

Vietnam's Language Policy for Ethnic Minority Languages from 1975 to Now

MA. Nguyen Thu Huyen¹, MA. Nguyen Thi Thuy²

¹Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

²Hanoi University of Home Affairs

Abstract: *Since its establishment, the country of Vietnam has set out language policies suitable to the specific situation in each historical period. The article presents an overview of ethnic minority language policies from 1975 to the present and comments on ethnic minority language policies during this period to contribute to policy development. Ethnic minority languages develop sustainably in new situations and new conditions of life.*

Keywords: language policy; minority languages; Vietnam

1. Introduction

Language policy in Vietnam is the entire policy and direction of the State on language. Ethnic minority language policy is a part of language policy prescribed in the Constitution and other legal documents of the State to create conditions for ethnic minorities to have ethnic equality, including language equality. Accordingly, the voices and scripts of ethnic minorities have contributed to the rich and colorful Vietnamese cultural identity.

1) Basic contents of ethnic minority language policy from 1975 to now

a) Ethnic minorities have the rights to use their own languages and scripts

Ethnic minorities have the right to use their languages and scripts. This is affirmed in the 1980 Constitution, the 1992 Constitution (Amended and supplemented in 2001), and the 2013 Constitution. There, the 1980 Constitution regulation: "Ethnicities have the rights to use their language, to preserve their ethnical identity, and to promote their customs, practices, traditions, and culture"; the 1992 Constitution regulation: "Ethnicities have the rights to use their language, to preserve their ethnical identity and to promote their customs, practices, traditions, and culture, " and the 2013 Constitution regulation: "Ethnicities have the rights to use their language, to preserve their ethnical identity, to promote their custom, practice, tradition, and culture. "

Based on the Constitution, all legal documents under the Code, orders, ordinances, etc., also clearly indicate the direction and policy of the State of Vietnam, which is to recognize and legally guarantee the rights of having their language for all ethnic minorities in the country, including education law. Article 4 of the Law on Universalization of Primary Education in 1991 stipulates: "Primary education is conducted in the Vietnamese language. Ethnic minorities have the right to use their languages and scripts together with Vietnamese to conduct education elementary". Article 5 of the Education Law No.11/1998/QH10 of the National Assembly was promulgated on December 10, 1998. "The State creates conditions for ethnic minorities to study their languages and writing systems. The teaching and learning of

languages and writing systems of ethnic minorities shall comply with the Government's regulations". Article 7 Section, 2 of the 2005 Education Law, states: "The State creates conditions for ethnic minorities to learn their languages and scripts to preserve and promote national cultural identity and helping ethnic minority students to learn their languages and scripts easily. Therefore, easily continue to acquire knowledge while studying in schools and other educational institutions. Clause 2, Article 11 of the Education Law 2019 stipulates: "The State encourages and creates favorable conditions for ethnic minorities to learn their language and to write according to the Government's regulations. " Thus, Viet Nam always has the policy of respecting the mother tongues of ethnic minorities while affirming to ensure that all ethnic minority languages throughout the territory of Vietnam are developed freely and equally.

b) Preserve and promote the languages and scripts of ethnic minorities

Preserving and promoting the voices and writings of ethnic minorities are officially included in the Party's documents: "It is necessary to preserve and promote the voices and writings of ethnic minorities" [1]. In that spirit, Vietnam has issued many specific regulations for each issue of ethnic minority languages and scripts. For example, responding to the aspirations of ethnic minorities in the combination of learning the national language script and the ethnic script: "Attention to solve well the needs of some ethnic groups in learning their ethnic letters, interspersed with learning letters in high school" [2]; Create favorable conditions for ethnic minority people to learn their ethnic letters if they have aspirations: "For the people who need to learn ethnic letters, all favorable conditions must be created for the learning of the ethnic minorities, practical results" [2]; Enhancing the promotion of ethnic minority voices and scripts in social communication such as using languages of ethnic minorities in the media, in socio-cultural activities: "Strengthening forms cultural activities such as publication of books and newspapers, radio, exhibitions, official publications, cinema, spotlights. . . ; pay attention to the use of ethnic languages and scripts and forms of mobile activities to go deep into highland, remote and isolated areas" [3]; Preserve and promote the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, especially

Volume 11 Issue 4, April 2022

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

their voices, scripts, costumes, traditional festivals, and positive cultural values in religions and beliefs" [4]; "Focusing on economic development, taking care of material and spiritual life, eradicating hunger, reducing poverty, raising people's intellectual level, preserving and promoting good cultural identity, language, writing and traditions beauty of the nations" [6]; Ensure the preservation of the language, writing, and national identity, and promote the acceptable customs, practices, traditions and culture of each nation" [5]. The use of ethnic minority languages will help them preserve and promote their traditional cultural identity.

c) **Language education in ethnic minority areas must be bilingual education**

In a multilingual social environment such as Vietnam's ethnic minorities, the State's language education policy is an important orientation to both provide ethnic minority people with the means of language for them to use in daily life and help to stabilize the society to develop the country and integrate with the world. Vietnamese is valued as a language to promote socio-economic development, while the mother tongue of ethnic minorities is valued as a tool to ensure the preservation and to promote the community's cultural identity. Hence, the State of Vietnam specifies that the policy of language education in ethnic minority areas must be bilingual. Decision No.53-CP dated February 22, 1980 of the Government Council, stipulates that: "In ethnic minority areas, ethnic script are taught simultaneously with the Vietnamese script at comprehensive schools and cultural supplement schools, in order to create conditions for learners to both understand the ethnic script and quickly grasp the Vietnamese script"; Officials and teachers working in ethnic minority areas must necessarily learn the languages and languages of the ethnic minorities where they work".

Bilingual policy is implemented by the Government mainly through the education system. Circular No.01/GD-DT dated February 3, 1997 of the Ministry of Education and Training guides the teaching of ethnic minority languages and scripts: "At elementary where teaches ethnic languages, ethnic languages are taught as a subject, equivalent to other subjects in schools, in order to help learners quickly and conveniently absorb the knowledge imparted by the ethnic languages and Vietnamese, contributing to the preservation and development of traditional languages, scripts and cultural capitals of ethnic minorities". Bilingual teaching has contributed to improving the quality of education in ethnic minority areas. Through the Vietnamese language, ethnic groups in localities get closer together, understand each other better, and can develop economic, culture, science and technology. . . together.

d) **Using ethnic minority languages in cultural and artistic activities**

Languages of ethnic minorities are always encouraged, promoted and honored by the State of Vietnam in cultural activities, literary and artistic works. Therefore, some specific policies related to the use of ethnic minority languages in cultural activities have been promulgated. Decision No.1270/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister Approving the project of preserving and developing the culture of Vietnam's ethnic minorities until 2020, in Section 7. The key tasks of the project emphasize: "Appreciate and

organize the implementation of programs on the preservation and promotion of good traditional values, the development of new value of culture, literature and art, especially the promotion of languages and scripts of ethnic minorities"; Directive No.194/CT-BVHTTDL of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism dated October 20, 2011 on Organizing the implementation of the project on preserving and developing the culture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam until 2020 specified: "Introducing and promoting literary and artistic works, typical cultural heritages of ethnic minorities and bringing traditional cultural education of ethnic minorities into schools". Hence, many of folklore works of ethnic minorities such as: Singing for brides (Mong ethnic folk songs); Dam San epic, Xinh Nha epic (Ede ethnic group); Customary law (Giakai ethnic group, Mngong ethnic group) ... has been introduced throughout the country in a bilingual form. This helps languages and scripts of ethnic minorities to exist and develop, and enriches the literary and artistic treasures of the Vietnamese peoples.

e) **Using ethnic minority languages in the media**

Using languages of ethnic minorities in the media helping ethnic minority people have conditions to access information to improve people's knowledge. Therefore, the Government has issued such regulatory documents: Decree No.96/2003/ND-CP of the Government dated August 20, 2003 on Regulations on functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of Vietnam Television, in which Article 3, the organizational structure of Vietnam Television Station has the Ethnic Language Television Committee; Decision No.1659/QD-TTg dated October 26, 2020 approving the objectives and tasks of strengthening the production capacity of ethnic language television programs in the 2021-2025 period, including the following objectives: "Increasing the total broadcast time on 4 channels VTV5, VTV5 Southwest, VTV5 Central Highlands and VTV5 Northwest to 96 hours/day (24 hours/a day each channel), in which the total production time for new programs of 4 channels by 2025 is 13 hours 30 minutes/a day/4 channels; Increasing the total number of production and broadcasting languages to 27 (extending 04 languages compared to the present) including: H'Mong, Thai, Dao, Muong, San Chi, Ede, Jo Rai, Ba Na, Xe Dang, Je Trieng, Raglai, K'Ho, S'Tieng, Cham, Khmer, Pa Co-Van Kieu, Co Tu, Cao Lan, Ha Nhi, H'Re, Chu Ru, Cho Ro, M'Nong, Tay, Hoa, Ca Dong and Vietnamese"; Decision No.1270/QD-TTg dated July 27, 2011 approving the Project on preserving and developing the culture of Vietnam's ethnic minorities until 2020: "Strengthening information and communication work: Strengthening propaganda to create understanding of the society about the conservation and development of ethnic minority culture; coordinating between Vietnam Television, Vietnam Broadcast and local radio and television stations in building propaganda columns on the conservation and development of ethnic minority cultures, prioritizing the use of language and script of the nation". Thus, the production of radio and television programs in ethnic languages has contributed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency in implementing ethnic policies, promoting the values and cultural identities of ethnic minorities. strengthen social consensus, strengthen the great unity bloc of all nations, and raise the people's confidence in the State.

f) Using ethnic minority languages in the legal field

The Constitution stipulates that the People's Court ensures citizens of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam belonging to different ethnic groups have the right to use their own language and writing before the court. The Law on Organization of People's Courts in 2014 stipulated the language and script used at the People's Court: "The language used at the Court is Vietnamese. The Court guarantees to the participants who procedure have the rights to use their own language and script at the People's Court, in this case an interpreter is required"; Article 29 of the 2015 Criminal Procedure Code stipulates: "*The spoken and written language used in criminal proceedings is Vietnamese. Procedure participants have the right to use their own languages and scripts. In this case, an interpreter is required*". This principle has great socio-political and practical significance. On one hand it shows equality among different ethnic groups. On the other, it ensures that the trial is accurate and public. This provision is intended to ensure respect for the languages of ethnic minorities, and to ensure equal rights in proceedings for ethnic minorities.

g) Improving and constructing writing system for ethnic minorities

To implement the language policy, in ethnic minority areas, languages and writing systems of those ethnic groups are used simultaneously with the common languages and writing scripts.

Decision No.53-CP dated February 22, 1980 of the Government Council on guidelines for ethnic minority scripts, stipulated: 1/ Ethnic minorities, which do not have a writing script, may require their own set of rhymes in order to form their own language. Some ethnic minorities with ancient scripts prefer having a modern script according to the Latin alphabet with the aim of being closer to the common script. These requirements need to be respected and resolved step by step"; 2/ To make teaching and learning ethnic and common scripts more easily, conveniently for both ethnic minorities and the Kinh who need to learn ethnic writing systems, it is of utmost importance to construct or improve ethnic writing systems according to a set of rhymes close to the set of common written rhymes.

Implementing the aforementioned policy, the construction and development of scripts and compilation of ethnic books have achieved great accomplishments: the publication of the alphabet and sound, rhyme system in the Jrai and Bahnar languages; the writing systems of the following ethnic minorities: Co-ho (in Lam Dong), Bru-Van Kieu, Paco-Ta Oi (in Binh Tri Thien, now the provinces of Thua Thien Hue, Quang Tri, Quang Binh); Latinized Thai, Ra-glai (in Ninh Thuan), Co Tu (in Quang Nam), Cham-Hroi, Bana-Krim, Hre (in Binh Dinh); Mnong (in Dak Nong and Dak Lak); Xtieng (in Binh Phuoc) [7].

2) Some comments on ethnic minority language policies in the period 1975 to now

In Việt Nam, the languages of ethnic minorities are always considered as one of the elements that make up the national cultural identity. Therefore, it can be seen that the ethnic minority language policy is always consistent, correct and

fully demonstrates the principle of equality and solidarity among ethnic groups living together in Vietnam, that is:

- Affirming language equality: Vietnam has always had a policy of preserving and promoting the written language of 53 ethnic minorities. The preservation and promotion of the voice and writing of the 53 ethnic minorities is always in relation to the Vietnamese language and vice versa. Thanks to this policy, most of the ethnic minorities are able to use bilingualism.
- In order to preserve and promote the written language of the ethnic groups, Vietnam has introduced many appropriate guidelines and policies such as: the production, improvement and use of writing; the use of ethnic languages in the central and local mass media; the use of language in cultural and artistic activities; the use of language in judicial activities to ensure the rights of ethnic minorities. . .

From a linguistic perspective, it can be seen that this is the right policy of Vietnam to preserve ethnic minority languages. From a social perspective, it can be affirmed that ethnic minorities in Vietnam have equality in terms of ethnicity and language. However, the issue of language education and language use in ethnic minority areas in Vietnam currently has certain limitations. Example: there is a situation of writing disorder in ethnic minority areas; Policies to preserve ethnic minority languages are not specific, especially ethnic minority languages at risk of dying.

To preserve languages of ethnic minorities, the following solutions should be implemented:

- To adopt a policy of priority, advanced and intensive training for the teaching staff of ethnic minority languages.
- It is necessary to train and foster a contingent of qualified staff to meet the requirements of researching, exploiting, and introducing culture and arts in the spoken and written language of ethnic minorities.
- Localities with a large number of ethnic minorities need to regularly organize activities to preserve speech and writing such as: organizing festivals, teaching songs, folk tunes, folk games, and songs. gongs, worship songs,. . . These activities are considered to be the community link of ethnic minorities, actively contributing to the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values of the ethnic groups. create the power to survive and develop.

2. Conclude

Language is a symbol of culture, especially with a multilingual, multicultural country like Vietnam. In order to ensure cultural diversity, promote understanding and solidarity among ethnic groups, and at the same time be suitable for the economic development of the country, Vietnam has developed many policies on language, especially especially language policy for ethnic minorities. The voice and writing of religious organizations in Vietnam is always respected, equal rights guaranteed, maintained and helped develop, and protected activities of religious organizations by law to meet their requirements. on the use of ethnic characters to record books, write letters, copy

folklore materials and conduct information and propaganda work in the locality. In addition, the common language and script are increasingly popularized among the ethnic minority communities as a common language of the whole country, which has been and is making practical contributions to promoting the development of various aspects. in ethnic minority areas.

References

- [1] Resolution No.03-NQ/TW dated July 16, 1998 of the 8th Party Central Committee on building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity.
- [2] Resolution of the Politburo No.22-NQ/TW dated November 27, 1989 on a number of major undertakings and policies for socio-economic development in mountainous areas.
- [3] Directive of the Secretariat No.23-CT/TW, dated November 15, 1977 on the work of ethnic minorities in the southern provinces in the current situation.
- [4] Resolution No.33-NQ/TW dated June 9, 2014 at the Ninth Conference of the Party Central Committee, term XI.
- [5] Decree No.05/2011/ND-CP dated January 14, 2011.
- [6] Resolution No.23-NQ/TW dated March 12, 2003 at the 7th Conference of the IX Central Committee on promoting the strength of national unity for the sake of a rich people, strong country, fair society and people. owner, civilized.
- [7] Doan Van Phuc (2010), Decision No.53/CP on the conservation and promotion of languages and scripts of ethnic minorities in the new period", Language Magazine No.9.
- [8] Nguyen Van Khang (2015), Looking back at the policies of the Party and State of Vietnam on ethnic minority languages and current issues facing ethnic minority languages, Language and Life Magazine, No.1.