williams Branch Library in Harris County in Texas, and teaching courses at some universities. These programs were organized through the efforts of professors and teaching staff with Vietnamese migrant backgrounds. Due to limited funding, these schools usually lacked well-trained teachers and teaching materials (ibid., p. 264). These issues were mitigated by the development of new materials, especially language software, cultural software and media. However, there were still a lot of challenges in teaching the Vietnamese heritage language. One of the challenges was the attitudes of the learners. Nguyen (2016) informed that some heritage learners felt uncomfortable learning Vietnamese because they did not self-identify as Vietnamese. Another difficulty arised from the feelings of heritage speakers about dialect accents. For example, Jane, who grew up in a family

from Central Vietnam, was accustomed to the Hue accent. She found the Northern accent “foreign” and “strange” (ibid., p. 44). In addition, her classmates mostly spoke with the Southern accent. She felt more comfortable with the Southern accent than the Northern one. Therefore, she tried to learn this accent to avoid becoming “an oddball” (ibid., p. 44). The problems of heritage learners can bring difficulties for heritage language teaching.

Surprisingly, there have been a few studies regarding Vietnamese heritage language education and policy. This topic deserves greater attention due to the necessity of creating suitable language and cultural programs in different Vietnamese communities around the world.

The voice embedded within this passage is one of recognition and concern for the challenges faced by Vietnamese heritage language education and policy in the United States. It echoes the sentiments of researchers like Maloof et al. (2006) and Tran (2008), who shed light on the numerous obstacles impeding the success of heritage language programs.

This voice articulates the issues surrounding these programs, encompassing instructor skills, diverse student backgrounds, cultural sensitivity, political dynamics, funding, and academic infrastructure. It speaks to the persistent struggle for adequate resources and well-trained educators in Vietnamese heritage language education.

Furthermore, this voice resonates in the portrayal of difficulties faced by learners, including discomfort stemming from self-identity issues or regional dialect variations. It underscores the intricate web of factors influencing the effectiveness of heritage language teaching.

Overall, the voice conveys the urgent need for increased attention, resources, and tailored language and cultural programs within Vietnamese communities worldwide. It underscores the significance of addressing these challenges to ensure the preservation and revitalization of the Vietnamese heritage language.

Vietnamese Heritage Language Proficiency Assessment

The language proficiency of heritage speakers has been investigated in early research related to the Vietnamese heritage language. The study of Nguyễn et al. (2001) involving 588 participants with self-reports, surveyed individuals regarding their competence in the Vietnamese language. The majority, 60% of the participants, reported that Vietnamese was their first language, while 7% indicated English as their primary language, and 26% claimed proficiency in both languages. Additionally, 8% of respondents were unsure about their first language. Concerning speaking abilities, 67% of the participants stated that they spoke Vietnamese very well or well, while 25% felt their Vietnamese proficiency was okay, and 7% had limited or no speaking skills in Vietnamese. When it came to reading and writing, 23% reported being proficient, 19% felt they were okay, and a significant 58% had little or no ability in reading and writing Vietnamese (Nguyễn et al., 2001, p. 162).

The results showed that the majority of participants thought Vietnamese was their first language. Through self-evaluation, speaking competence was good, but their literacy competence was still poor.

In the same topic, Maloof et al. (2006) measured Vietnamese heritage language proficiency by self-reports in two domains: communication and cultural content. The communicative domain was accessed by self-reported competence in four skills: understanding, speaking, reading, and writing with nine-interval Likert scales (1 = not at all, 9 = very well). The cultural content was identified by inquiring into some cultural language aspects such as proverbs and ethnic holidays. Additionally, the cognitive competence was evaluated through reports about four student skills (understanding, speaking, reading, and writing) that were conducted by language center teachers. Of the 33 test students, 12 were identified as low in Vietnamese heritage language proficiency.

Bui (2016) shed light on Vietnamese heritage language competence among adolescents. To investigate language interest, she conducted surveys with Vietnamese immigrant teens in the United States (n=22, aged 14-35) and Germany (n=21, aged 13-29). In the US, 50% of participants reported good speaking and listening skills, but only 14% could read and write Vietnamese well (p. 146). Notably, in Germany, 50% of participants demonstrated proficiency in all four language skills, particularly reading and writing. This higher proficiency is likely due to parental expectations and frequent Vietnamese language use at home (ibid., p. 230).

In terms of language competence of Vietnamese-German adolescents, Hegele (2014) found that most migrant children could speak German almost fluently, whereas their parents often had problems with this language. The participants of this study could speak Vietnamese well, but they had difficulties in literacy because they had not learned Vietnamese at school (p. 11). This is a story of a participant:

I can understand all, it is sometimes for me difficult with vocabulary, and then I must sometimes ruminate. Actually, I can talk quite well, but writing and reading are hard for me... I learnt this at home, we speak Vietnamese. That's why I also have problems in reading and writing, because I did not learn it in a school. However, I firstly learnt Vietnamese, therefore it is my mother tongue. (Hegele, 2014, p. 11)

Tran (2018, 2019) described Vietnamese heritage language performance through writing skill of Vietnamese-German adolescents to explore to what extent these heritage speakers could write Vietnamese. A quantitative evaluation form was developed to measure the written texts of 20 participants across two different time points. This form was evaluated to determine whether it was reliable for application in other studies. In addition, in order to describe in more detail the written language performance of this target group, a qualitative analysis of collected written and translated texts of Vietnamese bilinguals and monolinguals was carried out. The results showed that 3 out of the 12 evaluation categories were required further consideration. The qualitative analysis provided a comprehensive description of Vietnamese heritage language characteristics in the written performance of Vietnamese-German adolescents that will be described in the next section.

The voice underlying the existing studies is one of commitment to understanding and assessing the language proficiency of Vietnamese heritage speakers. It reflects

the dedication of researchers to uncover the intricacies of language competence among heritage speakers, particularly those of Vietnamese descent living in different countries.

The existing research has typically used self-reports and various evaluation methods to measure Vietnamese heritage language proficiency. These studies seek to gauge competence in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding Vietnamese. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive data collection. The voice within the passage emphasizes the importance of such research to provide a holistic view of heritage language competence.

Additionally, it underscores the variation in language proficiency among Vietnamese heritage speakers in different contexts. Some individuals demonstrate proficiency in speaking but struggle with literacy, while others excel in all language skills due to cultural expectations and practice at home.

Moreover, the passage's voice also advocates for the development of objective evaluation methods, combining quantitative and qualitative assessments to comprehensively measure Vietnamese heritage language proficiency. The aim is to provide educators, linguists, and teachers with valuable insights to design effective language programs.

Overall, the voice of these studies promotes a deeper understanding of Vietnamese heritage language proficiency, advocating for comprehensive assessment methods and further research in this area to benefit both learners and educators.

Characteristics of Vietnamese Heritage Language

Studies on characteristics of Vietnamese heritage language are briefly summarized in Table 7.2.

Most of the above studies were based on oral data; only two studies by Tran (2018, 2019) analyzed written data. The informants of existing research are adolescents and adults. There are still a lack of studies about the taxonomy of Vietnamese heritage language among young children.

The most prominent feature that appeared frequently in language use through generations and in all data is code-switching and transfer. Ho-Dac (2003) analyzed code-switching in syntax, tonal facilitation, and personal pronouns of Vietnamese-English bilinguals in Melbourne, Australia through face-to-face interviews and 11 natural conversations.

Firstly, the frequency of code-switching by word classes was discussed. The proportion of English nouns that excluded proper nouns was more than 50 percent of the total switches. The switched nouns were distributed among some of the following semantic categories such as accommodation (flat, bedroom, motel), landscape (city, park, tram), work-related (team, office, boss), food (milk, cereal, dinner); institution (tax, court, police), household (furniture, kitchen, cook), shopping (shopping center, sale, op-shop), education (Math, library, exam), and Australian way of living (cricket, pub, safari).

Table 7.2 Summary of published studies on Vietnamese heritage language characteristics

Study	Subjects	n	Methods	Findings
Ho-Dac (2003)	First generation/ natural speech (Australia)	60	Analysis of interviews and natural speech recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequent occurrence of code-switching, especially in the use of nouns (50%) – Frequent occurrence of code-switching in some communication topics such as book and film (21.51%), daily work (16.22%), and Australian picture (12.04%) – The signal of attitude change in code-switching of personal pronouns
Tran (2006, 2013)	First generation 1.5–Second generation Third generation	12 21 7	Analysis of conversa- tion recordings and observations in family communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The use of complex address forms was still maintained – The use of address forms establishing both of horizontal and vertical relationship was influenced by French language and culture – The wrong use of classifiers
Thai (2007)	Aged 20–62	28	Analysis of 37 interviews, daily life conversations and 120 journalistic texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The renewal of lexical forms by code-switching – The maintenance of old vocabulary
Đào (2012, 2016)	First generation aged 35–54, Second generation aged 18–25 (Australia)	10 10	Analysis of language background questionnaires, phonetic tests, and journalistic data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The divergence of tone and vowel production of the second generation – The maintenance of obsolescent items, particularly those belonging to older people

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

Study	Subjects	n	Methods	Findings
Hoang (2013)	First generation aged 18–28 Second generation aged 45–60	30 31	Analysis of data collected by Discourse Completion Test Role-plays, language tests on idioms and proverbs, questionnaires, and interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Significant shift from the indirectness of the first generation speakers to the directness of the second generation speakers – Characteristics of the shift: an equality-based relationship instead of traditionally hierarchical Vietnamese customs; a rational basis instead of an emotional intuitive basis; and clear-cut style of speech instead of indirect
Phan (2017)	The second generation aged 22,5	6	Analysis of data collected through participants' narratives about a series of pictures of a given story and through the participants' interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consistent use of the aspect markers of <i>đã/rõi</i>, <i>đang</i> – Wrong use of verbum denoting the direction of movement (<i>ra</i> (out), <i>xuống</i> (down))
Phan (2018)	The second generation aged 22,5	6	Analysis of data collected through participants' narratives about a series of pictures of a given story and through the participants' interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequent occurrence of missing, misusing and overusing of classifiers – Consistent use of the indefinite determiner <i>một</i> (a), the indexical <i>cái</i> (unlike classifier <i>cái</i>) and the aspect markers of <i>đã/rõi</i>, <i>đang</i>

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

Study	Subjects	n	Methods	Findings
Tran (2018)	Second generation aged 15–16	45	Analysis of written data collected through writing and translation tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequent use of basic verbs such as <i>làm</i> (make), <i>nhìn</i> (see), <i>nói</i> (talk) – Frequent use of infinitival forms of verb in borrowings – Monosyllabilization of borrowed verb
Tran (2019)	Second generation aged 15–16	40 40	Analysis of written data collected through writing and translation tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Code-switching – Characteristics of all linguistic levels – Writing strategies

n = Total number of participants

Secondly, the relationship between code-switching patterns and topics was examined. The results showed that code-switching happened frequently in some conversation topics about books and films (21.51%), daily work in Australia (16.22%), and the Australian culture (12.04%) (ibid., p. 73).

Finally, code-switching in personal pronouns was considered a strategy to handle identities. Specifically, the switch of a Vietnamese address form to an English personal pronoun signaled the attitude change of the speakers. For example, Vietnamese pronouns *mày – tao* as informal address forms appeared dominantly to show the close and intimate relationship between friends. One speaker changed address forms to the English pronoun *me* to create distance between herself and her friend.

To sum up, Ho-Dac (2003) considered code-switching as a critical feature of the Vietnamese language variety of heritage speakers living in Australia. Code-switching was seen as a strategy to make conversations in Vietnamese in an English environment. At the grammatical level, code-switching of content words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives occurred more frequently than with function words. However, the usage of English words was influenced by the rules of using the Vietnamese grammatical structure, such as the lack of word change in all positions within a sentence. In addition, the code-switching of address forms could express the change of speakers' attitudes which are traditionally implied in the Vietnamese language and culture.

Another study on code-switching and transfer as prominent characteristics of bilingual conversation is Thai (2007). In this study, he examined the relationship between code-choice, code-mixing and identities. Thai (2007) recorded 53 conversations, in which there were 28 participants aged 22–62 living in Australia for at least 5 years (Pritchard, Springvale, and Belconnen). Participant worked in many different jobs ranging from doctors, IT engineers, writers, students to housewives. 12 of the participants were fluent Vietnamese-English bilinguals.

Interestingly, based on the collected data, he proposed the forms of lexical renewal, such as the creation of new words that was based on English lexical vocabulary: *đi làm*

pham (go make farm—seasonal fruit picking), *tách phom* (separate form—separated couples), *làm neo* (make nail—manicurist). In the existing examples, English words *farm*, *form* and *nail* were not only Vietnamized at the phonetic and graphic aspects, their meanings were also mostly broadened. Particularly, in the standard Vietnamese, *đi làm ruộng* (working on the farm) is manual planting, watering and harvesting, whereas *đi làm farm* in the Vietnamese heritage language variety in Australia refers to seasonal fruit-picking or sometimes as cash-paid seasonal labor. Semantic expansion occurred frequently because of the impact of English homonyms or the preference of archaism in the migrant language (Clyne, 1985).

Tran (2006, 2013) also described Vietnamese heritage language through daily conversations in Vietnamese immigrant families in France, particularly in Nice, Lyon, and Paris. Her studies argued that address forms in communication between different generation were influenced by French language and culture in both horizontal and vertical relationships. Frequency of using the pair address *mày-tao* (*moi-tu* in French, *you-I* in English) and the limited knowledge of pronouns were considered two features of Vietnamese heritage language in France.

Dao (2016) attempted to define characteristics of English loanwords in the Vietnamese lexis of the Vietnamese-Australian immigrants. The study showed that nouns obtained the highest proportion of English loanwords in the Vietnamese vocabulary of Vietnamese-Australian immigrants, about 87.6% (p. 209). The semantic fields of English loanwords were from a wide range of places. The semantic fields of health, business and economy, cars/vehicles/aviation, housing, and dwelling obtained the highest proportions, respectively about 8.8%, 8.1%, 7.7%, and 7.6% (*ibid.*, p. 210).

Interestingly, in Dao's study (2016), the orthography of English loanwords was based on the Vietnamese orthographic system with tones, diacritics and/or hyphens between syllables, for example, *ô-cao* for *account*, *chạc* for *charge*. Many words were borrowed in order to “designate new things, persons, places, and concepts” (Weinreich, 1974, p. 56). However, Vietnamese-Australian immigrants used English words for many things that already had their own names in the Vietnamese language such as *casino* for *sòng bạc*, *seat belt* for *dây an toàn*. It was evidence of the high level of “penetration of English loanwords in the Vietnamese language in Australia” (*ibid.*, p. 213). In addition, about 39.1% of loanwords are loan translations. For example, *pension age* is translated to *tiền già* (lit. old money).

Dao (2012, 2017) and Dao and Nguyen (2015) also described transfer and code-switching with regard to the phonetic aspect. Through phonetic tests and language background questionnaires, the study showed the divergence of production of the tones and vowels between the young Vietnamese residents in Australia and the older Vietnamese residents in Australia (p. ii). Specifically, young Vietnamese Australians were unable to produce the broken-curve tone of Southern Vietnamese dialect. Tones in the same register of similar characteristics such as the level and rising tone and tone diacritics such as the falling and the rising tone were confused. The vowel productions of young Vietnamese-Australians were also distinct from those of older Vietnamese-Australians and native speakers, due to the influence of the transference of English. Despite the existence of the close mid /e/ in Australian English, young bilinguals tended to produce the English vowel /e/ instead of the Vietnamese vowel

/ɛ/. It was explained by the difficulty of distinguishing between /ɛ/ and /e/ in the Vietnamese language. These two vowels are described as front, mid, unrounded, but /ɛ/ is pronounced more open than /e/ (Dao & Nguyen, 2015, p. 302). In addition, the similarity of e and ê, o and ô is also brought difficulty for the participants when they had to read the test.

Phan (2017, 2018) focused on the linguistic characteristics of the Vietnamese language in the United States. Twenty-four illustrated frames of a wordless children's story were used as a test instrument to collect participants' oral data. Consistent with findings from Ho-Dac (2003), Tran (2006, 2013), Thai (2007), Dao (2016), code-switching appeared frequently in the Vietnamese speech of Vietnamese-American participants. These loanwords were predominantly used within Vietnamese syntactic frames, regardless of participants' varied levels of Vietnamese fluency. This finding supports Montrul's (2012) argument about "the most resilient areas" (p. 20), which are passively acquired through consistent heritage language exposure within family settings (Phan, 2018, p. 8).

Code-switching has also been investigated in Tran (2018, 2019). This aspect was measured by self-reports with a 4-point scale of the frequency level of code-switching in the conversation between Vietnamese-German adolescents with different people. The results showed that code-switching often appeared in communication between children and their mother/father, whereas it happened only between certain people in communication between heritage speakers with siblings, and best friends. It never or rarely occurred in conversation with classmates, neighbors, and friends. Specifically, Tran's studies focused on lexical code-switching and transfer. The results were consistent with existing studies by Ho-Dac (2003) and Thai (2007) in written and translated texts of Vietnamese-German adolescents: (1) High frequency of code-switching from German to Vietnamese; (2) Existing code-switching from English; (3) More frequency of code-switching in content words (verb and noun); (4) Use of infinitival form of words in code-switching (*fliegen* (fly) instead of *fliegt*, *smooth down* instead of *smooths down*); (5) monosyllabization of borrowed words (*bau* instead of *bauen* (build)); (6) Use of basic or general words for specific words in loan translation and semantic extension (*làm*—*make* instead of *paint*, *saw*, *sew*).

Several studies highlighted the fossilization of vocabulary among first-generation heritage speakers. Interestingly, Ho-Dac's study revealed that certain words such as *thủ lĩnh* (leader), *nhật trình* (daily newspaper), or proper names of many countries as *Hoa Lục* (China), *Hoa Thịnh Đốn* (Washington), *Úc Kim* (Australian Dollar) have no longer used in Vietnam since 1975, but persisted in the spoken and written language of Vietnamese immigrants in Australia. New Vietnamese vocabulary has replaced these terms within Vietnam, for example, *lãnh đạo* for *thủ lĩnh*, *Trung Quốc* for *Hoa Lục*, *Washington* for *Hoa Thịnh Đốn*, *Đô la Úc* for *Úc Kim*. Another feature of lexical use in the Vietnamese heritage language variety in Australia was the scarcity of new vocabulary adopted after 1975 such as *bao cấp* (budget subsidies), *hộ khẩu* (number of inhabitants), *quần chúng* (the masses). The issue of fossilization of language routine and the lack of new vocabulary among immigrant communities can likely be attributed to limited contact with their native language in their home countries. Thai (2007) additionally discussed the

frequent use of the passive voice, the adoption of address forms *you and me*, and the common use of expressions like *thank you* and *sorry*.

Dao (2016) compared monolingual Vietnamese newspapers published in Australia such as *Việt Luận* (Vietnamese Herald), *Chiều Dương* (the Sunrise), and *Nhân Quyền* (Human Rights) with those published in Vietnam such as *Tuổi Trẻ* (the Youth), *Thanh Niên Newspaper* (the Youth Newspaper), and *Tin nhanh Việt Nam* (Express News of Vietnam). The analysis revealed a high frequency (79%) of obsolete vocabulary use in the Australian Vietnamese newspapers. The proportion of obsolete nouns were higher than obsolete verbs (13.8%) and adjectives (5.7%). Notably, vocabulary related to political institutions such as government, politics and legal matters were preserved in these publications. Furthermore, 18.3% of the obsolete vocabulary stemmed from older South Vietnamese dialects, with spellings reflecting southern pronunciations, for example, *chánh phủ* (government) instead of *chính phủ*, *cá nhân* (individual) instead of *cá nhân*. Finally, the study found 60.5% of the obsolete vocabulary used in Vietnamese newspapers in Australia consisted of Sino-Vietnamese terms, most of which have no longer used in contemporary Vietnamese, such as *chiếu khán* (visa) for *thị thực*, *Lã Phụng Tiên* (La Fontaine) for La Fontaine.

Other several features have been described in studies by Phan (2017, 2018) and Tran (2018, 2019). Although there aren't many other studies in the same area, the findings of these studies are interesting and meaningful for research on Vietnamese heritage language. Their studies examined the use of classifiers, the use of the indefinite determiner *một*, the use of the indexical *cái* within noun phrases, the use of *đã/rồi*, *đang*, and the use of causative constructions. In Phan's works (2017, 2018), classifier use included errors such as omissions, misuse, and overuse that varied among participants another. Classifier *con* was mostly used correctly due to its distinct meaning of [+animate]. In contrast, the general classifier *cái* (Tran, 2011) was often misused in place of more specific classifiers. Additionally, (Tran, 2011) found the overuse of the indefinite determiner *một* and the indexical *cái* (not CL *cái*, that is *extra cái*). The wrong use of the indefinite determiner *một* might result from the influence of the indefinite article *a/an* English. Heritage speakers used the indexical *cái* significantly more than native speakers, though the author did not provide a detailed explanation for this finding in details.

Expanding on this topic, Tran (2019) demonstrated that classifier omission was the most common classifier-related issue in Vietnamese heritage language, likely influenced by the absence of classifiers in German. Consistent with the findings of Phan (2017, 2018) and Tran (2011), the classifiers *con*, *cái* and *chiếc* were the most frequently used, reflecting their prevalence in the Vietnamese monolingual environment.

Shifting the focus to defining characteristics of the Vietnamese heritage language in Germany, Tran (2018) examined the verb use of Vietnamese-German adolescents. A nine-picture set of building a boomerang was used as the instrument to collect written data of 25 participants. A separate translation test (from English) involved text was used for a translation test involved 20 different participants. The results indicated a tendency or a strategy towards simplification in verb use, where basic verbs like

làm (make), *nhìn* (see), or *nói* (talk) were used frequently over more specific verbs. Tran's 2019 dissertation expands on this research, offering a more comprehensive analysis of the Vietnamese heritage language among adolescents in Germany.

In addition, Tran's dissertation (2019) also identified the common characteristics within the Vietnamese heritage language across various linguistic levels, as demonstrated in both the boomerang written texts and the translated texts. At the orthographic level, these features included deletion of diacritics, word initial capitalization, grapheme replacement due to transfer from German orthographic rules (e.g., <k> instead of <c>, <n>, <ng> instead of <nh>), grapheme confusion due to interlanguage resources (e.g., <s> and <x>, <i> and <y>), reduction of digraphs and trigraphs (e.g., <u> instead of <uơ>, <n> instead of <ngh>). At the lexical level, the study revealed a smaller vocabulary size in Vietnamese-German adolescents compared to their monolingual peers. This was evident through the analysis of total words, compound words, and Sino-Vietnamese words, which were used by participants. At the pragmatic level, Tran's work specifically focused on the complex and context-dependent Vietnamese address form system. Results indicated that Vietnamese-German adolescents favored to use the intimate informal address forms such as the pronoun *mình* (used to address and refer in intimate relationships), and kinship terms *em*, *con*, *cháu* instead of formal address forms such as *tôi*, *chúng tôi* in the formal contexts provided by the written and translated tasks. The findings suggested that the adolescents' written productions of the Vietnamese-German adolescents reflect strategies like "write the way they speak" (Chevalier 2004); and "simply writing down everything" (Danzak 2011: 501).

The voice embedded in these studies is one of thorough examination and documentation of the linguistic characteristics and behaviors found within Vietnamese heritage language communities around the world. These studies demonstrate a deep commitment to unraveling the complexities of language use, evolution, and maintenance among Vietnamese diaspora communities.

Firstly, the voice in these studies emphasizes the significance of code-switching and transfer as prominent features within Vietnamese heritage language communities. It delves into the reasons behind code-switching, whether it's a strategy for communication in other host language-speaking environments, a reflection of identity shifts, or a way to navigate complex social relationships. The studies illustrate how code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but is deeply intertwined with cultural, social, and psychological aspects.

Secondly, the voice stresses the persistence of obsolete vocabulary and fossilization of language routine within these communities. This highlights the importance of examining not only how languages evolve but also the processes through which they can become fossilized or undergo selective change based on the context of migration and cultural contact.

Moreover, the voice is dedicated to studying the influence of English and other language loanwords and the adaptability of Vietnamese in response to the linguistic environment of the diaspora. It explores the creative lexical renewal processes and demonstrates how loanwords can reshape and broaden the meaning of existing vocabulary.

Furthermore, the voice shows concern for the younger generations of Vietnamese heritage speakers, discussing language proficiency, phonetic variations, and grammatical features among adolescents and children growing up in diaspora communities. These studies provide insights into how these young speakers navigate linguistic complexities, often influenced by their bilingual upbringing.

The voice across these studies is characterized by a strong commitment to understanding the dynamics of language use and change within Vietnamese heritage language communities. It emphasizes the need for in-depth linguistic analysis to shed light on the intricate relationship between language, identity, and cultural adaptation among Vietnamese diaspora populations.

Conclusion

The voice of Vietnamese heritage language research has transitioned from silence to empowerment, offering a newfound voice to Vietnamese heritage speakers who have been overlooked. Heritage speakers “who are used to being silent in their first language a new voice, one that can make them truly bilingual and bicultural” (Boom & Polinsky, 2014, p. 17). This transformation fosters an embrace of bilingualism and biculturalism. Nevertheless, the voice of Vietnamese heritage speakers requires further exploration from diverse perspectives, as research on this matter still exhibits considerable gaps, encompassing both entirely novel topics and unexplored facets of existing subjects.

The issue of Vietnamese heritage language loss, shift, and maintenance has garnered substantial attention in the United States and Australia. However, there remains a pressing need to examine these phenomena across a wider spectrum of age groups, various communities, and an array of related variables. Despite some progress in researching Vietnamese heritage language education and policy, there’s still much more to explore in this field. To formulate effective language and cultural programs that cater to Vietnamese heritage language speakers worldwide, comprehensive research in this domain is imperative.

Evaluating the proficiency of Vietnamese heritage language has largely relied on self-assessment, which often lacks precision. Therefore, the development of comprehensive evaluation criteria for Vietnamese heritage language proficiency becomes essential. While the study of Vietnamese heritage language characteristics has expanded in recent years, there is still a demand for advanced perspectives explored in diverse settings and using varied data sources. Notably, exploring Vietnamese heritage language from a cognitive perspective remains an uncharted territory. Furthermore, pedagogical approaches to teaching Vietnamese heritage language sometimes overlap with teaching Vietnamese as a second language. Lessons from comprehensive studies on Spanish heritage language education can provide valuable insights and methodologies for researchers in the Vietnamese heritage language domain.

In summary, the call for extensive research on Vietnamese heritage language, spanning multiple dimensions, is not only to elevate its status “from the margins to become a central focus” (Montrul, 2016, p. 6), akin to certain other heritage languages, but also to amplify the voices of Vietnamese heritage speakers within society.

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Chapter 8

Languages and Ethnic Minority Students' Access to Education in Vietnam: Problems Turned into Opportunities from the Perspective of Translanguaging



Chinh Duc Nguyen and Thanh Nguyen Thao Tran

Abstract Compared to students of the ethnic majority (the Kinh), minority students have a lower level of educational attainment. Language barriers have been widely accepted as a cause for this disparity. That is, ethnic minority students encounter schooling difficulties due to their disadvantages in Vietnamese, the national language and also the language of the ethnic majority in Vietnam. This chapter reports part of the findings of a project that explored schooling opportunities for ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Specifically, the chapter highlights the findings related to language difficulties experienced by students of two ethnic minorities in two highland provinces (Gia Lai and Dak Lak). Data were collected from informal talks/interviews with educational/school leaders, teachers, and parents in local villages. The findings show that a low level of Vietnamese was perceived as the major challenge to the ethnic minority students' schooling opportunities. In addition, students were discouraged to capitalize on their indigenous languages to facilitate their learning and engagement in the classroom. The chapter begins with an overview of educational inequalities between ethnic majority and minority students in Vietnam. Next, we focus on language barriers experienced by ethnic minority students by reviewing relevant studies. The findings and discussion will be the central section of this chapter. Based on the literature and our research findings, we suggest a solution to the perceived problems. That is, policy and practice of education for ethnic minority students need to be innovated in accordance with translanguaging, which posits ethnic minority students' language resources should be seen as strengths rather than challenges.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_8

Introduction

The world today is characterized by inequalities, which are manifested in income, accommodation, job opportunities, and access to public services (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2019; Zeichner, 2011). Educational inequalities, which are simply understood as differences in schooling attainment between rich and poor students, have become a great source of concern in many societies. In other words, disparities in familial and socioeconomic backgrounds among students are reflected in their educational achievements. In many multiethnic societies, students of the majority outperform their minority peers, and the differences in schooling attainment result from a wide range of factors, such as family income and parents' educational background (Nguyen & Zeichner, 2021). Languages are, to some extent, one of the reasons behind schooling inequalities (Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2017). That is, the ethnic majority language has been used as the national language or medium of instruction in mainstream education. As such, students whose languages and ethnicities are minoritized tend to be disadvantaged as they have to abide by mainstream practices in the schooling system. The monolingual perspective on educational practice has been criticized for partly leading to educational inequalities (Nguyen & Huynh, 2021; Zeichner, 2010). As part of initiatives or solutions to the perceived problems, translanguaging has been put forward for classrooms mixed by students of multilingual and multiethnic backgrounds. Simply put, translanguaging is more like a pedagogical approach that encourages or helps students capitalize on their multilingual resources or capabilities for learning within and beyond the classroom (García, 2009; Lewis et al., 2012; Williams, 1996).

Vietnam is known as a multiethnic nation encompassing 54 recognized cohabiting ethnic groups. However, the ethnic majority, the Kinh, accounts for over 85% of the population; whereas, the rest of 15% is for 53 other ethnic minorities (General Statistical Office, 2019). Unsurprisingly, institutions in mainstream society have been grounded in the 'standard' of the Kinh majority (Nguyen & Huynh, 2021). For example, Vietnamese, the language of the Kinh, has been acknowledged as the national language of Vietnam since the national independence in 1945. The national language has also been employed as a medium of instruction in the schooling system nationwide. The monolingual policy and practice in most schools have caused schooling inequalities between students of the majority and those of minorities (Bhowmik et al., 2018; Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Truong, 2011). Despite the perceived problems, policy and practice of education have yet to accommodate the bilingual or multilingual resources of ethnic minority students. On the basis of this reality, we conducted a study on educational equity for ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Part of the findings of this study pertained to the language barriers experienced by ethnic minority students, which helped to explain their schooling difficulties. In this chapter, we selected the findings related to language issues as part of the findings of our research project on educational equity for ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Translanguaging is presented as our recommendation for transcending the language barriers experienced

by ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands and throughout Vietnam. The chapter begins with an overview of educational inequalities between ethnic majority and minority students in Vietnam. Next, relevant studies are reviewed to delineate language obstacles experienced by ethnic minority students. Based on the literature and our research findings as the central section of this chapter, a workable solution is proposed to alleviate the perceived issues and facilitate favorable experiences among ethnic minority students.

Literature Review

Schooling Inequalities Between the Ethnic Majority and Minority Students in Vietnam

Recognised as a nation with 54 existing ethnic groups among which the Kinh makes up 85% of the total population, Vietnam has witnessed significant socio-economic disparities between the dominant Kinh, Hoa (Chinese), and other minority groups in terms of income, infrastructure, geographical areas, transport, educational access, and standards (Bui et al., 2017; Giacchino-Baker, 2007; Imai et al., 2011; World Bank, 2009). The Hoa (Chinese) group, despite how small it is, gathers with the Kinh predominantly residing in urban areas, and plains due to similar social and economic aspects while other ethnic minorities live in mountainous and remote regions of Vietnam (Pham & Doane, 2021). Whereas the delta regions have experienced greater economic expansion and infrastructural growth, poverty remains entrenched in the hilly North West and Central Highlands associated with meager income, limited healthcare systems, and scarce educational access. Imbalanced resource and opportunity allocation between these geographical areas has hampered educational equities among ethnic minority groups, leaving local children impoverished (Vu et al., 2013). The wealthy-impoverished divide is also delineated in the big picture of inequalities in Vietnam. As seen in everyday life across the country, people from deprived backgrounds described as socioeconomically underprivileged groups have a difficult time satisfying their fundamental necessities. People from disadvantaged backgrounds are frequently ostracized from mainstream culture, limiting their growth opportunities. Particularly, children of rich families or communities have access to higher-quality institutions, a more sophisticated curriculum, contemporary resources, modern facilities, and experienced instructors. Children from low-income families, on the other hand, are neglected and live in deplorable conditions (Rolleston & Krutikova, 2014).

Predicated on particular facts and statistics, researchers also emphasized the educational discrepancy between minority groups and the dominant Kinh, which was linked to revenue and living standards (Baulch et al., 2007, 2012). According to Trieu and Jayakody (2019), poverty has been identified as the major cause for minority students not transferring to upper-secondary institutions. This schooling chasm results in low minority enrolment rates, posing severe challenges, not just

economically but also socially and politically. According to social capital theory, students' conducts are frequently shaped and governed by social norms and standards in a macro-level context (Coleman, 1988). For example, child marriage known as married life prior to the age of eighteen has gained in popularity in underprivileged regions of Vietnam. Not only does early marriage hamper minority students' scholastic and financial chances but it tends to be linked to premature pregnancy and dropouts (Baulch et al., 2007; Kutor et al., 2005). As a result, educational disparities may be conceived as a prism reflecting all discriminatory practices at all levels. Through positioning schooling barriers in Vietnamese official policy discourses, DeJaeghere and other researchers (2015) reveal that a lesser status is attached to ethnic minority groups typically framed as the polar opposite of the Kinh majority. Such policy paradigms have not only failed to address ethnic inequities in schooling in Vietnam but have aggravated the problems related to ethnic class separation, exclusion, and inferior learning achievement (Truong, 2011).

It is highlighted that ethnic minority students performed academically worse than those of the majority (Giacchino-Baker, 2007). While their weak academic attainment is blamed on their dearth of Vietnamese capabilities, a prescribed 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Training appears alien to minoritized children, putting students in underprivileged areas at a disadvantage in classrooms. Additionally, monolingual teachers who can only use Vietnamese (Giacchino-Baker, 2007; Luong & Nieke, 2013; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021) are more prone to have misunderstandings and lack of interaction between professors and students in classrooms. Due to the hegemonic curriculum and instructional medium, national records and multinational exam results may obscure the disparities between underrepresented groups and dominant (Kinh) children (DeJaeghere et al., 2015). Therefore, numerous teachers adhere to ethnocentric beliefs about ethnic minority students and their academic performance (Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021). The ethnocentric beliefs are not spontaneous but derive from Kinh's learning culture where exam scores are regarded as a pivotal component in determining students' ability. These issues are considered a reminder to all citizens and state institutions to partake in the battle against educational inequities. Among substantial breakthroughs in the target for closing educational majority-minority gaps (Oxfam in Vietnam, 2017; World Bank, 2016), teacher education is highlighted through a plethora of ongoing professional teacher programs to alleviate the shortage of trained instructors in disadvantaged areas (Giacchino-Baker, 2007; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021). Nevertheless, these programs are based on a nationwide shared curriculum that is centered on a basic understanding of discipline and pedagogy instead of tailoring to instructors in minority areas. As a consequence, educational inequalities in minority regions of Vietnam are attributed to top-down approaches in policies together with existing disparities in social practice. Dilemmas around being differently valued among ethnic minority and majority children emerge in schools as a social field of power embedded in ideological structures. The dynamics of inequalities contribute to the contradiction between underperformance and positive educational achievement among diverse learners.

Language Barriers Experienced by Ethnic Minority Students in Vietnam

Language barriers have also been regarded as a critical contributor to poor academic performance among minorities (Lavoie, 2011; Nguyen & Hamid, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2017). Some researchers have examined the disproportionately low learning outcomes of ethnic minority students in Vietnam and linked these low performances to their incompetence in Vietnamese (Kosonen, 2009), impoverishment, and poor teaching (World Bank, 2009). Students of the Hmong community, one of the ethnic minority groups in Vietnam, are the case in point. Luong and Nieke (2013) determine that the underperformance of Hmong students stems from difficulties in comprehending instructions, particularly in the initial years of schooling, when Vietnamese is the instructional medium and teachers cannot speak indigenous languages. Similarly, concerns about teacher-student interaction together with instructors' competence in local languages are expressed in a report by Action Aid Vietnam (2003). This entanglement in languages is also delineated in multiethnic classes with nationally standardized curricula and exams, triggering varied educational performance among learners (Aikman & Pridmore, 2001; Truong, 2011). Numerous minority children are stereotyped as "slower" and "less proficient" learners in school, with little regard for language barriers. In comparison with Kinh students, statistical evidence frequently shows inferior enrolment rates, greater dropout rates, and worse accomplishment levels among minorities (Truong, 2009). It can be seen that subtracting schooling not only shapes inequalities in academic outcomes but also creates exclusion among students of diverse groups. In Vietnam, academic performance has a significant impact on social standing and how differently they are valued. In this sense, subtractive schools are more like a social field that exacerbates existing underlying inequities and hierarchies of power across ethnic groups. It can be inferred that poor educational attainment among ethnic minority groups as a result of language barriers or subtractive learning contexts has long been a source of concern for authorities (Save the Children-UK, 2002; Vu, 2008).

The aforementioned entanglements around schooling among ethnic minority students have urged to alleviate language barriers to lower ethnic divides, decrease inequalities and improve minorities' educational achievements (Nguyen et al., 2017). While teachers play a pivotal role in reducing language barriers in education settings, Nguyen and Ha (2021) explore that teachers are neither constructed with knowledge nor engaged in any practice appropriate to ethnically diverse learners, especially minorities. For those trained in institutions in urban areas, pedagogical approaches to teaching the marginalized are largely ignored. Even when they are employed to teach in ethnic minority areas, no systematic induction is organized to acquaint them with indigenous learners and cultures. This reality places an intolerable burden on teachers, requiring them to seek different expectations and ways to teach students from ethnic minority communities. The dearth of teacher training together with ethnocentric beliefs about the minorities drives a lowering of expectations for minorities, triggering their poorer academic performance and school failure (Bhowmik

et al., 2018; Nguyen & Ha, 2021). As explored by Ogbu (1987), learners' learning and growth are hampered when their teachers are far from empathetic to their life circumstances or they lower standards for students. According to Taylor (1994), a modification of oppressed people's perceptions of inferiority is required to promote social reform and the enhancement of minority learners' educational positions. With that aim, the Ministry of Education and Training (2014) adopts the policies that enable minority students to pass the Vietnamese national high school graduation examinations with lower scores than those from the Kinh group. Even Kinh students residing in rural and mountainous regions are also given precedence in these examinations but to a slightly lesser degree than other minority groups. Expecting them to gain simpler knowledge further marginalizes local learners. Ironically, these policies are far from a solution to language barriers but impede the holistic development of minority students.

Prior research also reveals that poor academic attainment among ethnic minority students is ascribed to the ineffective implementation of minority-focused education programs (Truong, 2011). Given the government's apparent pledges in policies to encourage minority languages, these policies have not yet been completely implemented. The emphasis on Vietnamese as the dominant and national language in instructional medium has left a very minor room for indigenous languages in education (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2017). Very scarce schools in ethnic minority regions effectively follow the educational law published by the Vietnamese Government (2005) that supports local languages in schooling (Lavoie, 2011). It is clear that existing language barriers have precluded ethnic minority students from their full access to their own languages in schooling. Therefore, some bilingual education programs are established in primary schools where regional languages are taught as a subject (Lavoie & Benson, 2011). Particularly, the bilingual learning initiatives in Hmong villages, launched in 2008 in line with Freire (1974)'s educational philosophy of awareness, permit the Hmong to study the national language in the most efficient manner. As a result, the objective of these initiatives is not to preserve minority languages but to leverage their native language literacy to swiftly teach Vietnamese literacy and adapt them to the Vietnamese language (Kirkpatrick, 2012). In lieu of supporting minority learners, the failure in policy adoption puts a burden on entangled language practices among ethnic minority students, affecting their learning outcomes and holistic development.

Translanguaging: Problems Turned into Opportunities

An extensive literature on translanguaging has been highlighted as the theme of theoretical and practical debate. This concept has been defined as an umbrella term that pertains to multilingual speakers' adaptable language practices (Nikula & Moore, 2019). The term 'translanguaging' emerged in the research context of bilingual

Welsh-English-medium schooling in Wales (Williams, 1994). On this point, translanguaging is defined as a pedagogical approach in multilingual classrooms that intentionally alters the language mode of input and output, such as giving information in one language while enabling students to practice in another language (García, 2009; Lewis et al., 2012; Williams, 1996). While American scholars in the field of bilingual education regard translanguaging as code switching, much research indicates a distinct perspective on the positioning of translanguaging beyond code switching. Beyond its original focus on languages, translanguaging refers to different discursive practices that multilinguals partake in to understand their bilingual worlds (García, 2009). In other words, this term is understood to use individuals' *idiolect* with a complete disregard for socially or politically imposed language designations or borders (Otheguy et al., 2015). Despite different explanations, it is substantiated that translanguaging is the process of making meaning, gaining experiences, attaining understanding, and wisdom through the simultaneous use of two languages in class activities according to a provisional and growing concept (Baker, 2011). As a result, both languages are employed to organize and facilitate psychological processes in interpreting, communicating, literacy, and particularly learning in a dynamic and functionally-coordinated way.

The translanguaging characteristics can be influenced by numerous cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors. Regarding cognitive and linguistic elements, translanguaging takes full advantage of the knowledge and strengthens various competencies in the "weaker language" by harmonizing the hierarchy of languages inside the classroom. Similarly, translanguaging, according to Williams (2002), necessitates utilizing one language to strengthen the other to enhance students' understanding and amplify their capabilities in both languages. While Williams (1996) deems translanguaging a pedagogic paradigm, he acknowledges that it is predicated on a cognitive process of a bilingual interchange such as receptive skills, knowledge absorption and accommodation, and selection from brain memory to interact in an oral and written manner. As it progresses from discovering parallel terms to processing and transmitting meaning and knowledge, translanguaging necessitates a deeper understanding than just translation. In terms of socio-cultural values, this approach facilitates home-school collaboration by encouraging parental involvement in students' school activities, together with classroom connection between dominant and minoritized language learners (Baker, 2001). In contrast to traditional education, which is primarily geared at one particular language, translanguaging strengthens home-school ties, particularly when students are taught in a medium of instruction that their parents hardly understand. This practice empowers students to deepen and intensify what they have learned in one language in school-wide contexts through discussions with their parents at home in the other tongue (Baker, 2011). It is clear that the powerful mechanism of translanguaging furthers a reasonably balanced growth of students' two languages, fostering "professors' understanding of students' sociolinguistic, cultural and historical backgrounds" (Mazak et al., 2017, p. 72), and facilitating sociocultural values among diverse communities (García, 2009). As a result, more than a scaffold in multilingual teaching, translanguaging connects multilingual students' worlds inside and beyond the classroom by utilizing their complete

cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural repertoire as well as engrossing learners in heteroglossic practices to support their academic success. Given that interpretation, bilingual students, through this pedagogic practice, develop and maintain multiple language competencies together with their multicultural identity.

Translanguaging has quickly gained popularity and has been endorsed throughout different contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). Similar to the original research in bilingual Welsh–English schools in Wales, De Korne (2010) discovered additional good effects in Luxembourg, where she recorded genuine translanguaging practices, including Luxembourgish, German, French, and English, during a project to compose and perform an English-language play. These practices demonstrate heteroglossic ideologies regarding multilingualism and language in education. In Flores and García (2013)'s research, ethnographic data taken from two primary school classes in the United States suggests a heteroglossic understanding of languages as assessment techniques for bilingual students. Nowadays, translanguaging is commonly used as an umbrella phrase to encompass conceptual and practical evidence of dynamic language use that defies a tight separation paradigm both outside and within the classroom, particularly in areas where minority languages are spoken. As per Otheguy and other researchers (2015), translanguaging can assist underrepresented groups and their tongues by supporting the disruption of the socially constructed linguistic hierarchies that are responsible for the suppression of the languages of minoritized populations. Therefore, this practice has been applied to contexts of minority language education in many studies. In Leonet et al. (2017)'s research on trilingual education in the Basque Country, translanguaging interventions are highlighted to be consistent with the development of language and metalinguistic awareness as well as minority language preservation. Through Hong Kong's multilingual setting, where English is widely employed as a medium of teaching, He and Lin (2017) also further the idea that translanguaging can be used to encourage South Asian learners to employ multilingual repertoires in classroom interactions to enhance collaboration, stimulate learning, and validate ethnic minority students' identities. This teaching technique, however, may be counterproductive at times without taking into account the unique peculiarities of the social setting. If there is no room for minority languages in specific regions, translanguaging may end up benefiting majority language speakers rather than minorities, possibly triggering increasing language extinction (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Consequently, translanguaging needs to pertain to minority languages and be adapted to social environments of multi-communities in which schools are positioned.

The Study

Data used for this chapter were selected from records of a research project on educational equity and culturally responsive teaching to ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Gia Lai and Dak Lak, two major provinces in the Central Highlands, served as the research sites. Gia Lai is the home to the Jarai and

Dak Lak to the Rhade. Jarai and Rhade people have their own languages which are members of the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian language family (Dang et al., 2010; Hoang, 2004). Although each province has been recognized as the native land of each tribe, the Kinh is the majority group in the two provinces as well as in the Central Highlands (General Statistical Office, 2019). Similar to other hilly or isolated areas in Vietnam where the discrepancy between the dominant Kinh and minorities is accentuated, the Jarai and Rhade together with other ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021; Pham & Doane, 2021).

The lead researcher of the project undertook two field trips, one to Gia Lai and the other to Dak Lak. During the field trip, the researcher visited two secondary schools and two villages in each province. In each school, the researcher met principals/vice-principals, teachers, and students. While interviews were conducted with teachers and school leaders, students were engaged in informal talks. In total, there were 16 interviews (1 with an officer working in the Department of Education, 4 with school leaders, and 11 with teachers). The interviewed teachers taught a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, sciences, arts, civic education, and English language. In four indigenous villages, the researcher directly interacted with children, parents, and other villagers while visiting and staying with local families. Field notes, which involved the talks between the researcher and local families on the language issues, were utilized as a method of data collection in the villages. While semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection from the school staff, informal conversations were employed with the Jarai and Rhade villagers. The questions of the interviews and informal talks were centered on the Jarai and Rhade students' schooling. Specifically, the researchers highlighted how students of these two ethnic minorities were taught and what schooling practices they were engaged in.

A thematic analysis approach was adopted for data analysis of the large research project. The researchers adhered to the steps of thematic analysis in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Specifically, interview transcripts and field notes were first coded by the research team. Based on these codes, the team collaborated to reach an agreement on the themes, which were regarded as the answer to the research questions of the project on educational equity for ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands. Data analysis for this chapter was initiated by a theme that highlighted the language barriers experienced by the Jarai and Rhade students. That is, the theme of language barriers was a springboard for the research team to further explore how languages affected, or more precisely, inhibited the Jarai and Rhade students from accessing schooling opportunities. Emerging as the research results were three themes related to language issues in ethnic minority students' schooling in the Central Highlands, which were situated in the literature and the Vietnamese context. The themes were then linked to the theories of translanguaging, on which the research team drew to suggest a model for transcending language hurdles experienced by ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands and throughout Vietnam.

Findings About Language Issues in Ethnic Minority Students' Schooling

Ethnic Minority Students Criticized for 'Low Level of Vietnamese Language'

All of the interviewees expressed their concern about the Vietnamese language levels of ethnic minority students as explicitly manifested in the language they used for stating the problem, such as “incompetent”, “low-level”, “too bad”, “below standard”, “unsuitable for learning higher” and “not meeting the requirement”. Mai, a teacher of biology, observed, “Some in Grade 6 or 7 at secondary school, but their Vietnamese is lower than that of primary students [of the Kinh majority] in Grade 3 or 4 at primary school.” Likewise, Hoa, a teacher of Vietnamese and literature, provided a detailed description:

They [Rhadé students] have no difficulty in communicating with teachers and friends who are the Kinh majority. But their written language and the way they express their ideas about knowledge had a lot of problems. I read many answers and essays but could not understand what they meant.

Not only in fields of humanities like literature and history, but sciences and mathematics did teachers discover the apparent difficulty in their classrooms. As per Nam as a representative for science teachers, there was no equivalent in their ethnic minority languages for basic concepts in biology, physics, and chemistry. As a result, many students failed to comprehend explanations or classroom instructions given by their teachers.

From the perspective of a leader, all the interviewed principals and vice-principals were also concerned about the level of Vietnamese language proficiency among ethnic minority students in the school each one managed. Nguyen, a principal, said, “This issue has always attracted the attention of school leaders like me and leaders at higher levels in the Department of Education.” Huy, the officer in charge of regulating the quality of teaching and learning in a district of Gia Lai province, observed, “There has been great improvement in teaching and learning, but lots of Jarai students are still left behind due to their incompetent Vietnamese language.” He further noted that this problem was always a key point on the agenda of meetings among educational leaders and political authorities. The participants, to varying degrees, related ethnic minority students' low educational attainment to their poor command of the Vietnamese language. In particular, the interviewed teachers and school leaders both agreed that ethnic minority students with high proficiency in Vietnamese would achieve better academic results than those with a restricted level. Lan, a vice-principal, even argued, “I know a lot of Rhadé students whose Vietnamese is superb can get good grades, even as good as the Kinh students.” In addition to pointing out the perceived problem in secondary schools where the respondents were working, they all contended that being inept at Vietnamese impeded this population of students from gaining access to education at higher levels.

To the community members, mainly Jarai and Rhade parents having school-aged children, the low level of Vietnamese language has been perceived as the primary schooling concern of their children and also in their indigenous community. Similar to the interviewed teachers and school leaders, the parents whom the lead researcher talked to during the field trip shared their perspective that the Vietnamese proficiency of their children was significantly lower than that of Kinh students. One parent explained, "We [the Rhade] can't speak or write Vietnamese properly because we use our language every day." A father of four school-aged children admitted, "I am regularly invited to school to meet the teachers to discuss what can be done to enhance my children's Vietnamese." A mother in a Jarai hamlet stated, "Our children and even us adults always feel inferior to the Kinh people just because we're far behind them in Vietnamese." Through visits to many families, the primary researcher discovered that the spoken Vietnamese or accent of both Jarai and Rhade people is clear and, to some extent, simpler for many Kinh people in the rural or remote areas. The bulk of both Rhade and Jarai people, however, did not acknowledge this strength. Instead, they have been swayed by the belief that ethnic minority people are always inferior to the Kinh community in all respects, notably the Vietnamese language.

"Vietnamese Only" as the Practice in the Classroom

The interviewed teachers and principals/vice-principals all emphasized the necessity of the "Vietnamese only" regulation and practice within and beyond the classroom boundary. When asked whether there was a document or policy that regulated the mandatory use of the Vietnamese language in the classroom, the teachers and school leaders all responded that no official document from the Department of Education had been issued at all levels. However, as they pointed out, the national language has been acknowledged as the medium of instruction for secondary education nationwide regardless of ethnic or geographical differences. Nga, a school principal, said, "We, like all schools throughout the country, have to align with the national curriculum, textbooks, pedagogical practices, and assessments, so everything must be in the national language." From the leadership perspective, Huy also agreed with school leaders in his district, "If Vietnamese only is not strictly mandated in the classroom, ethnic minority students may use their own languages, and then their schooling attainment will not improve."

Through their stories about the language problems in mixed ethnic classes including Kinh and ethnic minority students, the interviewed teachers maintained a uniform perspective of the Vietnamese exclusively in the classroom. Lien, a teacher of mathematics, observed in her classes:

Some Jarai students study very well but others do not. So, it's uncommon that the 'weak' students try to ask for help from the good or strong ones like telling the answers or explaining what I said in Jarai. But I ask the strong ones not to help their friends like that. Instead, I always ask the weak ones to use Vietnamese to ask me for help. Only in this way can they improve their Vietnamese.

With a shared background of ethnicity, Jlut, a chemistry teacher, could comprehend what her Rhade students talked with each other or even asked her in Rhade language. However, as strictly confined to the practice of Vietnamese only, Jlut asked those students to use the national language, not the Rhade language for classroom communication:

I am a member of the Rhade community. Rhade students often ask me this or that in the classroom, a lot about the learning content. But I always pretend not to understand or try to talk back to them in Vietnamese. I only use the Rhade language when dealing with something very urgent. All I do is to create a learning environment with the Vietnamese only so that the Rhade students can change and improve their schooling attainment.

Similar to Jlut, Eba, a teacher of civic education, insisted on strictly using Vietnamese in the classroom despite her shared ethnicity with her Jarai students. “Bilingual education, Vietnamese-Jarai, is only for primary education, not for secondary education,” she emphasized. Other Jarai teachers, according to Eba, also expressed their intolerance towards the use of indigenous languages in the classroom, especially in secondary education. In general, all the interviewees, including teachers, school leaders and ethnic minority parents, adhered to their belief about the role of Vietnamese as a common language for all students regardless of students’ ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Another factor that partly accounts for the practice of Vietnamese only is the national curriculum for all schools throughout the country. As teaching and learning of all school subjects are strictly prescribed by the national curriculum, teachers have limited space for accommodating ethnic minority students’ languages. Instead, they tend to employ Vietnamese-only textbooks without any modification or adaptation due to the lack of professional training and follow the credit-driven practice of the Vietnamese education system. These contextual factors provide insight into the perspectives on the language issues shared by both stakeholders and community members.

Despite their view against the use of ethnic minority languages in the classroom, when questioned about the effectiveness of teaching in Vietnamese solely to ethnic minority students, they all pointed out several problems. More noticeable is a lack of understanding from Jarai or Rhade students because their Vietnamese repertoire is far from complicated to understand the lesson, especially the scientific concepts. “I have set up the rules about the Vietnamese only and students have been cooperative, but it seems that they don’t grasp much of my teaching,” said Nam, a teacher of physics. In general, all the stakeholders recognized the problem related to the inefficiency of using Vietnamese as the only medium of instruction for ethnic minority students. They were, however, required to comply with the national curriculum and classroom practice, which has no room for ethnic minority languages.

In order to free themselves from the mandated use of the national language, the Jarai and Rhade students tend to utilize their own languages outside the classroom. That is, during the breaks or after class hours, ethnic minority students frequently congregate and converse in Jarai or Rhade languages. Minh, a history teacher, remarked, “Their faces showed their happiness and comfort, not like what they had to undergo in the classroom.” The underlying reason for this contrast is their freedom in

language use outside the classroom. Although the teachers did not explicitly indicate their desire to experience student engagement like this in their classes, they all wish their ethnic minority students would overcome the language barriers and actively engage in classroom activities.

Still on the Journey of Finding Workable Solutions

The section centers on using or neglecting indigenous languages and cultures in school contexts as teachers' responses to language barriers encountered by ethnic minority learners in teaching practices. An analysis of those pedagogical practices is also offered to help clarify whether they alleviate or exacerbate the educational difficulties of the Jarai and Rhade students.

The interviewed teachers and school leaders have been on their shared journey of finding feasible strategies or solutions to the perceived challenges regarding the inadequate proficiency of Vietnamese among ethnic minority students in their areas. First, both teachers and school leaders voiced a need for innovation in policies that would specifically assist teachers and schools in dealing with language issues related to ethnic minority students:

In meetings with principals and education leaders in the district or in the province, we always make a lot of suggestions for improving the national language of Jarai students. We also expect specific policies that help us deal with the problem. For example, there should be extra tutorials to support and assist the Jarai students in improving their Vietnamese language. (Nga, a principal)

Huy, in the role of an officer in the Department of Education, shared his experience of learning Jarai as a prerequisite for government officers but only for those in key positions. As Huy explained, this strategy was beneficial and appropriate for understanding indigenous cultures through their languages. Although this policy has been critiqued for its effectiveness during the stages of implementation, Huy advocated the idea that Jarai language classes should be offered to teachers working with ethnic minority students. He further stated, "Many officers just learned to get the certificate to meet the requirement of promotion, but I learned a lot to work with Jarai communities, especially the students." Analogous to Huy, the principals and vice-principals were aware of the benefits of knowing Jarai or Rhade languages when they were employed to work in local villages. However, this competency is not explicitly listed as a requirement for teachers.

Among the interviewed teachers, Tu (a teacher of English) and Dinh (a teacher of geography) picked up some basic words and sentences for engaging with the Jarai and Rhade populations. Their initiatives are commendable because teachers are not required to do so:

During my early years of teaching, I often went to the local villages, visiting students' families. I had a chance to talk to many Rhade villagers. Of course, they spoke Vietnamese. I learned a lot about their customs and cultural life and acquired a bit of Rhade languages.

I have made the best use of my limited repertoire of Rhade to talk to my students at school. When they knew that I could say something to them in their language, they were closer to me and listened to me more. (Dinh)

Like Dinh, Tu learned Jarai at a very basic level, focusing mostly on vocabulary and simple sentences. As he claimed, students would trust him and share their troubles or difficulties in learning if he talked to them in Jarai. Vu did not explicitly state the necessity of knowing Jarai language among students in his district, but he demonstrated his bilingual awareness when working with ethnic minority students. Other interviewees, despite their awareness of bilingual competence as an advantage for teaching ethnic minority students, did not have time to learn their students' languages.

Although the interviewed teachers explicitly stated their approval of the use of Vietnamese solely in the classroom, they occasionally permitted ethnic minority students to speak in their native tongues. Most striking was the use of ethnic minority languages to provide support in some situations, as in the extract below:

I know that it's not good to let the Rhade students use their own languages in my classes, but sometimes I want to remind them of something important. I often ask the Jarai students who are good at Vietnamese to explain to their friends. (An, a teacher of mathematics)

Similar to An as in the aforementioned excerpt, Minh, a teacher of biology, frequently solicits assistance from Rhade students who are fluent in Vietnamese to help her explain important knowledge to other Rhade students. As Minh explained, "Doing that way does not help Rhade students improve their Vietnamese, but it's effective for tests or examinations." With a shared background with ethnic minority students, both Jarai and Rhade teachers in this study also stated their disapproval of the use of minority languages in teaching. However, they sometimes draw on their shared languages with students in order to have appropriate support or interventions. Yban, a teacher of biology, told a story about how she related biological or scientific knowledge to everyday phenomena to explain concepts to minority students:

In a lesson about tropical vegetation, if teachers strictly follow the textbook and explain the knowledge in a formal way, many Jarai students will not understand. Instead, based on my ten years of teaching experience, I remind students of natural phenomena in their daily life. I also use a little bit of Jarai language to guide half of the indigenous students in my classes. After that, I link all the things students are familiar with to the biological knowledge.

As in the example above, the teacher, despite her disapproval of the use of ethnic minority languages, recognized the effectiveness of indigenous resources, including the language in imparting scientific knowledge. However, she did not further explore or implement this pedagogical practice as all the teachers comply with the mandated use of the national language for all classroom activities. This practice is more like a mirror to reflect the entanglements between how hegemonic curricula impede ethnic minority students' development and teachers' effort to respond to their unfavorable learning experiences. As regards professional development for in-service teachers in the Central Highlands and throughout Vietnam, knowledge and practice related to language use or culturally responsive teaching have not been provided in training

programs. As such, ethnic minority languages have no place in teachers' perceptions and practices in the sense that students are encouraged or given opportunities to maximize their language capabilities. As a result, there is a need to understand language barriers faced by ethnic minority students and promote the use of indigenous languages in teaching practices and policy as feasible approaches or measures to transform beliefs and pedagogical practices at individual and institutional levels.

Discussion and Recommendations

The cornerstone of this study is the entanglement between policy and reality, between teaching and learning practices in the monolingual context of Vietnam. The findings are intended to offer fresh perspectives on language barriers to schooling practice in ethnic minority areas in the Vietnamese context and some suggestions for alleviating those challenges from the perspective of translanguaging.

Our Thoughts on Language Barriers to Ethnic Minority Students' Access to Education

The findings highlight how Jarai or Rhade students' access to education is constrained by ethnic stereotypes, national curricula and monolingual teaching practices of Vietnam. Those language barriers are emphasized as a culprit of their academic underperformance, similar to existing studies in the educational literature (Lavoie, 2011; Nguyen & Ha, 2021; Nguyen & Hamid, 2018; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2017). Their inferiority arises from their perceived inability to grasp Vietnamese in subtractive education systems where monolingual medium of instruction is emphasized together with nationally standardized Kinh-centered curricula applied in multiethnic classes (Aikman & Pridmore, 2001; Luong & Nieke, 2013; Truong, 2011). Teachers are aware of minorities' language difficulties and the great importance of integrating their living contexts with what could be seen as the hegemonic curriculum that emphasises the values, beliefs and understandings of a majority's view and which is largely outside the practices, beliefs and understandings of Jrai and Rhade community. However, most teachers, regardless of their competence in indigenous languages, tend to abide by this hegemonic curriculum to seek performance accomplishments and fulfill local and national learning outcome criteria. This tendency results in educational hurdles among ethnic minority pupils in the Central Highlands analyzed in three themes regarding language barriers to their schooling in the findings of this chapter.

Highlighted in this study is the stereotyped belief about ethnic minority students' inferiority compared to the Kinh population in all aspects, stemming from the "Vietnamese only" policy and practice within and beyond classrooms. Despite no existing

specific measure or panacea for these challenges, the most striking element in the findings is the positive indication of bilingual worlds to ethnic minority students' educational development. Particularly, educational effectiveness is also enhanced when teachers apply minorities' everyday events or take advantage of bilingual competence of minority students fluent in Vietnamese to explain crucial concepts to lower-ability groups through their regional languages. Therefore, there is a need for growing recognition and integration of their indigenous languages and cultures into mainstream schooling in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. In particular, the integration of bilingual and multilingual resources need to be promoted in school settings mixed by students of the Kinh and other ethnic minorities. As a result, there is an urge to facilitate translanguaging to cross the boundary and enhance the existing educational practice in multilingual schools in Vietnam. When planning this chapter, we meant to use 'translanguaging model' as part for the heading of this section. However, after carefully reviewing the literature and the findings presented in this chapter, we found 'suggestions' more appropriate. The reason for our decision is that translanguaging is, to some extent, not to say completely, new in Vietnam, in both research and practice of education.

Suggestions for reducing Language Barriers to Ethnic Minority Students' Access to Education from the Perspective of Translanguaging

Predicated on the findings and the discussed literature, translanguaging will be proposed in this section as a recommendation on different domains including teaching philosophy, curriculum, instructional delivery, and environmental support to motivate students of disadvantaged backgrounds.

At an individual level, learners and teachers need to gain widespread perceptions of translanguaging practices and the imperative of multilingualism in minorities' learning access, critical thinking, and intercultural competences. The fact that linguistic resources utilized in classes might include or exclude students can be tackled by translanguaging spaces in cooperation with classmates and structural stakeholders (Kaufhold, 2018; Mendoza, 2020). Teachers' favorable attitudes toward translanguaging considered as a social and cognitive resource may facilitate a linguistically inclusive learning environment that enables ethnic minority students to integrate their home or community-wide language practices into the classroom (Axelrod, 2017; Carroll et al., 2021). In order to create such spaces, the divides between schools and ethnic minority families should be narrowed at the meso levels. Schools need to flexibly ratify specific instructions, collaborate with families and communities to encourage lower-ability students and promote dynamic nature of language learning in minority contexts. Simultaneously, pre-service and in-service teachers must be offered a comprehensive and detailed philosophical and practical training on how to draw on students' language repertoires through multilingualism and translanguaging

in specific educational contexts (Ganuza & Hedman, 2017; Mwindi & van der Walt, 2015; Yuvayapan, 2019).

As a key part of translanguaging practices, the mindset and leadership of school leaders are underlined in establishing the multilingual milieu, language regulations, and teaching methods (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016). School practices form and are structured by national language policies in education and macro-level ideologies together with human agency within locally situated milieus of interaction (Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen & Huynh, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022). Particularly, national curricula at all levels directed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) should be decolonised to cater to students from multicultural and multi-ethnic backgrounds. Students' heritage assets should be incorporated into the national holistic curriculum to appreciate the values of minority communities and empower students from different backgrounds in educational attainment (Nguyen & Huynh, 2021). Systematic assistance regarding translanguaging initiatives, finance and time from the MOET and the Vietnamese government also needs to be tailored to support school leaders, educators, and practitioners in promoting inclusive learning environments. These steps contribute to obliterating ethnocentric beliefs and negative stereotypes among ethnic minorities in order to position those from underrepresented groups as insiders in quality education systems. Governments need to adopt socio-cultural and linguistic policies or strategies to arouse a sense of pride inside minoritized communities, enhance students' favorable multilingual identity (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Palmer et al., 2014) and facilitate their multilingual capacities. Individual, social and structural levels are intrinsically intertwined and influence each other, as well as learners' academic performance and developmental trajectories. These potential translanguaging techniques may be opportunities for more sustained inclusive learning environments for ethnic minority students.

Conclusion

The study is conducted to deepen profound understandings of language issues encountered by ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The findings indicate ethnocentric beliefs about ethnic minority students' academic performance in the "Vietnamese only" learning environment. Specifically, ethnic minority learners' underperformance is perceived as a mirror to reflect their inferiority to the Kinh students and their inability to comprehend and speak the Vietnamese language. Despite viewpoints against the use of indigenous languages in "Vietnamese only" practice, all the stakeholders acknowledge its inefficiency, especially in the incapacity of Jarai or Rhade students to comprehend the lesson due to their limited Vietnamese repertoire. Therefore, the use of ethnic minority languages is also applied to offer support in some situations in order to involve minority learners in classroom activities. In light of these language entanglements in ethnic minority schooling, translanguaging is proposed as a solution to existing challenges of catering for minority learners' linguistic development. Implementing translanguaging is far

from considered a panacea or one-size-fits-all pedagogic model but rather a viable source of treatment for language obstacles experienced by ethnic minority students in the Vietnamese-only practice.

Besides, Vietnamese educational leadership has maintained a top-down policy approach, highlighting the roles of the MOET or the Vietnamese Government in formulating and developing policy, followed by local authorities (Phelps et al., 2014). Most educational development initiatives have been associated with socio-economic progress programs rather than transforming pedagogical practices to alleviate the Kinh's long-established cultural supremacy. Consequently, promoting translanguaging in an attempt to transform sustained learning experiences for ethnic minority students is seen as a potential cornerstone for national education reform in Vietnam to improve cultural diversity and gain fulfillment of educational equity in multiethnic schools.

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Part II
Contemporary Issues in Education
and Training: Language, Culture, Identity,
and Curriculum

Chapter 9

The Legacy of the American War Today: The Nation, Heroes and Enemies in Vietnamese War Literature for the Youth



Tú Anh Hà  and Andrea Roxana Bellot 

Abstract This chapter seeks to explore the impact of American War (Vietnam War) literature in framing students' opinions and standpoints regarding major topics such as nationhood, heroism and alterity in present-day Vietnam. High-school students from Ho Chi Minh City were asked to critically engage in the reading of short stories to be able to explore their perception and understanding of the war today. The main results suggest a move forward in the recognition of this large-scale humanitarian tragedy by valuing the sacrifices made by the national body and the acknowledgement of the enemy as a human being.

Keywords American war · Vietnam war · Youth literature · Vietnamese official syllabus · Nationhood · Heroism · Alterity

Introduction

The Vietnam War (also called the American War or the Resistance War against America in Vietnamese contexts) is one of the fundamental historic events of Vietnamese history in particular and world history in the twentieth century in general (Dror, 2018; Herring, 1991; Lockard, 1994; Moyer, 2006). The war presupposed one of the most grievous divisions in the country's history, leaving behind not only a terrible number of deaths and severe mental illness of the survivors but more significantly, the wounds and distinctions between two parts of the whole country: North and South.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_9

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In *Nothing ever dies: Vietnam and the memory of war* (2016), Nguyen illustrates several ways in which the war is still alive in different contexts with its unresolved memories. Regarding education, the war actually posed a significant challenge to the teaching practice in the Vietnamese education system. The main challenge involves how to approach the teaching of such a long and bloody conflict in order to heal the collective wound, build solidarity and empathy, while fostering patriotism and national identity. As such, education plays a key role in forming the opinion of the younger generations, and literature, in particular, as a reflection of the moods and feelings of those involved in the conflict, directly and indirectly. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to explore the reception of the war literature that is being taught in the official syllabus at high schools across Vietnam.

Moreover, since learners are key agents in their learning and play a determinant role in the teaching–learning process, it is essential to collect constructive feedback, learners’ backgrounds and viewpoints need to be heard and viewed in order to provide appropriate teaching strategies, materials and techniques to support learners. To be specific, related to the Vietnam War, it is imperative to understand students’ perception of their nation and its people as well as the enemy participating in the war – the American. Understanding how students perceive their nation, the people and the enemy, especially in such a historic event – the Vietnam War – can help to find out the solution not only to deal with the collective trauma but also to build solidarity and national identity for students.

Among many ways that the school in Vietnam teaches students about the nation, its people and the Vietnam War as a part of the nation’s history, literature is considered one powerful tool as it is seen as a major compulsory subject that all students need to pass in order to complete their formal education. Therefore, in our research, literature has been chosen as the context to survey students’ viewpoints. It is also noteworthy that literary works in the official curriculum directly written about the Vietnam War described the actual war events, rather than the war consequences, unresolved and traumatic memories of the survivors.

The subjects of the present study are high school students in grade 12, the last grade of formal/basic education in Vietnam, ages 17–18, which was precisely one of the reasons for choosing these students. These teenagers were going to complete their formal education and soon reach 18 – the age that their citizenship would be confirmed by the law; and after formal education, they needed to decide the (career) path that they wanted to follow. Therefore, this age group was actually at the time of important milestones in their life. Thus, understanding their perception of the nation and the people can help to know the life value of the young Vietnamese generation, and how they are prepared to become a citizen to participate in the country’s system.

With the aim of surveying high school students’ opinions and beliefs after reading the literature about the American War included in the Vietnamese national official curriculum, the research questions are the following:

RQ1: What is the Vietnamese students’ perception of the nation and the national heroes?

RQ2: What is the Vietnamese students’ perspective of the figure of the national enemy?

While the first question can help to find out how the literary works build national identity and patriotism for Vietnamese high school students, the second question can help create the figure of the other/enemy, which, in turn, will help in developing their own identities.

Literature Review

The Nation, National Identity and Patriotism

There are some concepts that need to be clarified before exploring how literary works about the Vietnam War in the Vietnamese national curriculum build national identity and patriotism for Vietnamese citizens, through high school students' perspectives. They are the nation, national identity and patriotism; as well as how these concepts are nurtured through language and education. Several researchers have put forward many ways that a nation is understood, from different dimensional views, including history and culture, or politics. In a simple and basic sense, the term 'nation' often refers to the territory with its inhabitants who are connected by birth, language and the government that rules them (Joseph, 2004). Joseph (2004) also points out that this way of understanding nations shows many limitations, especially in the context of global mobility with migration.

Can those who leave their nation of birth be considered as 'outsiders'? For others who do not share the same territory of birth, however, they do share the same nation, not only because of their residency, but also because of something more underlying and latent rather than overt such as their sense of belonging. Barrett (2007) explains that the term 'nation' as 'a named human community occupying a homeland and having a shared history, common myths of ancestry, a common mass public culture, and shared values, symbols, traditions, customs and practices' (Barrett, 2007, p.5). It can be seen that while the understanding of the nation mentioned by Joseph is seen from politics, the one of Barrett is viewed from history and culture. Barrett (2007) also differentiates between nations and ethnic communities. They are similar in sharing collective names, myths of ancestry, historical memories, customs and traditions; but they are different as the former occupy in their historic homeland while the latter do not. Instead, ethnic communities connect to their homeland in an affective and symbolic way (Barrett, 2007).

Researchers mostly agree that nations are recent phenomena in world history, which is the result of the French Revolution in the nineteenth century and the climax of a number of social and intellectual trends linked with the Enlightenment happening in Europe at that time (Barrett, 2007; Liu & Turner, 2018). According to Barrett (2007), it is a necessary artificial outcome of the transition to modernity in which the central idea is industrialization. Industrial societies asked for a mobile workforce with a high degree of specialization; therefore, required a means to connect different villagers who came from different local communities and moved to cities for work

(Barrett, 2007). The concept of a nation as well as national citizenship emerged so as to homogenize and unify cultures to prepare the workforce for the industry. This is the notion of a nation, what about the concept of ‘national identity?’ According to Byram and colleagues (2002), each individual is complicated with numerous social identities and his/her own individuality, and national identity is one kind of social identity that contributes to the answer of the question ‘Who I am?’ and other related questions to describe and identify oneself such as ‘What makes me me?’

As discussed above, the nation is a recent phenomenon, therefore, national identity is argued to be a recent concept, appearing after the French Revolution in the nineteenth century as well (Liu & Turner, 2018). Liu and Turner (2018) explain ‘national identity’ as the following:

National identity refers to the identity of the citizens of a country with their own country’s historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals, beliefs, national sovereignty, and so on. (Liu & Turner, 2018, p. 1080)

From the literature review above, national identity can be understood as the social identity making up the identity of a person, it relates to their territory with its own culture, history, sovereignty and systems. Bechhofer et al. (1999) also propose a notable idea, regarding the concept of national identity, which is:

National identities are not essentially fixed or given but depend critically on the claims which people make in different contexts and at different times. The processes of identity rest not simply on the claims made but on how such claims are received, that is validated or rejected by significant others. (Bechhofer et al., 1999, p. 515)

From Bechhofer’s argument, national identity is not only identified by the agency that claims it, but also by social acceptance which confirms its validity. Byram et al. (2002) contend that ‘national identity’ is a kind of social identity instead of individuality, therefore, it requires the approval of the community. Logically, if a person is rejected by a nation, they may not build or have a sense of belonging to that nation, and the characteristics (such as culture, history and customs) of that nation may not become a part of their identity.

Therefore, national identity is related to the acceptance of the society, an individual’s sense of belonging to a nation, which is connected with the concept of patriotism. Patriotism in a simple way of understanding is ‘love of country’ and ‘attachment to the nation’ (Hanson & O’Dwyer, 2019). Love for the nation and attachment to the country are the foundations to form national identity. In other words, patriotism is the base to construct national identity, and national identity contributes to nurturing patriotism. Hanson and O’Dwyer (2019) also differentiate between patriotism and nationalism, which is called patriotism’s ‘evil twin’ and has been understood as an orientation to national superiority and dominance which is far beyond love for the nation. Therefore, both patriotism and nationalism refer to affection and attachment to the nation, however, the former is a positive concept while the latter is negative and even dangerous.

National Identity and Its Relationship with Language

According to Joseph (2004), national identity is closely associated with the national language for some reasons. Firstly, the author argues that national language is a means to build nationalism and to form national identity:

A number of prominent historians, sociologists and political scientists have argued that the existence of a national language is the primary foundation upon which nationalist ideology is constructed. Others, however, have paid more serious attention to the evidence compiled by linguistic historians showing that national languages are not actually a given, but are themselves constructed as part of the ideological work of nationalism-building. (Joseph, 2004, p. 94)

Secondly, Joseph argues that identity is the third, distinct primary function of language: ‘in communication, our interpretation of what is said and written to us is shaped by and organized around our reading of the identity of those with whom we are communicating’ (Joseph, 2004, p. 20). He adds:

What matters is to understand that, if people’s use of language is reduced analytically to how meaning is formed and represented in sound, or communicated from one person to another, or even the conjunction of the two, something vital has been abstracted away: the people themselves. They are always present in what they say and, in the understanding, they construct of what others say. Their identity inheres in their voice, spoken, written or signed (Joseph, 2004, p. 21).

Barrett (2007) also points out the link between language and national identity in which novels and other literary works contribute to the building of national identity. Both Barrett (2007) and Joseph (2004) agree with the function of constructing a national identity of language. Furthermore, from Joseph’s arguments, language not only forms but also reveals the identity of a person. As Byram et al. (2002) argue, one’s self is shaped by both individuality and social identities including national identity, and language, therefore, also divulges an individual’s national identity.

The Role of School Education in Children’s Process of Forming and Developing National Identity and Patriotism

The nation and national identity are phenomena of modernization in which the central notion is industrialization (Barrett, 2007; Liu & Turner, 2018). In order to homogenize and connect villagers who came to big cities for work from different local communities with distinct customs and traditions, mass public education was introduced by the states. The purpose of mass public education is to ‘promulgate among their populations a new sense of cultural unity based on the nation. Thus, education was the principal means through which the shared culture of the nation was transmitted to individuals, replacing the traditional pre-literate folk cultures in the process’ (Barrett, 2007, p. 10). School curriculum plays as one of the most essential impacts on children’s national enculturation. In addition, there are three principal ways that

schools influence children's national enculturation, including: (i) direct and explicit instruction about their own state and nation; (ii) the ethnocentric biases that often feature both educational curricula and school textbooks, (iii) the adoption of specific aspects of their nation's civil culture within their own daily practices (Barrett, 2007, p. 102).

Regarding the first path, schools provide children with explicit teaching about the history, cultural heritage and symbolic imagery of their own state and nation (Barrett, 2007). The teaching is given through particular subjects, such as literature, history, geography and civic education. Barrett also notes that school education not only affects children through a much higher percentage of the amount of information about their own country than other nations but also through bringing them to specific types of information with particular perspectives about their own nation. For instance, in the English curriculum, children were exposed to a model of nation where heterogeneity and multi-cultures of the nation were emphasized, in which immigration was presented as a well-established historical phenomenon. For the French, the nation was depicted as a series of battles between two contrasting forces. They are progressive, enlightened, rational forces, which are opposite to the unenlightened ones. For the Dutch, Dutch history was described as being written by ordinary people who have different backgrounds, lifestyles and opinions, however they are able to live together peacefully by negotiation and democratic participation (Barrett, 2007). In addition, Barrett also mentions several ways in which a person can respond to historical narratives about his/her own nations. Individuals can fail to learn those narratives, or learn them but oppose them, or even believe in other alternative narratives instead.

Literature About the American War and its Role of Forming National Identity and Patriotism

In the Vietnamese contexts, the Vietnam War is often called the American War or Resistance War against America). From this part forwards the Vietnam War will be called the American War, which is the name of the Vietnam War in the national official curricula for all grades of the Vietnamese education system. As the research was conducted in the context of Vietnam, to make the research inclusive for all participating students, the name that every student knows and understands has been used.

About the American War

The American War is the war between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) or North Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) or South Vietnam (1955–1975). According to Dror (2018), the significant distinction of the American War is the following:

The war between the DRV and the RVN was an armed conflict between two polities identifying themselves as representing the same national ethnicity: Vietnamese. These two polities

put this unifying identification aside and fought for the ideologies that set them apart. It was a struggle between different visions that Vietnamese had about the kind of society they wanted to live in and to bequeath to the next generation. (Dror, 2018, p.3).

However, the American War is not only the war between two parts of Vietnam or two polities ‘identifying themselves as representing the same national ethnicity: Vietnamese’ as Dror argues (Dror, 2018, p. 3). The war was beyond a civil war happening inside one nation – Vietnam but was put into a bigger background which was the conflict between two opposite forces: the communist world led by the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the anti-communist world led by the United States (Dror, 2018). With the accelerating involvement of the U.S. right after the French withdrew from the Vietnam battles (1954), ending the French colonialism in the country but marking the emergence of two Vietnams (DRV and RVN) (Dror, 2018), the Vietnamese could not unify their own country in another way, without the significant influence of outside forces. The civil war was positioned in increasing tension between the Communist and the anti-Communist. Herring (1991) argues that the American government had anticipated the ‘Domino theory’ by which losing Vietnam to communism could result in losing all of Southeast Asia to communism. In fact, the dominoes did not fall outside the border of Indochina, and the regional and international effects of the war were less than what had been predicted.

In Vietnam, nowadays, the American War is viewed as the tradition of protecting the country against the invasion and colonization of foreign countries, passing down through generations and nurtured through the history full of battles and fights against the Chinese, the Mongolian, the French and the American (Lockard, 1994; Schwenkel, 2009). Thereby, protecting the country against foreign invasion and dominance is a nationalistic identity of the Vietnamese.

Literature about the American War in the Vietnamese national official curriculum

In the Literature textbook (Philology – published by Vietnam Education Publishing House, 2019) for high school students, all literary works about the American War are written by soldiers who directly participated in the battle.

Broadly speaking, these narratives focus on the following topics:

- humane affection, such as love for family and the nation;
- power to protect the country from American occupation;
- consciousness of the national heroic tradition;
- willingness to be a part of that tradition to gain the unity of the whole nation;
- untamed spirit of people from different classes all over the country to fight against the enemy – the American.

In the national literature curriculum for senior high school students [chương trình Ngữ văn lớp 12] (academic year 2019–2020), there are two stories centered on the fighting of Vietnamese people against the enemy in the American War in the period of 1955–1975. They are ‘Children of a Family’, [‘Những đứa con trong gia đình’, 1966] by Thi Nguyen [Nguyễn Thi] and ‘The Xanu Wood’ [‘Rừng xà nu’, 1965] by Trung Thanh Nguyen [Nguyễn Trung Thành]. These two are the ones chosen for this

research as they directly told the story about the war in the battle context of Southern Vietnam.

‘Children in a Family’ [‘Những đứa con trong gia đình’, 1966] by Thi Nguyen is a short story set in Southern Vietnam that describes the tradition of fighting against the enemy for a united Vietnam. The story emphasizes family traditions and the transmission of values and norms from one generation to another in a Communist family. While parents suffered and passed away in the war, their children kept fighting to avenge the enemy despite their young ages. The story is famous for its poetic beauty and convertible timeline structure.

‘The Xanu Wood’ [‘Rừng xà nu’, 1965] by Trung Thanh Nguyen is also a short story set in the mountainous region in Southern Vietnam. The story narrates the bloody war between Stra village (an ethnic minority who supported the Communist Party) and soldiers of the RVN. The hero is Tnu, a young man brought up by the villagers who eventually becomes a Communist soldier. His tragic and legendary life reflects the Stra villagers’ fight progress against the invaders and foreign powers. The story is characterized by its epic features.

Some of the other main texts about the war included in the syllabus of previous grades are the following ones: ‘Distant stars’ [‘Những ngôi sao xa xôi’] written in 1971 by Lê Minh Khuê, ‘The ivory comb’ [‘Chiếc lược ngà’] written in 1966 by Nguyễn Quang Sáng, ‘The poem about the transport platoon’ [‘Bài thơ về tiểu đội xe không kính’] written in 1969 by Phạm Tiến Duật, ‘The fire stove’ [‘Bếp lửa’] written in 1963 by Bằng Việt and ‘The sound of the chicken at noon’ [‘Tiếng gà trưa’] written in 1965 by Xuân Quỳnh. All these texts were produced and written under the guidance and control of the DRV.

Reception Theory

Stuart Hall (1993) put forward the theory of reception. The foundation of the theory is the circulation of communication, being comprised of three components: sender–message–receiver. Hall proposed the concept that there are two attributes of the process of communication: relative autonomy and determinateness that occur in a discursive form. Determinateness means that there are always particular social and political backgrounds affecting the process of encoding/production and decoding/reception.

In addition, the process of encoding and decoding does not necessarily happen at the same time. Audiences’ various backgrounds and ideologies as well as distinct moments of decoding can result in receivers’ misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the message that the sender aimed to transfer. This leads to the second attribute of the process of communication – being relatively autonomous. Relative autonomy refers to the independence of both the production and the reception process that ‘no one moment can fully guarantee the next moment with which it is articulated’ (Hall, 1993, p. 508).

Viewing Vietnamese students' perspectives of the literature about the American War in the Vietnamese national curriculum from Hall's theory of reception, it can be seen that the literary works (or text) encompass the message that the author wanted to send. The author is the sender in the communication process who created the text enclosing the message. Students are the receiver decoding the message. The moments of encoding and decoding are significantly different. The sender created the message when still encountering grievous battles and fights between two parts of the country. They could not imagine clearly the future when the separation ended and two parts of the country would be unified and become one, how life would be after that. On the contrary, the receiver received and interpreted the message when there were no wars, battles, blood and tears. They live in peace in a unified country run by one Party (the Communist). The big gap in these two moments can influence what students as the receiver understood the message that the sender sent.

Method

Participants

There were seventy-seven students voluntarily participating in the study from Le Hong Phong High School, a high school for gifted students in Ho Chi Minh City. The students' ages ranged from seventeen to eighteen years old, and they were in the last year of their high school at the time the study was carried out in April 2020. In the pre-survey, there were seventy students voluntarily answering the questionnaire (forty-seven males, thirty females). In the post-survey, there were 74 responses from 74 students (44 males, 30 females). The following table summarizes the above information (Table 9.1).

The students were informed about the aim of the study and required to fill in the consent form that they agreed to take part in the research. The data collected has remained confidential.

Instruments

Google Form questionnaires were used to collect students' opinions: a pre-reading and a post-reading survey. The aim of the pre-reading survey was to have an overview

Table 9.1 The number of students participating in the research

Stage	Number of students	Number of males	Number of females
Pre-survey	77	47	30
Post-survey	74	44	30

of students' general ideas about the American War and background knowledge about the literary texts that they had been taught about the American War. The post-reading survey was designed with the objective of getting students' perceptions of the war and their opinions on the texts after the analysis in class. Below, we show some of the main questions that the surveys contain:

Pre-reading questions:

- Can you name some literary works that you have learnt about the American War?
- What can you remember about those literary works? (For example, topics, main ideas, characters, plots, details, etc.)
- If you remember those literary works, how do you feel after reading them?

Post-reading questions:

- After reading and learning the two literary works, do you want to recommend the works to other readers? Why?
- Do you like reading other similar works like the two works that you have read and learnt written about the American War? Why?
- Name at least three points that you like in each literary work.
- Name at least three points that you do not like in each literary work.
- Which character do you like most in each story? Why?
- Which character that you like least in each story? Why?
- If you could meet the character of the two stories, what would you want to ask/say to them?
- Both stories that you have read were written by Vietnamese authors who also participated in the war as soldiers. Do you want to read the works about the American War from American authors/ soldiers? Why? Do you think that the works written about the American War by American authors are different from the works written by Vietnamese authors? If yes, how are they different?

Procedure

The data was collected with Google Forms from 7th April to 3rd May 2020 via emails. First, the data was manually independently coded by two researchers. After working independently, the two researchers compared their results and discussed the differences to finalize the framework built from the data. The coding frame established needs to satisfy the requirements of qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2014, p. 175), including: (i) unidimensionality – meaning that major categories cover one aspect of the material only, (ii) mutual exclusiveness (subcategories in one major category are mutually exclusive, this is understood that one unit cannot appear in more than one subcategory), (iii) exhaustiveness (all relevant aspects of the material must be covered by a category). The requirement of mutual exclusiveness does not mean that each unit is coded only once. Instead, each unit can be coded only once under one main category.

Based on the framework established, the data was analyzed again individually by the two researchers. Then the two researchers conducted cross-checking, and the results showed high consistency, confirming the reliability of the analysis. To build the framework, the researchers based on the two primary relationships between things: similarity and contiguity (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014, p. 23), as well as connecting strategies. All the data was analyzed by using a combination of inductive and deductive coding with both concept-driven and data-driven categories in order to build a coding frame.

Findings

Building National Identity and Patriotism through the Text – High School Students’ View about their Nation and their Own People

Empathy with the People, Pain for the Nation

The data of both the pre-test and the post-test showed that students demonstrated empathy for the people who sacrificed and experienced too much pain in the war, they also felt pain for their nation.

Regarding the affection domain, in the pre-survey, 39 of the total 77 students participating in the study could list the literary works that they had read or learnt about the American War (50.6%). The students who still remembered the literary works written about the American War in the pre-survey also expressed their feelings about those works. The most common emotions shared by students encompass recognition (n = 21), empathy (n = 17) and obsession (n = 12). It is also noteworthy that the negative emotion of ‘revenge’ is not popular in students’ affection as only one student mentioned this emotion. And only four students remembered the optimistic atmosphere of the literary works.

In the group ‘empathy’, students shared that they felt strongly touched by using the following words to express their emotions: *thuong* – a Vietnamese word to name the feeling consisting of empathy, compassion, and humanitarian love, *xót xa* – a Vietnamese word to call the feeling which is a mixture of empathy, humanitarian love, compassion and pain, and *đau thương* – the feeling made of different emotions and abilities including empathy, mourning or grieving, pain, and love. Regarding the group ‘obsession’, the words used include: being obsessed, *nặng nề* – a Vietnamese word to express a strong feeling of pressure or heaviness and sadness. For the group ‘recognition’, it is sorted into three subcategories: being proud and admiring, respect and appreciate the effort and heroes’ noble actions, and feeling thankful.

In the cognition domain, in the post-survey, a majority of students (86%) want to recommend the literary works written about the American War in the national curriculum to other people. The reasons for their recommendation are the following:

- (i) the literary works reflect the life of people in the American War (n = 9), as well as
- (ii) the history of the nation (n = 9);
- (iii) show the horror of the war and the sacrifice, death, blood and tears of Vietnamese people for a united country and peace (n = 15);
- (iv) describe respected characteristics of Vietnamese people living and fighting in the war (n = 12);
- (v) build love and pride of the nation as well as responsibility to the country for the young generation (n = 9);
- (vi) help Vietnamese people respect peace gained by the ancestor, a united country and what they are having at present (n = 9);
- (vii) the literary works are worth reading, meaningful and interesting (n = 9);
- (viii) they are the representative works for the literature of the American War period (n = 4).

By recommending the literary works, students show their respect for the value of the literary works in the national curriculum. In addition, in the post-test, the students were asked to list three points that they liked in each story that they had learnt. The most popular points that many students like include:

- (i) patriotism of the Vietnamese (n = 49);
- (ii) voice and different techniques to build characters and figures in the works (n = 46);
- (iii) indomitable spirit and strength of the people (n = 40);
- (iv) love for the family (n = 35);
- (v) personality traits of the characters (exclude braveness or determined spirit to protect the country, such as being innocent, agile, resourceful, etc.) (n = 35);
- (vi) determined spirit to protect the country (n = 26).

On the contrary, only a few students mentioned that they liked how the terrible war was reflected and the way the enemy was depicted to be extremely cruel with severe crimes (n = 5). Some students also mentioned that they were touched by the story and felt the pain that the characters experienced when they were tortured physically and witnessed their family members being horribly punished (n = 11). From what the students mentioned, it can be seen that they show their love and empathy for the nation and the people suffering the war. This is not only natural humanity but also becomes evidence of the sense of belonging to the nation of the students. Feeling pain for the people and the country is because the students are a part of it, they are not the outsiders to view the war, but they see it as a part or a member of the nation experiencing the war – the Vietnamese.

Hatred towards the War and Crimes, Violence and Cruelty

From the data collected, students also showed their hatred towards war, violence and cruelty. In the post-test, when students were asked a specific question about the three points that they did not like in each story, students listed the following things:

- (i) very painful details (n = 39) – ranking the first in the list of points that students do not like;
- (ii) writing techniques (n = 14) including the lack of describing the inner world of the characters (n = 8) and the lack of details describing everyday life (n = 4);
- (iii) violent details (n = 12) and the barbarity of the enemy (n = 5);
- (iv) the desire and enmity motivation to fight against the enemy at a very young age (n = 8) and the idea of revenging the enemy (n = 6);
- (v) familiar characters, the point of view on the war, and topics (n = 6);
- (vi) showing gender prejudice (n = 3); and
- (vii) the perspective to see the war is one-dimensional (n = 2).

Among the aforementioned list, regarding the idea of revenging the enemy, some students also argued that the enemy should not have been revenged or hated, instead it was the war to be hated.

Students also demonstrated their hatred towards war and violence by making reference to the characters they do not like in the stories. Thirty-five students replied that they did not like the enemy depicted in the stories for the reasons that they were described as incredibly barbarous, one-dimensional and representative of the war. For example, some students responded:

I don't like Duc because this character is villainous but fuzzy, one-dimensional, converging all the most hateful things of a person. [*Em ít thích nhân vật Duc, vì nhân vật này phân diện nhưng mờ nhạt, một chiều, hội tụ đủ những điều đáng hận, đáng ghét nhất của một con người*]. (Participant #30)

In the Xanu wood, I don't like the character "Duc" the most because he represents the war, he captured Dit and then shot her, captured both Mai and her child to beat them. This is the cruelty and harshness of war, losing humanity, not caring about others but just for their own purposes. [*Truyện Rừng xà nu: em không thích nhất là nhân vật "thằng Duc" vì đó là đại diện cho chiến tranh, nó bắt con Dit rồi bắn, bắt cả chị Mai và đứa con để đánh đập. Đó là sự tàn khốc, khắc nghiệt của chiến tranh đánh mất đi tình người, không quan tâm đến người khác chỉ vì mục đích của mình*]. (Participant # 31)

What I liked the least is the enemy, every time they appeared they brought loss and pain. It is only because of the war that the stories and the main characters' personalities are revealed, I believe that if the work is divided into many parts, each part is a different character, each character will be different and equally loved, only the American aggressors still carried the most sins. [*Nếu ít thích nhất thì em xin dành cho bọn giặc, mỗi khi chúng xuất hiện đều mang lại mất mát và nỗi đau. Chỉ vì lí do chiến tranh mà những câu chuyện, những tính cách của nhân vật chính mới được bộc lộ, em tin rằng nếu được chia tác phẩm ra làm nhiều phần, mỗi phần là mỗi nhân vật khác nhau, nhân vật nào cũng sẽ được yêu thích bằng nhau, chỉ riêng bọn giặc Mỹ vẫn mang tội lỗi nhiều nhất*]. (Participant # 38)

I don't like Duc in the work "The Xanu Wood", because the character is so cruel, either the big, fat soldier character appearing in the story as well. They are all henchmen, do not

know how educated they are, and how resilient their hearts are, they are cowardly henchmen, only good at hurting others, being brutal towards innocent people. [*Em không thích nhân vật thằng Dục trong tác phẩm "Rừng Xà Nu", vì nhân vật thật độc ác, cả nhân vật thằng lính to béo nữa. Toàn là tay sai, không biết học thức đến đâu, lòng có kiên cường đến mấy, cũng là bọn tay sai hèn nhát, chỉ giỏi làm đau khổ người khác, tàn bạo với những người vô tội*]. (Participant # 41)

From what the students said, it can be seen that a part of them viewed crimes and the war as being created by the enemy. Having hatred towards the crimes, the cruelty and violence is a part of humane characteristics, but this also shows students' love for their nation because they do not ignore but feel negative emotions as they are a part of it to share the anger and hatred against crimes and violence causing pain to their people and nation.

My Own Nation and the Enemy's Nation – High School Students' Challenging Views of Nationalism

Not only showing their empathy with the people and pain for the nation, some students also demonstrated their critical thinking about the war and nationalism, which actually led them to follow patriotism with the main concept of love for and sense of belonging to the nation instead of the idea of national superiority or the right belongs to my nation. Their critical thinking was shown in the following ideas: (i) people are not the enemy, even if they were on the other side in the battle, (ii) cannot let revenge and the war destroy humanity, and (iii) requirements of a multi-dimensional perspective to view the war.

People are not the enemy

Some students (n = 6) had very clear differentiation between the people and the regime. For those students, they believed that the ones in charge of the war were not the people, and the people were not the criminals, instead they were also victims of the war. They did not deserve to receive feud and hatred. Therefore, six students answered that they did not like the fact that the characters in the story 'Children in a family' nurtured their feud with the enemy, instead they should have hated the war. Some students even chose the main characters as the ones that they liked the least because of their revenge for the enemy. For instance, one student said:

I like Chien the least in the story "Children in a family" because Chien was very fierce in going to the war, but it seems that Chien was too engrossed in destroying, killing the enemy and then became a bit brutal because after all, the enemy is also human, soldiers are controlled by their regime. Western soldiers are not the cause of unhappiness for her family but the greedy and selfish rulers. [Em ít thích chị Chiến nhất trong truyện "những đứa con trong gia đình" bởi vì chị Chiến rất quyết liệt trong việc mình ra trận, nhưng có vẻ như chị Chiến đã quá sa vào việc tiêu diệt, giết giặc, để mình trở nên hơi chút tàn bạo bởi suy cho cùng, giặc cũng là con người, những người lính bị điều khiển bởi chế độ của họ. Những người lính Tây không phải nguyên nhân gây ra sự bất hạnh cho gia đình chị mà chính những kẻ cầm quyền tham lam, ích kỷ]. (Participant # 8)

Cannot Let Revenge and the War Destroy Humanity

Some students (n=8) also argued that humanity needs to be preserved even in extremely harsh conditions like the war with loss and pain. Therefore, these students did not agree with the action of participating in the war, especially at a young age because the war could lead to the deterioration of humanity, as one student said:

In the story “Children in a family” the character that I like the least is Uncle Nam. Uncle instilled in the children’s hearts with family feuds, making Chien and Viet extremely hate the enemy even though they were young, despite everything to fight against the enemy. [*Trong truyện “Những đứa con trong gia đình”, em ít thích nhất là chú Năm. Chú đã gieo rắc lên tâm hồn những đứa trẻ về những mối thù của gia đình, làm cho dù còn nhỏ nhưng chị em Chiến và Việt vô cùng căm thù giặc, bất chấp để đánh đuổi giặc*]. (Participant # 57)

Requirements of a multi-dimensional perspective to view the war and nations

In the post-survey, a majority of students wanted to read literary works written about the American War from the point of view of American soldiers (70 students, 94.6%). The reasons they gave include:

- (i) to see the war in other and multidimensional perspectives (n = 63);
- (ii) to understand how American soldiers felt and thought when participating in the war (n = 5);
- (iii) to know why the Americans created a meaningless and cruel war (n = 2);
- (iv) and one student believes that the literature written by the American can reflect reality in a simple and honest way.

Several students also questioned how the history and the war were written and taught in the official curriculum as they believed that they were reflected in a biased way, only supporting their own nation. For example, two students shared their thoughts:

I do not like topics of wars; authors and literary works tend to support one side. History is always written by the winner, not only in Vietnam but also in other countries. [*Bản thân em không thích những chủ đề chiến tranh, các tác giả, tác phẩm nghiêng về một phe quá nhiều. Lịch sử được viết bởi kẻ chiến thắng, không phải chỉ riêng Việt Nam, mà các lịch sử nước khác cũng vậy*]. (Participant # 66)

I always want to know what foreigners think of the resistance war created by them or by us, to have an overview about both sides, so I can understand clearly about the war, how it happened. [*Em luôn muốn biết những người ở nước ngoài nghĩ gì về cuộc kháng chiến do họ gây ra, hay do chúng ta gây ra, muốn nhìn một cách tổng quan hơn về hai phía, thì em mới hiểu rõ được về cuộc chiến đó thật sự diễn ra như thế nào ạ*]. (Participant # 41)

Discussion

According to Barrett (2007), national identity is nurtured through mass public education to build a ‘sense of cultural unity based on the nation’ (Barrett, 2007, p. 10). From the survey, it can be seen that a majority of students valued the literary works in the official curriculum; a large number of students showed their sense of belonging

to the nation by demonstrating their love and empathy for the country and the people suffering the war depicted in the literary works. The students also expressed their hatred for the enemy and the war, which caused extreme pain for the people. Therefore, the literature about the American War in the official curriculum could help build national identity and the sense of belonging for students.

In addition, there are two contrasting ideas of students to view the enemy. The first notion, which was followed by a large number of students (35 students, 47%), is that the enemy was the criminal, and the Americans were the enemies. The second idea is that soldiers and people though came from the other side of the battle and did not support our Party, were not the enemy, instead they were also the victims ($n=6$). The real enemies were the war and the rulers. Although just a few students shared the second idea, this signals their critical thinking about how the enemy and the war were reflected in the literary works selected to teach the American War in the official curriculum. Barrett (2007) argues that there are different ways in which a person can respond to historical narratives about his/her own nations. They can learn the narratives, or they can fail to learn them, or they can oppose them and believe in other alternative narratives. The fact that students criticized the portraits of main characters appearing as heroes in the story because of their revenge on the enemy reflects another distinct, critical way of responding to historical narratives written about their country.

Furthermore, most students wanted to read the literary works written about the American War from American authors as they desired to have a multi-dimensional view to see the war. This is evidence showing students' critical thinking about their own nation, which helps to differentiate between patriotism and nationalism. While the former is love for the nation with a sense of belonging to the country, the latter is exacerbated by the feeling of national superiority. From the survey, it can be seen that, despite knowing the result of the American War in which the Americans could not achieve what they initially aimed for, students did not show the feeling of being over-proud; instead, they wanted to view the war from different perspectives.

The study has some limitations. Students from Le Hong Phong High School (Hồ Chí Minh City) are gifted students; therefore, the sample cannot be represented for all students in Hồ Chí Minh City. However, as they are carefully chosen, they can become the representative for the intellectual youth from Hồ Chí Minh City, giving their perspectives on the literary works taught and written about the American War in the national curriculum.

The study has implications for both research and practice. In terms of research, it is one of the first studies to investigate how the literary works written about the American War in the national high school curriculum contribute to the construction of students' national identity and patriotism. In terms of practice, understanding how students perceive the literary works written about the war contributes to re-evaluating the ways of teaching this historic event as well as the related literature in the national curriculum. Despite the fact that the literary works written about the American War were valued by the students, the questions and critical thinking that students showed, also their desire to view the war from different points of view suggest that the curriculum should include more diverse texts and authors to help

students clear their doubts and questions about the war and their nation, which can build students' trust based on deep insight of the war, its sorrow for people and the value of peace.

Conclusions

This research study found that a majority of students reckoned that the literary works in the national curriculum are valuable and useful to learn about the history of the nation, reflecting, in turn, the horrors of war and the sacrifice of Vietnamese people for a united country and peace. Such texts still contribute to building national identity and patriotism for Vietnamese learners by eliciting their empathy and compassion for the grieving nation and those citizens who were direct victims of war. Although the moments of encoding (students as agents) and decoding (writers as agents) are significantly different in social conditions and distant in terms of historical times, the receiver (students) still succeeds in interpreting and valuing the message that the sender (writers) created. This could be a result of the consistent viewpoint that education under the Communist Party aims to transfer and form in each citizen, including the notion that the American war was to unify the country and happened as the consequence of the Vietnamese's patriotism, i.e. resilience for the Vietnamese identity and freedom from foreign occupation.

This last point is in line with Barrett's (2007) appreciation that mainstream education aims to bring students to specific types of information with particular perspectives about their own nation. However, this does not impede the adoption of alternative perspectives. Some students provided critical responses to the texts, and a majority of students (90%) demanded a multi-dimensional viewpoint about the war. Many students (11%) acknowledged that those coming from the other nations, with different languages and appearances, were not the real enemy, instead they were also victims of the war atrocities. The real enemies were violence and hatred, and the incompetence and despotism of some rulers. This perspective shows the relative autonomy of readers (receivers) in the communication with the writer (senders) of the story. Students live in a different context from the writers, in peaceful times and with mobility and international interaction as a part of the globalized world. Mobility and international exchange foster intercultural competence by exposing students to a wider range of perspectives from other cultures, leading to their requirement for a broader perception of national history.

By showing their critical thinking when reading the texts as well as their desire to analyze the war from different points of view, students propel a modification in the teaching of the Vietnam War in Vietnamese educational systems, which should be more inclusive in terms of a variety of texts and authors. Embracing a wider perspective will bring, in turn, a more insightful understanding of the conflict, resulting in respect for peace and human lives. After all, the teaching of war and dealing with collective traumas in the classroom should not only aim at building patriotism and

national identity but should, above all, emphasize the need to work for peace and thus prevent humanitarian catastrophes.

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Chapter 10

Writing Non-fiction Books on National Culture for Vietnamese Children in the Age of Globalisation: The Process of Building Intercultural Competence



Thi Phuong Anh Dang , Tú Anh Hà , and Quang Anh Phan 

Abstract This paper tracks down the process of writing non-fiction books on national culture for Vietnamese children to help them understand their identity and respect cultural differences in the age of globalisation. By self-reflecting on the writing experience, this essay elucidates the process of building intercultural competence in its relationship with national identity through the case study of “*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*”. The paper provides a discussion among the three authors in the format of an interview with the co-author who also wrote the non-fiction book series that we focus upon. The first part reflects on intercultural competence as a concept, and the second half considers how the book series emerged and put this concept into practice. The research results show that constructing national identity, individual agency, and intercultural competence for children must be transferred naturally from each book’s topic to the flow of the story. In this case, the most striking feature is the main character’s interaction with his family. In addition, the context needs to integrate both global and local elements. The series creates situations in which there is a comparison between the past and the present, between Vietnam and other countries. It helps readers engage in different worldviews and address diversity by examining their community and nation, thus becoming more tolerant of others. This paper suggests guidance for creating similar books and helps the audience understand the author’s journey to create a trade book series featuring culture-related content.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_10

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Introduction

Intercultural competence is imperative in our changing world of globalisation as “the costs of intercultural incompetence are so high, including all the dangers of conflict and war” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 38). Living in a globalising world means engaging with a world of migration and increasing interaction among people with distinct socio-cultural backgrounds. This requires each citizen to respect cultural diversity, interculturally interact, and wisely communicate to avoid hurt and conflicts. Intercultural competence is not innate but nurtured through education and demands a long time to build and grow. Therefore, starting at a young age is necessary to become a citizen with intercultural competence.

Besides, the possibility of being culturally homogenised is an outcome of globalisation. Thus, forming a national culture for children becomes imperative as it creates a foundation for each citizen to understand themselves, develop their sense of belonging to a community as well as maintain cultural diversity as diversity is an inevitable feature of our living world. It is also the motivation for development. On the other hand, in the era of globalisation, it is becoming increasingly important for each person to be aware of different traditions and beliefs and respect cultural differences (Alburo et al., 2005). Therefore, the idea of having more books written by local authors to help children understand their culture, build their sense of belonging to the community and understand their cultural identity to develop intercultural competence is not only well ahead of the curve and the herd, but it is truly a need.

Among different ways and materials of building intercultural competence for children, non-fiction books are considered an effectively educative way (Gill, 2009), and they also convey accurate and straight information to learn about the world of children (Neate, 1999; Seuling, 2005), which is appropriate to the aim of transferring knowledge of national culture for children in the context of globalisation. In Vietnam, after the Doi Moi (Renovation) policy was imposed in 1986 (Freeman, 1996) and especially after the 2000s when the Vietnamese publication market was influenced by globalisation, the concept of a Vietnamese citizen has changed in the publishing field. Instead of building the image of a citizen actively labouring to produce more products and construct Communism, the Vietnamese citizen has been required to have a firm root in their society, a grasp of their culture and intercultural competencies to meet the requirement of a “socialist-oriented market economy”. The publishing field in Vietnam is now paying attention to publish non-fiction books series on national culture so as to build intercultural competence for Vietnamese children in the age of globalisation.

This paper aims to analyse a specific non-fiction book series called “*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*” (*Narrating Vietnamese culture*), a collection written about Vietnamese national culture for readers aged 8–13 in the contemporary context. The target group is Vietnamese children living in Vietnam, however, Vietnamese children living overseas or other children having Vietnamese origin can also read the series, depending on their particular purposes. This study attempts to explore how this series develops intercultural competence for Vietnamese children in the era of globalisation. It

provides a perspective on intercultural education and publishing for children in the context of globalisation in a developing country.

The paper is implemented by a discussion amongst the three authors in the format of an interview with the co-author who also wrote the non-fiction book series that we focus upon. The first part presents intercultural competence, its relationship with national identity, and the content attributes of non-fiction books on national culture as the theoretical framework, and the second half considers how the book series emerged and put this concept into practice.

Literature Review

Intercultural Education and National Identity in the World of Globalisation

The Concept of a Global Citizen

The trend of globalisation leads to changes in different life aspects, including education (Lourenço, 2018). Some organisations, such as Oxfam (2015) and the UNESCO (2014), proposed the concept of "global citizenship education with the image of a 'global citizen'". For instance, according to the UNESCO (2014, p. 15), global citizenship education "aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world". Similarly, Oxfam (2015) views a global citizen as a person who is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their role as a world citizen; respects and values diversity; has an understanding of how the world works; is passionately committed to social justice; participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global; works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place; and takes responsibility for their actions (Oxfam, 2015, p.5).

The characteristics of "respecting and valuing diversity", "working with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place", "being committed to social justice", "participating in the community both locally and globally", and "contributing to a peaceful, tolerant and sustainable world" that the UNESCO (2014) and Oxfam (2015) promoted require individuals to have the ability to accept and respect differences, be able to inter-culturally communicate and work with other people from different socio-cultural groups. In other words, to become a "global citizen", a person needs to have intercultural competence (IC), and intercultural education needs to be a part of the "global citizenship education" that Oxfam (2015) and the UNESCO (2014) proposed.

Intercultural Education and Intercultural Competence

Portera (2010) argues that intercultural education takes advantage of trans-cultural and multicultural education. While the former is associated with education for human rights, common human sharing, human ethics, and human needs, the latter is connected with education to recognise and respect other humans and cultures. Moreover, intercultural education provides an opportunity for interplay: “a direct exchange of ideas, principles and behaviours, compared to preconceptions” (Portera, 2010, p. 20).

Intercultural education aims to help individuals build and grow their intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2019). In addition, Byram et al. (2002) contend that individuals’ IC can be understood as “their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (Byram et al., 2002, p. 10). The authors also argue: “Intercultural communication is communication on the basis of respect for individuals and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction”. (Byram et al., 2002, p. 9). Byram and his colleagues (2002) and Portera (2010) agreed that intercultural education is for human rights and based on the equality of human rights. Intercultural education is vital in the world of globalisation as the UNESCO (2013) contends:

The costs of intercultural incompetence are so high, including all the dangers of conflict and war [. . .] just as our future depends upon actions taken today, so the future of cultural diversity respectful for human rights in our social world depends upon our ability to gain and demonstrate intercultural competencies today (UNESCO, 2013, p. 38).

Migration with different socio-cultural groups living together is an unavoidable outcome of globalisation. Intercultural education needs to be implemented to ensure peace and minimise the possibility of conflicts and wars. It is the education for human rights based on respect for cultural diversity and people with distinct social identities.

Although there are several definitions and models of IC, their central concept is to help improve human interaction across other social groups. Deardorff (2019, p. 5) briefly explained that intercultural competencies, in essence, are about enhancing human interactions across differences, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, etc.) or across borders.

Intercultural Competence and its Relationship with National Identity

According to Liu and Turner (2018), a thorough apprehension of identity is how to answer the question “Who am I?”. Identity is not only personal but also collective and social. Byram and his colleagues (2002) argue that humans are complex with multiple social identities and individuality. Moreover, national identity is a kind of social identity, which according to Byram and colleagues (2002), is related to culture.

Similarly, Liu and Turner (2018) also find the link between national and cultural identity. They explain that national identity is the product of the development of modern nationalism (Liu & Turner, 2018, p. 1080) because modern nationalism is a political and social movement based on the ideology of modern nationalism after the French Revolution. The political outcome of modern nationalism is the nation-state constructed by two pivotal constituents: the nation-state system and its residents' national identity, which is affected by cultural identity (Liu & Turner, 2018). Therefore, the authors define "national identity" as the identity of the citizens of a country with their own country's historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals, beliefs, and national sovereignty, among others (Liu & Turner, 2018, p. 1080).

In order to build IC, it is a prerequisite to forming a national identity that is associated with cultural identity. Byram and his colleagues (2002) argue that there are three components of IC, including knowledge, attitudes, and skills, and all of them require each individual the ability to understand their own culture. It can be seen that without the ability to understand who I am, my values and beliefs, my social groups and culture, an individual lacks the foundation to compare and relate other cultures to their own, to acknowledge standard human features and cultural differences, to decentre themselves to see how they may be viewed from an outsider's perspectives. Therefore, without the ability to understand their identity, a person cannot build the ability to relate, understand other opinions and viewpoints, and empathise. They are soft skills that help deal with diversity and acknowledge differences. Thus, national identity and a sense related to cultural identity need to be developed to form IC.

Two Approaches to Intercultural Education

Deardorff (2019) discussed two approaches for intercultural education: formal and non-formal learning. Formal intercultural learning can occur through the educational curriculum at all school levels or short courses. In contrast, non-formal intercultural learning can happen through public spaces like museums, galleries, libraries, or cultural exchanges. Furthermore, IC still develops through everyday interaction with other people of different social groups such as ethnicities, professions, religions, etc.

From the two approaches for intercultural education that Deardorff (2019) mentioned, it can be seen that non-fiction books about culture can be integrated into both formal and non-formal intercultural learning for children. When combined with formal learning, they can be used as learning and teaching materials for students and teachers. If they are used as materials for non-formal education, they can support students' extensive reading or their reading for pleasure, simultaneously improve their intercultural knowledge, and stimulate their curiosity to discover other cultures.

From the literature review, non-fiction books on national culture for children can be seen as a way building intercultural competence through forming a national identity, which is shown in Fig. 10.1.

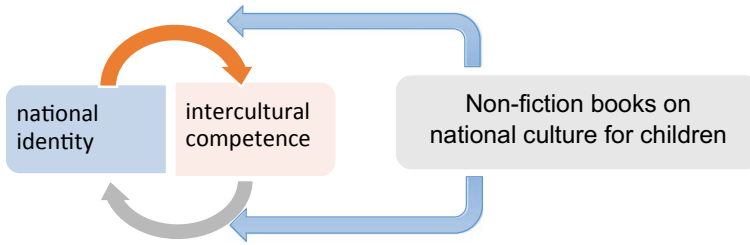


Fig. 10.1 Non-fiction books on national culture for children in the relationship with the building of intercultural competence and national identity

Books on National Culture—A Way of Forming Intercultural Competence for Children

The concept of culture, as usual, attracts much attention from academia. According to Olie (1995), over 164 definitions of culture before 1951 have been closely examined. With the vogue words reflecting the modern age of technology and artificial intelligence, Hofstede (2011) states that “Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 3). In addition, according to Dervin (2011), it is necessary to move from a solidified, polarised and objectivist vision of cultures to a liquid approach viewing culture as the fluid, meaning that it is not fixed but changing and always in interaction with others, especially in the world of globalisation. Moreover, Baumann (1996) asserts that “culture is not real but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behaviour, but summarises an abstraction from it, and is thus neither normative nor predictive” (p. 11). From our perspectives, we agree with Baumann’s idea that culture summarises an abstraction from behaviour. Through observing the mass behaviour of people from one group, we can recognise the values and ways of life that they share to summarise an abstraction. However, as culture is not solid but fluid, applying simple cultural stereotypes to view an individual can simplify a complex entity whose identity is formed by different factors, such as their profession and other social groups that they participate in. Therefore, we can summarise an abstraction of culture from the behaviour of people of a national group but also be aware that each individual’s identity is much more complex than the abstraction that we have summarised. Culture does not come and go quickly. It takes a long time to form in each society and integrate into or become a part of each individual. The process occurs through learning values that the community appreciates joining collective activities, role modelling, and understanding cultural symbols. The cultural characteristics are ingrained in each person from the influence of the family, school, religion, workplace, friends, and media (Ringov & Zollo, 2007). Therefore, culture provides a sense of belonging to each citizen and a unique feature integral to social management.

The national culture is established from the ways of life shared by the people of one nation (Flynn & Saladin, 2006). National culture is a concept attracting great concern as it impacts all aspects of life, including the economy, social organisation, and environment. National culture helps form the culture of organisations or enterprises, trading, and popular taste of a specific nation. Different nations have attempted to identify and re-identify their own national culture to avoid global cultural homogenisation, a side effect brought up by globalisation. How to culturally exchange and integrate into the world with the inevitable trend of globalisation while still identifying and maintaining national culture is the question emerging in different aspects of life, including both publishing and literature.

In addition, in this increasingly globalised society, citizens must become aware of their traditions and beliefs to be more tolerant of others (Albuero et al., 2005). Diversity, a concept related to globalisation, is an essential issue for education, including ethnicities, culture, and language, since it can diffuse prejudices and stereotypes (Smith-D'Arezzo, 2003). Meanwhile, books help people, especially children, to engage in different worldviews. They become a powerful tool that can change people's thinking (Kan, 2009). Furthermore, addressing diversity starts by examining one's community and nation. When children become aware of their culture and customs, it can be easier to respect other people and their traditions (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Glacier and Seo (2005) discuss multicultural literature as a "mirror and window". This metaphor emphasises the effect of multicultural literature in supporting children to see their own lives as a reflection or a portal for observing diversity in someone else's life (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Some publishers started concerning indigenous authors and content related to national culture (Salvi, 2019). For every country impacted significantly by globalisation, especially in multi-ethnic or multinational countries, educating people to understand the differences, respect cultural diversity and get on well with each other through reading books is worth concerning.

"Agency" and "identity" are two concepts emerging from the relationship with "national culture", helping each individual to identify and understand who they are, especially when they are in connection and conversation with other people from other ethnicities or nations (Kan, 2009). "Agency" contributes to creating a sense of belonging in the country and becomes a method of negotiating and claiming a range of cultural/multicultural identities (Duckworth, 2019). Duckworth (2019) notes that "agency" and "identity" are developed in young people through many means, including literacy events. In a multi-ethnic country like Australia, children's literature has been believed to bring up "a sense of agency in young learners (future citizens of a global community)". This sense leads to the growth in the publication of indigenous literature as one of the most significant developments in Australia. Such works are considered a natural pull that helps balance the invasion of foreign published works in the previous period. However, it is also noteworthy that how the publisher treats indigenous cultural themes and deals with indigenous writers and illustrators is a long story (Sheahan-Bright, 2011).

Literary works on national culture in the context of globalisation are required to establish the dialogues between global and local themes. Guitierrez (2017), in a

study of fairy tales for young readers, develops the theoretical framework of “*glocal fusion*” in which a globally known narrative pattern is adapted and transformed in a particular (“local”) culture, community, nation, or geographical space. Children today are increasingly exposed to glocal materials, so it has become more critical to interpret cultural artefacts from a global–local reference scale (Guitierrez, 2017). On the other hand, local narratives need to include global elements (Wiebe, 2020). With globalisation, there is an inevitable interaction between local and global features. The global context has influenced the life of any local element. This impact leads to the fact that it is necessary to integrate global and local perspectives and aspects in building characters, language, and illustrations in creating a book for children. However, in another view, the content on national culture poses an issue in authenticity, which refers to the accurate representation of a group of people and their culture and validates local knowledge as a powerful source of information (Kan, 2009). Thus, the process of building contents, characters, illustrations, and selecting language requires a focus on local or national issues and the concern of trans-nation, multi-culture, and cross-culture.

Ha and Dang (2022, p. 212) reviewed and summarised three requirements of the content that non-fiction books on national culture written for children should satisfy, including:

- i. Able to create and construct “agency” and “identity”. “Agency” contributes to the creation of a sense of belonging in the nation and becomes a method of negotiating and claiming a range of cultural/multicultural identities (Duckworth, 2019).
- ii. Integrate both global and local elements. The content needs to differentiate between domestic cultural elements and globalised elements or imported cultural elements, and to compare the culture between the past and the present.
- iii. Diversity: requires the content to transfer cultural diversity as an outcome of globalisation to help children respect other people and diffuse prejudice and stereotypes (Smith-D’Arezzo, 2003).

The three requirements above are the foundation for further discussion about how the series “*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*” develops intercultural competence in the relationship with national identity for Vietnamese children.

Methodology

The Case of Kể Chuyện Văn Hóa Việt—A Non-fiction Book for Children About Vietnamese Culture

“*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*” is a series of three books published by one of the long-standing private publishers in Vietnam. This series conveys knowledge about the cultural features of the Vietnamese (the Kinh), the ethnic majority in Vietnam today,

compared with other ethnic minorities of the country, to provide children with an understanding of different socio-cultural groups living together in Vietnam. In addition, even within the same ethnic majority—the Kinh, the series also presents the differences in the ways of living in different geographical regions. By giving information about the diversity of ethnic groups in Vietnam, and the differences in ways of living among the Kinh that is commonly called the Vietnamese—the ethnic majority, the series offers children intercultural knowledge about the people of their own country as the first step to stimulate their curiosity about Vietnamese culture, to build their respect for differences and to empathise with others, based on the ability to relate to themselves. Therefore, intercultural competence is not the term born and used only for the world of globalisation. Even in the same country, among people speaking the same language, each person always needs to build intercultural competence to speak to others from a different socio-cultural background and might share different values. Therefore, everyday communication is always intercultural communication. Each book focusses on one topic and engages a familiar and fundamental issue in the Vietnamese daily lives such as eating (Volume 1), clothing (Volume 2), and housing (Volume 3). Through three volumes, young readers perceive the systematic features of the national culture. This series was born in the context that national cultural values are not much appreciated in the Vietnamese general education system (Toàn, 2021). In addition, experts are concerned that many young people will lose their cultural identity in the context of globalisation (Pham, 2019).

Reflective Writing as a Method

Reflection and reflective writing are no longer novel terms since these two concepts have been thoroughly dissected in either theoretical or practical literary studies. McCarthy (2011) notes that it is crucial to bear in mind that reflection is socially constructed and could be interpreted in various ways. Generally, reflection may be seen as a problem-solving process as we learn from reflecting on experience (Dewey, 1933). This process brings us the chance to contemplate, assess, and look back on the journey we have experienced. According to McCarthy (2011), reflection is increasingly employed in professional disciplines to neutralise the disparity in professional practice between theories and methods practitioners claim to use, and those practitioners really use. Besides, reflective practice can give a technique for evaluating tacit knowledge—things that researchers or authors instinctively know but cannot easily convey (McCarthy, 2011).

In this paper, we employed reflective writing as a method to extract and analyse our thoughts on the book writing/reading process. McGill and Beaty (2001) declare that reflective writing could be considered a form of metacognition, helping writers gain value through translating the experience into language and enabling distance and objectivity to reveal insights not recognised during the event. While the process might partially or entirely be descriptive, it is still helpful since it lays the foundation for further contemplation on the feelings associated with the event, thus entailing the

re-evaluation of the experience (McGill & Beaty, 2001). Writing a trade book series for children is an exciting but challenging process, even with a well-prepared author. Finding the right words, creating appealing characters, and plotting proper scenes are not only tasks that manifest inventiveness but also steps of a self-discovery process, with which first-time writers easily encounter setbacks. Thus, reflecting on what the author has gone through would help the audience understand how the goal of this book project is achieved step by step.

One author of the research is also the author of the book series, while two other authors of this current study played the role of interviewers to help the book author brainstorm and reflect on her writing process. Their interview questions were designed to build the conceptual framework and navigate the flow of thoughts conceived by the series author, which includes the whole process of constructing the book series, starting from the pre-writing stage (such as brainstorming ideas, identifying the context and the image of the main character) to the writing stage (how to convey national identity and intercultural competence through the narrative of the main character). The questions to interview the author of the book series are the following:

- How do you come up with the idea for your book series “Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt” (Narrating Vietnamese culture)?
- How do you convey national culture in the book series?
- How do you embed the idea of intercultural competence in the book series?

The book author’s reflection answers the interview questions, which reveals the way the series builds intercultural competence in the relationship with national identity for Vietnamese children. The following part presents the book author’s reflection, based on her conversational interview with two other researchers of this study and her reflective journals (Ortlipp, 2008).

Reflection

How do I Come Up with the Idea for the Book?

A representative of THB Publishing House approached me in mid-2018 with an offer to make a series of books on national culture for young children. That representative was informed that I was a teacher who composed some syllabuses and learning materials on Vietnamese culture for private schools in Hanoi. The goal of the book series was to convey cultural values to the children, which is the gap in today’s publishing industry. For me, it was not an easy job to switch from a teacher to a storyteller through language and images.

To make the decision, I spoke with some experts in the publishing industry to learn about the historical mission of children’s characters over different periods. They told me that publications must be for national propaganda in Vietnam. After

Doi Moi (Renovation) in 1986 (Freeman, 1996), the aim was to establish a “socialist-oriented market economy”, thus featuring new citizens in the context of internationalisation through Vietnamese literature. While domestic books for Vietnamese children lack an indigenous image, the main characters of translated books often have global personality traits to help children develop the sense of being global citizens. The mission of spreading a global citizen’s image through a series to children seems to be overwhelmed for me who is only used to interacting with children as a mother and a teacher. However, there is a motivation encouraging me to write a book on national culture for children, which seems to be inadequate in the contemporary publishing market in Vietnam. Going to a bookstore in Hanoi, translated books and English-written books for children occupy most of the bookshelves, while books written by indigenous authors seem to be scarce. It is even scarcer to find books on Vietnamese culture, which focusses on building intercultural competence in the relationship with national identity.

The question “Why do we write children’s book?” has come to my mind many times. I enjoyed an article of the same name by Lindgren (2017) who suggested that the above question should be replaced with “Who do we write children’s book for?” Is it for publishers or teachers? Or is it for critics or politicians? We need to be grateful to the people named above because they help affirm the role of children’s books in our society. But who drives us to write is incomprehensibly enthusiastic readers who “willingly take a book’s poor words and from them shape a fantasy paradise”. “This paradise lies out of reach of all adults, because none of them, not even writers, have a key. They had it once when they were children themselves. But they’ve lost it since”. (Lindgren, 2017, pp. 195).

It prompted me to make a series of “*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*”, which always makes me curious about what paradise I will open up to the children. Building intercultural competence in the relationship with national identity, if so, that is probably found in the world of young readers, not a principle that I forced myself to follow from the moment I started writing.

How do I Convey National Identity in the Book Series?

I could not completely answer this question in the first days of writing this series. I imagined that a sense of belonging to the community or the nation should be constructed before becoming aware of identity, which specifies features of the community or the nation. Unlike other popular science books, the book series builds the main character that readers can immerse in to see themselves in the context of interactions. This protagonist is a Vietnamese child born and raised in the context of rapid globalisation and urbanisation in Vietnam. Girls and boys of his age can find themselves in his thoughts and dialogues with his parents. They belong to a generation of young Vietnamese who grow up in an era when foreign cultures easily and rapidly penetrate and dominate all media such as the internet, television, and books. The

knowledge of traditional culture is gradually becoming unfamiliar, although activities reflecting such culture are still being practised in daily life that the children can observe and recognise that these activities belong to the Vietnamese and are different from other ethnicities and countries. For example, any child can ask, “Why do the Vietnamese eat rice?” “Why do the Vietnamese tend to boil every food instead of cooking it with oil or spices?” “Why is Áo dài the traditional Vietnamese costume?” “Why do Vietnamese always have an altar to their ancestors?” “Why do villages have a communal house?” Answering these questions will help answer important questions such as “Who am I?” “Where is my homeland?” “How am I different from the world around me?”—those that help consolidate each citizen’s agency and national identity. I do not own a vision that my series would help answer those big questions because this requires the integration of different media in a comprehensive educational system. I aim to answer the small questions each child can pose daily and answer them through the main character’s story in his interaction with his mother and father. It is expected to bring each reader a sense of belonging to the Vietnamese community.

To achieve this goal, I divided the series into three volumes concerning cultural elements children are exposed to from birth until fully grown. Volume 1—The eating of Vietnamese people tells cultural features of the Vietnamese through the stories of “What do the Vietnamese eat?” “How do the Vietnamese cook and eat?” and “What is the Vietnamese’s table manner?” Volume 2—The Vietnamese clothing shows the effort to answer a list of questions, including “How was Áo dài—the traditional Vietnamese costume formed?” “What did the Vietnamese wear in the past?” and “How do Vietnamese people weave clothes?” Volume 3—The Vietnamese housing tells the story of “Where and how did the Vietnamese build houses?” “What materials did Vietnamese people build their houses with?” “What is special in the Vietnamese house?” These questions systematically explain how the Vietnamese have adapted to the environment, and through those activities, they have formed and built their culture. The Vietnamese live in hot, humid, and rainy climates, so they eat plant-based foods, build tall and airy houses, and wear loose, relaxed and comfortable clothes. The people have been adapting to the working condition of wet rice farming, which requires much labour, so they highly appreciate the community. It expresses how the village is organised and how the people gather around a circular tray while eating. The tradition of ancestor worship and respecting the elder is shown by the fact that Vietnamese people invite the elder before eating and have their own ancestral worship space in the family. The flexible adaptation, the community, and respect for the ancestors and the roots are typical cultural features of Vietnamese people. The publisher and I hope to help shape children’s national identity and agency by understanding and spontaneously following the guidance of the previous generations in the family.

How do I Embed the Idea of Intercultural Competence in the Book Series?

My readers are children born in the context of globalisation. What they communicate in their daily lives is the exchange and integration of the global and the local. For instance, they will find in their daily meals that besides rice as an indispensable dish, there is sushi, kebabs, or curry, which come from Japan, Korea, or India, as their parents tell them. Fried chicken and pizza have become every child's favourite food. It is a story happening in every country in the world, and people can gradually realise that globalisation is no longer an alien term since it could be reflected in their family meals. However, the pizza and fried chicken pieces in a Vietnamese family meal are different from the Chinese', and they are not the same as the Japanese or the Korean. The localisation is reflected in the cooking style, with local spices added to create a suitable flavour that helps form indigenous taste. Space also matters. Vietnamese children have to learn to eat fried chicken originating from the United States with chopsticks when they are five or six. This dish will be placed with other dishes on a round tray for the whole family to enjoy. They will have to practice the ritual of inviting elders before eating. The happy atmosphere in the meal brings deliciousness to all family members. It is an example of what Gutierrez (2020) mentioned: "a globally known narrative pattern is adapted and transformed in a certain ('local') culture, community, nation, or geographical space. Children today are increasingly exposed to glocal material, so it has become more important to interpret cultural artefacts from a global–local reference scale". My book series starts with the situation of the global–local culture integration to guide the young readers into the story of national culture.

Moreover, my book series provides knowledge of Vietnamese national culture compared to other cultures. Nowadays, Vietnamese children can see the same clothing and housing as children from other nations. However, they are also easy to observe the meticulous differences. For example, Vietnamese people have a traditional costume called Áo dài, often worn at important events. In apartments or villas, there is a particular space for ancestral worship. In addition, they will see that their grandparents and parents often come back to their hometown on traditional holidays to visit relatives and remember their roots. Telling those differences helps build a national identity for children and exposes them to cultural diversity. For instance, since Áo dài is the traditional costume of the Vietnamese, then what are the other national costumes of other countries? Within a multi-ethnic country like Vietnam, the way different ethnic groups eat, dress, and build houses are also diverse. The illustration-based mind map is a way my book series provides visual aids to foster children's thinking about diversity and respect for the natural existence of cultural differences.

For a developing country like Vietnam, globalisation entails modernisation and urbanisation. The cultural differences between what is considered modern, imported from foreign cultures, and being seen as "urban" and what is deemed obsolete, traditional, and often labelled as "rural" have created prejudice and stereotypes in

Vietnam. From the current context, my book series tries to make a journey to discover the tradition. This discovery is led by a parent when the question is posed: for example, today, we live in solid, fully furnished houses, then looking back to the past, how did our ancestors build them? We have imported many materials from abroad to build modern houses, then why do we have to learn from the past principles in constructing shelters? *Áo dài*, considered the Vietnamese national costume, was it born along with the existence of Vietnamese people or was it the product of the acculturation process that explains the association between Vietnam and the Western countries? The explanations help the children understand that today is the result of yesterday and appreciate past achievements and traditions. In addition, to provide an objective view of the Vietnamese in the past, the book series uses visual materials in the book “*Technique du Peuple Annamite*” by Henri Oger, a Frenchman, and his collaborators who travelled around Hanoi and sketched the daily lives in the early years of the last century. It is expected to give the young readers a look at the differences of the Vietnamese themselves at different stages, which is an inevitable difference, a difference that should be respected.

When I started writing this book series, I put myself into the children’s shoes to observe with their eyes and think alongside their thinking. I understand what needs to be built for the children to adapt to the rapidly globalising context. My book series does not teach intercultural skills but provides a perspective on diversity and a way to accept differences as the nature of that diversity.

Discussion

Children’s books are an exceptional means of reflecting objective reality and a tool for education. By reading books, children can approach and comprehend cultural values, turn human capabilities into their own, and at the same time form and develop good human qualities. In other words, the knowledge acquired in the book positively affects the development of moral qualities (virtue) and abilities (talent)—two fundamental aspects of human personality for children. However, children’s books will only promote their full educational effect if they have a proper reading culture: they know how to choose books with good ideological content and high artistic value and understand, evaluate, and absorb knowledge correctly and creatively. Educating children in reading culture is an urgent requirement for all those interested in the comprehensive and harmonious development of the young generation. From the first moment that the author of the series “*Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt*” has engaged with the writing process, those thoughts mentioned above are deemed the guiding torch. The discussion below is based on the criteria to develop the content for non-fiction books on national culture to build intercultural competence for children (Ha & Dang, 2022) which involves three requirements: (i) being able to create and construct “agency” and “identity”, (ii) integrating both global and local elements, (iii) and highlighting cultural diversity.

The sharing of the book author demonstrates ways that the book series builds a national identity and agency for children by giving familiar, essential topics (such as eating, clothing, housing) and concrete examples that children can observe directly and frequently practice in their daily lives (e.g. to use chopsticks to eat instead of forks and spoons) to help them understand their culture and build their sense of belonging to the community and national identity as well. This is different from how the national textbooks try to develop the national identity for Vietnamese children. According to Grigoreva (2014), the official textbooks for Vietnamese children often attempt to shape their national identity and intergroup solidarity by emphasising their beautiful and glorious origin. Although there are different ethnic groups in Vietnam, all Vietnamese people share the same root: “*Children of the Dragon, Grandchildren of the Fairy*”, and they share the tradition of myths and legends about the ancient past. On the contrary, the book series *Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt* aims to form children’s national identity from familiar, simple and essential things related to children’s lives, like eating, housing, and clothing.

Grigoreva (2014) also argues that although the strategy of socialisation for Vietnamese children through focusing on their glorious origin offered by the textbooks appears to be effective, there is a problem that Vietnamese children and later adults can immerse themselves in the world of legends and myths without being able to understand themselves and the world around them. Therefore, it is necessary to give children other views about their identity, based on reality and daily life, to help them critically and practically think about themselves to understand who they are and where they live and grow. With this view, *Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt* not only provides another path to build Vietnamese identity but can also be an answer to overcome the limitations of the official textbooks.

The book series is based on the context of North Vietnam with typical cultural features of Vietnamese people living in the Red River Delta to build a national identity for Vietnamese children. This poses a controversial issue in identifying the concept of national identity for book writers and the Vietnamese education system. According to Barrett (2007), national identity is the concept used to connect and homogenise people from different regions and ethnic groups of a nation to prepare the workforce for industry, which is the centre of modernisation. However, prioritising the mainstream culture related to the Hanoi area (McCann et al., 2004) and lacking the concern or marginalising other cultures can even lead to conflicts and misunderstanding inside a nation (Nguyen, 2016). Should education on national identity be changed to be more inclusive to cover the diverse cultures of different regions and ethnic groups in Vietnam? Should the Vietnamese education system shift the point of view to help children understand that they live in a multicultural country where the diversity of different cultures builds their national identity? They are questions that need to receive more concern from educators and policymakers in Vietnam.

In terms of integrating both global and local elements in the book, the series *Kể chuyện văn hóa Việt* offers children knowledge of other cultures such as Japanese, Korean in comparison with Vietnamese culture. By integrating both global and local elements in the book, the book series exposes children to an intercultural environment which can help each child to reflect upon themselves and the world around them in

the context of interacting with other cultures, which according to Byram et al. (2002) is a way of building intercultural competence.

When it comes to highlighting cultural diversity, the book series tries to achieve that goal by presenting the culture of different ethnic minorities in Vietnam in comparison with the ethnic majority (Kinh/ Viet). Similarly, information about other cultures from the neighbouring nations is also given to expose children to cultural diversity.

Implications and Limitations

In terms of theoretical implications, the study points out the relationship between intercultural competence and national identity in writing non-fiction books on national culture in the age of globalisation. In terms of practical implications, the study shows a specific case of writing non-fiction books on national culture for children to build their intercultural competence and national identity, in order to particularise the framework of writing non-fiction books on national culture for children. The study also suggests some directions for other book series on national culture for children in the era of globalisation.

The study is not without limitations. First, the research focusses on one case of writing non-fiction books on national culture for children, therefore, the findings cannot be representative, instead, they rather provide an example of how to write a non-fiction book on national culture for Vietnamese children. Second, the research employs the reflection of the book author who also co-authors the study as the method, therefore, subjectivity cannot be avoided. However, this methodology also reveals the author's insight of building intercultural competence in the association with national identity for children. Third, since building intercultural competence is a thread receiving a multitude of concerns from different researchers and educators around the world, and the concept of intercultural competence is still in its progress of formation, findings of this current study still need to be updated so as to form a better framework of writing non-fiction books on national culture for children, as well as to offer further suggestions for future research of this topic.

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Chapter 11

Technological Competence for Graduate Employability: Pedagogical and Professional Perspectives from Cross-National Translation Working Contexts



Thu Do

Abstract The need to develop graduate employability in response to globalised industry has become one of the central missions of Higher Education Institutions. This paper reports on how technological competence is approached in university translation programmes and in professional practice. The research used surveys and interviews of 246 students, trainers and professional translators from two growing translation markets, Australia and Vietnam. The findings highlight that translation programmes need to provide more adequate training in computer-assisted translation tools and research skills, considering both international and local work requirements. The findings may have pedagogical implications for training programmes in Asia Pacific contexts and beyond.

Introduction

Developing graduate employability in response to today's growing demands of globalisation and technologicalisation has been considered one of the central missions of Higher Education Institutions (Abelha et al., 2020; OECD, 2020; Small et al., 2018). The same holds true for university translation (and interpreting) training, a discipline in which recent work has also explored the implication of employability for pedagogy (Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017; Kiraly, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017).

The current increase in automation (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019), the emergence of new demands and forms of communication (Abelha et al., 2020; OECD, 2020; Römgens et al., 2019) with new technologies becoming a cornerstone of the

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translation profession (Bowker, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019) are triggering substantial changes in the role of a translator and in translator education (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). Different challenges have been posed by the integration of professional skills into the academic translator training environment. One of the main issues is related to the (mis)match between university translation graduates' competences and market needs (Álvarez-Álvarez & Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017; Do, 2020; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017, 2019; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017).

This chapter follows an education ethos that, similar to any profession-oriented university programmes, the ultimate goal of educating prospective translation professionals must be to prepare graduates for the conditions they will undertake in the professional world (Cuminatto et al., 2017; Kiraly, 2016; Ulrych, 2005). It advocates that those competences required in the profession are expected to be included in training (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2017, 2019; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017). Within this chapter's focus on developing technological competence as part of translator competence for translation graduates' employability (Do, 2019a, 2020), the chapter discusses pedagogical and professional perceptions of what translation tools and resources are required by professional translators, and how—or whether—these are acquired in university translation programmes. It draws on two case studies of translator training programmes from Australia and Vietnam in the context of Asia Pacific higher education.

The research is based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected via online surveys and follow-up interviews. The chapter gives rise to the opportunities to see possible changes in translator training curriculum that can facilitate greater integration of competence development, particularly technological competence in the scope of this chapter, for graduate employability. Although the results do not claim representativity, the findings from this empirical cross-national sample of two growing markets in the globalised translation industry provide insights that have pedagogical implications that will enhance general graduate employability for other translation programmes in the Asia Pacific context and beyond.

Technological Competence

Technological competence, within the scope of this study, is one of the sub-competences of Kiraly's (2016) translator competence model adopted for this research. The model is explicitly designed for curricular purposes and entails six competences (strategic workplace competence, technological competence, thematic competence, interpersonal competence, intercultural competence, and communicative competence) that a student should possess at the completion of their university translation programme (Kiraly, 2016). It underlies a socio-constructive approach that highlights the need for a profession-oriented training programme to develop students' competences so that they can meet the professional requirements of the industry upon their graduation. As one of the key components in the model, technological competence is what translators are now expected to acquire in order to

be capable of tasks beyond translating in the increasingly changing demands of their professional translation work. These changes are due to technological advancements, the need for speed in translation work and other requirements in this globalised industry (Király, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). In the practice of professional translation, technological competence involves the use of technological tools, documentary resources and terminology information research and management (Kelly, 2005; Király, 2016).

Research Design and Methodology

This chapter is derived from larger research, which aims to assess the degree to which translator students are equipped with professional skills in their training programmes to meet professional translation requirements. The broader study aims to address two main research questions:

How is translation performed in professional work contexts?

How are translator students trained in university translation programmes?

The chapter focusses on two sub-questions of the research, which specifically examine the extent to the technological competence, within this study's translator competence framework, required in professional translators' work is developed for translator students in academic training. It investigates the linkage between translation practice and translation training in developing graduates' employability, looking at the translation tools that professional translators are required to use, and those provided in translator training programmes.

The study adopted a mixed-method design, which included a first phase of online surveys (quantitative and qualitative) and follow-up interviews (qualitative data) to help elaborate the survey results. The participants recruited for this study consisted of 246 participants including professional translators ($n = 86$), translator students ($n = 102$) and translator trainers ($n = 58$) from both professional translation practice and translation pedagogy to obtain multiple perspectives of the linkage between these two settings (Table 11.1). The respondents were particularly recruited from Australia and Vietnam as two case studies in the Asia Pacific region. The chosen participants are believed to represent a global context rather than a local context, as within this study's attempt to describe translator training programmes and the translation profession from a macro perspective. In the Australian context, the training programmes and translation profession involve language pairs in English in combination with East Asian languages, and also some European languages. The language pairs undertaken by the Vietnamese respondents are mainly Vietnamese-English and vice versa. With their particular historical, social and economic features, both contexts have witnessed an increase in growth in the translation market that in both countries is now increasingly globalised (see Do, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Hoang, 2020; Orlando, 2016; Ozolins, 1998; Pham & Tran, 2013). The involvement of these two researching contexts, with their common as well as unique features may provide an interesting insight into the

Table 11.1 Online survey and follow-up interview respondents

Respondents	Australia-based respondents		Vietnam-based respondents		Total of both context-based groups	
	Survey	Interview	Survey	Interview	Survey	Interview
Professional translators	40	5	46	9	86	14
Translator students	26	5	76	10	102	15
Translator trainers	17	4	41	10	58	14
Total					246	

adaptation and development of the translator training in each specific context, and by extension, the global context.

The professional translators are those currently working from either of the two chosen contexts, Australia or Vietnam. The target population of the student and trainer groups are from six universities in Australia and five public universities in Vietnam that offer translation training programmes. In this study, the respondents' training in translator programmes in the Australian context took place at postgraduate level. In the Vietnamese context, so far only undergraduate translation programmes are being offered in all public universities. Therefore, the mentioned programmes in Vietnam refer to undergraduate training only.

This chapter's data analysis focusses on technological competence, one sub-competence component of the translator competence model adapted from Kiraly's (2016) dynamic model towards translator education. The survey results are reported using frequencies and descriptive statistics. Cross tabulations were done to test whether there are any differences or similarities between technological tools used in the profession and trained in programmes in the two investigating contexts. The follow-up semi-structured interviews based on predetermined questions emerging from online preliminary data results, each lasting from forty-five minutes to one hour and a half, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The themes were coded and categorised by NVivo 11 software. The interviewees are de-identified, who are coded and numbered according to their groups for data analysis. Those professional translators who had their university training degrees with a translation major also had the opportunity to relate their professional working experiences to their previous training. The follow-up responses therefore could provide insights into pedagogical practice from both pedagogical and professional perspectives, and outline possible linkages and/or dichotomy between academic and work environments.

Findings and Discussions

The findings in this chapter are discussed focussing firstly on translators' work requirements regarding technological competence. It involves the use of technology or computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and research resources in professional

translation practice. Next, the chapter discusses the extent these tools and resources are provided in training for translation graduates' professional readiness. The data analysis also focusses closely on the training of this competence in both contexts in Australia and Vietnam to see the linkage between professional requirements and academic training in these two settings. The findings are presented with primary results from the online surveys and further supported with the participants' follow-up interview responses.

Use of Technology Tools and Researching Resources in Professional Translation Practice

In examining translator's technological competence, the professional translators were asked to indicate the CAT tools and researching resources they have been required to use in their current translation work. The findings show a congruence between the CAT tools popularly used among translators and those commonly provided in training programmes in both Australia and Vietnam (Table 11.2). However, the extent to which these tools were focussed on in training, particularly in the Vietnamese training context, was still significantly lower than the level that professional translators reported as being required in the profession.

The overall usage of CAT tools from Table 11.2 reveals that the most popular tools translators had been required to use were SDL Trados (41.0%), Wordfast (22.3%), memoQ (18.3%) and gtranslator (13%). Tools required among the other 15.2% included, as indicated in the additional comment box, Transit, memsource, STAR transit NXT, SDLX, XTM cloud-based, Aegisub (subtitling) and other Google-based tools. Data from Table 11.2 also show the notable result that 39.5% of the translators reported no use of any CAT tools in their translation work. Although selecting 'none' to indicate no specific use of any CAT tools, many respondents mentioned in the comment box their use of many other technical resources, mostly relating to online search engines for terminology research, communication and documentary resources. These generally included the use of the Internet for terminology research, the use of online forums for terminology, or communication with experts for specialist consultation.

In addition to the presentation of the overall data regarding CAT tool usage, the cross-tabulations of tools to investigate variations in which the tools were used between the Australian and Vietnamese working contexts indicate no difference, except for the usage of SDL Trados ($p = 0.020$). Regarding this tool, professional translators in the Australian context reported a higher percentage of usage (57.1%) than in Vietnam (24.0%).

The popular use of CAT tools as reported in both contexts of this study strongly aligns with those commonly used in other contexts (e.g. Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017). In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) context

Table 11.2 Cross tabulations of CAT tools by professional translators in Australia and Vietnam

CAT tools	Overall usage (%)	Respondents	Usage by groups (%)	Exact Sig.(2-sided) <i>p</i> value
SDL Trados	41.0	Au professional translators	57.1	0.020*
		Vn professional translators	24.0	
None	39.5	Au professional translators	48.0	0.477
		Vn professional translators	31.4	
Wordfast	22.3	Au professional translators	16.0	1.000
		Vn professional translators	28.6	
memoQ	18.3	Au professional translators	20.0	0.578
		Vn professional translators	16.6	
Others	15.2	Au professional translators	16.0	0.280
		Vn professional translators	14.4	
gtranslator	13.0	Vn professional translators	16.0	0.451
		Vn professional translators	10.0	
MetaTaxis	1.8	Au professional translators	0	1.000
		Vn professional translators	3.6	
Déja Vu	1.5	Au professional translators	0	0.301
		Vn professional translators	2.9	
Global sight	1.5	Au professional translators	0	0.301
		Vn professional translators	2.9	
Lokalize	1.5	Au professional translators	0	0.301
		Vn professional translators	2.9	

* The difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

(Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017), for example, data on translators' requirements in translation job descriptions published in this region reveal that experience in using CAT tools appears to be a requirement of the utmost importance. Essential knowledge of CAT tools for translators as required in the MENA region involves commercial CAT tools mainly including SDL Trados studio, Wordfast and MemoQ, and this is consistent with the current research findings.

Further to the survey's report on the popular application of CAT tools, the translators' responses illustrated the importance of experience in using these tools in translation work. These include views about the essentiality of CAT tool experiences, and of experiences particularly relating to requirements of speed and quality, machine translation and editing, and localisation.

Essential CAT Tool Experiences

Regarding perceptions of CAT tool experiences, the translators indicated the necessity of being familiar with translation tools and knowing how to use them in translating different text genres as required. In light of this, it is worth noting that the translators in both contexts were found to work with a wide variety of text domains, including five main categories of (1). Administrative/personal documents/commercial texts; (2). Scientific texts; (3). Media texts; (4). Vernacular-based/literary texts; (5). Websites/audio-visual texts (see Do, 2019b). Although translators in each of the two contexts reported different frequencies of translation for particular types, which might relate to the prevalent socio-economic realities and language service demands of each context, translation of electronic documents, particularly web-accessed text in category 5 (websites/audio-visual texts) appears to constitute an emerging field in this study. Interview responses from translators from both Australia and Vietnam indicated the increasing popularity of translation of websites, subtitling, smartphone games and game contents.

The overall common text domains as found in these two translation markets show some correlation with those in other contexts. In the Middle East and North African region (Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017), requirements in translation job descriptions indicate that jobs requiring knowledge of subject-field translation seek candidates with proficiency in technical, legal, medical, software localisation or financial translation. As translators in this current study have reflected on translation requirements relating to localisation of websites, subtitling, games and softwares along with the increasing demands of using CAT tools and research skills for translating these types (see also Do, 2020), media-related domains could be regarded as emerging translation genres in the contemporary technological era. In mentioning the required experience within this current translation work, one of the comments argues:

It is undeniable that technology is important in translation work, when a variety of documents required to be translated are in different formats. Professional translators should master technology, such as the use of CAT tools, machine translation systems used for professional translation practice. (Professional translator_Vn4)

CAT tool experiences have also been emphasised as an essential requirement in addition to language competence. A translator remarked on this as:

I would say the most important thing for translators is knowledge of CAT tools. The language skills, you take that as given. If you haven't got any language skills you shouldn't have been in the business, but the critical thing that makes a big difference is the ability to use CAT tools. (Professional translator_Au6)

These reflections on the necessity of CAT tool experience reinforce earlier findings of this research (Do, 2019a, 2020) about the common steps in a professional translation process, which clearly involve the ability to use translation tools throughout the process.

Recognising that technological skills, along with language proficiency, is an important component of professional translator requirements, many of the participants interviewed shared their perceptions on the need to focus on CAT tools training in translation programmes. One of the translators—also a freelancer for more than 20 years—highlighted the usefulness of technology integration in training and in application in future translation work:

Technology is obviously a good tool for people to speed up their translation process. Translation tools are now popular in professional translation companies and these should be taken advantage of and be trained at schools. This will be a base for those who want to become a professional translator to apply these useful tools in real life, improving the quality of translation work. (Professional translator_Au8)

Supporting the need for skills in using technology, particularly for freelance translation work, a translator believed that professional translators need to acquire basic technology skills during the training to enter the market more confidently. This translator remarked:

In this rapidly changing [era] of new technologies, I think there are some basic technological elements, common CAT tools that students should be familiar with, otherwise we have to go a long way again spending time obtaining technological skills as commonly required. (Professional translator_Au4)

As professional translation practice has changed radically with more challenging translation requirements and working methods (Do, 2020), and familiarity with translation tools (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019), hands-on experience or training in one CAT or more would be expected in training. Exposure to a range of tools and working methods is best so trainees can become self-reliant users of translation technology, with the confidence to explore and evaluate the usefulness of new tools as they arrive on the market in the future (Bowker, 2016; Kiraly, 2016).

Speed and Quality

Speed and quality were found to be among the most commonly expected professional requirements (Bowker, 2016; Do, 2019a, 2020; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). In

this regard, benefit of using CAT tools, machine translation and editing in dealing with time requirements was also strengthened by a number of translators. An in-house translator for a governmental organisation commented:

I found Wordfast and the MemoQ really helpful since they can boost the speed of the translation. They provide a translation memory of words, which I often find repeated in my translation work with government documents. That really saves time. (Professional translator_Vn7)

A translator who is also a project manager of a translation agency in Vietnam indicated their support for the application of CAT tools as follows:

I support the application of CAT tools because translators can save time and the translation work will be more consistent if technical tools are used, with database and translation memory created. In a group for a big project, for example, all translators need to use translation memory to have consistent terminologies with those used by others. Or when translators are required to translate a technical document based on previous translation, they might need to follow a provided translation memory. (Professional translator_Vn3)

The significance of CAT tools in translation particularly for dealing with requirements of time and quality has been much stressed in the contemporary era (e.g. Alcina, 2008; Alcina et al., 2008; Lafeber, 2012; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). A result in Lafeber's (2012) research, for example, has revealed that maintaining quality under time pressure is one of the most important knowledge and skills needed in translators. Characterised by a growing diversification of knowledge fields and specialisation of disciplines, translation work now often requires translators to produce a larger number of translated documents and in shorter timescales. Translators are therefore expected to use a wide range of computer-based tools and resources to enhance the efficiency, speed and quality of tasks involved in the translation process (Alcina, 2008; Kiraly, 2016).

In highlighting the significance of translation tools particularly in facilitating speed and quality, a number of translators also advocated the need to embrace machine translation to respond to market demands. One of the professional translators opined:

As multi-tasked professional translators, you may also be requested for editing tasks. Sometimes I've been called to pre-edit a text for machine translation or post-edit machine translation output. (Professional translator_Au5).

Corroborating the above opinion of machine translation and translation editing, another translator with over ten years' experience in legal translation and who is also a project manager of his company, commented:

Well, machine translation can really aid my team and open up new possibilities in how we can manage translation projects. Occasionally, machine translation can be of some help in getting a draft and speeding up that initial process. Pre-editing around 10000 words a day or post-editing some similar amount would be what to expect in this machine translation process. (Professional translator_Au1)

The ability to pre-edit or post-edit machine translation was also mentioned reflecting growing demands in the use of machine translation in the process of translation work. This finding further stresses the need to integrate CAT tools and machine translation in training programmes.

Localisation

Translators' responses revealed that CAT tools are also commonly applied in localisation. These tasks were mainly related to localisation of website, software and game. Among the interviewees commenting on this, a graduate from an undergraduate translation programme mentioned the frequent requirement of using CAT tools for website localisation from his international clients. This respondent stated:

CAT tools are required very often from my international clients. Skills essential in my work are often about using tools for website translation and website localisation. The tools really help us work faster and respond more quickly to the market demands. (Professional translator_Vn5)

In a similar trend, a trainer with a part-time translation job also indicated an increase in website localisation requests in her translation work:

I've been working with some website localisation, mainly about tourism websites from overseas companies. I can't deny the assistance of technological tools in my work. (Translator trainer_Vn2)

Localisation of software and game was also reflected in one of the translators' responses:

I've translated a smartphone game, I've had to do game localisation. I've also been requested for translation of software, software localisation. Most of the time I use Wordfast or Trados, occasionally memoQ, and these programmes make the process easier. (Professional translator_Au5)

The reflections on common requirements of CAT tools application in localisation strongly accord with the current increasing internationalisation and localisation of company and organisation sites, and the increasing use of machine translation to/from various languages to translate websites (Archer, 2002). In the current information and communications technology era, the increase of localisation has resulted from the emerging characteristics of the translation market, which are global, decentralised, specialised, dynamic, virtual and demanding (Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017). The reported requirements of CAT tools in general are also corroborated by recent indications of market demands and the impacts of future sectoral developments on the profession (Rico, 2014, 2017). This was specified in a data set of professional destinations compiled by the Quality Department at Universidad Europea de Madrid (Rico, 2014), in which the translation industry demands a specialised translator to be fully conversant with computer-assisted translation tools.

Use of Researching Resources

As indicated earlier in the data findings (Table 11.2), in addition to the required ability to use CAT tools in translation work, translators' responses also mentioned the ability to use documentary resources for terminological research and information management. Regarding these researching skills, the translators reflected on the expectation of possessing adequate skills to be able to do research, using the Internet sources as well as sources outside the Internet. In terms of the Internet sources, one of the professional translators highlighted the necessary skills of terminology research by using search engines as follows:

I think that terminology research skills are really important. How to use search engines for researching terminology, to get the most out of Google, Google images, Wikipedia or other specialist sites will be most helpful to translators. Because there are a lot of tricks that you can learn in the process and that's very important. (Professional translator_Au2)

The ability to use search tools was also mentioned in relation to using sources outside the Internet via desktop search software on the computer. A professional translator shared her experience on the use of desktop search tools:

You can use the search tools on your computer, my best translation tool is not a CAT tool, but it's a desktop search software called DT search, and that is invaluable because it enables us to create an index for various subject areas. Every time I find something on the net that relates to the subject area—might be glossary or an interesting article—I just download it and it goes straight into the index. (Professional translator _Au8)

Translators who are currently trainers and students working as translators also emphasised the importance of using resources and searching strategies in translation tasks. Based on his translation work experience, a trainer asserted:

Students need to be taught information mining. As prospective translators, they need to demonstrate the ability to find information that is both reliable and relevant to the task at hand. (Translator trainer_Au1)

On the same note, a student also supported the idea of equipping students with information mining skills, as he opined:

We should be very good at using glossaries provided or searching for other glossaries on the Internet, should see the real process of consulting experts about difficult terms or concepts, checking the target text over and over again to make sure it's accurate and comprehensible. (Translator student_Vn10)

In a general view, the usefulness of providing students with both CAT tools and research skills was strongly advocated among the interviewing participants. One of the professional translators remarked on this:

So I would say the things are going across all the different fields, really good target skills, proofreading skills, really good computer skills and how to use the internet, how to search terminology on the internet, so I think those are the things that should be in any course, and those are the things that are going to be applicable no matter what language you're working with no matter that your subject areas or specialist areas will be. (Professional translator_Au8)

The reported data have revealed the widespread perceptions among interviewees that familiarity with translation tools and resources is of paramount importance to embark on successful professional translation work. These consolidate the requirements of instrumental competence in translation work, as stipulated in the current age of intense time-to-market pressures (Bowker, 2016; Bowker & Marshman, 2009; Kiraly, 2016). In discussing the translator's instrumental competence, Kiraly (2016) has maintained that, apart from the required competence of using CAT tools such as translation memory tools and terminology software, translators need to be competent in using the Internet and other resources for information and terminology research. In the sections that follow, the analysis will provide insights into the extent that students are trained for technology competence that professionals are required to possess in their translation work.

Use of CAT Tools and Researching Resources in Translation Programmes

In the the investigation of CAT tools training in translation programmes, the students and trainers were asked about the tools available in their training. The usage of these tools in the profession and in training is displayed in Table 11.3 to examine the linkage between the two settings.

Results in Table 11.3 display a significant difference ($p \leq 0.05^*$) in most of the technical tools that were commonly used by the professional translators, except for Wordfast. SDL Trados, the most popular tool, was used by 41.0% of the professional translators. By contrast, the use of this tool was much lower in training, at 22.0% as reported by students and trainers. As for memoQ, the professional translators also reported using this tool more commonly than it was provided to students in training, at 18.3% and 4.8%, respectively.

Wordfast was a common tool in both groups, with a quite similar percentage of usage, that is, 22.3% by professional translators and 31.0% by student and trainer groups. The fact that Wordfast can be accessible with its free online version might explain the similar common usage of this tool in the profession and in pedagogy. Data reported from the students and trainers about CAT tools used in training were also displayed in two context-based groups to compare the CAT tools provided in training programmes between the two countries. Notably, the cross-tabulations do not show any difference between the two training contexts (see Appendix 1).

In general, it can be said that although there is similarity in the common CAT tools in pedagogy and practice, the data show some incongruence in the percentage of tools that translators were required to use and students were provided in their training programmes. This lack of coverage on the use of technology tools in translation training seems to be an existing concern, as the situation elsewhere also revealed that technology was one of the gaps in translator training, with students indicating that their training provided only basic preparation for technology use in their professional work as translators (Gümüş, 2017; Plaza-Lara, 2016).

Further to these responses in online surveys relating to CAT tools, the participants also reported in the follow-up interviews on what training was given in their programmes. The reflections are presented in the following sections, with a focus on training in both Australian and Vietnamese contexts.

Table 11.3 Cross tabulations of CAT tools used and trained between professional and pedagogical groups

CAT tools	Respondents	Responses by groups (%)	Exact Sig (2-sided)
SDL Trados	Professional translators	41.0	0.002*
	Students and trainers	22.0	
None	Professional translators	39.5	0.001*
	Students and trainers	16.1	
Wordfast	Professional translators	22.3	0.321
	Students and trainers	31.0	
memoQ	Professional translators	18.3	0.002*
	Students and trainers	4.8	
Others	Professional translators	15.2	0.018*
	Students and trainers	4.8	
gtranslator	Professional translators	13	0.655
	Students and trainers	2.4	
MetaTaxis	Professional translators	1.8	0.458
	Students and trainers	0.6	
Déja Vu	Professional translators	1.5	0.568
	Students and trainers	1.8	
GlobalSight	Professional translators	1.5	1.000
	Students and trainers	0.6	
Lokalize	Professional translators	1.5	1.000
	Students and trainers	0.6	

* The difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

CAT tools and researching resources in translation training in the Australian context

Regarding the postgraduate programmes in the Australian context, data show evidence that skills in using CAT tools and researching have been incorporated into training programmes. Common activities reported in the process include students' involvement in working on their translations and providing reflective commentaries on the process, in which they needed to document the resources and technology tools used for the translation. One student remarked:

In our programme, we can have access to Trados programmes in a computer lab and practise using this tool. We had an "Introduction to Trados" unit when we can have some basic knowledge of this CAT tool. Throughout this practice, we're also required to reflect on what we've applied throughout our translation process. The training really helps for my current translation work. (Translator student_Au5)

On a similar note, others also reflected on being taught how to use and practise with translation software applications. In this respect, a student underlined the usefulness of technology training in her current programme to her translation work:

We have workshops working on Trados and subtitling. I feel that it is very important for us to know how to do it because I've been working in a translation company, sometimes they give us some translations to do and once the translation is accepted by the other party, they will give us a hundred of these with similar formats. The skills we have in Trados or similar CAT tool programmes can help to produce it more quickly. And sometimes I can create a glossary to look up very quickly; you don't have to waste your time looking up the terminology, 'cause this is a mining process. (Translator student_Au2)

However, there were also opinions indicating that training programmes had not offered them ample technological skills to work in a professional setting. A freelancer who is a new graduate from a Master's translation programme mentioned the lack of technology training in her programme, stressing the need to prepare for freelancing work. She expressed her expectation of a greater focus on those skills as follows:

I don't think we were sufficiently trained, with only two CAT tool workshops throughout the programme. I expected that we could have more training in that stuff, 'cause I haven't been able to use any of them as a practitioner, and I think that is partly because I haven't done enough translation to make it worth investing in it but also partly because I didn't get almost any training in it so it is hard for me to start using it, to feel confident. I can't do more than a certain amount of work because I can't do it fast enough, because I can't use the technology to help me. (Professional translator_Au3)

Regarding training in research skills, it was largely reported that the postgraduate students had experience in acquiring these skills through a process of translation tasks. This process required them to reflect on the sources and methods for their terminology and documentary research. Almost all student interviewees from this programme shared their positive experiences of learning research skills from the reflection, in which they also had opportunities to share the strategies of using searching tools and online resources. One of the students said:

We would share resources that we found in doing searching for the translation. Having the opportunity to listen to others' perspectives on the searching methods during their translation work, specific tools may help students to learn from their peers' experiences and also to see different points of view that may help them to appreciate the importance of choosing a tool that they find comfortable to use and effective in meeting their needs. (Translator student_Au4)

The involvement of research skills in training, particularly through a translation training process, has been supported by a number of translation technology trainers (e.g. Gile, 2004; Orlando, 2016; Pakkala-Weckström, 2015). Along with their translations as assignments, the students are required to submit their reflective commentaries on their translation process (Gile, 2004; Orlando, 2016). In these reflections, they are instructed to briefly analyse the source text in terms of genre, type, function, and to document the sources and methods they have used in their translation process as well as to reflect on their most challenging part of the work (Pakkala-Weckström, 2015). Aligning with results from these previous studies, the

students' reflections in this finding show that training activities for research skills have enabled their engagement in exploring and comparing various resources. The reported experiences suggest that the students were able to learn and evaluate the resources' usefulness and integrate their learning into the ways they prefer to work.

CAT tools and researching resources in translation training in the Vietnamese context

Concerning undergraduate translation programmes in Vietnamese universities, similar to training at postgraduate level, students' responses also revealed their opportunities be trained in CAT tools. A student commented:

In my training, there is a simple basic training class in Wordfast which has taught me enough to use some other programmes. I can't use a lot of functions in Trados but I can do enough to translate a document and send it back. Same with memoQ, I've used that for translation and for proofreading. And they've also used an outside trainer who is qualified in using the programmes. So I am able to use them in my current part time translation job. (Translator student_Vn1)

Regarding the opportunities of CAT tool training, efforts in making changes for better technology integration in undergraduate programmes were also mentioned. One of the students who is now at her final year of the programme asserted:

I believe that was one of the programme revisions they've made, for the last 3 years, they've added in more about technology use. They've added in Wordfast, I think it was not much, but since they've made that presence in the course obviously they are responding to what the workplace needs. (Translator student_Vn10)

Congruent with the above comments that the students made on CAT tool training, a number of trainers also indicated their efforts at improving technology integration in training programmes. A head of programme, who is also an experienced professional translator, reflected on the programme adjustment in order to link to requirements in the profession. He remarked:

We've added a new compulsory unit "Online Resources in Translating". In this unit, students are introduced to trial Wordfast and Trados. We can't provide ideal conditions to practise with professional versions due to financial constraints, but at least the students can have some basic skills. (Translator trainer_Vn2)

However, as this type of technological competence demands regular and repetitive practice to be assimilated in order to develop the skills to automatically use the technology, many of the participants did not think they had had enough training and practice, as recounted by one of the students:

Technology was rarely dealt with during our undergraduate training program. We did not have suitable CAT tools to practise on. I wish I could have learnt Trados at university and practised it often so that we could translate faster and could quickly meet the requirements of the work. (Translator student_Vn5)

Similarly, one of the students who had just entered the freelance translation industry complained:

We have been introduced to Wordfast, but we actually need to be in with the practice for the delivery, learning with the activities, experiencing SDL Trados. We don't do that, but that should be the case. (Translator student_Vn7)

The above-mentioned reflection about the lack of technology application in the Vietnam-based translator training, as could be referred to in the review of relevant literature of this training context, possibly be due to the fact that most translation trainers are from a language teaching and acquisition background and lack formal training in translation and hands-on experience in the translation profession (Do, 2019b). This scenario poses the necessity of also equipping translator trainers with technological competence for the sake of students' benefit in translation training in this field.

In this discussion of technological competence development, there also appears evidence of a sizeable gap to be addressed in the Vietnamese programmes in terms of facility conditions. Lack of access to training tools was claimed to be one of the obstacles, as one trainer indicated:

I think many of us trainers are really aware of the benefit of integrating technology into the translation training. However, there are several obstacles that might hinder the integration, one of which is a lack of access to appropriate hardware and software due to facility conditions. The current training is still just an introduction and basically based on trainers' personal experience as experienced professional translators in the industry. (Translator trainer_Vn1)

This context, however, has recently witnessed a more routine incorporation of online resources into training practice. Responses from both students and trainers commonly stated that students have been taught how to conduct effective information searches during their translation activities and assignments via online discussion groups, blogs and translators' forums. One of the students commented on the usefulness of their learning of information mining skills as follows:

I think this is very useful because it is one of the tasks that translators do as part of their everyday work. I have also developed my technological competence, using google translate, google image, websites like tratu.vn, and other online resources. (Translator student_Vn10)

A newly graduated translator said:

I have learnt a lot about terminology research and expert consultancy through online forums such as ProZ.com, TranslatorsCafé.com, and TermsCafé.com. I've also learnt from other specialists and terminology websites. (Professional translator_Vn4)

Based on the participants' perceptions of the awareness of technology in translation work and the significance of its integration into training programmes, the gap between technological advances and pedagogical practices unarguably needs to be closed. By the time students graduate, as emphasised by Bowker (2016), they must be aware of the variety of translation tools available and have some exposure to a representative selection of these tools. By integrating CAT tools into the teaching environment, translation training programmes can transmit practical skills that will get graduates jobs (Kiraly, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). The internet has transformed translation from a paper-based activity to a computer-based activity, as

a result of which the market now demands faster, more competitive and resourceful translators (Bowker & Marshman, 2009; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). The requirements regarding instrumental resources used in contemporary professional translation work pose pedagogical challenges. Specific training to develop the claimed insufficient technological competence in students—and some trainers—is clearly needed so that prospective graduates can benefit from the opportunities offered by the rapidly evolving field of information technology.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter investigates the linkage between university translator training and professional requirements, with insights into technological competence as required in translation work and trained in translation programmes. It focusses particularly on the usage of CAT tools and researching resources. In general, the results have revealed both professional and academic respondents' high awareness of technology application and researching skills in translation work, as well as the importance of providing training in these skills to translation students.

The quantitative data show congruence in CAT tools that are popularly used among translators and those commonly provided in training programmes in both Australia and Vietnam. The importance of CAT tool experiences was reflected by professional translators relating to the requirements of speed and quality, machine translation and editing, and localisation. Translation programmes, especially in Australian universities, have been updated with most commonly used CAT tools such as SDL Trados, Wordfast and memoQ. However, the statistical difference in CAT tool usage, with higher percentages among translators in both training contexts, indicates an insufficient coverage of CAT tools in training. Added to this, there are significant differences in the extent that these tools are required in the profession and focussed on in training, particularly in the Vietnamese training context. Some translation programmes in the Vietnamese context still experience hindrances in the application, which might be due to financial obstacles and a lack of mastery by trainers. This suggests a need for more integration of and focus on translation tools in pedagogy.

It is clear from the respondents' perspectives in this study that the importance of translation technology cannot be overstated. Responses from the interviewees clearly indicate that the Internet and new technology, together with internationalisation of the profession, have had a tremendous impact on translator practice. Although training has witnessed ample integration of technological skills, it still faces considerable challenges in bringing programmes closer to equipping students with adequate skills in translation work requirements. Within the discussion of CAT tools, it has been observed that novice translators sometimes exhibit 'blind faith' in technologies because they lack the confidence or experience required to use the tool in their translation work (Bowker & Marshman, 2009).

The reported requirements of CAT tool use and researching skills align with the current globalised move, pertaining mainly to the increasingly pervasive use

of translation memory tools, machine-aided translation systems, multilingual document management applications and website and software localisation (Bowker, 2016; Plaza-Lara, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019). The lack of focus on the requirements of speed and quality indicated in this study's findings further reinforces the strong need to prepare students to translate on a very tight deadline in order to meet the current professional translation requirements. It is true that for the requirements of workload and speed and quality, proficiency in the use of CAT tools and online resources is highly expected in translation work in order to leverage a significant amount of translated content, increase workflow efficiency, and ensure consistency as well as time- and cost-effectiveness (see also Al-Batineh & Bilali, 2017; Gümüş, 2017; Plaza-Lara, 2016; Rodríguez de Céspedes, 2019).

Considering the social and economic differences between the Australian and Vietnamese contexts (see Do, 2020), the perceptions on technological competence are surprisingly similar. It can be said that the two totally different realities are producing convergent perceptions on the issue of technological application into translation work and translation training. Notably, in an emerging translation industry such as that in Vietnam, the issues and concerns are quite the same as in the well-established translation context of Australia. Translator training is proving to be a still-emerging field in both Australia and Vietnam, with needs created from the evolving contemporary globalised industry. The chapter provides an opportunity for translator trainers and programme developers in other similar contexts to reflect on the training practice and explore relevant ways to effectively prepare graduates for their future professional requirements.

Appendix 1: Cross-Tabulations of Cat Tools Provided in Translation Training Programmes Across Two Countries

CAT tools trained	Overall usage (%)	Respondents	Responses by groups (%)	Exact Sig. (2-sided) p value
Wordfast	31	Au students and trainers	27.0	0.334
		Vn students and trainers	35.0	
SDL Trados	22	Au students and trainers	29.3	0.124
		Vn students and trainers	14.7	
None	16.1	Au students and trainers	17.6	0.284
		Vn students and trainers	14.6	

(continued)

(continued)

CAT tools trained	Overall usage (%)	Respondents	Responses by groups (%)	Exact Sig. (2-sided) p value
memoQ	4.8	Au students and trainers	5.0	0.272
		Vn students and trainers	4.6	
Others	4.8	Au students and trainers	5.9	0.413
		Vn students and trainers	3.7	
gtranslator	2.4	Au students and trainers	2.5	1.000
		Vn students and trainers	2.3	
Déja Vu	1.8	Au students and trainers	2.3	0.151
		Vn students and trainers	1.3	
MetaTaxis	0.6	Au students and trainers	1.0	0.150
		Vn students and trainers	0.2	
GlobalSight	0.6	Au students and trainers	1.2	0.344
		Vn students and trainers	0.0	
Lokalize	0.6	Au students and trainers	0.8	1.000
		Vn students and trainers	0.4	

* The difference is significant at $p \leq 0.05$.

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Chapter 12

Vietnamese Higher Education, Student Identity, and Human Capital Futures: Who Do We Believe or Imagine University Students to Be?



Jonathan J. Felix

Abstract Students make up the most sizeable number of persons at any educational institution. In this chapter, I maintain the ‘idea’ of who or what a student might be, in the case of Vietnamese higher education, is crucial to sustainable human capital development. My aim in this chapter is not to explicitly state what the social identities of Vietnamese higher education students are at present or what they should be. In contrast, the purpose of this chapter is to make a case for the importance of human capital through higher education by considering the ways in which students are conceptualised.

Introduction

Surveying the discourse on Vietnamese higher education, human capital development remains an important aspect of the country’s potentials and futures. The higher education sector plays a key role in these realisations undoubtedly. Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính has repeatedly stated the importance of human capital development as a national and regional priority, with efforts needed in the education sector to ‘build strategies and plans, institutions and mechanisms, and standards and criteria’ (VietNam News, 2021; VietnamPlus, 2021a, 2021b). Similarly, the business community in Vietnam has supported the necessity of human capital development through education as an important aspect of social and economic development (Dinh, 2018; Duong, 2019; Phuong, 2021; Tran et al., 2021). The importance of higher education and its relationship to human capital raises the matter of who the constituents of human capital might be. This ontological consideration precedes

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© The Author(s) 2024
Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_12

economic and social potentials through ‘who’ rather than ‘what’ can be considered human capital. The concepts we use to identify or describe large groups of persons can inadvertently obscure the complexities of such categorisations.

My aim with this chapter is to discuss the importance of higher education students, not as an abstract category, but as key players in the development of potentials and futures within the institutional setting of the academy. I make use of the phrase ‘potentials and futures’ in the plural here to designate the multiplicity of opportunities available to these students and other stakeholders of the higher education ecosystem. I reassert openness and contingency of the future based on the unstable nature of modernity as a historical and social condition (Felix, 2020, 2021b). The COVID-19 pandemic is just one of several other global events that have only accentuated this instability, as I have also argued elsewhere (Felix, 2021a). Students make up the most sizable number of persons at any educational institution worldwide. As significant as university students are in Vietnam, they remain an under-researched sector of the local population.

Existing studies on higher education in Vietnam do not typically focus on students directly, but rather on the functioning of academic and administrative systems within universities. A handful of scholars have observed the dearth of student-centred, education-based research in Vietnam (Nghia & Tran, 2021; Tran, 2020, 2022). Few make explicit mention of issues regarding student agency (Pham, 2019, 2020; Pham, 2020; Tran & Bui, 2021; Tran et al., 2022), as greater emphasis is placed on the institutional structures students inhabit, rather than agency they exercise as subjects (Nghia et al., 2020). In this chapter, I argue that higher education students represent the potentials and futures of Vietnam in developing its modern, post-industrial ambitions. Moreover, I contend that the social identities of students understood as ‘the category and attributes that experience proves’ (Smith, 2006, p. 85) are crucial to the potentials and futures of higher education in Vietnam and beyond.

Throughout this chapter, I raise reflexive questions concerning higher education stakeholders. I do so with a view of extending the traditional concept of human capital in order to rethink issues of higher education policy and practice. It is needful, I offer, to avoid the conceptual trappings that come with discussing a substantial number of persons who constitute a particular group. My aim in this chapter is not to explicitly state what the social identities of higher education students in Vietnam are at present or what they should be. In contrast, the purpose of this chapter is to make a case for the importance of human capital through higher education by considering how students are conceptualised. If the language of Vietnamese higher education policy discourse conceptualises learners as passive or deprioritises their role as change agents—what kind of future can we expect?

Generalising Students

The expanded understanding of human capital I offer later in this chapter is drawn from scholars of Vietnamese higher education. While much of their work does not directly engage with the topic of human capital, they highlight the significance of student identity, while not explicitly stating the concept (Pham, 2019, 2020; Phan, 2017; Tran, 2013, 2015, 2016). My contribution to offering an expanded understanding of human capital as a concept considers student identity as an important aspect of how this develops through higher education policy and practice. Student identity is important, partly because of the significance of both the role of education and identity as separate topics within various disciplines across the spectrum of the humanities and social sciences (Brooks et al., 2013; Gleason, 2018). While sociologists of both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have engaged with the notion of identity (Turner, 2010), Ervin Goffman's work is some of the most cited and influential on the topic (Burns, 1992; Goffman, 1956; Rousseau, 2014; Smith, 2006; Turner, 2014). For Goffman, *identity has to do with the ways persons are identified or categorised, which includes the attributes an individual may have in a personal or contextual sense* (Smith, 2006). Conceptual precision regarding the notion of student identity can mitigate problematic generalisations that emerge when engaging with sizeable demographics.

An example of problems inherent in generalisations was evident in the early twentieth century when the emerging phenomena of people's engagement with the mass media became an area of scholarly interest. At this time, particularly in Western countries, the 'effects tradition' began formation as sociologists and other researchers turned their attention to the mass media's effect on audiences, which resulted in the widespread notion of audiences as a homogeneous mass whose engagement with the media was direct, uniform and uncontested (Park & Pooley, 2008; Pooley, 2021). Thinkers such as Raymond Bauer, Joseph Klapper, Russell Neuman and Lauren Guggenheim made important contributions towards this understanding. Yet, their influence is only overshadowed by the popularity of persons such as Harold Lasswell in addition to critical theorists such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and others from the Institute for Social Research, better known as The Frankfurt School (Littlejohn et al., 2017). During the late to mid-twentieth century, scholars such as Stuart Hall challenged essentialist notions of audiences by highlighting individual agency, its collective functioning and the situatedness of audiences (Durham & Kellner, 2006). This wave of research for this period onward was underlined by the importance of social identity in shaping one's agency and practical outcomes. It was no longer reasonable to talk about audiences while overlooking how their social identities contributed to their engagement with the media.

I argue that students are hardly conceptualised in education research in Vietnam with the same nuance that people now regard 'audiences' as a conceptual category in other disciplines. The historic shift in both academic and market-based research on the mass media in moving away from the 'passive audience' view of human subjects to the 'active audience' view did not happen on its own (Griffith, 2012; Jensen,

2021). Among the many reasons that can be offered for the departure from and discrediting of the ‘magic bullet’ or ‘hypodermic needle’ view of the media, was that an overgeneralisation was offered, in part due to quantitative analysis (Barker, 2004; Grossberg, 2010). The result was a reductionist view of people’s complex engagement with equally complex texts, processes and political economies which in turn led to this issue of abstraction. Higher education research in Vietnam has the likelihood of oversimplification if scholars within the humanities and social sciences do not actively challenge disciplinary stagnancy which might masquerade as epistemic certainty (Nguyen & Hutnyk, 2020).

Citizenship, Social Mobility and Workforce Development

Persons’ attainment of higher education, I posit, is intimately related to the concept of human capital. This is generally understood in economic terms concerning persons’ labour productivity based on their learning or skills development. Human capital is an important aspect of modern education institutions at all levels as scholars have linked this aspect of higher education institutions to twentieth-century developments in the economics of labour within industrialised, often market-oriented states as an outcome of the social and historic condition of modernity with roots in seventeenth-century Enlightenment ideas (Bhambra, 2007; Nghia et al., 2020). In contrast to the standard definitions of human capital that exist (Holborow, 2012; Martin, 2019; Nafukho et al., 2004), I here provide an extension to this concept. Specifically, I advance that *human capital pertains to the capabilities of individuals and groups, expressed via their knowledge, skills, experiences, and outputs and how this corresponds with the intersections of citizenship, social mobility, and workforce development* (Kataoka et al., 2020; Pretorius & Macaulay, 2021; The World Bank Group, 2020; Tomlinson, 2017). There is a warrant for the expansion of human capital as a concept and I will offer a brief justification.

Firstly, while the concept of human capital has been observed by scholars as being inherently flawed in several respects, no suitable alternatives exist to supplant the concept altogether (Martin, 2019; Nafukho et al., 2004; Tan, 2014; Tran et al., 2021). This explains its enduring use in economic and policy-based discourses the world over. Next, human capital development typically entails persons’ educational attainment, which is always situated within bounded systems. In this regard, education practice occurs within a defined social and historical context and in the case of higher education, the nation-state is usually the primary locus for analysing or deconstructing modern education systems. It is also difficult to disassociate matters of citizenship whenever reference is made to any nation-state. This is especially the case because higher education functions as a socialising agent within modern societies which are primarily organised through the structure of the nation-state (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005; Trinidad et al., 2021). Lastly, class distinctions play a key role in the educational participation of individuals and groups especially given the correlation between one’s educational attainment and various capitals that are

accrued in the process, such as social, economic and cultural capital (Johnes, 2019; Mccaig & Mccaig, 2018; Mok & Jiang, 2018). Furthermore, education plays a role in determining one's position in the class-based hierarchies of modern societies.

Many students in Vietnam internally migrate for the purpose of education (Gavonel, 2017; UNESCO et al., 2018). The cost–benefit of migration for these students relates to the sense of upward mobility to be gained because of their social participation in educational attainment (Gavonel, 2017; Phan & Doan, 2020a). Throughout 2020 to the present, Vietnam has also seen another kind of reverse migration, this time by university students studying overseas. This included persons who had their studies curtailed as a result of the pandemic, or others who completed their course of studies and decided to return home (Kim & Trong, 2020; Long, 2020; Van Nguyen et al., 2020; Phan, 2021; Phan & Thanh, 2020). My previous work briefly explored the possibilities of these education migrants and their role in human capital development as defined earlier. I raised questions regarding how local teaching and learning be affected by the return of so many foreign-educated expatriates and how local higher education institutions might equip current and future students with resilience and relevance for the post-COVID-19 world (Felix, 2021a). However, I also ask how these individuals might reintegrate into local society with capitals that can be mobilised. What potentials and futures lay on the horizon for Vietnamese higher education?

Potentials and Futures

The idea of potentials and futures point towards desirable and disadvantageous ends as equally viable outcomes. As mentioned earlier, a great deal of research on Vietnamese higher education overlooks students who are the central focus of this ecosystem. Few scholars identify the primacy of their perspectives in teaching and learning reforms, including other areas of education policy and practice (Nghia & Tran, 2021; Tran, 2020). Students are the driving force of higher education and the actors who will make the potentials and futures of Vietnam a reality. There is great value in engaging with this demographic and much is at stake if they are overlooked or misapprehended. From a total national population of upwards of 100 million persons, higher education students stand at an estimated number of over 2 million persons (Kataoka et al., 2020; Le, 2022). There are a few key points that can be raised regarding the significance of both universities and the students who populate them.

Firstly, university students in Vietnam are an important demographic, especially given the sheer number of higher education institutions in Vietnam. Varying estimates are approximately upwards of 220 since 2015 (Truong et al., 2021), with a documented total exceeding 420 from this period, comprising both State-run and private institutions (Nguyen & Tran, 2019; Phan & Doan, 2020a). Secondly, Vietnamese higher education students are meant to exceed the current figures of 'highly skilled' or 'trained workers' and contribute to the growth of both national and global talent

indexes. Since the turn of the century, investment in education has increased remarkably in Vietnam, through local–foreign partnerships and other homegrown ventures, to bolster the national workforce, innovation and labour productivity (Nguyen & Tran, 2018, 2019; Tran & Marginson, 2018). Thirdly, the value of university students lies not only in their sizeable numbers but also in what might have been considered to be the ‘promise of education’ as realised through this demographic (van’t Land et al., 2021; Yinger, 2005). This realisation is partly due to the productive uses of their knowledge, skills, experiences, creativity and more in the face of challenges and opportunities that characterise this stage in late modernity in Vietnam and the world over.

Global metrics on Vietnam situate higher education as important concerning the notion of human capital in the traditional sense, but also in the alternative view which I elaborate later in this chapter. Traditional notions of human capital in the literature entail one’s capacity to earn an income through productive means (Ray et al., 2022), and the relationship between schooling, literacy and employment (Llorca-Jaña et al., 2022). Human capital while being a predominantly quantitative concept is challenging to measure empirically (Diebolt & Hippe, 2022). This is because there are ‘many different possibilities to measure human capital’, however, scholars commonly opt for an ‘education-based approach’ in their measurement (Diebolt & Hippe, 2022, p. 10). A 2020 report on human capital in Vietnam notes that ‘as Vietnam’s economy grows, it needs to invest more in higher levels of education and lifelong learning to ensure students exit the system with the knowledge and skills relevant to labour market needs’ (Kataoka et al., 2020, p. 6). The 2020 Human Capital Index observes that in countries like Vietnam ‘human capital development has not yet matched the potential that one would anticipate, given these countries’ wealth’ (The World Bank Group, 2020). The 2023 Global Talent Competitiveness Index ranks Vietnam 75 out of 133 nations, considering a range of factors, including those related to higher education (Lanvin et al., 2023). Local metrics tell a similar story as a 2019 labour force survey highlighted that young Vietnamese accounted for over 42% of unemployed workers (Truc, 2021).

The Promise of Education for Vietnamese Students

Other local studies on Vietnamese youth feature a very interesting picture. Such findings tell of a disconnect between the intention and actuality of higher education, but also the actuality and potential of the students (British Council, 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Sen, 2019). For these individuals, their social participation in education attainment may be seen as complicated discourses of engagement and disengagement. A major 2020 study by the British Council spotlighted some of these entanglements as part of its Next Generation research report series, highlighting young people in Vietnam (British Council, 2020). In this study, Vietnamese youth generally had a positive view of educational attainment, however, this would be influenced by future opportunities, parental approval and personal interest. At the same time, the research data

revealed a market-oriented sensibility regarding the value of education. Sustainable career-related concerns were a matter of interest, particularly in meeting the demands of living in the twenty-first century and in the age of Industry 5.0.

Most participants in this study identified as 'feel(ing) disconnected from broader, national issues' (British Council, 2020, p. 66) and a sense of detachment regarding their civic engagement. I believe this correlates with changing attitudes regarding individualistic versus communal lifestyle choices as a possible result of the influence of globalisation and the erasure of tradition under the ethos of modernity (Duara, 2015; Weiming, 2014). Vietnamese youth, many of whom are higher education students, are part of Vietnam's efforts in human capital development. The progress and well-being of these individuals and the institutions they are affiliated with are inextricably linked to the trajectory of the nation socially, culturally, politically and otherwise. What I would like to point out is that there is no reason to believe that educational attainment and educational engagement are synonymous. If market-oriented sensibilities are common and young people in this context report an experience of detachment from broader issues as these occur within the local society, what might this tell us about the socialising work of higher education? Is it reasonable to believe that the potentials and futures regarding higher education can materialise without connection to the entanglements of Vietnamese youth?

With the so-called 'promise of education' in Vietnam, the potentials and futures to emerge from this new state of affairs is yet to be seen. Post-Doi Moi, post-COVID-19 and post-global Vietnam, is a Vietnam with an open view of the world and a watching world looking back at Vietnam all the same. Higher education matters in this setting not only because of what education does but also because of what it represents. Undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic has been a world-changing event that presents another range of challenges and opportunities for higher education across the world, including Vietnam, as research into Vietnamese higher education has been of considerable interest to both local and international scholars alike for several years (London, 2021; Nguyen & Shah, 2019; Phan & Doan, 2020b; Phan et al., 2019; Statista, 2021; Tran, 2018; Tran & Marginson, 2018). The impact of this pandemic is unprecedented as it has made an indelible mark on what can still be considered the early years of the twenty-first century, leading to what might be considered a recalibration of priorities and outcomes as the world comes to terms with disruption and instability characterise the 'new normal' as a present-continuous situation.

The Value of Higher Education in the Post-COVID-19 World

While institutions of higher education across the globe have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in very different ways based on an array of factors, each response, I again argue, is underpinned by revisiting the notion of values (Felix, 2021a). Or perhaps, the notion of values has become much more prominent due to the destabilising nature of the seemingly never-ending public health concerns brought about by the

pandemic in addition to other instances sociopolitical unrest across the globe? Years before the COVID-19 virus became a day-to-day reality, scholars of education have discussed the importance of values that underpin higher education theory and practice (Harland & Pickering, 2011; Kay et al., 2010). Thinkers have long envisaged futures for higher education beyond the neoliberal agenda. Their visions were underpinned by seeing education as a holistic human transformation rather than a commodity. Harland and Pickering (2011) argue that values are inseparable from social practices and the academy and its stakeholders might 'ask challenging questions about what is a good society and what is of quality in human nature' (p. 100). Such questions consider the role of university students and their relationship to the kind of good a society might see beyond their participation in the workforce.

For universities in the post-COVID-19 world, the question of values becomes increasingly important in three specific ways. Firstly, there is the question of what might be the value of higher education in the post-COVID-19 world. Next, what may be the core values fostered by higher education institutions? Finally, what kinds of values are generated by the recipients of higher education—this being students? My use of the term, 'values' has been a subject featured in previous work and could also be understood again here in two distinct ways (Felix, 2021a). The first has to do with the negotiation of priorities or ideas held in high regard. Originating from this, the second distinction involves the more tangible outcomes of the former, better understood as value creation. I believe that both are important in making sense of the social practice of higher education. Harland and Pickering (2011) state '(t)he idea of the university is thus important because it has potential as a powerful shaping force in society' (p. 101). Potentials and futures can make for a better Vietnam in time to come or an impending reality that is far worse than the present.

A nation's education system is a major social institution in any modern society being more than providing skills for employment (Brooks et al., 2013; Ma & Cai, 2021; Rousseau, 2014). A skills-oriented or occupation-focussed conception of higher education is pervasive, to say the least. However, this is a problematic paradigm for framing education policy and practice. There is more to education than workplace competence. Education is important in the development of citizenship and in helping individuals and groups attain greater social mobility (Bergan & Damian, 2010; Pham & Saltmarsh, 2013). There is also good reason for higher education to be reframed as a systemic approach to human capital development, considering the ways in which citizenship and social mobility are part of this process. As societies across the globe face the realities of the post-COVID world, it is worth considering *who* exactly will be navigating this uncharted territory. Student-focussed research is less common in higher education literature in Vietnam, with one local scholar noting '(t)he perspectives of students are important in the context of VHE, where top-down approaches and centralisation in curriculum and assessment predominate. It provides insights into the contemporary situation of teaching and learning in VHE

from a ground-up perspective' (Tran, 2020). Literature on Vietnamese higher education focuses on areas of policy and practice with few studies connected with the idea of student identity. I believe here opportunity lies in equipping university students for post-COVID-19 realities, but in terms of the way we think about them in the first place.

Conclusions

At the start of this chapter, I referred to the work of Nghia and Tran (2021) as their research explored student experiences in teaching and learning reforms in Vietnamese higher education. In closing this chapter, I would like to draw on some of their insights which correspond with my contribution here; these insights are significant insofar as students are presented in high resolution, with a degree of texture that aids in reinforcing the importance of student identity in higher education policy and practice. Nghia and Tran (2021) note the following key points:

Voices of students, being the youngest and the least powerful among internal stakeholders in higher education, are often not heard of in decision making, even for those changes that directly affect them such as teaching and learning reforms...All of the teaching and learning reforms in Vietnamese higher education reported in this book, and possibly also the case of many higher education systems in the world now, converge at one point: shifting the leading role in and responsibility for learning to students. Indeed, in higher education and other levels of education, students are the key agents of their learning process because they learn for themselves (pp. 248–249).

While student voices are important, I posit that preceding this is *what* or *who* we understand students to *be* in the first place. As key agents within the higher education ecosystem, I assert the ways in which students are conceptualised have immense implications for higher education policy and practice. The identities of students are an important aspect of human capital in the social practice of higher education that I have aimed to argue here. I believe it is misguided to think of education in general and higher education specifically as an automatic or autonomous process. Engaging with matters of human agency and the discourses at work in any sociohistorical context shapes the articulation of higher education. It is a gross misstep to think of human capital development in terms of numbers, metrics, policies and strategies and overlook the largest group of persons who constitute the higher education ecosystem—that being students. Research on student identity in Vietnam is a starting point for new discourses on sustainable human capital development in the post-COVID-19 world.

I maintain that the 'idea' of who or what a student might be in general and/or as a defined group, in the case of Vietnamese higher education students, is important to consider. Peterson (2021) observed that '(t)he use of single terms implicitly hypersimplifies what are extraordinarily diverse and complex phenomena' (p. 169). Abstractifying students as a conceptual category is unhelpful in the critical work needed in researching this demographic as with any other (Peterson, 2021; Sowell,

2012). When large demographics are the focus of any research endeavour, I believe there is a common temptation to draw sweeping conclusions without regard for nuance. Such an approach may be fitting concerning some aspects of the shared reality human beings inhabit. Yet, it is problematic to overlook factors of geographic, historical, cultural and social distance which account for finer distinctions in research findings and subsequent conceptualisations. Even before Peterson (2021), for several years Sowell (2012) warned of the dangers of reductionism in seeing people through the convenience of abstractions. It is easier to think of students as a homogenous and compliant group without difference or nuance than to consider the relationship between their social identity and the agency they might exercise within a particular setting. The development of sociological frames of references through the likes of demographics, psychographics and birth cohorts demonstrates that human subjects are far too complex to be uncritically aggregated en masse in modern societies (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Thi et al., 2021). In my view, abstractions are premised upon generalisations and oversimplifications, which are certain errors to be avoided, if one looks back at early twentieth-century history as I have outlined earlier.

As mentioned before, students typically outnumber teaching and administrative staff in a higher education environment. I believe it is worth considering factors and forces that shape student identity and how this might relate to the social structure of a university environment. The role, significance and formation of student identity as observed by scholars is an important aspect of human capital—particularly as this relates to the ‘promise of education’ as some scholars point out—which entails ‘preparing people for life and work’ (Brown et al., 2020, p. 132). The potentials and futures of higher education and human capital in Vietnam can be realised sustainably by acknowledging the importance of concepts used to define present and future realities. It is problematic to conceptualise students in abstract terms. With a problematic conceptual starting point, there is also the potential for undesirable social outcomes, such as low labour productivity or a lack of civic engagement. The neoliberalisation of higher education and the overemphasis on occupational competence pose a challenge to how students are conceptualised, which in turn undermines the potentials and futures of the societies to which they belong. The higher education students of Vietnam today are the potentials and futures for the nation in time to come. Who do we believe or imagine these university students to be?

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Chapter 13

Engagement of Vietnamese Religious Communities in National Education: Resources, Challenges, and Opportunities



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Abstract With 43 legal religious organizations and an estimated 26.5 million religious adherents, Vietnam has had a very diversified religious landscape. After the Renovation (*Đổi Mới*), the Vietnam government's policy of socializing education has encouraged religious groups to participate in the national education. Our chapter outlines this policy before focusing on the contributions of certain religious organizations to developing national education. Then, our research identifies significant challenges faced by religious organizations in the field of national education, as well as the critical advantages they could have had to compete in this area. Toward the end of the chapter, we recommend that religious topics be included in the curriculum for all public schools.

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Introduction

Beyond Vietnam, it could be said that many religious communities have participated in the formal and informal national education of many countries over the course of history. Nevertheless, such participation of religious communities in national education primarily relies on the relationship between religious organizations and the states. For instance, the Catholic community played a pivotal role in education in France when the French state was closely associated with the Catholic Church at the time before the 1789 Revolution. To some extent, their churches functioned in a similar capacity as schools. However, France established a secular state following the 1789 Revolution. Its first secularization law was approved in 1882, followed by the Law of 1905 regarding the separation between the church and the state. Since then, the Catholic Church has been excluded from the national school system in France. Based on those secularization laws, the secular principle was tightly established in terms of national education, in that the French government played a role as a privileged provider of national education, while the Catholic Church paid attention to religious education within its purview. In other words, the Catholic Church was not allowed to participate in public education in France (Willaime, 2007). Some European countries and others have also adopted this secular model of state, particularly regarding the relationship between religion and national education.

Nevertheless, the separation degree between religious communities and national education has been variable in different countries. Even though their states are based on secular principles, certain Southeast Asian countries keep collaborations with religious organizations in national education activities. In other words, religious organizations are permitted to participate in national education under state legislation. For example, although Indonesia is a secular state, the 1989 National Education Act of Indonesia recognizes that the Madrasah (religious day school), one of three types of Islamic schools (the Pesantren; the Madrasah; and the Sekolah Islam) in this country, is a part of Indonesia's national education system. As such, the Indonesian government takes responsibility to improve the quality of those schools better while remaining the Madrasah as a type of Islamic school (Zuhdi, 2006).

In the case of Vietnam, following the August Revolution of 1945, the State of Vietnam (in North Vietnam, then in unified Vietnam) has followed the model of a secular state and taken Marxism, a form of atheistic philosophy, as its primary ideology. However, regarding the relationship between religious communities and society, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) and the State of Vietnam have strongly encouraged religious communities to participate in many aspects covering from society, and culture to education. Such encouragement of the State of Vietnam to religious communities is part of the State's macro policy, which seeks to unite and take advantage of all social strata and religious groups for building and developing the nation (Nguyễn Đức Lữ, 2013b). The VCP and the State of Vietnam hold the opinion that as religious adherents are also state citizens, they can fulfill their civic responsibilities to the nation by helping to construct and develop it. For certain religious communities, participating in social development also aids them in pursuing

numerous goals, including the successful implementation of religious morals and teachings as well as national patriotism. As a result, they consider this social engagement as a great opportunity to advance their religious values and consolidate their position in the society of Vietnam, which is now governed by communists.

Specifically, in terms of the education sector, intending to galvanize social forces to promote national education after Renovation, the VCP and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) have pursued the policy of socialization of education. Such policy has kicked off a salient legal background resulting in the engagement of various organizations, including religious organizations, in national educational activities. Vietnam is characterized by great religious diversity with 43 legal religious organizations, belonging to 16 different religions, and having an estimated 26.5 million believers, and many religious communities as such potentially provide an enormous resource for the development of national education in Vietnam. So, those religious groups are also considered in the policy of socialization of education over time. Engagement in national education is one of the strategies that religious organizations in Vietnam are using to not only enable their social responsibility but more importantly to revitalize their religious meanings and morals such as compassion, charity, equity, justice, and so on.

Against such background, this paper intends to present an overview of the perception of the VCP and the SRV toward the participation of religious organizations in national education after 1986. The paper then reviews the current activities of participants from religious organizations in the national education of Vietnam. Such activities will be demonstrated by statistics (school, class, teacher, attendance, major, and so on). Among the educational projects of religious groups, our writing turns the spotlight on participation in national educational activities done by religious organizations such as the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, the Catholic Church, and some domestic religious institutions. Our writing finally tries to shed new light on what key challenges religious organizations have faced in the field of Vietnamese national education, and what significant advantages they would have owned to compete in such a field.

The Party and State Policies on Religion and Education After Đổi Mới

To renovate the country, in 1986, the VCP launched a reform agenda called *Đổi Mới*. In the matters of religious affairs, the VCP achieved a turning point that was marked by *Resolution No. 24 dated 16 October 1990 On enhancing religious work in the new situation (Về tăng cường công tác tôn giáo trong tình hình mới)*. This Resolution foregrounds three key innovative points of the Vietnamese political system's epistemology of religion. These points are: (1) Religion has existed for a long term; (2) Belief and religion are spiritual needs for a group of citizens; (3) Religious ethics has had considerable points that will be suitable for the construction of a new society

in Vietnam (Nguyễn Đức Lữ, 2013a). This resolution demonstrates that the VCP has shifted its approach to religion from being mainly concerned with the ontological aspect of religions (the main question concerns what is religion and its nature) to a more pragmatic-functional (the main concern is what religions can contribute to the betterment of society and the diversity of cultures). In line with such an approach, the VCP focuses on investigating religious affairs from cultural and sociological viewpoints. Setting aside political-ideological concerns, religion has been viewed as a cultural and social phenomenon in the newly focused points of view of the VCP. Then, no longer restricted to the realm of spiritual life, religious groups are acknowledged as social organizations. The organizations as such are also expected to partake in nation-building and the betterment of society. This significant shift in the approach to religion of the VCP was codified into specific rules that have created fertile ground for religious communities to actively engage with and blossom in many social sectors.

In the education sector, the participation of religious communities in the national education system has been enabled in the course of the socialization policy that was implemented by the VCP and the SRV. The Objective of this policy is to galvanize all social forces into nation-building. At the national meeting in 1988, the Central Committee of Science and Education (Ban Khoa Giáo Trung ương) initiated the idea of a socialization policy and considered such a policy as a strategy to reform the education and science sectors (Phạm Giang, 2020). The 8th National Congress of the VCP in 1996 required the VCP and the SRV to particularize and legalize the policy on the socialization of education and training (Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam, 2015). To set up an explicit legal framework for this policy, the Vietnamese government issued Resolution No. 90/1997 dated 21 August 1997 whose regulations encompassed many areas from health, culture, and sports to education (Hayden & Chinh, 2020). This resolution set crucial legal guidance for several social organizations that have desired to engage in the educational field. Nevertheless, the role of religious institutions in such a field was modest in the 1990s. Though the Law on Education in 1998 regulated that every organization and individual was facilitated to develop education, the absence of special clauses to guide religious participation in national educational activities occasionally confused religious organizations. Only one clause, namely Clause 16, stated explicitly that religious propagation and practices were not allowed to happen in schools and educational facilities of the national education system (Quốc hội, 1998). In other words, this clause emphasized the SRV's secular principle which was to separate religious bodies and the State concerning the provision of the national education system. Nevertheless, when put into practice in the context of Vietnam, such a principle does not manifest the extreme separation between the Church and the State. In reality, the SRV has remained neutral in that the SRV, guided by a collaborative spirit, can cooperate and work closely with churches, enable religious bodies to participate in many sectors including education, and set an equal legal status for either religiously inspired organizations or other socially engaged groups.

Through the implementation of *Resolution No. 25 dated 12 March 2003 On religious work (Về công tác tôn giáo)*, the VCP boosted relevant government bodies to promote religious engagement in the socialization of education, healthcare, culture,

and society. This participation, as the Resolution directed, must observe two principles. Firstly, the SRV encourages legal religious organizations to enter the education sector considering their principles and the State's laws. Secondly, adherents of different faiths on behalf of citizenship are encouraged and facilitated to participate in educational activities (Ban Chấp Hành Trung ương, 2003). To legally specify such points of view of Resolution No. 25, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly launched the Ordinance on Belief and Religion (Pháp lệnh về tín ngưỡng, tôn giáo) in 2004. According to this ordinance, clergies and believers-cum-citizens were encouraged to organize educational activities under the law (Ủy ban Thường vụ Quốc hội, 2004). Moreover, the SRV would enable religious organizations to support the development of kindergartens and ensure the well-being of vulnerable children (Nguyễn Đức Lữ, 2013b). In addition, *Decree No. 69/2008 dated 30 May 2008 On promotion policy on the socialization of education, vocational training, healthcare, culture, sport, and environment (Về chính sách khuyến khích xã hội hóa đối với các hoạt động trong lĩnh vực giáo dục, dạy nghề, y tế, văn hóa, thể thao, môi trường)* affords religious organizations and individuals the chance to open vocational schools.

In recent times, religious participation in education has continuously come under the scrutiny of the government authorities of Vietnam. In an attempt to refine the draft of the Law on Belief and Religion (Luật Tín ngưỡng, Tôn giáo), in 2016, delegates of the National Assembly of Vietnam ever debated whether or not the law should specifically regulate the engagement of religious bodies in education. There emerged two arguments for this issue. On the one hand, most delegates suggested that the law could have specific articles to accord religious organizations equal participation in conducting educational activities as other social groups (Minh Thu, 2016). On the other hand, some delegates were concerned with potential consequences as the law allows religious institutions to participate thoroughly in the national educational landscape. Such open regulations would possibly lead to proselytization activities and religious rituals in the space of classrooms. These delegates thus suggested that if the Law on Belief and Religion was to be issued, it could not set any specific clause of religious participation in education. Instead, religious institutions should comply with regulations of laws on education while participating in the national education system. Following this supposition was deemed to create equality between religious organizations and other social ones (Minh Thu, 2016). The Law on Belief and Religion enacted on 18 November 2016 has eventually permitted religious engagement in the national education system, but such an engagement must adhere closely to relevant legal regulations (Quốc hội, 2016). Specifically, to be involved in the national educational field, religious bodies, and individuals must adhere mainly to the laws on education in Vietnam, not simply relying on the Law on Belief and Religion alone. Such laws are currently the Law on Education in 2019, the Law on Higher Education in 2012, the Law on Higher Education (revision) in 2018, and the Law on Vocational Education in 2014.

The above laws retain the secular education model in that the Vietnamese national education system operates under the control of the VCP and the SRV. The Secularization of the educational system explicitly rests on the principle that religious propagation and practices are forbidden in the classroom. The curriculum of schools

within the national educational system does not also have any specific religiously related subjects. The State plays the role of a host in the national education system and only shares the provision of national education with individuals and groups who conduct educational activities on behalf of their civil rights, not as representatives of their faiths and churches. In other words, every educational enterprise in such a system must follow the laws and be under the direction of relevant governmental institutions. Religious individuals and organizations can freely participate in national educational activities, but the privilege of management of educational activities and curriculums of schools belongs to the State, not to the churches.

Recently, encouragement of participation from religious groups in the socialization of education has coincided with the emergence of the concept of “religious resources” (*nguồn lực tôn giáo*) which has evolved into one of the hegemonic discourses of religion in the official media and communication of the VCP and the SRV, and the Vietnamese official scholarship as well. This discourse stems from the fact that the VCP and the SRV retain the encouragement of values of religion and encourage religious communities to bring their resources into developing the country. The Political Report of the 13th National Congress of the VCP confirmed that cultural and ethical values of religions and resources of religions are encouraged to contribute to developing the country (Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam, 2021). To promote this direction of the 13th National Congress of the VCP, the project for supporting information and propagation on national and religious affairs (Đề án hỗ trợ thông tin, tuyên truyền về dân tộc, tôn giáo) was launched by the Prime minister of the SRV on 21 February 2019. To direct this project, the Central Propaganda and Training Commission (Ban Tuyên giáo Trung ương) of the VCP required the Designated Representation of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam to add information on ethnic and religious affairs to the curriculums of schools following each educational level (Ban Tuyên giáo Trung ương, 2021). Noticeably, the purpose of this project is not ultimately for the religious instruction of churches but rather to provide learners in schools with the guidelines of the VCP and the policies of the SRV on religious affairs. Furthermore, the instruction regarding religiously related subjects comes in the form of an academic exercise, rather than a confessional religious education based on the catechisms of the churches. The project as such may also be expected to build up respect for ethical and cultural values of religions among students and the general public.

Tapping the Potential Religious Resources in the Education Sector

In the context of religious diversity, many Vietnamese people are affiliated with various religious traditions, which, in turn, creates substantial manpower and resources for religious communities. According to the consensus of the Governmental Committee of Religious Affairs (Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ), by December

2020 there were roughly 26.5 million religious followers which constituted 27% of the total population of Vietnam, and these adherents belonged to 41 state-recognized and licensed religious organizations of 16 different religions in Vietnam (Ban Tôn giáo Chính phủ, 2021). By December 2021, the total number of state-recognized religious organizations in Vietnam increased to 43. Having many followers gathered by religion-based networks, the religious bodies are certainly at a great advantage in terms of human and social capital. These institutions then can effectively mobilize their members to foster other capital resources such as finance, facility, and ethical values to support many of their activities including participation in national education.

In possession of potential resources, religious communities are also encouraged by the reformation policy of the VCP and the SRV to contribute to developing national education. In fact, in the early 1990s, based on the reform policy of the VCP and the SRV on religious affairs, religious organizations such as Buddhist Sangha and Catholic Church initially organized some volunteer-based literacy classes (*lớp học tình thương*) that targeted vulnerable children who were poor, orphaned, disabled, and homeless. In line with the socialization policy in 1997, religious organizations in Vietnam have had significant opportunities to participate in the national education sector. As the Ordinance on Belief and Religion in 2004 initiated specific regulations on religious participation in the national education sector, religious bodies have eagerly established new private kindergartens and volunteer-based literacy classes. After 10 years of enacting that ordinance, there was a surge in the number of private kindergartens and preschool classes established and operated by religious groups and individuals. The official consensus in November 2014 indicated that 269 kindergartens and 905 preschool educational groups and classes as such were formed. The number accounted for 14.7% of the total number of private kindergartens in the country in the same year (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). These kindergartens and preschool classes were scattered largely in Southern provinces such as Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Lâm Đồng, Đồng Nai, and Hồ Chí Minh. With more than 12,594 children, enrollment in such kindergartens and preschool classes constituted 3.06% of the total kindergarten enrollment in the country (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). These educational bases have accepted children whose parents either belong to religious communities or non-religious ones (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). In other words, the kindergartens and preschools of religious organizations and individuals provide equal educational opportunities and care to every child regardless of religious affiliation and family background. So, the religious status of individuals does not prevent them from receiving benefits from these educational facilities under the sponsorship of religious organizations and individuals.

Concerning personnel administration, teachers of these organizations as such were recruited from both outside and inside the religious communities. The teachers sign contracts with managers of kindergartens, but normally teachers who are not monks and nuns receive a monthly salary. Many teachers, who lead a monastic life, are willing to dedicate their time to work, unpaid. The pedagogical expertise of

such teachers follows the standards and guidance of relevant government agencies under the direction of the Department of Education and Training and the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam.

Religious organizations such as the Buddhist Sangha and the Catholic Church even renounced their land property rights at many places to build private kindergartens. These organizations hold fund-raising events to improve the quality of care and education of children. In addition to raising financial funds inside their communities, the religious institutions also appeal to outside sponsors to be involved in support of educational activities. As a result, many kindergartens were built with an investment cost estimated to be dozens of billion VND. Many vulnerable children could have access to education in such kindergartens (Ban Thường trực UB TWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). Thanks to the sponsorship of religious organizations and individuals, not only the quality but also the scale of many private educational facilities were enhanced. In 2014, such facilities had roughly 3,620 classrooms, and most of them met rigorous standards of solid structure construction and semi-solid structure construction (Ban Thường trực UB TWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). Learning resources such as textbooks, teaching aids, educational toys, and pieces of equipment have been used to teach children under the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and Training. According to the evaluation of the relevant governmental agencies in 2014, ten kindergartens of religious organizations and individuals achieved the national preschool standard (Ban Thường trực UB TWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014).

Apart from establishing kindergartens, religious organizations have engaged in vocational training that yielded more skilled workers. There are around 12 vocational training schools run by religious organizations such as the Catholic Church and Buddhist Sangha. These schools are mainly scattered in the central and southern regions of Vietnam and offer long-term and short-term training programs in a wide range of vocations for thousands of learners (Nguyễn Hữu Bắc, 2021). Besides, there are many short-term vocational training classes run by religious organizations to enhance the working skills of laborers.

Main Religious Players in Vietnamese National Education

The Case of the Buddhist Sangha

During the period of the feudal dynasties of Vietnam, the education system mimicked the Chinese Confucian model where the Confucian literati played the main role. But in the context of the coexistence of Three Religious Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism), many Buddhist clergies embracing Confucian doctrines also played a certain role in the education of intellectuals in society. Such monks and nuns were either preachers of Dharma or informal teachers to instruct cultural norms and morals (Nguyễn Công Lý, 2015). In the early half of the twentieth century,

the Buddhist Sangha focused on Buddhist education as religious education rather than national education. In the years after 1954, specifically the years 1964 to 1975, Buddhist communities played a part in national educational activities from preschool, primary, secondary, and high schools to undergraduate levels in South Vietnam. While preschool facilities were situated in the Buddhist orphanage system, the primary, secondary, and high schools mainly belonged to the Buddha School System (Hệ thống trường Bồ Đề) (Minh Thanh, 2010). The curriculum of these schools of the Buddha school system had to adhere to standards set by the Ministry of Education of South Vietnam at that time. The characteristic of such a curriculum was that teachers delivered one lesson or two lessons of Buddhist doctrine once a week in classrooms (Nguyễn Công Lý, 2019). At the undergraduate and graduate levels, the Buddhist Sangha in South Vietnam established Vạn Hạnh University (Viện Đại học Vạn Hạnh) in 1964 and appointed the Most Venerable Thích Minh Châu as the director of this university. At this university, there were many faculties in various disciplines that ranged from Buddhist Studies, Literature, Economics, Business Studies, Political Studies, and Sociology (Nha học vụ, 1973).

The above educational facilities of Buddhist communities were dissolved or nationalized after 1975. Along with the unification of the country, the VCP and the VRS mobilized monks and nuns of Buddhism in Vietnam to unite in an umbrella organization by the name of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) in 1981. Since then, the VBS has engaged in building the society with the motto “Dharma–Nation–Socialism” (Đạo pháp–Dân tộc–Chủ nghĩa Xã hội). Since the *Đổi Mới* epoch, the VBS has attempted to enter the educational landscape guided by the socialization policy of the VCP and the VSR, and the legacy of Buddhist pedagogical tradition in the past. In this process, Buddhist groups and individuals of the VBS have demonstrated the importance of support for the private education sector as they attended to constructing educational facilities and providing teachers to classrooms. Volunteer-based classes run by Buddhist monks and nuns have brought literacy to poor children since the 1990s. The VBS’s statistics in 1997 showed that Buddhist communities operated 196 volunteer-based literacy classes, 116 semi-boarding preschools, and classes for orphans and disabled children, with a total of 6,000 children. The number of volunteer-based literacy classes, which were operated by Buddhists, increased to 1,500 classes in 2002 (Nguyễn Thị Minh Ngọc & Thích Gia Quang, 2014). Besides teaching the Vietnamese Romanized script, monks and nuns of many pagodas also organized classes to teach Nôm script, which was the vernacular Vietnamese script emerging around the tenth century. Teaching this vernacular is to help people, especially the youth, understand classical texts related to certain cultural heritages in Vietnam.

Along with the volunteer-based literacy classes, the VBS has contributed to the expansion of vocational training. For instance, to resolve the problem of under-qualified laborers in Quảng Trị Province, the Buddhist Charity Committee of the VBS in this province launched Phùng Xuân Vocational Training Center in 1997 (Võ Thị Loan, 2018). This center aims at improving poor people’s working skills to make them more employable in the job market. Most graduated students from this center landed stable jobs and contributed to the total income of their families (Thích Đàm

Huê, 2020). Apart from Phùng Xuân Vocational Training Center, Buddhists have operated two other vocational schools, Tây Ninh Vocational School and Long Thọ Vocational School, both of which have offered a six-month vocational training in areas such as tailoring, embroidery, home electricity, informatics, and so on.

Regarding the preschool system, since 2004, the VBS has expanded this system run by Buddhist groups and individuals. In the years from 2012 to 2017, Buddhists operated 64 semi-boarding kindergartens and educational facilities for orphan-ages and disabled children around the country. Among such educational facilities, Buddhist nuns in Thừa Thiên Huế Province organized 11 facilities to teach 1,700 children (Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam, 2017). Buddhist contribution to educational activities has increased in recent years. The VBS assisted in opening nearly 2,000 volunteer-based literacy classes for orphans, homeless children, and disabled children in 2018. This religious organization also helped to build hundreds of semi-boarding kindergartens. Many Buddhist pagodas are either religious places or preschool facilities such as Long Hoa Pagoda (District 7 in Ho Chi Minh City), Diệu Giác Pagoda, Kỳ Quang 2 Pagoda (Gò Vấp District in Ho Chi Minh City), Quang Châu Pagoda (Hòa Vang, Đà Nẵng), Bảo Quang Pagoda (Hải Phòng), and so on (Ngô Văn Vũ & Tạ Thị Thu Hằng, 2020). Many volunteer-based literacy classes are a form of educational provision for children. For instance, a volunteer-based literacy class in Lộc Thọ pagoda (Nha Trang) with 140 pupils and 7 teachers, a volunteer-based literacy class in Kim Sơn Pagoda (Nha Trang) with 53 pupils and 3 teachers, Nụ Hồng Giác Hải kindergarten (Vạn Ninh) with 90 children and 5 teachers (Thích Nhuận Chương, 2020). Another typical educational base run by Buddhists is the Phật Quang Center of Social Charity. In 2002, this center opened three classes from first grade to third grade to teach 100 children. From 2006 to 2012, the center took care of and educated 120 children. In 2013, it established the Nhân Ái kindergarten which has been a free semi-boarding kindergarten (Thích Minh Nhân, 2017).

Especially, in 2012, the Buddhist Sangha of Long An Province formed the Bồ Đề Phương Duy School which was also the first private inter-level school run by a religious organization in Vietnam. This school, which is located in Long Thạnh Pagoda in Thủ Thừa town, has become a typical example of Buddhist participation in education in the Cửu Long Delta region. The curriculum of such a school follows the regulations of the national education system. In addition to compulsory subjects, students of Bồ Đề Phương Duy School are taught special subjects such as calligraphy, music of talented amateurs (*đàn ca tài tử*), martial arts, and tailoring. Thanks to sponsors, this school has offered free education to students in 12 classes at primary, secondary, and high levels. In the school year 2013–2014, the enrollment number in such classes reached 189 students whose situation was vulnerable (Trần Hoàng Hảo & Dương Hoàng Lộc, 2015:126). Though encountering a multitude of difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bồ Đề Phương Duy School still managed to deliver education to 169 students consisting of 85 children at the primary school, along with 38 pupils at the secondary school, and 34 pupils at the high school in the school year 2020–2021 (Lê Đại Anh Kiệt, 2021).

To enhance the professional expertise of preschool teachers, since 1992, the Central Committee of Social Charity of Buddhist Sangha has collaborated with the

Saigon College to train pedagogical skills at the preschool level for 100 nuns and Buddhists who came from many different provinces (Thích Nữ Huệ Từ, 2017). As a result, these graduates then became managers or directly participated in teaching children in volunteer-based childcare facilities of Buddhist organizations. In 2014, the Vietnamese Buddhist Academy in Ho Chi Minh City in conjunction with the Ho Chi Minh City University of Pedagogy launched a four-year undergraduate program for clergies and believers of Buddhism in the form of on-the-job training. To motivate Buddhist nuns to enroll in the preschool pedagogy program, seventy-five percent of the total tuition fee in such a program was sponsored by some Buddhist institutions of the Buddhist Sangha. In 2019, 49 Buddhist students graduated from this program and then were appointed as rectors or teachers of kindergartens (Thích Quang Thạnh, 2019).

The Case of the Catholic Church

Catholics had engaged in educational activities in the colonial period of Vietnam. Most schools that were run by the Catholic Church or Catholic individuals were private or semi-public at that time (Nguyễn Quang Hưng & Nguyễn Văn Chính, 2016). In 1861, the school by the name of Collège d'Adran was established by Admiral Charmer in Saigon. The purpose of this school was to educate indigenous intellectuals who could serve as interpreters of the colonial regime. In 1873, the colonial government set up another school by the name of Collège des Administrateurs Stagiaires with the rector being Petrus Trương Vĩnh Ký. In 1925, the Indochinese Governor-General established Collège Cochinchine in Saigon and subsumed it under the administration of Missions Etrangères de Paris (a Catholic missionary congregation). This school provided education at primary and high levels (Nguyễn Quang Hưng & Nguyễn Văn Chính, 2016). The role of the Catholic Church in the education system in South Vietnam was expanded after 1954. The Catholic Church's consensus in 1962–1963 showed that Catholics operated 93 high schools with 60,412 pupils and 1,122 primary schools with 234,749 pupils (Vinh Sơn Nguyễn Cao Dũng SCJ, 2020). The Catholic Church even formed some universities such as Đà Lạt University in Lâm Đồng Province, Thành Nhân University, and Minh Đức University in Saigon (Vinh Sơn Nguyễn Cao Dũng SCJ, 2020). These schools and universities operated in the educational settings of the Ministry of Education of South Vietnam.

After 1975, as Vietnam was unified by and under the leadership of the VCP, the SRV took main responsibility for educational provision, thus carrying out the dissolution or the nationalization of the aforementioned Catholic schools and universities. A few of these educational facilities were then transformed into national educational schools under the new regime. Upholding the motto of “Living Gospel in the heart of the nation to serve happiness to the compatriot” (Sống phúc Âm giữa lòng dân tộc để phục vụ hạnh phúc của đồng bào), the Catholic Church in Vietnam has participated much more intensively in education activities after *Đổi Mới*. In the 1990s, the government allowed the Ho Chi Minh City Preschool Pedagogical Intermediate School to

open training programs for Catholic nuns (Phanxicô Xaviê Đễ Công Minh, 2020). Since 1993, in line with the course of the reform policy of the VCP on religious affairs, female Catholic orders (*đòng tu nữ*) in Vietnam have initiated private nurseries and preschool classes. These orders not only set up educational facilities but also boosted the training of teachers who were also Catholic nuns (Nguyễn Thanh Xuân, 2015). Given such a preparation, Catholic congregations formed numerous private kindergartens quickly and with very little effort since the Ordinance on Belief and Religion was enacted in 2004. At the end of 2004, Catholics operated around 675 kindergartens in most Catholic dioceses over the country. This number of kindergartens and volunteer-based literacy classes reached over 1,000 in 2015 (see Table 13.1). It is noticeable that the statistics of the Catholic Church by 2015 indicated that the Diocese of Ban Mê Thuột had 426 kindergartens and volunteer-based literacy classes, but this figure was seemingly not exact. According to the statistics provided by the Clergy Department of the Diocese of Ban Mê Thuột in 2018, this diocese had some volunteer-based classes, thirty kindergartens including one for children of leprosy patients in Ea Na, and two schools for disabled children and children having Down syndrome (Ban Tu sĩ Giáo phận, 2018).

Many Catholic nuns devote a great deal of effort to specialized education teaching vulnerable children. For example, since 1997, nuns of St. Paul de Chartres contributed to establishing Vi Nhân Specialized School in Buôn Mê Thuột Province. In the school year 2019–2020, this school had 200 pupils who were distributed to 16 classes. Such a school not only offers facilities for literacy learning but also provides vocational training in careers such as clothing tailoring, fine art paintings, massage, and sauna (Nguyễn Hoa, 2019). In 2009, the Saint Paul congregation in Ho Chi Minh City opened Trúc Linh Center which has not only taught autistic children but also supplied training programs for teachers of such children. According to Nguyễn Phú Lợi (2021), there were 437 autistic children enrolled in this center and 305 of them finished preschool education.

Catholic congregations of nuns are a spotlight on Catholic participation in preschool education in Vietnam. Kindergartens run by Catholic nuns constituted 50 of 52 exemplary kindergartens that were honored by the government in 2014 (Phanxicô Xaviê Đễ Công Minh, 2020). Some of the Catholic nun congregations devoted a huge amount of money to building kindergartens. For instance, the Sisters of Divine Providence (Hội Dòng Chúa Quan phòng) allocated 22 billion VND to build Sao Mai kindergarten in Ninh Kiều district of Cần Thơ City, and the Lovers of the Holy Cross (Đòng Mến Thánh giá) in Huế City spent 20 billion VND to set up Bích Trúc kindergarten (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). The curriculum of kindergartens run by Catholic nuns also adopts a wholeness approach to education that consists of syllabuses holistically addressing various aspects of child development (physical, cognitive, linguistic, social emotion, and aesthetics). In terms of linguistic education, children are taught to follow the teacher's guidance and enhance communication abilities, read short poems such as Three Girls (*Ba cô gái*), Friendship (*Tình bạn*), and stories (the Origin Tale of Watermelons (*Sự tích quả dưa hấu*), Gift of teacher (*Món quà của cô giáo*), etc.), and recognize and pronounce the alphabet as well. To develop Vietnamese literacy for

Table 13.1 Number of kindergartens and volunteer-based literacy classes in Vietnamese Catholic dioceses

Dioceses	2004	2015
Hanoi	17	45
Lang Son		3
Hai Phong		10
Bac Ninh	35	18
Hung Hoa	5	8
Bui Chu	32	27
Thai Binh		6
Phat Diem	3	3
Thanh Hoa		1
Vinh	3	14
Hue	106	65
Da Nang	27	34
Quy Nhon		12
Kontum	21	22
Nha Trang		80
Ban Me Thuot	48	426
Ho Chi Minh city	154	207
Vinh Long	23	48
Can Tho	36	58
My Tho	17	16
Da Lat	64	93
Long Xuyen	23	25
Phu Cuong	1	42
Xuan Loc		155
Phan Thiet	40	92
Ba Ria		34
Total	675	1.547

Source Hội đồng giám mục Việt Nam (2005: 512); Hội đồng giám mục Việt Nam (2016: 487, 489, 493)

children, teachers use textbooks such as “Children get used to the alphabet and practice letter painting” (*Bé làm quen với chữ cái và tập tô chữ*), and “Children recognize and get used to letters” (*Bé nhận biết và làm quen chữ cái*).

The Catholic Church is also one of the religious organizations that actively participate in providing vocational training programs in Vietnam. Currently, Catholic organizations operate around 52 vocational classes and 11 vocational schools of which there are 1 college, 2 intermediate schools, and 8 vocational centers (Nguyễn Phú Lợi, 2021). The college by the name of Hòa Bình Xuân Lộc College has been administered by the Episcopal See of Xuân Lộc. Based on the motto “Promoting the Whole

Person,” this college wishes to train students to become well-rounded individuals who are expected to benefit not only their families but also society through their skilled labor and professional ethics. In Hòa Bình Xuân Lộc College, there is a multitude of disciplines to educate students, both at intermediate and college levels. At the intermediate level, the students can enroll in majors that cover a wide range of areas such as computer engineering, fashion tailoring, hotel administration, tourism guidance, automotive technology, electric industry, and so on. At the college level, the students can select some majors which are automotive technology, electric industry, electronic industry, hotel administration, accounting business, and so on. From 2011 to 2017, Hòa Bình Xuân Lộc College trained over 4,000 students of which over 1,000 students graduated and had jobs (Lê Xuân, 2017).

To empower Catholic participation in educational activities, the Catholic Church in Vietnam has constantly encouraged Catholic congregations and individuals to contribute to education and considered such a contribution as a religious obligation of Catholics. In 2007, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam drafted the summon letter to confirm that the Catholic Church participated in expanding and developing education. In this letter, the Catholic Church in Vietnam confirms that they willingly contribute to developing the education sector of the country and consider education as an important means that fosters ethical, responsible, and caring youth (Vinh Sơn Nguyễn Cao Dũng SCJ, 2020). In 2009, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Vietnam formed the Committee of Education intending to promote Catholic participation in education at all levels. In 2014, the structure of such a committee was elaborated on its specialized departments that supported either religious education or secular education such as vocational training and preschool.

The Case of Domestic Religious Groups

Compared to the Buddhist Sangha and the Catholic Church, the participation of some domestic religious organizations such as Hòa Hảo Buddhism and Tịnh Độ Cư Sĩ Phật Hội in the national education system is relatively modest. These religious organizations have not yet established kindergartens, but they actively enter vocational training and raise the Learning Promotion Fund (Quỹ khuyến học) to help economically and socially disadvantaged children enroll in schools.

Regarding the Learning Promotion Fund, the Hòa Hảo Buddhist Church has raised funds to provide scholarships, textbooks, pens, bicycles, and food for students every year (Vũ Thanh Bằng, 2022). Additionally, this church initiated the program of “Educational Promotion Kitchens” (Bếp ăn Khuyến học) that supplied lunch to students who suffered from food insecurity. By 2015, eight such kitchens could serve daily lunches to around 1,780 students (Nguyễn Công Lý, 2019). The Hòa Hảo Buddhist Church even mobilized believers to renovate schools free of charge. To cope with educational difficulties caused by the pandemic COVID-19, in 2020, this church organized the program of “School Enrollment Assistance” (Tiếp sức đến trường) that extended opportunities for school-based education of poor children by providing

scholarships and food with an estimated worth of 9,774,900,000 VNĐ (Lê Thanh, 2021).

About Tỉnh Độ Cư Sĩ Phật Hội's participation in public educational activities, the Education Committee of this religious organization has long placed particular emphasis on traditional medical training that compiles with its own collected textbooks. These textbooks are divided into three categories to educate medical students corresponding to the first-level, the second-level, and the third-level programs. The 12-month first-level program consists of modules that cover ten medical rules, medical properties of 200 medicinal flavors, opposite relationships among different medicines, abstaining throughout pregnancy, diagnosis of diseases by observing colors and shapes, learning human physiology, and moral doctrines, respectively. The 18-month second-level program consists of modules that pertain to ways of using medicinal herbs, typology of origin of medicinal herbs, vascular disease, discussion of treatment, eighth symptoms of diseases, eight groups of treatment methods, ways of production and use of medicinal herbs, names of medicine, explanation of diseases caused by six elements such as wind, coldness, light, humid level, dry level, and hot level, and moral doctrines. Finally, the 20-month third-level program consists of modules that instruct students on the medical properties of 200 medicinal flavors, discussion of disease treatment, names of medicine, vascular disease, pediatrics, and gynecology (Nguyễn Thị Thu, 2021). The students who graduated from such programs have to commit themselves to serving in the traditional medicine clinic of Tỉnh Độ Cư Sĩ Phật Hội for three years. In the years from 2014 to 2019, the Education Committee of Tỉnh Độ Cư Sĩ Phật Hội trained and licensed 589 physicians (Ban Trị sự Trung ương - Tỉnh độ Cư Sĩ Phật Hội Việt Nam, 2019).

Challenges for Religious Organizations

Religious organizations such as the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha and Catholic Church fall short of highly qualified staff, modern equipment, and facilities to successfully conduct educational activities in the national education system. The teaching staff of these educational bases rely on visiting teachers who work for other schools. Such a situation sometimes entails difficulties in both teaching quality and developing schools on a large scale. To date, the number of kindergartens that meet the national standard is relatively small. Among vocational training bases of religious organizations, there are deficiencies in modern equipment used for instructing high skills. Another problem concerns the fact that a range of educational facilities is based on religious institutions such as pagodas and churches. This situation, in turn, leads to a space shortage for learning and extracurricular activities.

Furthermore, many religious organizations and individuals inevitably encounter the paradox that is to strike a delicate balance between religious practices and secular principle-based educational activities. Managers of kindergartens, those who are also nuns of religious congregations cannot often hold leading positions because they are also responsible for religious duties. They have to obey the rules of religious orders

and assign religious works. Leaders of religious orders also can change and appoint these nuns to religious assignments in other areas. Teachers who are clergies of religious organizations have to ask for permission from their religious leaders when they want to participate in educational activities. These teachers must also allot their time to religious activities in churches and classroom teaching practices. Another question is whether or not teachers as clergies and believers are granted permission to teach some majors when they must adhere to strict religious disciplines. For example, the Buddhist canon prohibited Buddhists from performing dancing and singing (Thích Giác Duyên, 2020). Such paradoxes impacted the efficiency of the teaching and the management of schools run by religious organizations and individuals. In addition, students of some educational bases that rely on religious facilities to operate educational activities are inevitably influenced by religious practices. Some educational bases run by religious organizations not only impart knowledge but also propagate their faith to children incidentally, which may be contradictory to the secular principle of the national education system (Nguyễn Hữu Tuấn, 2015).

Simultaneously, religious participation in national education encounters barriers owing to the complexity of legal rules. Despite the Law of belief and religion confirming that religious organizations have the right to participate in national education, there is a lack of a legal framework to specifically regulate, justify, and operate educational facilities and vocational training schools run by religious organizations. Whereas some religious individuals participated in the national education system, they have not gotten used to related legal rules. Given such a situation, religious organizations and individuals may be confused or run into problems as they are involved in the national education field.

Opportunities for Religious Organizations

Preschool education has been extremely competitive and highly demanding in Vietnam in recent years. Since the market economy and industrialization increase have been among the main reasons that push parents to rush into long hours of work at offices and factories, there emerges a pressing need for sending children in early childhood to kindergarten. Along with this increase is the issue of overload in operating the preschool system in densely populated areas such as industrial zones and big cities. To share the burden of the national preschool system, the socialization of education continuously proves itself to be an effective inevitable trend that could have helped to provide more educational facilities. However, as such educational bases are set up excessively, it also poses a multitude of problems which range from bullies, food safety, and educational quality to teacher dedication. That such problems persist at an alarming rate concerns many families and the relevant institutions in the contemporary society of Vietnam.

Against such a backdrop, religious players in educational activities at the preschool level are appreciated highly for their pedagogical ethics. Because of their religious upbringing, religious individuals and groups are inculcated with laudable moral traits

and principles inside their minds. Specifically, the religious instructions instilled love and compassion in the teachers who are also monks and nuns of religious congregations. Such a moral legacy in turn manifests through sacrifices in the work of these teachers whose devotion to teaching takes priority over financial returns. The moral principles of religions also help such teachers eschew inappropriate behaviors in the process of tutoring and provide tender care for children with great love and genuine concern. According to an official report in 2014, there was no bullying in all private kindergartens that were operated by religious organizations and individuals (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014). In such a pedagogical comfort zone, parents could feel happy and safe if they send their children to kindergartens of religious congregations. One mother said that “nuns have no pressure of economic benefit and family, instead, they have a warm heart, thus devoting themselves to educating children” (Nhưng Nguyễn, 2022). So educational bases run by religious bodies have great advantages that appeal to their customers, retain customer loyalty, and create healthy competition in the education market.

Religious organizations continue to express their unequivocal commitments to participating in education, especially volunteer-based education. This orientation is premised on the fact that every religion intends to educate and guide human beings toward good deeds. To contribute more effectively to improving education, some major religious organizations in Vietnam have promoted training professional human resources through association with universities and colleges. Religious groups and individuals also actively equip themselves with legal rules pertinent to operating educational bases in line with the laws and policies of the State.

Schools operated by religious organizations and individuals charge affordable tuition fees or even provide free education for learners. Such non-profit schools contributed a great deal of literacy learning to poor children. These organizations thus have played an important part in sharing the financial burden of the State in the progress of improving education for citizens. With that contribution, religious organizations are encouraged strongly by the SRV and other institutions of the political system of the VCP to participate actively in national education activities. Nguyễn Thiện Nhân, a former president of the Central Committee of Fatherland Front of Vietnam, confirmed that the Central Committee of Fatherland Front of Vietnam at every level always accompanies religious organizations to develop education missions, particularly preschool education, to benefit Vietnam (Việt Hoàng, 2014). The religious organizations in Vietnam have also received support from the people inside and outside religious communities to expand educational facilities and improve pedagogical quality. This support will extend opportunities for religious participation in the national education system, especially in the space of volunteer-based and specialized education for vulnerable people.

Conclusions

Though attaining remarkable achievements that made the country much more prosperous than many years before, the reform and development of Vietnam have faced many issues and challenges. In terms of education, the rate of out-of-school children has been relatively high at all educational levels. Many of such children belong to some ethnic minorities or have difficult circumstances. Religious organizations in Vietnam with their millions of followers are welcomed by the government to be part of this collective enterprise, of transforming the nation. Following the reform policy of the VCP and the SRV on education, religious organizations and individuals have actively made a positive contribution to the national educational landscape. Indeed, by taking part in educating the citizens of the country irrespective of religious status, religious organizations are improving not only the health and well-being of the individuals but also the prosperity of the nation.

Religious organizations and individuals with great love and great compassion willingly devote themselves to educational activities without any intention to gain financial profits. That said, such devotion can contribute to reorienting society towards humanistic education in the face of a brutally competitive market. Reconciliation, collaboration, a degree of receptiveness to universal values, a focus on our common humanity, and moral responsibility toward one another should be some of the principles that would help religious organizations together with the government to come up with a new system of education that does not let any stratum, especially the disadvantaged, the poor, and the weak, be sidelined from the path of development of the country.

Being guided by traditional and socialist values, the government has created policies that pave the way for the participation of religious groups in the education of the poor, the homeless, and the marginalized. To enable this work more effectively, local governmental institutions, especially the Department of Education and Training (Sở Giáo dục và Đào tạo) and the Department of Home Affairs (Sở Nội vụ), need to continue supporting the training in both professional teaching and administration for staff at schools run by religious organizations. By working closely with these religious organizations to improve their understanding of laws related to education, the local governments will help these organizations eschew legal problems related to national education activities. Furthermore, to encourage religious groups to contribute to developing national education, the government and political organizations such as the Committee of Fatherland Front (Ủy ban Mặt trận Tổ quốc) and the Department of Education and Training continuously rally religious groups and others in exchange experiences in the national education. From that, these groups can learn and scale up role models in their national educational activities (Ban Thường trực UBTWMTTQVN-Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, 2014).

The government's openness should also be reciprocated with openness from all sides, be it Christian, Buddhist, or other. Religious organizations concerning engagement in national education also need to enhance the quality of professional teaching for clergies and ordinary religious people who are willing to become teachers and

staff at the schools of the national education system. To achieve this goal, religious organizations should constantly collaborate with colleges and universities across the country to open more courses to train their human resources in terms of pedagogy and educational administration. Moreover, religious authorities should make time available for monks and nuns who simultaneously work as teachers in the schools of the national education system. Religious organizations must also establish more focused agendas for participating in national education and provide certain priorities to their teaching activities. Teachers who are also religious believers can now balance their time between their religious duties and their teaching activities with greater flexibility. Certain subjects, like music and dancing, can go against the tight restrictions for the clergies of some religious groups. The schools administered by these groups should assign such courses to other teachers with the same expertise, those who are ordinary religious people or non-religious ones. Collaborating with outside schools and teachers is thus a further solution in this situation.

In the final, to emancipate the macro paradox that stems from the incompatibility between the confession of faith of religious people and the secular principle of the State, may it be time to raise questions about building “a reconstructionist approach” to national education in Vietnam? This re-constructionist approach aims at enabling decision-makers to re-establish “the tenets of a secular discipline” of national education that should take into account particular religious values (Collins and Jun, 2019: 8). More specifically, religious education may need to be added to the curriculum as an option that only targets certain students who already identify with a particular religious tradition. In other words, such students can be classified “by denominational affiliation and are taught about their faith” from their inside perspective (Flensner, 2017: 19). Students also can choose what religious subjects they want to learn, or they can opt out of religious subjects entirely (Flensner, 2017). This approach may withstand the issue of camouflaged proselytization in the space of certain schools run by religious groups. Because it can specify which particular student groups are permitted to receive religious instruction at school and what particular requirements must be met for the teaching of religious themes. This is done not just to appease the religious side, but also to give the management of the government a clearer legal framework. Furthermore, two actual causes seem to have made the reconstructed curriculum, which incorporates religious themes, rather acceptable in the context of Vietnam. On the one hand, there are many different religions practiced in Vietnam. On the other hand, the cultures of various ethnic groups in Vietnam have had a close connection to certain religious traditions. Though it may take some time, careful consideration, and the participation and agreement of various sides—including the government and religious organizations—to reconstruct such a curriculum for national education in Vietnam, it appears to be a work of considerable importance in the national education agenda going forward.

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Chapter 14

Expanding Knowledge and Enhancing Understandings of Language and Education Issues in Global Vietnam: Coming Together



Phan Le Ha and Dat Bao

In this wrap-up chapter, we discuss and reiterate the contributions made by the volume as a whole and by the individual chapters. This chapter has resulted from many conversations between two editors—Phan Le Ha and Dat Bao. Presented with a collection of chapters, most of which are from authors rather new to writing for research publication and academic research in English, we have, admittedly, realized what a daunting task we have been taking up. We recall finding ourselves engaged with our diverse linguistic, academic, cultural domains and repertoires, as we were interacting with the authors and trying to understand what they were conveying in their chapters. We have found ourselves on multiple occasions turning to Vietnamese sources for verification. We have also felt surprised by new knowledge and fresh ideas that are crafted in ways that may not necessarily be accessible to those who only write in English. This very process has not only enhanced our own knowledge but has also brought back writing norms that we may not take into account as much when writing and publishing in English.

In the sections that follow, we articulate more elaborately a number of noticeable contributions of the volume and of the individual chapters.

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Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_14

Contributions to Studying Contemporary Issues in Vietnamese Language Education and Development

The volume, comprised of empirical, documentary, and conceptual contributions, addresses a vast range of issues and challenges regarding the Vietnamese language in the face of change, educational and economic reform, transnational mobilities, globalisation, and the nation-building project. Among these issues and challenges are linguistic differentiation, ideological tensions, literacy reforms, and the demand for curriculum improvement. For example, Ngo, Nguyen and Smith (Chap. 2), Ngo and Tran (Chap. 3), Hoa Do (Chap. 5), and Tran (Chap. 7) are concerned with how language use and education, and language maintenance play out in a variety of contexts in global Vietnam. Amidst such undertakings, challenges arise where linguistic-grounded issues turn into sociopolitical problems, discrimination enters school curricula, reform experiences resistance, and Vietnamese language as a heritage language becomes more marginalized.

At a more specific level, the authors of several chapters make it loud and clear that literacy practice in Vietnam (including materials, material development, and pedagogy) as well as the conceptualization of the curriculum for Vietnamese language teaching need extensive revisions at all levels, given the fast-changing landscape of education and the diverse student body. For example, Ngo, Nguyen, and Smith (Chap. 2), with a focus on the Vietnamese national schooling system, present factual information and highlight a number of issues concerning literacy, illiteracy eradication, and state policy in literacy reform. Based on a compilation of facts and events, these authors make it clear that existing methods for teaching Vietnamese literacy are ineffective and need to revamp. Relatedly, Ngo and Tran (Chap. 3) address the internationalization of Vietnamese language programs in higher education institutions in Vietnam, with a particular look at higher education reform, teacher development, and curriculum development for teaching Vietnamese to international students and to Vietnamese who learn the language as their heritage language. They have hinted a range of problems in existing programs such as low quality in teaching, insufficient number of teachers to meet current demands, irrelevant background and skills among teaching staff, and unsystematic teaching and learning resources. At the same time, the authors have observed that there remains strong resistance to change in Vietnamese higher education institutions when it comes to reform. Also, innovations emerge few and far within joint programs in certain universities, but innovations are nowhere happening on a national scale. Drawing on their initial observations and the limited resources that they could access, the authors call for more collaboration, resource sharing, and systematic training of Vietnamese language/culture teachers to meet the increased demand for internationalization and reform. They also raise readers' awareness of many nuances in the tardiness of teachers and curriculum development in Vietnamese studies programs in Vietnam.

Several chapters in this volume, such as Tran et al. (Chap. 4), Tran (Chap. 7), and Nguyen and Tran (Chap. 8) focus on different dimensions of the teaching of Vietnamese. If Tran et al. advocate for the teaching of Vietnamese as a pragmatic and

intercultural approach, Nguyen and Tran are concerned about educational equality and equity for minority students when it comes to how language barriers may hinder their access to education. For Tran, the maintenance of Vietnamese heritage language is central to her chapter. The advocacy of these ideologies in action is founded on a series of problems including the inefficiency of Vietnamese language pedagogy in many programs (Tran et al.), the persistent suffering of minority students for failing to catch up with mainstream peers because of their lower proficiencies in Vietnamese (Nguyen and Tran, Chapter 8), and the decline of Vietnamese as heritage language among many communities outside of Vietnam (Tran, Chapter 7). What is presented and discussed in these three chapters points to the importance of L1 in language learning and teaching (for instance, see de la Fuente & Goldenberg, 2022; Hall & Cook, 2012; Zhao & Macaro, 2014) as well as advocates for the learners' rights to access mother-tongue education particularly at an early age, which is in line with UNESCO's education agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) "Quality education for all". At the same time, Nguyen and Tran provide more evidence of the continued at-risk status of (minority) mother tongues in education in multilingual settings despite the availability of favorable policies and discourses around them, as argued by Tupas (2014). As well, these chapters bring to the fore questions of culture, identity, heritage, and access, all of which are closely tied to language, whether among immigrant students, international students, minority students, or those in the diaspora, the questions that are briefly foregrounded in the Introduction Chapter.

Vietnamese as a heritage language and language issues in Vietnamese communities outside Vietnam are examined in more depth in several chapters including Tran (Chap. 7), Hoa Do (Chap. 5), and Dam (Chap. 6). Take for example, drawing on an empirical study with teachers and principals from community language schools in Australia, Hoa Do (Chap. 5) presents readers with a nuanced account of tension in language ideology, practice, discrimination, standardization, maintenance, and development. The author also highlights challenging issues regarding language policy and planning, and educational impacts. Hoa Do discusses two Vietnamese language varieties and how they play out in education. Because of historical reasons associated with the Vietnam War and the underlying tensions between/within Vietnamese communities in and outside Vietnam, linguistic and ideological differentiation regarding the Vietnamese language in these communities poses many challenges to teaching, learning, and language development. Such differentiation has also become a topic of debate whereby each variety gets justified and mapped onto perceived relevant social groups. The author shows that tension (and discrimination) occurs between the socio-political statuses of the Vietnamese language and the acquisition by learners. There are clear differences between the peripheral Vietnamese language as employed by community language schools outside of Vietnam and the fast-changing Vietnamese language in Vietnam. Vietnamese users in and outside of the country do not seem to appreciate each other's language policy. While the former may view the language use of the latter as obscure and politically unpleasant, the latter may perceive the language use of the former as frozen, old-fashioned, and retrogressing. Hoa Do (Chap. 5) makes it clear that language planning needs to consider

linguistic differentiation among various Vietnamese education communities. Likewise, in local–global Vietnamese contexts and contact zones, there remains very little scholarship on linguistic differentiation, linguistic-grounded (socio-political) problems particularly discrimination through language varieties in the school curriculum, language in education, linguistic challenges regarding linguistic discrimination, community language school, and Vietnamese language standardization. These issues demand serious scholarly attention. Indeed, drawing on her long-term work on Vietnamese language in the diaspora, Tran (Chap. 7) also calls for more comprehensive studies into Vietnamese as a heritage language across all contexts where Vietnamese communities reside (i.e., beyond such dominant contexts as the USA, Europe, and Australia).

Contributions to Addressing Contemporary Educational Issues in Global Vietnam and Larger Social Issues More Broadly

Many changes taking place in global Vietnam together with the increased mobility of people and ideas to and from Vietnam have brought about layers and layers of opportunities for and challenges in the development of the Vietnamese language and its associated educational matters in and outside Vietnam. These opportunities and challenges, while being addressed alongside each other, are often blurred, as seen, for example, in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in university curriculum and training (Thu Do, Chap. 11), in overseas-trained parents' anxiety about and hope for their children's language and cultural re-integration upon returning to Vietnam (Dam, Chap. 6), and in the pronounced importance of having more systematically developed educational books for Vietnamese children that explicitly educate them about national and cultural identity as Vietnamese in this globalized world (Dang et al., Chap. 10). In the same vein, the availability of more nuanced information about the Vietnam War as a result of globalization and the media may enable Vietnamese students to have more balanced views of history and hence enhance their learning (Ha & Bellot, Chap. 9). Nonetheless, the impact of the War on Vietnamese students' worldviews has risen to be both opportunities for teaching critical thinking and of concern for educators in high schools in Vietnam when it comes to questions of nationhood, heroism, and alterity in present-day Vietnam. These authors also highlight how the education of Vietnamese youth could help build understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and positive views for moving forward.

In contemporary Vietnam, education on the move associated with people's mobilities between Vietnam and the world has been picked up in much scholarship (see for example, Phan, 2022; Tran & Marginson, 2018). Accompanying such mobilities are many issues concerning the education and language development of children whose parents have brought them along and/or left them behind. Drawing on the

data collected from 12 parents who were PhD students in Australia and intended to return to Vietnam after their graduation, Thuy Dam (Chap. 6) examines the how and the why regarding these sojourner parents' family language policy in relation to their children's language and educational journeys in Australia. She has found that in these families, the children were all switching back and forth between Vietnamese and English, moving across these languages, and mixing them in their communication. It also seemed that these children's English proficiency was getting improved much while in Australia with their parents. At the same time, the author also detected low motivation among the children and even their parents when it came to learning and maintaining Vietnamese for the kids. The parents were aware of the fact that their children would need to relearn Vietnamese upon leaving Australia, but they were also busy with their studies and could not help much with their children's Vietnamese language. They may have also hoped that their children could pick up Vietnamese easily once they went back to Vietnam. Although the parents in Dam's study were not necessarily categorized as immigrants, their duration of stay in Australia was long enough for their children's language development to be affected (about four years for full-time PhD students if they did return to Vietnam upon completion); and hence, these families could also be regarded as short-term immigrants. Hence, the many dilemmas and ambivalence involving whether and how to keep the children's home language/mother tongue and also letting them learn the language of the host country to the full for educational purposes are also seen in Dam's research participants. Likewise, Tran (Chap. 7) also touches upon these language issues within varied Vietnamese diasporic communities in global Vietnam.

These language issues and educational matters are among those extensively discussed in Dixon and Wu's (2014) state-of-the-art article on home language and literacy practices among children of immigrant families in a wide range of global contexts. Relatedly, drawing on her study on the maintenance of Vietnamese language among first-generation Vietnamese parents and their second-generation Vietnamese children in Melbourne, Australia, Tran, G. (2023) makes a strong case for how Vietnamese as heritage language has been preserved and identified as cultural capital among many of these Vietnamese as they navigate their multiple journeys through lives, work and education in multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual Australia. In the same vein, in her work conducted with Vietnamese mothers in Canada and their efforts to keep the Vietnamese language for their children, Tran, T.T.H. (2023) also offers rich insights into the everyday language practice and principles pursued by these mothers, amidst many challenges. These multiple realities and possibilities, to some extent, relate well to what Dam discusses in Chap. 6. The Vietnamese families Dam studied, only practiced what they needed to and tended to believe in what they had to do so as to cope with their children's educational situations while in Australia. That the language demand and medium of instruction for education in Australia and Vietnam differ greatly would create many challenges to their children's education and acquisition of cultural values when the context of study changed eventually. Nonetheless, these parents did not have a clear view of what to do in the future and how to ease their children's paths to reintegrate into the educational system in Vietnam. What happens to these children's education and their Vietnamese language as they

(re)enter school in Vietnam after a few years in Australia, and what choices their parents may make regarding their education are among the many questions that require scholarly examination in the years to come. This real-world issue coupled with pressing questions underlying language and education and other (re)adjustment matters are globally relevant, and speak to the larger literature on repatriation (or reverse mobilities) that includes the experiences of repatriate families and their children (for example, see Ismail et al., 2015; Klemens & Bikos, 2009; Knocke & Schuster, 2017; Van Gorp et.al., 2017). This real-world issue is becoming ever more fundamental to increased diverse mobilities globally, including mobilities in global Vietnam, a phenomenon that language and education researchers and practitioners are also called upon to address, particularly when scholarly publications on this topic remain highly limited despite the mushrooming literature on mobility more broadly, as Knocke and Schuster (2017) posit in their systematic and comprehensive literature review of repatriation.

Talking about education these days appears incomplete without mentioning graduate employability in relation to the purpose of education, particularly higher education globally. Regarding Vietnam, graduate employability has become a major interest in recent scholarship including an emerging body of literature dedicated to this topic, both internally and transnationally (see for example Tran et al., 2023). Along this line, Thu Do in Chap. 11 offers rich insights into the important connection between translation/translator training in universities and the complex practice in the industry. As stated in the chapter, the connection between ICT skills and translation skills is not given sufficient attention in education programs in many settings, not just in Vietnam. The current increase of automation, the emergence of new demands, and forms of communication with new technologies becoming a cornerstone of the translation profession are triggering substantial changes in the role of a translator and in translator education. Different challenges have been posed by the integration of professional skills into the academic translator training environment. One of the main issues is related to the mismatch between university translation graduates' competences and market needs. Both translation skills and ICT skills ought to be recognized as needs and employment skills in university curricula. For translators to be successful in their jobs, it is essential for them during training to acquire ICT efficiency (in consideration of speed, quality, and local context) and to drive themselves to be explorers with a strong sense of willingness to try out diverse technological tools for diverse uses. Drawing on an empirical research study conducted with 246 educators, students, and employees in Australia and Vietnam, Thu Do argues that education/translation programs need to consider integrating technology competence and technology training with translation skills. Some examples include the use of translation memory tools, machine-aided translation systems, multilingual document management applications, and website and software localization. She also shows that having translation skills alone would not work in today's translation-work contexts.

Related to graduate employability are human capital, higher education, and student identity—matters that Felix, from a conceptual perspective, explores in Chap. 12. Felix observes that although the higher education student population makes up a significant part of the youth workforce and of Vietnam's population

more generally, this group has remained more or less unstudied. In particular, in linking this population with human capital and the country's development, he argues for the importance to pay scholarly attention to student identity in Vietnam's higher education. He also makes it explicit that students are a critical force in the development of potentials and futures within the institutional setting of the academy. In the context of post-COVID-19 higher education and economic development, it is even more essential to conceptualize higher education in close relation to human capital development, of which the quality, the outlook, and the education of students play decisive roles. As scholarship on Vietnam's higher education has recently been on the rise as Felix shows, it is also time for researchers to study the student population with regard to their education and aspirations.

Other important, though modest in scale and scope, contributions this volume makes to knowledge about contemporary issues in education can be seen in Duong et al. (Chap. 13). These authors are the very first authors in Vietnam and elsewhere to identify and showcase the significant yet often overlooked and unknown role of religious communities in teaching Vietnamese learners literacy and numeracy skills, moral education (i.e., compassion, charity, and equity, etc.), and socialist education curriculum and values for the past many decades. Despite these communities' undeniable role in the overall national education picture, the authors of Chapter 13 show that these religious communities have been faced with many obstacles, and have constantly been struggling with finding funding to help them maintain their educational mission. As such, their enormous contributing potential to Vietnam's education has been greatly hindered. Yet, little has been done from the part of the government and other relevant authorities to address this problem. Duong et al. hope that their modest work would shed some light on this important yet little-known aspect of education in contemporary Vietnam. Enabling these religious communities to contribute to the education of Vietnamese students could potentially help solve many problems relating to equity, equality, and access to education especially among disadvantaged and less-fortunate students and communities and among those individuals on the margin or lacking opportunities. These very issues of equity, equality and access to education are also investigated in Nguyen and Tran (Chap. 8).

To date, issues surrounding languages and access to education among ethnic minority students remain largely under-researched. In this regard, Nguyen and Tran's Chap. 8 is much needed. Based on their empirical data that included interviews conducted with village and school leaders, teachers, and parents in a central highland context in Vietnam, the authors point to many persistent stereotypes towards students of ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly those that are stemmed from language proficiency and educational achievement matters. These students were reported to be negatively affected by the Vietnamese-only language policy in place, and this problem continued to disadvantage them in comparison with students of the Kinh background—the majority population of Vietnam. Equity and educational equality for minority students have not been properly addressed in Vietnamese education, as Nguyen and Tran show in their chapter. They, hence, demand that the gap in learning contents between the majority Kinh and the ethnic minorities be bridged, the long-existing ethnic stereotypes be addressed, and the Vietnamese-only language policy

be rethought. These recommendations, however abstract, are important as they call for attention at all levels, from education and language policy conceptualization, teacher training and curriculum to pedagogy and classroom practice concerning language, knowledge acquisition and education for ethnic minority communities and for multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual communities in contemporary Vietnam.

Final Thoughts

To sum up, however modest, the authors contributing to this edited volume, in varied ways and to varied extents, all make new contributions to knowledge and knowledge production in language and education as well as in the field of Vietnamese studies. Through their examination of language ideology, practice, linguistic discrimination, language standardization, and language maintenance and development, they have provided analytical insights and empirical evidence into many intercultural communication matters as well as many tensions embedded and arising in the domain of Vietnamese language and education in global Vietnam across time, space and community. The chapters collectively have brought to the fore many nuances and persisting problems in the curriculum development of Vietnamese language programs in and outside Vietnam, regardless of the call for ideological healing among diverse Vietnamese communities in global Vietnam and regardless of the demand for internationalization and higher education reform in the country itself. They have also addressed critical educational issues concerning social justice, equity, equality, and access. They show well-articulated observations of emerging issues and topics in language and education across the educational system in Vietnam, in and outside mainstream education in global Vietnam. These issues are globally relatable and are connected to larger educational and social debates identified and interrogated by scholars around the world, such as those debates regarding identity, language and culture, mother tongue education and medium of instruction, globalization, mobility and diaspora, and so on.

At another level, in this volume, by placing Vietnam and the Vietnamese language and educational matters at the center of inquiry from a global and evolving perspectives, we (the editors as well as all the contributing authors) have turned the dominant center-periphery dichotomy on its head. To a great extent, issues of language, globalization, and global identities have often been framed through the lens of hierarchical/binary power relations, and/or through a dichotomy between hyper-central languages, such as English, and peripheralized and marginalized local languages and cultures (see for example, Barnawi, 2018; Canagarajah, 1999; Nonaka, 2018; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phan, 2008; Phan et al., 2014; Phillipson, 1992; Tsui, 2020; Tupas, 2014; Windle et al., 2020). We have taken up scholarly attempts to challenge hegemonic views and frameworks of globalization, particularly in terms of knowledge production and in the domain of language and education studies. This is an important conceptual contribution this volume has collectively made. As demonstrated throughout the

book and briefly discussed in this chapter, the many findings, facts, discussions, analyses, and debates provided in the contributing chapters offer scope for comparisons and bring about refreshing perspectives vis-a-vis long-held and hegemonic ideas about top-down globalization, particularly in relation to issues surrounding language education and development, medium of instruction, curriculum, textbooks, mainstream education, community education, ideologies, culture and identity issues, nation building, and mobility matters.

We acknowledge the editorial contribution to the volume as a whole and to the individual chapters made by Joel Windle, whom we have invited to serve as another editor for this volume. Windle offers his own take on the volume and his participation as a volume editor in the next chapter.

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Chapter 15

Framing Language in Contact Zones: A Commentary on Vietnamese as an Expression of Globalisation(s)



Joel Austin Windle

Abstract Drawing on contributions across this volume, the present commentary argues for investigating the phenomenon of globalisation from the starting point of contact zones. It uses notions of language ideology and metapragmatic regime to discuss a series of contact zones shaped by sociopolitical tensions amongst speakers and linguistic forms that are presented in preceding chapters: Chinese–Vietnamese relations; French–Vietnamese colonial relations; diasporic–domestic relations; education–market relations; and micro-political relations mobilised in Vietnamese as a *língua franca*. These are important ‘southern’ sites of investigation in light of the primacy of research that references the global north.

What if, instead of starting with English, French or German, we started our theorising of linguistic contact zones under the pressures of globalisation with Vietnamese? Vietnamese, the language of an imagined community (Anderson, 2006) divided on multiple axes, offers a valuable starting point for considering other languages (including reconsidering global Englishes) as they are invested with the ideological legacies of multiple and conflicting imperial and nationalist histories.

Vietnamese, as a language and set of literate technologies, is marked by a distinctly southern set of historical and contemporary socio-political forces. These include millennia of Chinese influence on language, writing and the functions of the state; French colonial efforts to cultivate a local administrative class; the spectacular revolutionary uptake of national language and literacy campaigns in the struggle for national independence (also resulting in diasporic communities committed to linguistic and political conservatism); and more recent adaptations to the market and standards-based logics of global education. As such, Vietnamese offers a useful vantage point

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© The Author(s) 2024
Phan Le Ha et al. (eds.), *Vietnamese Language, Education and Change In and Outside Vietnam*, Global Vietnam: Across Time, Space and Community,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9093-1_15

for the development of counter-narratives in the face of a northern story of globalisation that centres the European and North American metropolises and, increasingly, the hegemony of a single language, English. A symbolic instance of the shift in perspective enabled by turning south is in the contrastive denomination of the Vietnamese War as the American War within the Vietnamese vernacular and scholarship (see Chap. 9).

The idea of a southern standpoint that represents a distinctive set of experiences, epistemologies and ontologies has recently been laid out in Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory* (Connell, 2020). However, there are myriad projects that seek to decentre the global north, even from within the traditions of that north—exemplified by Benedict Anderson's masterful dislocation of the origins of nationalism from Europe to the “new world” (Anderson, 2006). Anderson devotes considerable attention to Vietnam, and to overlapping political entities—such as French Indochina. The parallels he draws with other emerging nationhoods in the south, including neighbouring Indonesia, point to the global relevance of considering the dynamics of the Vietnamese language and literate practices.

The fractious twentieth-century history of Vietnam also invests the terms north and south with their own internal meanings. For sections of Vietnamese diasporic communities in Australia and the USA, language and political identity join together when northern accents and post-1975 linguistic changes continue to index traumatic experiences and entrenched ideological divisions. That is to say, historical and ideological disputes are embedded in notions of Overseas Vietnamese (*tiếng Việt hải ngoại*) and Domestic Vietnamese (*tiếng Việt trong nước*) that often map onto a north–south divide. The ideological investments in such north–south distinctions face challenges from other segments of the Vietnamese diaspora, including more recent emigrants (see Chap. 5).

Vietnamese has as strong a claim as any language to a constitution shaped by contact zones, starting with its connection to the sphere of classical Chinese influence through dynasties that ruled through the mandarin system even after formal independence. This Chinese influence extended from before the Common Era into the second millennium, and in space extended as far as Korea and Japan to the North, predating the dynamics of European colonisation, and post-colonial echoes, that have been of greatest interest to critical linguists in recent times (Alim & Pennycook, 2008; Heller & McElhinny, 2017). Chinese influence is reflected in as much as 60% of the Vietnamese lexicon, in the use of Chinese Sino Nom in civil service admission examinations into the second decade of the twentieth century, and in local scriptural adaptations for vernacular literature (*chữ Nôm*), with many registers still heavily influenced by Chinese models (see Chaps. 2, 3, and 5 for a detailed discussion).

But it is not just the forms of language that bear the traces of contact, but the social positions accessible through them, and the social evaluations that pass through recognition of registers and other linguistic forms as proper to particular identities and competencies. That is to say, contact is a process that also frames language in the minds of speakers by mobilising metapragmatic regimes (Silverstein, 2003). Metapragmatic regimes, following Silverstein, shape social interactions by providing a sense of what is appropriate, allowable or legitimate speech. Speech and text that

is viewed as making excessive use of forms that index Sino-Vietnamese of the past may be negatively evaluated in the metapragmatic order shared by those who live and work in Vietnam, but positively evaluated by some in the diaspora. Schooling is a key location for the establishment and shifting of metapragmatic regimes—illustrated by the attachment to pre-1979 textbooks in Australian heritage Vietnamese language classes (see Chap. 5).

In the early twentieth century, Vietnamese-language schooling was part of the colonial contact zone for a section of the local elite—just enough to populate the lower ranks of the French Indochinese bureaucracy and commercial sectors. The adoption of a new alphabetic script for Vietnamese, *Chữ Quốc ngữ*, symbolically cut ties with Chinese linguistic and cosmological models. Initially, schooled alongside the children of French colonists and students from other parts of French Indochina, Vietnamese students were subsequently separated from their European peers (Kelly, 1975). Ironically, As Anderson (2006) observes, it was the first generation educated in the colonial schools who, like their classmates in schools across the colonial world, would sow the seeds of nationalist revolt, to be spread through mass literacy campaigns. Commitment to mass education for nation-building was the foundation stone of mid-twentieth-century policy in Vietnam. Externally, this push extended to efforts to establish relations of solidarity with other socialist countries, particularly neighbouring countries where Vietnamese came to be taught as a foreign language.

Schooling has continued to remain a central space for nation-building, including through more recent shifts in the ways that national literature and culture are taught in order to emphasise social change and intercultural understanding (see Chaps. 9 and 10). However, new purposes for education have also gained considerable sway—those that are recognisable in standards and market-driven education reforms, sometimes referred to as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2016). Thus standards of proficiency in Vietnamese as a Foreign Language follow the model of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) (Division, 2001), a prime example of a globalising standard that is also used in a multitude of non-European settings. Similarly, shifts to notions of competence-based education are evident across various educational sectors in Vietnam, another international trend pushed by transnational policy and testing agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These trends, together with growth in market-based and private educational sectors that followed the influx of foreign capital, embed locally concepts that emerge from market ideologies, including ideologies that see education in terms of human capital and investment (see Chaps. 3 and 12).

Although English often appears as the only ‘language of internationalisation’, there is a healthy and growing move to internationalisation through the Vietnamese language. Vietnamese language and culture is an established academic field and study is compulsory for foreign students attending Vietnamese universities. Vietnamese is taught in a range of countries, many of which send exchange students to Vietnam. Much of this growth is through Asia-to-Asia academic mobility, a phenomenon largely overlooked in the literature on the internationalisation of higher education (Kim Khanh & Ngoc, 2023; Phan Le et al., 2022). At the level of policy, Vietnam

is also distinctive in combining increasingly market-oriented structures within a socialist system of government (Le Ha & Ngoc, 2020).

Something of particular interest is happening in this process of internationalisation, particularly as it involves other countries that fell within the historical linguistic and political sphere of Chinese influence (as a result sharing a wealth of idioms, proverbs, and lexical items). There is a hint that Vietnamese may be treated in some educational settings as a *lingua franca*. That is, a language that is not fixed in a single cultural tradition or pragmatic regime, but open to other cultural and pragmatic perspectives. This is brilliantly laid out in the account of Korean learner experiences of navigating the metapragmatics of making compliments in Vietnamese in Chap. 4. This chapter offers an insight into the dilemmas that all speakers face in managing shifting social and linguistic priorities that concern how we address, compliment, and engage with our interlocutors—drawn into sharp focus in the example of gendered patterns of complimenting appearance. These point to a linguistic micropolitics that locates agency in the discussions that students have about how particular uses of language affect themselves and others, and how shifting a perspective from a rigid adherence to an apparently homogenous cultural norm towards acceptance of divergent pragmatic stances can be valuable in highlighting constraining social structures. In so doing, these structures are put under pressure (“compliment culture is being changed”).

Vietnamese is also a *lingua franca* for 15% of the population within Vietnam, mostly ethnic minority groups for whom both Vietnamese and their own languages are sometimes seen as the source of difficulties. As argued in this volume (Chap. 8), a shift to viewing minority languages as a resource for learning with and through Vietnamese offers a valuable alternative perspective on language. So too does the recognition that language in and of itself does not constitute a problem or a solution, but rather attention must be paid to the economic and educational marginalisation of populations in the Vietnamese northern and central highlands whose access to the fruits of rapid development in urban areas has been limited.

In many settings, language as a problem appears to have faded in favour of language as resource as far as contact with other languages are concerned (to borrow from Ruiz’s conceptual framework (Ruiz, 1984, 2010)). Code-switching, code-meshing and translanguaging characterise the linguistic practices of Vietnamese migrants and subsequent generations across a range of settings in Europe, the USA and Australia, to cite examples discussed in the present volume (see Chaps. 6 and 7). But translanguaging itself, as a concept most influentially framed to meet the needs of Spanish bi-linguals in the USA (García et al., 2017; Windle & Amorim Possas, 2023), also needs to be rethought from the starting point of Vietnamese.

To summarise, the chapters assembled here show how Vietnamese has been framed by the dynamics of contact zones throughout its history, providing an instructive point of departure for appreciating overlapping metapragmatic regimes and language ideologies.

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