



POLICES AND STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ASEAN+3 COUNTIES: A CASE STUDY OF VIETNAM

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The research objectives were to study policies and strategies for Foreign Language Education in Vietnam and to identify the success and problems concerned. The research methodology was qualitative, based on documentary analysis, panel discussion, and suggestions by 180 experts and teachers of foreign language in Thailand.

The findings reviewed that English teaching in Vietnam has been founded since 1954. Foreign language education policies and accompanying student attitudes and motivation have become crucial issues in the national development by open-door, “Doi Moi” policy. The Main major strategy is content-based curriculum. Other languages such as Japanese, Korean, French, and German have been provided as elective subjects in high schools and universities, to enhance competitiveness of Vietnam so that they can move toward bilingual ability. Some major obstacles in promoting foreign language education are such as inappropriate teaching methodology, lack of teaching instrument and ICT for education, and lack of open education practical system. By 2015, a new, consistent teaching and learning foreign language strategies will have been implemented to all educational in Vietnam in order to gain success in communication, study and work in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment in ASEAN community.

Keywords: Policies and strategies, Foreign language education, Vietnam.

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a geo-political and economic organization of ten countries located in Southeast Asia, which was formed on 8 August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Its aims include accelerating economic growth, social progress, and cultural development among its members, protection of regional peace and stability, and opportunities for member countries to discuss differences peacefully. According the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) is a forum that functions as a coordinator of cooperation between the ASEAN has expanded to cooperate the three East Asia nations of China, Japan, and South Korea.

Education underpins ASEAN community building. Education lies at the core of ASEAN’s development process, creating a knowledge-based society and contributing to the enhancement of ASEAN competitiveness, and create a sense of belonging to the ASEAN Community and understanding

of the richness of ASEAN's history, languages, culture and common values by using ICT to promote education and life-long learning particularly in underserved communities through open, distance education and e-learning (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). Therefore, schools are changing to become open to dialogue with society and be closely linked with science-technology. Teacher, instead of transferring knowledge, are moving to provide the learners with systematic thinking methodologies of absorbing information and analytical thinking. ASEAN have the mission to work together, so the AESAN Charter, article 34 determines that "The working language of ASEAN shall be English". English is a formal language used for communication not only among the ASEAN member countries but also throughout the world. It is therefore important to teach English both for general and specific purposes, particularly at primary and secondary level, i.e. all schools can be more prepared to enter the higher education for both locally and globally. The report of the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook (IMD, 2011) ranked Singapore is the highest English Proficiency Index (EFL) but the list of Thailand is lower than Indonesia.

According to Khamkhien (2010) found that many authors have been investigating the tendency of English to become a world language. A large number of research outcomes (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990) have pointed to language learning strategy that one of the most important factors in the second language acquisition process. Many researchers of language learning (Green & Oxford, 1995; Grif-fiths & Parr, 2001; Oxford, 1990; Park, 1997; Wharton, 2000) have pointed out how successful learners seem to use a wider variety of language learning strategies than unsuccessful learners. It found that selecting appropriate strategies could enhance the learners' performance of second language learning (Brien, 2001; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Purpura, 1997; Shen, 2005; Wharton, 2000).

Therefore, this study will be focused on Foreign Language Education in Vietnam. The results of the study will propose for the development of policies and strategies on foreign language education in Thailand.

Research Objectives

Specifically, the objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To study polices and strategies for English Education and Foreign Language Education in Vietnam.
2. To study problems and condition of success for English Education and Foreign Language Education in Vietnam which guidance for development of policies and strategies on Foreign Language Education in Thailand.

Research Methodology

This research used a qualitative research method. Data collection from literature reviews of documents and research which related to policies and strategies for Foreign Language Education, panel discussion based on expert brainstorming activities by 180 experts and teachers of foreign language in Thailand. In relation to data analysis, I focused on the meaning of the information collected in two ways a content analysis that was descriptive, and an interpretation of the responses that reflected levels of complexity.

The Findings

1. The Background Contexts for Foreign Language Education in Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the countries in Southeast Asia, and is located in Indochina. It shares borders with Lao P.D.R., Cambodia, China, and the South China Sea faced to the east (Nouyen Loc, 2005). The appearance

of foreign language in Vietnam is different from that in ASEAN due to the escalating Vietnam War (1954 to 1975). Before 1975, in the North, Russian and Chinese was the major language of communication. English was taught as a weapon for the fight against the US for the reunification of Vietnam, whereas in the South, French and then English were deep-rooted at many ethnic groups. These languages were the main foreign languages to be taught as required subjects in secondary and post-secondary education. Until the national reunification in 1975, Russian was the national first foreign language for a number of years, and little attention was paid to the teaching of both English and French (Do Huy Thinh, 2006). Hence, the Vietnamese government pursued an open-door policy, Doi Moi, in 1986. Many research illustrated that this policy helped attract a considerable number of English-speaking visitors as tourists and business people to Vietnam. Social demands have forged the reemergence of English as the language for broader communication and cooperation. As a result, even though foreign languages such as French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese and German are still taught in secondary schools and universities.

2. Foreign Language Policies and Strategies

Vietnam's national curriculum to study of English further and to better the quality of English teaching and learning reiterates that Vietnam to meet the increasing trends of globalization. The Vietnamese Prime Minister declared the 10-year National Plan for "Teaching and Learning Foreign Language in the National Formal Educational System in the Period of 2008-2020. According to the National Plan, it consists of three phases. The first phase extends from 2008 to 2010, top priority is given to developing and perfecting the 10 years foreign language curriculum, focusing particularly on English; writing foreign language textbooks; preparing necessary conditions for exercising the pilot 10 years foreign language (English) programmes. In the second phase, from 2011 to 2015, the focus is on introducing 10 years foreign language programmes throughout the whole general educational system. And in the third phase, from 2016 to 2020, the focus is on developing intensive foreign language programmes for vocational schools, colleges, and universities. According to the 7 th session the National Assembly of the Socialist republic of Vietnam, Legislature XI. Article 7 (MOET, 2007) reiterates that the Vietnamese is the official language to be used in school and other educational institutions. The curriculum aims to nurture each child to his/her full potential, talents for life-long learning. The content-based curriculum imparts literacy, numeracy, the sciences, humanities, aesthetics, physical education, civics and moral education and National Education. To promote

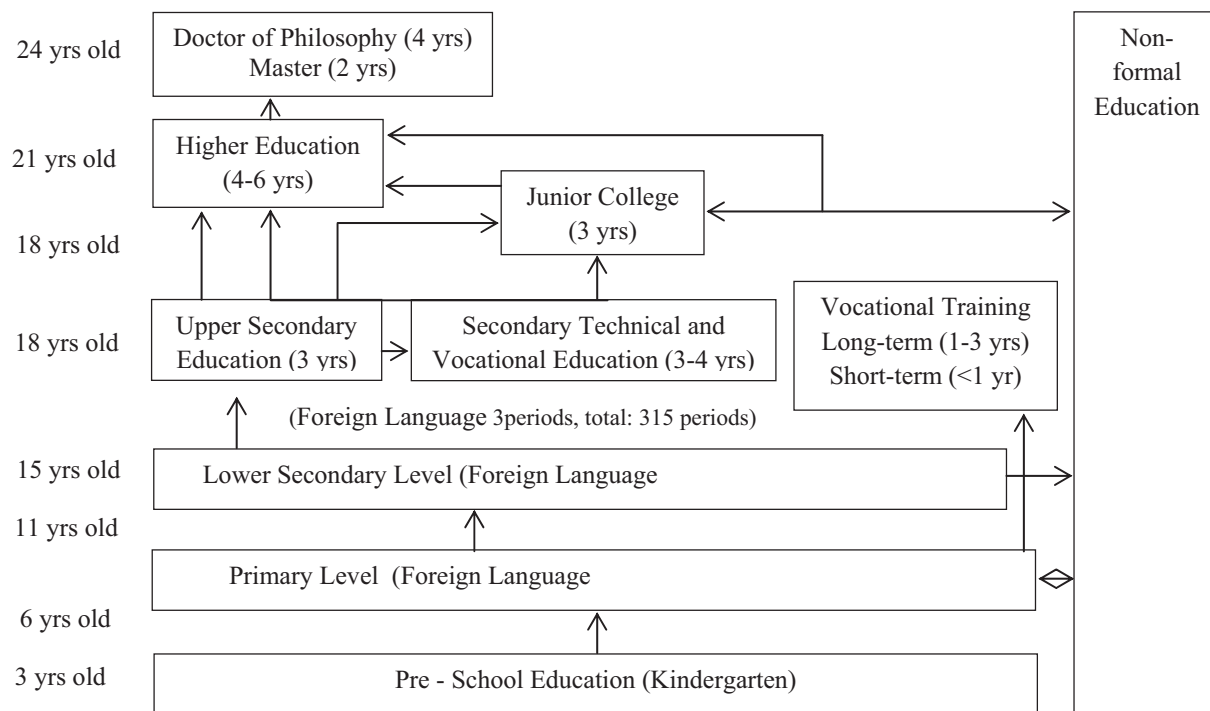
The goals of Foreign Language : It is generally assumed that after 700 hours (about 50 hours per semester) of English in secondary education, children will have mastered basic English phonetics and grammar and know a minimum of 2,000 vocabulary items (Hoang Van Van, 2007; Nguyen, 2010). A document on English language curriculum goals issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2007) which reflects the government language policy, specifies three cluster goals of foreign language teaching in secondary education (Nguyen, 2000; Hong Van Van, 2006). It can define into three goals as below:

- 1) Culture goals: English instruction in secondary education aims to develop the students' knowledge and attitudes towards using English as a tool for learning about other cultures and a method for establishing links with members of other cultures for the development of mutual understanding. Students will learn more about Vietnamese cultures through other peoples' cultures.
- 2) Linguistic goals: English instruction in secondary education aims to enable students to become effective language users by developing their language skills. These skills help students to gain insights into their Vietnamese language, which will contribute to a better overall linguistic competence in the mother tongue.
- 3) Learner autonomy development goals: English instruction in secondary education aims at the students' personal development (self-confidence, learning skills, and personal strategies), enabling students to use English for accessing information and communicating in their further academic

work. These goals are motivating factors for students to continue to develop their personal language skills independently beyond the classroom.

2.1 Curriculum

The Ministry of Education and training (MOET) oversees the education sector and endeavors to clearly present challenges for Vietnam to achieve the *Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015*. General education in Vietnam consists of 12 grades at grade 1-5 (primary school for children for the age range 6-11), grade 6-9 (lower secondary education for the age range 12-15), and grade 10-12 (upper secondary school for the age range 16-18). Foreign languages are taught to children from grade 6 to grade 12. As far as English is concerned, it is great importance to increase the number of periods for teaching a foreign language from 700 periods to 1,115 periods with particular allocation to each of the levels. MOET children in primary level (grades 3,4,5) being taught four periods per week, total: 420 periods. Lower secondary level (grades 6,7,8,9) being taught three periods per week, total: 420 periods. Whereas, upper secondary level (grades 10,11,12) being taught three periods per week, total: 315 periods as figure 1.



Source: Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2007)

Figure 1. Educational System in Vietnam.

2.2 Instruction

Many authors (Hoang Van Van, 2007; Nguyen, 2010; Do Huy Thin, 2006) examined the MOET build up a detailed table of foreign language proficiency, which consists of six levels, according to the international foreign language levels that are widely used. Devise educational curricula and compile textbooks for 10-year foreign language programme. Give incentives to schools and educational institutions which have conditions as well as a strong need for foreign language teaching. They are given priority in implementing intensive foreign language programs in each educational level. MOET have

devised foreign language programme, compiled correlative textbooks for vocational schools, technical schools, colleges and universities, and devised programs in which some subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and informatics are taught in English. These programs are implemented in secondary schools and educational institutions which have sufficient conditions and needs in some subjects and learning branches relating to such fields of technology, natural science in some colleges and universities.

2.3 Evaluation

In terms of English standards, the National Plan explicitly accepts the 6-level testing system as developed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) as the standard for assessing the quality of English learning in Vietnam and encourages Vietnamese educational institutions to actively develop and carry out bilingual programmes. The content is included in the testing and assessment of students' ability in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Expectation of English language proficiency for finishing primary level students is expected to reach level 1 (A1). Finishing lower secondary level students are expected to reach level 2 (A2). And finishing upper secondary level students are expected to reach level 3 (B1) with leaving examination (SSLE). Hoang Van Van (2007) pointed to a higher education; there have been three different views on what register of English: the GR (general register) view, and the AR (academic register) view. In both registers, the students have learned the phonological system of English. The only difference between GR and AR seems to lie in the terminology, while the AR can self-study through reading books and specialized journal articles in English. The other evidence supporters both of GR view and AR view are concerned the internationally testing system such as the TOEFL and the IELTS.

2.4 Teacher

The policy to enhance teachers at primary level was supply 1,500 teachers in 2008-2009, then maintains the annual, average supply of 2,300 teachers until 2015-2016, at secondary level was contribute 1,200 teachers in 2011-2012, then maintain the annual average supply of 1,900 teachers until 2015-2016. Upper secondary level is contributed 1,400 teachers in 2015-2016. Requirements of teacher qualification at primary schools should reach Level 3: lower secondary schools should reach Level 4: upper Secondary Schools should reach Level 5.

2.5 Equipment and ICT for Teaching and Learning

MOET include ICTs into curriculum, pedagogy and assessment so the students can develop their competencies for the 21st century. The government is provided more equipment sufficient facilities for the teaching and learning of foreign languages, in correspondence to the Project's major steps (MOET, 2008). By 2015, 100% of the educational institutions must have at least one Foreign Language Learning Room, 100% of the secondary schools, vocational schools, technical schools, colleges and universities must have been equipped with at least one multi-media room (Hoang Van Van, 2007).

3. Foreign Language outside the Formal Educational System

Foreign language, namely English, Russian, French, and Chinese outside the formal educational system in Vietnam has also been developing rapidly. Various English centers, public and private, have been established and a large number of foreign and joint venture language schools. In the non-formal educational sector, one can also see the presence the British Council, the American Apollo, the

Cambridge International Examination, and the American TOEFL, and TOEIC, which established in the big cities (Hoang Van Van, 2007).

4. The Main Obstacles in Promoting Foreign Language Education

Hoang Van Van (2007) pointed to the main obstacles in promoting Foreign Language Education in Vietnam which can be presented in six themes: firstly, there is disproportionate demand-supply. The demand for English language teaching far outstrip the native speaker and competent non-native speaker teachers with a population of over 85 million, of whom a sizeable proportion have strong desire to learn English: secondly, textbook writing and teacher retaining are too long when Vietnam starts to carry out the 10 years National Plan. Even though textbooks writing had been completed, but to do massive to retaining for teachers would demand manpower and high competence at present: thirdly, the quality of teaching and learning have not meet the demand for competent English- speaking: fourthly, there are overloaded beyond their capacity to class of fifty or even sixty, with poor libraries and poorly paid staff. High quality teachers often quit to seek employment in non-teaching fields: fifthly, teacher not much improvement in term of teaching methods has been noticed in English classes, and finally, there is a mismatch between testing and teaching. While teaching follows the communicative approach, but testing seems to focus on the students' grammatical knowledge.

Suggestion

At present, there are four foreign languages being taught in Vietnam national education system, namely English, Russian, French, and Chinese but English Language operates at many levels and plays many roles in Vietnam. Vietnam's open door policy, *Doi Moi*, had come into existence since 1986. It endeavors to clearly present challenges to Vietnam to achieve the *Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015* and enhance educational development with a view to *meeting the requirements of industrialization and modernization* in the context of globalization, and development of information and communication technology. English is in great demand and the most popular language being taught across the country. English, thus, has become the first foreign language taught and used in Vietnam. Moreover, as far as the importance of English in Vietnam is concerned, English has become the passport to a better paid job not only in the tourism and hospitality industries, but in many other enterprises. Vietnam foreign language education is promoted English language options so that the country can continue to develop its human resource. The educational systems are using the National Plan, emphasis on broad-based and holistic learning, focus on teacher quality and integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into the classroom and cooperation closely with parents and the community. The keys successful criteria for the foreign language education in the further should be considered policy & strategy, curriculum, learning outcomes, and then should be focused on teaching processes, area of language learning, ICT, and assessment as figure 2.

According to Ministry of Education in Thailand has expanded English Program (EP) and Mini English Program (MEP) since 2003. So that, MOE will:

- Developing curriculum models that fit each school's context and plans to support schools are needed;
- Supporting schools in organizing activities for English Education;
- Plans for to provide guidance for native speaker who will be English teacher;
- Developing and disseminating teaching and learning model and materials for speaking and writing;
- Developing standards of achievement to cultivate communication skills that are necessary to understand, and apply daily themes, materials, and information for practical English;

- Using ICT (Tablet) and exploring the collaboration with the media to broadcast interesting and meaningful radio and television program for children;
- Developing teachers' communicative teaching skills.

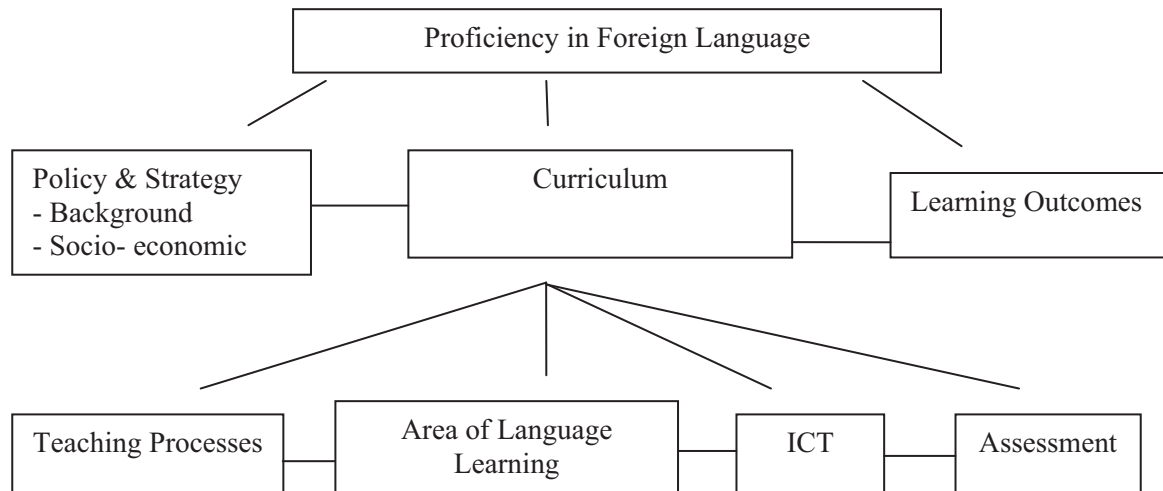


Figure 2. Keys Successful criteria in promoting Foreign Language education in Vietnam.

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