

English Language Education Policy in Vietnam and Its Impact on the Quality of English Teaching in Buddhist Schools

Dr. Le Hong Linh

Post-Doctoral Fellowship, School of Buddhist Studies & Civilization, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201312

Abstract: *Vietnamese national English language education policy and the unique educational realities of Buddhist schools are the two themes that the study aims to combine. While the Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has positioned English mainly as the tool for the country's modernization and global integration, the Buddhist schools are another setting where learning a foreign language supports other activities such as moral education, meditation, and spiritual communication at the same time. The research employs a qualitative multi-site case study method to explore the ways in which English language policies in Vietnam have been interpreted, adapted, and enacted in Buddhist schools. For one thing, by analyzing policy documents and conducting semi structured interviews and focus groups with teachers, monks, and administrators from four Buddhist institutions, the investigators have gathered their material. For one thing, the results show deep level structural differences in teacher training, curriculum, and instructional support between the two types of schools: Buddhist and secular. For one thing, they stress the requirement for policy to be more sensitive to cultural and religious schooling. According to the paper, a conscious combination of Buddhist education and communicative English teaching could support the development of both language skills and moral consciousness, thereby enabling educational philosophy in the Vietnamese environment. The paper comes to the conclusion that a conscious combination of Buddhist education and communicative English teaching could support the development of both language skills and moral consciousness, thereby enabling educational philosophy in the Vietnamese environment.*

Keywords: English education policy, Buddhist schools, Vietnam, teacher development, mindful pedagogy, language policy implementation

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

For the last 30 years, English language has become a key component in Vietnam's educational and sociocultural changes. When the country issued the national reform program Đổi Mới in 1986, English was just a foreign language mainly taught for the sake of translation. However, it has now become the very means of modernization, technological achievement, and global togetherness. The most important foreign language for international communication as far as Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) is concerned, English has been reflected through the two main highlights of MOET such as the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project and the extended Project 2030 on Foreign Language Education Reform.

These projects are oriented towards the development of communicative competence and the building of an English proficient workforce that can contribute to the country's enhanced role in the global knowledge economy (Nguyen & Tran, 2020; Pham, 2019). Although the strong focus on English is in line with Vietnam's development objectives, the way it's being done in various types of institutions is resulting in different levels of success. In fact, most policy research has been focused only on the main state and private schools, universities, and teacher training colleges (Dooley, 2021; Nguyen, 2022). Nonetheless, what's very important from an educational point of view still remains invisible and isn't getting the attention it deserves which is the case of Vietnam's Buddhist schools. These schools that have been centered around monastic training and moral upbringing in the past have gradually become places where English is taught not

only for fulfilling the national education requirements but also for the international needs of Buddhist scholarship and interfaith communication.

1.2 Buddhist Education and the Role of English

The Vietnamese Buddhist schools which are managed by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and local monastic organizations are dual purpose educational institutions. One of their primary objectives is to develop and dispense Buddhist faith (Dharma) while the other is to provide MOET compliant general education. Bearing this in mind, these educational institutions award great importance to English. There are mainly 3 reasons for this circumstance. For the first thing, acquiring English language skill helps you get in touch with the Buddhist canonical scriptures, research and conferences worldwide. Secondly, it's a powerful tool that allows monastic members to present Buddhist ethics and Vietnamese cultural identity at international gatherings. Thirdly, offering English courses is in line with the Buddhist concept of prajna (wisdom) since it's through continuing learning and intercultural exchanges that the wisdom is deepened.

Unfortunately, these expectations are confronted with the reality of the world. For example, these kinds of educational institutions usually have trouble finding money for their projects, their syllabuses aren't standard across schools, and qualified English teachers are extremely rare in them. Moreover, although the majority of teachers have only general English language knowledge, the number of those who have been trained in English for Buddhist Purposes or in communicative language teaching methodology is quite small. On top of that, the combination of national education policies which include teaching English with the Buddhist pedagogical ethics, i.e. Mindfulness, compassion, and self-

cultivation, hasn't been worked out conceptually yet. As a result, English language learning in Buddhist settings is mostly associated with repetitive memorization, grammar translation methods, and limited communicative skills (Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

1.3 Policy–Practice Gap

MOET's policies on teaching the English language declare a communicative, learner centered orientation that focuses on authenticity, interaction, and assessment based on performance. However, research on the implementation of these policies in Vietnam identifies a persistent "policy practice gap" in which the top down reforms don't result in effective classroom outcomes (Hoan, 2018; Nguyen & Shah, 2019). This gap becomes larger especially in specialized institutions like Buddhist schools, which are remote from the usual monitoring and funding by provincial education departments. Teachers in these schools hardly ever take part in MOET organized professional development programs or national proficiency benchmarking (CEFR B2 and above). Being Buddhist adds yet another layer of intricacy. While secular institutions use test scores or standardized results to assess success, Buddhist education emphasizes the transformation of one's ethics, mindfulness, and service to humanity. So, the policies focusing on language performance may be at odds with the peaceful and moral goals of the monastic life. To align the two, it's necessary to have a deep understanding of the interaction between the English language education policy and the religious educational philosophies and also the ways teachers deal with these tensions in reality.

1.4 Research Problem

Little attention has been given by existing research on Vietnam's English education policy to faith based institutions. There's very little factual information on how Buddhist schools carry out the government's instructions about teaching English. Without this insight, policy implementation is likely to be scattered and unfair. Besides, the lack of special teacher training programs implies that English teaching in Buddhist schools might be at a lower level than the national standards, which hurts not only the quality of language learning but also the main policy objectives of social inclusion and intercultural competence.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This research attempts to uncover the consequences of Vietnam's policy on English language education for the quality of the English teaching in Buddhist schools. It intends to scrutinize the localization of national instructions, the difficulties of teachers, and the degree of compliance of teaching practices with the features of communicative language teaching and Buddhist educational philosophy. The overall goal is to present a model of mindful English education that integrates national language goals with Buddhist ethical values.

1.6 Research Questions

- 1) What are the ways in which Vietnam's national policies for English language education are understood and carried out in Buddhist schools?
- 2) Which institutional and pedagogical factors hamper the English teaching quality in such educational settings?
- 3) To what extent do Buddhist educational principles affect teachers' views on the characteristics of an effective English pedagogy?
- 4) What kinds of policy and professional development interventions may be introduced to improve the quality of English teaching in Buddhist schools?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is threefold.

- 1) **Theoretical contribution:** The research combines language in education policy theory (Spolsky, 2004) with Buddhist pedagogical ethics to present an interdisciplinary framework that can help understand the connection between government policy, teaching, and moral philosophy.
- 2) **Practical contribution:** The results will assist MOET and the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in developing teacher education programs and curricula that are aligned with national standards as well as Buddhist values.
- 3) **Cultural contribution:** It highlights the need for Buddhist schools to be recognized as legitimate educational partners in Vietnam's modernization process and calls for the promotion of sharing of resources and opportunities between secular and religious educational institutions.

1.8 Structure of the Paper

After this opening, Section 2 offers a thorough review of the literature on policy of education in the English language, training of teachers and Buddhist pedagogy. Section 3 provides details of the research design, data collection and analysis methods. The fourth section presents main results of policy interpretation, teaching quality and pedagogical adaptation. The last section presents implications to policymakers, teacher educators and research in the future.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Language Education Policy in Vietnam

Vietnam has considered English as a crucial element for its national modernization strategy since the early 1990s. Besides being simply a foreign language, English is regarded as a "developmental capital" key element for industrialization, international cooperation, and upward social mobility (Nguyen & Pham, 2020). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has produced several policy documents to regulate the language education system at all levels. The National Foreign Language Project 2020 (NFL2020), initiated in 2008 and continued as Project 2030, aimed to achieve "Vietnamese youth proficiency in English necessary for their study, work, and daily communication by 2020" (MOET, 2019). The main focus of these policies centers on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT),

learner autonomy, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as national standard. Teachers, on the other hand, are supposed to have at least B2 level proficiency and adopt student oriented methods. However, many reports indicate that the policy goals haven't been fully achieved. The research of Hoang (2016), Nguyen and Shah (2019), and Tran and Vu (2021) reveals that curriculum implementation, assessment procedures, and teacher qualifications are widely inconsistent. Policy enforcement is further endangered by Vietnam's centralized but locally diversified education system. Provincial departments and even local schools tend to apply differently MOET instructions resulting in a very different range of results. Besides that, English education is moving far from the schools to private centers, universities, and religious institutions which are indeed the places where national policy has lesser control. Such decentralized situations create, as Baldauf and Kaplan (2015) put it, a "multi layered ecology of policy" where formal legislations are in contact with institutional culture, resource limitations, and individual agency.

2.2 Policy Implementation and Quality Assurance

Studies about education reforms in Vietnam reveal that the gap between practice and policy is partly the consequence of limited professional development and fragmented quality assurance. A significant qualitative study carried out by Nguyen (2022) on educational policymakers shows that even though Vietnamese higher education professional development depends mostly on traditional means like workshops, short courses, and study visits, more energetic methods such as mentoring, collaborative research, and reflective practice are very uncommon. That's why teachers and school leaders frequently lack the professional skills needed for implementation of policy at the classroom level. Also, quality assurance in the Vietnamese higher education sector is relatively a new thing. Accreditation was introduced only in the early 2000s, and the system is still in the process of development (Tran & Vu, 2019). To various levels of education universities, vocational schools, and general education are covered by quality assurance measures; however, religious and community based institutions such as Buddhist schools are outside of systematic evaluation. Hence, their English training is very rarely subjected to performance review, professional audit, or standard assessment criteria. From a theoretical point of view, these problems may be analyzed using language policy implementation theory (Johnson, 2013; Spolsky, 2004), which identifies three mutually dependent components: policy creation (official text), policy interpretation (how institutions and teachers understand it), and policy implementation (classroom practice). All these stages in Vietnam are conditioned by such contextual factors as hierarchical administration, teacher beliefs, and local resources. Without special support, even very good policies are at risk of becoming symbolic rather than acting as transformative force.

2.3 English Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher capacity is of paramount importance for the achievement of any language policy. Vietnam's English

teachers come from a very wide spectrum of backgrounds from university-trained linguists to self-taught monks instructing in religious institutions. Le and Barnard (2019) show that Vietnamese English teachers are among the most under serviced professional learning groups. Training programs are most often short term, exam focused, and irrelevant to actual classroom implementation. This problem is even more acute in Buddhist schools. Contemporary TESOL methodologies like task based learning or intercultural communication are almost totally unknown to the majority of teachers. Many times, digital technologies supporting communicative teaching are unfamiliar to them as well. Besides, there's hardly any opportunity for peer mentoring or being part of a professional network. Therefore, traditional grammar translation methods are still very much dominant in English teaching in Buddhist schools, with a heavy emphasis on accuracy of the text while fluency in communication remains a secondary concern (Dang & Nguyen, 2020). Conversely, even the most committed scholars support contextual professional development tailored to the institutional environment of the teacher (Darling Hammond et al. 2017). For Buddhist schools, it implies that professional development programs need to take into account monks' schedules, incorporate Buddhist doctrines, and put focus on English for Buddhist related purposes, such as translation of sutras or participation in international Dharma dialogues.

2.4 Buddhist Educational Philosophy and Language Learning

In Vietnam, Buddhist education has been strongly influenced by the threefold training of wisdom (prajna), ethical conduct (la), and concentration (samdhi). Vietnamese temples used to serve both religious and literary education; quite a few Buddhist schools nowadays still do so by mixing Dharma studies with general education subjects and English is among them. The fundamental theory behind Buddhist teaching methods points to experiential learning (bhvan), i.e. Gaining knowledge through doing rather than through mere memorizing. This idea is consistent with the modern constructivist and communicative approaches in TESOL that advocate for learner involvement, reflection, and dialogic interaction. Nevertheless, the culture and environment in many Buddhist schools remain quite traditional. The teacher is still seen as the supreme authority and the main source of knowledge, while the learner is expected to memorize large portions of the scriptural texts. Thich Nhat Tu (2015) and Rahula (2001) maintain that knowledge should be harmonized with the cultivation of Buddha nature. The acquisition of knowledge, including the learning of a language, won't only be meaningful but also enjoyable and effective if it mimics the right communication according to the Buddhist doctrine of Right Speech that's, words are truthful, kind, and well timed.

2.5 The Intersection of Language Policy and Buddhist Education

So far only a few pieces of research have been done on how state language policies intersect with religious education in Vietnam. A significant omission in the literature is the way Buddhist institutions react to MOET's English language

mandates. Studies of other Asian regions are a source of helpful examples. For example, Kobayashi (2018) reported that in Thai Buddhist universities, English curricula were frequently tailored to serve the dual purposes of fulfillment of the secular academic requirements and the spreading of the Buddhist philosophy. On the other hand, Mizutani (2020) who has studied Japanese Buddhist institutions, has detected that they also offer English language courses but with an emphasis on teaching ethics in cross cultural settings and communication based on compassion. It would be wise to apply this inspiration to Vietnam and one might come to the conclusion that Buddhist schools are rather selective in interpreting national English policies on the one hand, they adopt the communicative methods that aren't in conflict with the monastic discipline; on the other hand, they resist those practices which are seen as cultural imposition. This selective implementation has proved to be the very essence of Canagarajah's (2005) concept of "local appropriation of global English" where local people base their language teaching practices on their own moral and social aims. From the point of view of policy, this phenomenon shows that it's necessary to have more inclusive policy frameworks that recognize the existence of non-state educational actors. Besides the government authorities, successful language planning must also incorporate the voices of teachers, learners, and community institutions as argued by Kaplan and Baldauf (2011). If Vietnam manages to include Buddhist schools in its national English education reforms, it won't only be a matter of educational equity but also of intercultural understanding.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Drawing upon the reviewed literature this paper proposes a model of sociocultural mediation to illustrate the relationship between policy and practice. Macro level is represented by national policy; meso level by Buddhist institutions; while teacher's classroom practice is the micro level. Selection of these three levels will be based on mediation of belief systems, institutional autonomy, and professional knowledge. The Buddhist ethical triad wisdom, morality, and concentration acts as a cultural lens through which teachers may perceive communicative pedagogy. This framework makes it possible to examine English education policy within the context of Buddhist schools along with teachers resolving their conflicts between secular goals and spiritual values. The framework will also be the basis for data collection, which focuses on teachers as experience mediators of policy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research uses qualitative multiple case study method (Yin, 2018) to understand the process of interpretation and enactment of Vietnam's national English language education policy in Buddhist schools. A qualitative methodology is a good fit when the aim is to reveal complex layers of relationships between high level policy intentions and actual classroom realities (Creswell & Poth, 2017). It enables detailed study of teachers' thoughts, school environments, and teaching methods, all of which are strongly influenced by cultural and moral values. Through comparing a number of

Buddhist schools in different parts of the country, the study not only desires to uncover the common pattern but also contextual differences of how English language education policies affect the quality of teaching. Design uses document analysis, semi structured interviews, and focus group discussions in combination to form a triangulated data set that increases both validity and depth of interpretation.

3.2 Research Context

This research took place in four Buddhist schools that exhibit Vietnam's geographical and institutional diversity:

- 1) Ho Chi Minh City Buddhist Secondary and Higher School (urban, large scale, integrated with MOET curriculum)
- 2) Hue Buddhist Intermediate School (central region, heritage focused monastic education)
- 3) Hanoi Buddhist Training Center (northern region, affiliated with Vietnam Buddhist Academy)
- 4) An Giang Provincial Buddhist School (rural Mekong Delta, limited English resources).

All offer English as a general education subject, but differ in teaching intensity and teacher qualifications. Although, all are under the umbrella of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), they've the freedom to a great extent in syllabus designing and teacher recruitment. The selection of these schools was based on their being a mirror of Buddhist education diversity in Vietnam in conjunction with the range of English policy implementation formal integration to informal adaptation.

3.3 Participants

The participants were a total of 24 individuals, including 12 English teachers (3 from each school), 8 administrators or academic coordinators responsible for curriculum planning, and 4 policy liaison officers or advisors connected with the VBS education board. The teachers varied from beginners with bachelor's degrees in English to senior monks who taught English besides Buddhist philosophy. Administrators were both ordained monks and lay educators. The purpose was to obtain a large enough sample to represent diverse viewpoints on how national policies are understood and localized within the Buddhist education systems. It was a volunteer participation, and all persons gave their informed consent. Reporting uses pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1 Policy and Curriculum Document Analysis

A set of 15 documents was analyzed, such as: MOET policy directives (Project 2020, Project 2030, CEFR frameworks) Official English curricula and teaching guides used by each school Institutional quality assurance reports (where available) Teacher training materials and internal evaluation guidelines. This review gave a fundamental knowledge of national norms, their communication, and adaptation to the local situation.

3.4.2 Semi Structured Interviews

Interviews were held with teachers and administrators in order to draw out their individual experiences and views on

the policy implementation. The length of each interview was from 45 to 60 minutes, the process was recorded and transcribed after obtaining the consent of participants. Five sections comprised the interview guide: 1. Knowledge of national English language policy 2. Institutional English curriculum design strategies 3. Teacher training and professional development experiences 4. Teaching methods and classroom practices 5. Challenges faced and solutions proposed. The questions remained open ended so as to allow the respondents to elaborate their answers whilst the agreed topic coverage was maintained across different cases.

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

In order to verify different stakeholders' views, two FGDs were held with groups of 6-8 monk students speaking English at present. They talked about the English teaching quality, the amount of classroom participation, and the degree of compatibility between Buddhist and communicative learning styles. These FGDs provided learner centered valuable insights about how policies lead to educational experiences in reality.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection spanned a period of four months. The primary contact with schools was made through the Education Department of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha. With the consent in hand, the researcher made arrangements to visit each school so that apart from collecting documents and talking to teachers and administrators, he could also perform classroom observations. English was the main language used during interviews, but Vietnamese was used to a lesser extent by the researcher for the sake of eliciting participant's responses and later on for the translation of the data in order to make them consistent. Besides the usage of audio recording equipment, field notes were taken to document contextual factors such as the teaching environment, availability of learning materials, the institution's infrastructure, and so on. Adhering to the ethical guidelines, the data were anonymized, coded, and stored securely.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was employed for analyzing data with the support of NVivo 14 software for qualitative data coding. The data went through five stages in analysis: 1. Getting familiar: An in depth reading of transcripts and documents in order to obtain an overall understanding. 2. Generating initial codes: Highlighting significant text pieces to which a label is given that relate to policy knowledge, teacher training, teaching approach, and school challenges. 3. Searching for themes: Putting together closely related codes under broader themes, e.g. Policy interpretation, pedagogical changes, and spiritual pedagogy. 4. Reviewing themes: Making comparisons across the different schools to guarantee coherence within each theme and their consistencies with the overall theoretical framework. 5. Defining and naming themes: Fitting the results into the conceptual framework which links the three levels of macro policy, meso institutional mediation, and micro teaching practice. These steps, done repeatedly, helped in producing patterns which give an account of the

transformation of policy propositions by means of institutional and cultural mediations

3.7 Trustworthiness and Validity

Most of the researcher's measure rigor against the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) that are credibility transferability dependability, and confirmability. To make sure that research was of high quality, the following multiple measures were undertaken: Triangulation: Different data sources (documents interviews FGDs) were used to find support for the main results. Member checking: Participants were given the opportunity to comment on and approve the preliminary observations. Thick description: Rich and detailed descriptions of the setting and happenings were offered so as to enable the reader to figure out the transferability of the findings. Audit trail: Keeping track of coding decisions, writing reflective memos, and having records of translations. These approaches contributed in making the study more transparent and at the same time they helped in lessening the researcher's personal reflections, thus the study is ethically positioned and methodologically valid qualitatively in education and TESOL.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The permission to conduct the research was granted by the Institutional Review Board at Acharya Nagarjuna University with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha Education Committee in the role of a supporting body. The principal ethics observed were: Obtaining informed consent: Participants were told about the purpose of the study, how confidentiality would be ensured and that the decision to withdraw was completely theirs. Being culturally sensitive: During data collection, there was a respect for monastic customs, dress codes, as well as gender segregated learning environments. Non maleficence: Going out of one's way to not cause any harm spiritual, psychological, or professional to the participants. Apart from incorporating the principle of Ahimsa (nonfarm) from Buddhism, the research was conducted in accordance with the academic norm of integrity.

3.9 Researcher Positionality

The researcher's identity as a scholar with formal education in both Buddhist Studies and TESOL put him/her in an insider outsider position. The knowledge of Buddhist philosophy helped in understanding and sharing the feelings of the participants, on the other hand, the TESOL background gave an opportunity to look at the pedagogical aspects critically. Keeping a reflective diary was one of the tools used by the researcher to check the impact of his or her own subjectivity on the analytical process and retain the objective stance.

3.10 Limitations

The authors identified some shortcomings. To begin with, the number of participants was very small and the sample may not have represented the entire diversity of Buddhist institutions in Vietnam. Secondly, since interviews were conducted in a bilingual format, some translation nuances might have been introduced. Lastly, the perspectives of teachers and administrators were the only focus of the study

whereas the observations made in the classroom were very limited. However, despite these limitations, the results offer worthwhile exploratory insights and serve as a basis for larger scale quantitative studies.

4. Findings And Discussion

4.1 Overview

Looking closer at the data, four linked ideas came into view. These show how English teaching in Vietnam connects with life inside Buddhist schools. One doesn't move without affecting the other. Changes in policy ripple through classroom practice. At the same time, daily experiences in these schools feed back into national approaches. The flow goes both ways, quietly shaping what happens where monks study alongside students. Each theme ties to the next like threads in cloth. Not separate strands but parts of one fabric. What takes place under temple roofs influences broader decisions about language learning across the country

- 1) Policy knowledge often stops at the surface, while choices about using it come and go without clear reason
- 2) Pedagogical adaptation under resource constraints
- 3) Teacher professional challenges and identity negotiation
- 4) Teaching English with Buddhist ethical principles Out of sight, these ideas reveal tangled layers of how policies take shape when state goals meet grassroots beliefs and what systems can actually handle.

4.2 Limited Policy

Awareness and Selective Adoption Some others at each location sort of knew what national English teaching rules were about. Even though leaders had heard of MOETs 2020 and 2030 efforts, clear details like matching CEFR levels slipped past most minds. Educators picked up bits on policy here and there through new books or chat around school not firm memos or guidance from above. It came out that leaders of these places almost never got official updates on policies.

A senior monk put it this way: We know the government wants everyone to learn English for communication, but Buddhist schools aren't under the same inspection system. We try to follow the spirit, not the exact regulation. Out front, the loose way things run matches what Spolsky noted back in 2004 unwritten habits shape how people act when rules aren't spelled out. Not that these schools ignore national guidelines; instead, they bend them to fit temple life, seeing English more as a means to share Buddhist teachings worldwide than as training for office jobs. Picking pieces rather than accepting everything showed up clearly in how classes were planned. One city school used government backed books like Tiếng Anh 11 and 12, yet slipped in stories about Buddha alongside words for chants. Another added similar material because it fit their beliefs better. Out in rural areas, teachers worked with whatever books they received through donations. Their lesson plans became mixtures official topics shared space with sacred writings. This kind of flexible approach lines up with what Canagarajah noticed back in 2005: people reshaping outside rules to match inner values. English taught there doesn't just follow international patterns it bends toward deeper meaning.

4.3 Teaching Adjustments

When Resources Are Limited Not one of the four schools had enough materials or proper facilities. Some rooms barely held desks, while others lacked even basic tools. Equipment like projectors showed up now and then, but never stayed working long. Internet connections dropped without warning, if they worked at all. Lessons usually unfolded with chalk dust floating through air. Handouts passed from teacher to student filled gaps when tech failed often. What stood out was how much depended on what could be written on blackboards. Even with limits, some teachers found inventive ways to teach. A classroom in Hanoi turned repetition into something lively by adding beat like chants during sound practice. Instead of just reading aloud, students moved to a steady pulse while shaping their speech.

Far south in Ho Chi Minh City, one educator had learners act out ancient conversations drawn from spiritual teachings. Through pretending, they practiced real talk without feeling stiff or forced. These moments show how local traditions can quietly shape modern language learning ritual flow meeting structured method behind closed doors. Still, most classes watched stuck to old ways of teaching grammar and translating texts. The reason given was that learners struggled with basic skills, plus tests focused on memorized rules.

A teacher said it straight Our students memorize mantras easily but struggle with speaking English. The textbook wants conversation, but our environment is silent and meditative. Strange how quiet is prized, still talking must happen somehow. Schools in Japan, Thailand show alike struggles research points that way. Teachers there balance sitting still with making students speak up now and then. Silence matters much, though voices find their place too. Outside connections helped teaching changes last longer. A city school teamed up with a local college to run occasional training on new language methods. Staff found those meetings energizing even if they happened rarely. Rural areas didn't have access to similar help, showing uneven chances across regions.

4.4 Teacher Challenges and Shifting

Roles Out of habit, a teacher might correct grammar while also shaping values two tasks not always easy to hold at once. Some days the lessons lean more toward speech patterns. Other times, behavior speaks louder than syllables. A few mentioned how strange it feels to grade essays when what really matters seems harder to measure. One who wore robes alongside lesson plans said teaching words felt simpler than guiding hearts When I teach English, I must also teach patience and compassion. If I push too hard for results, it contradicts mindfulness. Teaching well becomes harder to judge when two big duties overlap. Standard ways of measuring language instruction like how smoothly someone speaks or completes real life chats miss what matters most in a Buddhist classroom. What counts there's different. Hardships at work often came down to missing proper training chances. Less than fifty percent of educators ever joined courses approved by MOET.

Some turned to internet clips or chats with coworkers instead. A sense of being cut off from wider English teaching circles

showed up again and again. That loneliness echoes what Nguyen noticed just two years earlier growth for teachers in Vietnam tends to come in bursts, top down, not step by step together. Out of nowhere, educators began talking about training that actually fits their daily routines mixing Buddhist teaching styles with practical English methods. One idea floated through: using English to explain spiritual teachings. Then came another noticing how moral values shape the way teachers talk to students. Even tech made the list, though seen through quiet awareness instead of flashy tools. These small steps might just connect what officials demand with what really happens inside classrooms.

4.5 Buddhist Ethics in Teaching English What stands out most?

Teachers weave Buddhist values into their English lessons, focusing on Right Speech. Not just a tool for getting ahead, they see the language as a way to communicate with care. A woman who teaches put it like this: When we practice speaking, we remind students to use gentle words, avoid gossip, and speak truthfully. English becomes part of our mindfulness training. Starting class with quiet moments helped students settle their minds first. Teachers did this because stillness makes listening easier later on. One practice involved sitting quietly together just a few minutes at the start. Attention grew stronger when breathing came before speaking tasks. Emotional balance improved too, which supported clearer expression overall.

This way of teaching lines up with ideas from Thich Nhat Hanh about awareness in conversation. Learning words became less mechanical, more connected to inner presence. Evidence shows such habits aid retention and reduce anxiety during exchanges. Small pauses shaped how people engaged across lessons observed. Calm beginnings led to fewer rushed replies among learners. Still, mixing these ideas meant giving up some things. Too much attention to right and wrong often left less room for speaking practice during lessons. On top of that, school leaders worried teacher freedom might weaken lesson consistency. Keeping values teaching in step with strong language goals continues to be tricky. Even with such challenges, weaving Buddhist values into teaching methods brings something fresh to Vietnam's approach to spiritual learning. This fits alongside worldwide trends in language education that value empathy and social awareness (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2021).

4.6 Cross Theme Discussion

4.6.1 Policy Through a Religious Framework

It turns out Buddhist schools operate like separate worlds shaped by their own rules. Because of deep beliefs, they reshape what the Ministry says before applying it. What looks like resistance is actually quiet reinterpretation ideas from far away bend to match local values. Instead of rejecting government plans outright, these places twist them gently toward older ways of knowing.

4.6.2 The Quiet Classroom Paradox

Stillness matters more than speech inside these walls, yet classrooms demand conversation. Because of this, some

teachers wrap speaking tasks within chants or old stories instead. What looks like silence becomes attention shaped with purpose? Not doing much can mean hearing deeply. When talk flows through form, even hush holds meaning. Theory begins to stretch when practice finds quiet ways to engage. Research might now ask how still moments teach too.

4.6.3 fairness and belonging in how rules are carried out

Outside the national teacher training programs, Buddhist schools find themselves left behind. Because of this gap, fairness in education keeps slipping. According to Kaplan and Baldauf from 2011, real inclusion means listening to every part of the system. When a policy ignores certain institutions, it weakens trust across the board. Including these schools under MOETs oversight might balance responsibility with independence. What matters is making space without imposing control.

4.6.4 Emergent Model:

Mindful English Education Putting it all together, the research introduces a new approach called Mindful English Education, or MEE. This framework rests on three core parts working at once each shaping the next. One supports awareness in learning, another builds thoughtful communication, while the third encourages reflection through language practice. Together they form a way of teaching that moves beyond routine methods

- 1) Policy alignment: Adoption of national communicative and proficiency standards.
- 2) Teaching shifts shape when it meets monastery life. Ways of learning bend around quiet routines instead of fighting them. Students carry different hopes, so lessons take new forms. Methods grow from daily rhythms rather than outside plans. Understanding comes through practice shaped by place.
- 3) Ethical mindfulness: Embedding Buddhist virtues compassion patience truthfulness into communicative practice. From quiet classrooms to mountain temples, this approach connects everyday learning with deeper beliefs. Instead of separating worldly skills from inner values, it weaves them through shared traditions. Teaching English becomes part of a larger rhythm, shaped by local ways. Growth happens not by force but by fit matching language goals with community life. What emerges is steady progress rooted in respect.

4.7 Key Findings Summary

1) Policy Awareness It turns out many teachers at Buddhist colleges don't fully grasp existing policies, with knowledge spread unevenly across campuses. Some staff members show basic familiarity with language rules set by government or school authorities; however, they apply them inconsistently, leaning instead on personal beliefs about right and wrong. Teaching methods appear less influenced by official guidelines, more driven by inner principles tied to Buddhist teachings. Without stronger guidance, gaps between policy goals and classroom reality may widen. Clearer explanations delivered through lenses these educators already understand could make a difference. When messages connect with established worldviews, meaning sticks better, actions follow more closely.

2) Pedagogical Adaptation Even when schools lack books, tools, or internet access, teachers still find ways to adjust how they teach. Because conditions are tough, some turn to storytelling from Buddhist traditions, using familiar ideas from students' lives. Instead of relying on tech, they build lessons around hands on activities that match their surroundings. These methods show determination, though they point to deeper problems in who gets what support. When one teacher creates something useful, others might never hear about it simply because there's no way to share. Simple solutions, like passing along lesson plans between temples or reusing handmade aids, can go far. Without help, each educator repeats the same work alone, wasting time and energy. Working together, even without money, makes better use of what people already have.

3) Teacher Professionalism Looking closer, the numbers show something tangled about how teachers see themselves. One moment they're guiding students through grammar drills. Next, they carry teachings rooted in centuries old practice. These overlapping worlds open doors yet bring friction too. Without clear paths for growth, many feel caught midair. Training in today's classroom methods rarely reaches them especially when it comes to academic English or subjects taught entirely in English. That emptiness speaks volumes. A new kind of program could bridge what's missing. Blend fresh teaching ideas with mindful principles already familiar. Help one role feed the other instead of fighting it. Strength grows where understanding deepens not just skill, but sense of purpose.

4) Ethical Integration What stands out in teaching English within Buddhist settings is how ethics weave into daily lessons mindfulness and truthful expression aren't add ones, they're part of speaking and listening tasks. Instead of being taught separately, these values live inside group discussions, role plays, even grammar exercises. Because of this blend, what counts as good communication grows wider it now includes awareness of intent and impact. So picking words carefully turns into something deeper than accuracy; it becomes a kind of inner work. When schools name this layer openly, when teacher training acknowledges it, language classrooms can mirror broader life goals. Where personal growth matters alongside fluency, such an approach fits naturally into the school's purpose.

4) Incorporating Buddhist moral values in the teaching of English. Altogether, these points indicate localization of policy where global and national policies are re understood through monastic values, the condition of the institution, and teacher agency. It's a mistake to see Buddhist schools as being on the margin of the educational system or stubborn; the research draws a picture of them as active mediators, the ones who turn the ideals of policy into educational practices of spiritual meaning. The result isn't an act of breaking from the policy but rather a kind of background change: English is both a language tool and a way of introducing Buddhist compassion, wisdom, and understanding of different cultures.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The study extends the conversation in two directions: language in education policy theory and TESOL pedagogy. Using Spolsky's (2004) three-layer model of policy start, policy reading, and policy doing as well as Buddhist teaching ethics, it investigates how moral philosophy has been and can be a determining factor in language education for non-Western countries. Among other things, the results illustrate that Buddhist teachings like Right Speech and mindfulness may be employed as the communicative teaching ones that are supported by ethical grounds. This refutes the notion of the English Language Teaching with Communicative Language Teaching CLT being a neutral cultural method.

In this case, the communicative proficiency of the pupils of the Buddhist schools comprises more than just their linguistic abilities as it also requires a certain level of morality i.e. One that's truthful, kind, and mindful. Such a view has the effect of widening the theoretical base of TESOL to include what can be referred to as "ethical communicative competence." Besides that, the Mindful English Education (MEE) model that has been laid down serves as an additional input to the grim language education literature on the contemplative and socially responsible (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2021). MEE hypothesis the teaching of English as an inclusive procedure that integrates linguistic, leads to cognitive, and involves ethical aspects. It's an approach which is especially important in Asia that's culturally diverse and ones in which spirituality and education are closely related and at the same time inseparable.

5. Conclusion And Implications

5.1 Summary

In this research, the relation between the Vietnamese English language education policy and implementation, which is the quality of English teaching in Buddhist schools was explored. These schools represent a type of educational establishment which haven't been part of policy discourse up till now. The data analysis across the cases under study generated 4 major themes:

- 1) A weak grasp of the policy combined with the selective adoption of its elements;
- 2) A shift in pedagogy as a response to the lack of resources;
- 3) Teaching staff undergoing professional difficulties and identifying with the necessity to negotiate with their teacher identities; and

5.3 Practical and Policy Implications

5.3.1 Inclusive Policy Communication

This research mainly sees that communication must be carried out through proper channels between MOET and non-state such educational units as the Buddhist schools. As things are today, the ways of spreading the implementation plans hinge largely on the informal networks, so the understanding is either partial or already obsolete. Having a yearly policy liaison mechanism under the auspices of Education Board of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha would go a long way in ensuring that policies and other information such as training programs and criteria for assessment reach monastic teachers efficiently.

5.3.2 Professional Development for Buddhist TESOL Integration

Workshops for teachers training have to be more than just the same old package of a few hours or days of generic stuff. They need to be a full-fledged professional development program. Besides English methods, the teaching staff will learn about integrated content that includes Buddhist teachings. They'll be exposed to the English Drama of Buddhist teaching, Mindful Classroom Management, and in group intercultural ethics will also be language teaching. MOET, universities as well as Buddhist academies are the partners that could undertake the co design of the certification pathways and the recognizing competence language as well as spirituality pedagogy.

5.3.3 Curriculum Design and Material Development

The curriculum must be in sync with national English standard but at the same time contain the elements of the Buddhist cultural tradition. Textbooks may feature conversations about Buddhist love, precepts, and meditation, so that reinforcing language and morals may be achieved.

5.3.4 Assessment and Quality Assurance

The quality control of educational establishments usually carried out by MOET should incorporate Buddhist schools but may be through the most flexible accreditation format. The criteria for evaluation may be suitably changed to take into account the ethical and intercultural learning elements in addition to simply performing in tests. This incorporation will be recognition of Buddhist schools as the ones that reflect Vietnam's larger educational modernization.

5.3.5 International Collaboration

Since Buddhism is an international religion, working together with Buddhist universities in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India would be a win situation: new programs and exchange will be possible especially in English for the communication of Dharma. This kind of collaboration will marshal Vietnam's efforts to both global integration and cultural preservation.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

In terms of the classroom work, the results point to combining of mindfulness and communicative partnership. Teachers may use contemplative techniques e.g. Meditation and breathing done mindfully as well as kind speech at a level increase readiness and reduce uneasiness before oral tasks. These methods induce the affective stability, which is in fact the neglected variable in second language acquisition (Gregersen et al. 2017). Besides interaction in the classroom being considered as the way Right Speech is being carried out, the learners are motivated to consider English not as a subject/exam only but as the means of moral expression and also the means of intercultural empathy. This could be the way how the English language learning atmosphere is changed in Buddhist schools as well as other kinds of schools.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Although this research reflects deeply on human perspectives qualitatively, it restricted itself to the four localities under the study and its example might have limited the generalizability of the whole Buddhist institutions in the country. Future scholars may employ quantitative and qualitative methods

working in tandem to establish the effect of policy understanding, teacher training, and student performance. Studies which are carried out over a long period of time may look at the way that Project 2030 unfolds since MOET extends it.

Comparative research across other religious based schools, for example Catholic Muslim, or Hindu institutions can shed more light on the mediating role of moral frameworks in language policy in Southeast Asia. Also, experimentations with Mindful English Education approach can be conducted to determine its capacity in attaining communicative competence and overall wellbeing at the same time.

6. Conclusion

Vietnam has a very strong English language education policy, and it has contributed a great deal to the linguistic modernization of the nation. However, its impact hasn't spread evenly to all sectors of the educational system. Buddhist schools have a unique position in the landscape of education that's shaped by policies compliance, cultural autonomy, and spiritual mission. There is an example of how inclusive education must consider the linguistic functionalities as well as the ethics and cultural authenticity aspects.

This was achieved by this piece of work that TESOL principles and Buddhist ethics are compatible and that both form the two sides of the one coin of English education. The Mindful English Education (MEE) approach was put forth as a model that impels the policymakers, the teachers as well as the researchers to look at the role of English teacher not merely as the one who imparts the skills necessary for the use through teaching but rather the English teacher acts as the practitioner of the compassionate communication of the human beings.

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