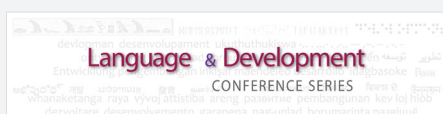


The bilingual education model on the basis of the mother tongue language in Vietnam

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Introduction

The mother tongue-based bilingual education model is a new initiative and approach for the education of ethnic minority children in Vietnam, with support and funding from UNICEF. The basic idea of the initiative is to immerse bilingualism in education in order that students learn and study using their mother-tongue language. The aim is for them to develop their cognitive ability, which builds a solid foundation for students to learn scientific knowledge and acquire a second language, that is the national language and language in education, effectively in their later stage. This paper set out a comprehensive picture of the model that has been successfully implemented in Vietnamese

ethnic minority communities with theoretical and practical basis, educational outcomes and lessons learnt for future replication of the initiative. It also serves as the basis for proposing language policies for the ethnic minority communities in Vietnam.



Vietnam: ethnic minorities and ethnic minority languages

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic nation. According to the current legislation of Vietnam, there are 54 ethnic groups, of which Kinh, the ethnic group with a largest population, accounts for 85.3 per cent of the nation's population. The other 53 ethnic groups accounts for 14.7 per cent of the national population and are considered ethnic minorities. Thus, in Vietnam, the concept of "ethnic minorities" is understood to be minorities with a small population relatively compared to an ethnic group with a large population, which is the Kinh ethnic.

The Vietnam ethnic minorities settlements are scattered on two-thirds of the territory of the country and mainly concentrates in deep-lying, remote, border areas that are areas of complex topography and harsh climate conditions. Geographical regions with more than 50 per cent of the population comprising ethnic minorities are called ethnic minority regions by Vietnamese using government standards

Language of ethnic minorities in Vietnam

Vietnam has eight language groups: (1) Vietnamese – Muong language group (four ethnic groups); (2) Tay – Thai language group (eight ethnic groups); (3) Mong – Dao language group (three ethnic groups); (4) Malay – Polinêsia language group (with five ethnic groups); (5) Han language group (three ethnic groups); (6) Tibetan – Burmese language group (six ethnic groups); (7) Mixed language group/ Ka – dai (four ethnic groups); (8) Mon – Khome language group (21 ethnic groups). Each ethnic group in Vietnam has its own mother tongue (MT), some have their own written mother-tongue languages. It is commonly used in communication and community activities. In order to unite people in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Constitution stipulates that Vietnamese is the national language. Therefore, Vietnamese is the official language used in schools and other educational institutions.

Teaching and learning in foreign languages in schools and other educational institutions shall be stipulated and regulated by the Government. The Government also regulates the teaching and learning of spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities. Thus, in Vietnam, for ethnic minorities, Vietnamese is a second language (L2), while their own ethnic minority languages (mother tongues) are their first language (L1); Vietnamese law allows teaching ethnic languages (L1) in schools and educational institutions as an elective subject. Currently, the use of ethnic minorities language as the medium of instruction in schools is implemented through experimental studies. Textbooks are allowed to be compiled and used in a bilingual programmeme (using ethnic languages and Vietnamese) for some subjects in elementary schools.

Overview on bilingual education in Vietnam

The use of bilingualism in teaching in ethnic areas has been studied and experimented in Vietnam from the 1950s with many different approaches. Between 1955 and 1960, Early Transitional Bilingual Education (ETBE or Weak BE) was studied experimentally in the Northern mountainous provinces, with two Hmong, Vietnamese and Thai, Vietnamese language groups:

- From beginner class (corresponding to the current five-year-old kindergarten), 1st and 2nd grade the teaching language is ethnic

languages (mother tongue – first language – L1). Vietnamese (second language – L2) is taught to acquire listening and speaking skills only. From 3rd grade, the medium of instruction is Vietnamese (L2).

- Teaching materials are compiled according to the national education programme. Primary documents for 1st and 2nd grades are compiled in ethnic languages while 3rd and 4th grade documents are compiled in Vietnamese.

Early transitional bilingual education		
Level 1 (Primary school)	4th Grade	Teaching language: Vietnamese (L2)
	3rd Grade	
	2nd Grade	Teaching language: Mother tongue (L1) (Vietnamese: <i>learning to listen and speak</i>)
	1st Grade	
Kindergarten (Five-year-old kindergarten)		

Table 1: Early transitional bilingual education model

There are a number of advantages of an Early Transition BE. First, studying in mother-tongue language in the first two years has helped ethnic minority students to overcome language barriers and improve the quality of education.

In addition, learning to speak and listen to the Vietnamese language for two years before using Vietnamese as the medium of instruction has helped students reduce their learning pressure. It also encourages students to understand and to be proud of their culture. However, there are also some limitations. The programme, for instance, does not compile separate documents, but translates directly from national programme

textbooks, and therefore the specific needs when teaching using ethnic minority languages have not been addressed. The textbooks are inconsistent with the language words and teaching methods used for teaching ethnic minority students. Furthermore, a team of teachers who could read and write fluently in ethnic minority languages were missing. Finally, as a result of the transition of the medium of instruction from mother-tongue language to Vietnamese being spontaneous from 3rd grade, students have faced difficulties and been frustrated during the transition.

Strengthened Bilingual Education (1961–87)

Between 1961 and 1987, Strengthened Bilingual Education was implemented alternatively with Tay Nung-Vietnamese language from 1962 to 1978 in the provinces of Viet Bac Autonomous Region, Mong-Vietnamese language in 1970–78 in Lao Cai, Nghia Lo, Ha Giang as well as Ede-Vietnamese, Jrai-Vietnamese and Bahnar from 1982 to 1987 in the Central Highlands. The programme was structured as follows.

- Kindergarten children only learnt to read and write in their mother tongue (L1) while 1st grade children learnt to read and write in Vietnamese (L2).
- From 1st grade to 4th grade, the language of teaching was both mother tongue (L1) and Vietnamese (L2) and used simultaneously.
- Teaching materials were developed in both ethnic languages and Vietnamese. In kindergarten classes, the language of teaching was mother tongue while 1st and 2nd grade classes were taught predominately in mother tongue and supplemented by Vietnamese. When students progressed to 3rd and 4th grades, the medium of instruction shifted to being predominately Vietnamese with mother tongue taking a supplementary role. Students generally learnt to speak Vietnamese at all levels (from 1st grade to 4th grade) to improve their Vietnamese competency.

Bilingual education		
Level 1 (Primary school)	4th Grade	Teaching language: Mother tongue (L1) and Vietnamese (L2) (use both L1 and L2 simultaneously)
	3rd Grade	
	2nd Grade	
	1st Grade	
Kindergarten (Five-year-old kindergarten)		Teaching language: Mother tongue (L1)

Table 2: Strengthened Bilingual Education model

A major advantage of the Strengthened BE was that teaching materials were compiled in both mother tongue and Vietnamese language and that the language of instruction was both mother tongue and Vietnamese. While in 1st and 2nd grade, teaching was conducted predominately using mother-tongue language, from 3rd to 4th grades the use of mother-tongue languages as gradually reduced to enhance the use of Vietnamese. In addition, Vietnamese was learnt as a subject from 1st grade to 4th grade to enhance Vietnamese proficiency of students. As a result, students understood and became proud of their culture.

However, as with the early transitional programme, there were limitations to its success. Strengthened BE was implemented over more than 20 years, but was then stopped. The reason for not being able to continue and be expanded was that the quality of education did not greatly improve. The scheme encountered difficulties similar to those experienced in the early transitional BE programme. The teaching materials, for example, were not designed specifically, but translated from the textbooks from the national programme, making the materials less relevant to teaching.

Jrai – Vietnamese transition bilingual education (1998–2004)

From 1998 to 2004, a bilingual education programme was trialled with Jrai and Vietnamese in two primary schools in two districts of Chu Păh and Chu Se in Gia Lai province as follows:

- In the first term of 1st grade, students learnt to read and write Jrai (L1) while Vietnamese was learnt through listening and speaking skills. In the second term of 1st grade, students learnt to read and write in Vietnamese (L2).
- In 1st and 2nd Grades, Jrai (L1) language was used as the medium of instruction.
- From the second term of 2nd grade the medium of instruction for Maths was Vietnamese (L2).
- From the second term of 3rd grade the medium of instruction for all subjects became Vietnamese while Vietnamese and Jrai continued to be taught as separate subjects until the end of 5th grade.
- Teaching materials were developed in ethnic language and Vietnamese based on the national programme. Documents for 1st to 3rd grades were designed in the ethnic language or Vietnamese while documents for 4th to 5th grades were compiled in Vietnamese.

Jrai – Vietnamese bilingual translating education					
Class		Subjects		Language teaching	
		Ethnic language	Vietnamese	Math	Other subjects
Grade		L1 – Mother tongue	L2 – Vietnamese	L2	L2
Grade		L1	L2	L2	L2
Grade	2nd term	L1	L2	L2	L2
	1st term	L1	L2	L2	L1
Grade	2nd term	L1	L2	L2	L1
	1st term	L1	L2	L1	L1
Grade		L1	L2	L1	L1

Table 3: Jrai-Vietnamese transitioned bilingual education model

This transition model has many advantages. It includes elements of both Early Transitional BE (Weak BE) and Strengthened BE, and at the same time it tackles the limitations of the previous BE: 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade materials are newly compiled, which address the specific requirements of BE and cater for the needs of the specific language teaching method, making the materials suitable for the students. It helps to remove language barriers for Jrai students and improve the quality of education in the early years of school. It also helps Jrai students understand and be proud of the culture and their people.

However, there are some limitations. For instance, learning to read and write Vietnamese (L2) from 2nd term of 1st grade is quite easy for students because they have not yet finished studying the sound system of the Jrai language. This creates pressure and heavy workload for students who have to learn reading and writing in two languages – both Jrai and Vietnamese.

In addition, the transition of the medium of instruction from mother tongue to Vietnamese is implemented spontaneously (from the 2nd term of 2nd grade to Math and from the 2nd term of 3rd grade to all subjects). Some of the students encountered considerable difficulties in the beginning stage. There is also the issue of 4th and 5th Grade documents not being compiled specifically for BE, but rather following the national programme documents. They do not match the language and teaching methods specifically for BE and are therefore not suitable for teaching and learning. Other difficulties are related to the low linguistic competence (L1) of the teachers, limited teaching materials, teaching facilities and equipment.

Given the limitations mentioned, students in the experimental classes still achieved good academic results. This has contributed to a definitive statement that 'better do something than nothing' when implementing BE.

Action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education (2008–15)

Action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education is a pilot research programme in Vietnam. The programme was supported by UNICEF Vietnam both technically and financially. The goal of the programme was to test the model followed by a new approach. The research results serve as a basis for the development of appropriate and sustainable policies for bilingual education in Vietnam in the future.

The expected educational outcomes of the research model on mother tongue-based bilingual education are:

- Reducing the number of students who repeat a grade, drop out or under-perform
- Achieving better learning performance in both languages and all subjects
- Higher admission rate to secondary school for all students
- Higher proportion of girls going to school and progressing to secondary schools
- Better coordination between educators, parents and the communities
- Higher satisfaction rate of students and families towards studies

- Building human resources within ethnic minority communities
- Improving the language proficiency in both mother tongue and national language of all participants.

A bilingual approach and action research were selected as the main approaches for the action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education. A bilingual approach is the idea of using both ethnic languages, that is the student's L1 and Vietnamese (L2) as the medium of instruction for teaching and learning and in other educational activities. Both L1 and L2 are flexibly used in the teaching process to firmly consolidate L1 proficiency and gradually develop students' L2 proficiency. Action research is a combination of research methods in order to achieve action results (changes) and research results (understanding) at the same time. Activities of mother tongue-based bilingual education are implemented, monitored and evaluated based on the action research model of the Deakin model: Consideration – Planning – Action – Observation/Reflection (Research Center for Ethnic Minority Education, 2015).

The ethnic language (L1), ethnic cultural identity and socio-economic conditions are the factors that have direct relationship with the whole process of implementing action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education. Ethnic languages and ethnic cultural identities are cultural values of ethnic groups. With 53 ethnic minorities using their own mother tongues (L1) for family activities and communication in their own ethnic community, the national language (L2) is only used in communication with other ethnic groups and in public-state organisations. Ethnic minority children use their own L1 (taught by parents) in family settings and community communication before going to kindergarten. When they enter pre-school, from three to five years of age, the language used shifts from L1 to L2 in the school setting. The shift in language has become the biggest barrier for ethnic minority children when accessing education. The consequences are low education quality, slow

learning pace and high dropout rate for ethnic minority children. In addition, the transition rate to higher school level is low, especially for girls. Therefore, bilingual education is a possible solution for education in ethnic minority areas.

Socio-economic conditions affect the level of development of ethnic minorities. Problems such as poverty, natural disasters and difficulty in commuting are barriers hindering ethnic minority children when accessing education. Although existing models of multi-grade classes, school sites, semi-boarding and boarding ethnic schools, and multi-level schools contribute to reduce the education barriers in ethnic minority areas, the implementation of bilingual education further contributes to overcoming the difficulties of socio-economic conditions and motivating ethnic minority students to go to school by removing language barriers. At the same time, their values of ethnic identity are preserved and developed.

Action research model on mother tongue-based bilingual education

Action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education of Vietnam is designed as a continuous process from kindergarten to the end of primary school, with a total amount of six years as a cycle, as set out in the table below.

Research on practising bilingual education on the basis of mother tongue			
School level	Learn language skills		Language teaching – learning Subjects
	Mother tongue (L1)	Vietnamese (L2)	
5th Grade	Listening, speaking, reading, writing	Listening, speaking, reading writing	L2 and L1
4th Grade	Listening, speaking, reading, writing	Listening, speaking, reading writing	L2 and L1
3rd Grade	Listening, speaking reading writing	Listening speaking reading writing	L1 and L2
	Listening, speaking reading, writing	Listening, speaking	L1
1st Grade	Listening, speaking, reading, writing	Listening, speaking	L1
Five-year-old kindergartens	Listening, speaking	Listening, speaking	L1 and L2

Table 4: Action research model on mother tongue-based bilingual education

In this model, languages are used in the following ways:

- Mother tongue (L1; MT): is taught as a subject for six years (may continue at secondary school). In the first year (five-year-old kindergarten), students learn to listen and speak. In the next five years (from Grade 1 to Grade 5), children learn all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). By the end of Grade 5, the students will have six years of studying and using mother tongue. As a result, it is expected that their mother tongue is firmly consolidated, and students develop sufficient proficiency to learn and communicate using MT to acquire knowledge and develop their cognitive skills.
- Vietnamese (L2): Vietnamese is taught as a subject. In the first three years (from kindergarten to the end of 2nd Grade), students only learn listening and speaking

skills. In the next three years (from 3rd grade to 5th Grade) students learn all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. After six years of Vietnamese learning with the help of the complementary role of MT, students learn Vietnamese fast and effectively. By the end of 5th grade, students meet the standard requirements of knowledge and Vietnamese proficiency as required by the school standard.

- Mediums of instruction (L1 and L2): For all subjects, from kindergarten to 3rd grade, the medium of instruction is MT for all students.

From 4th to 5th Grade, the teaching language includes both MT and Vietnamese. Vietnamese is gradually used as the main teaching language, while MT has a supporting role. This model has overcome the problem of spontaneous transition of medium of instruction in transitional BE. Both MT and Vietnamese are used flexibly, supporting each other to help students to acquire knowledge and develop their cognitive ability. For this reason, this approach is also called Flexible BE.

Teaching programmes and materials

The bilingual education programme framework is mainly based on current national programme standards. There are additional standards and some changes made to the learning timetable due to the additive component of teaching both the mother tongue and Vietnamese language. Students in the bilingual programme have to meet national standards by the end of 5th Grade, in addition to achieving high standards of proficiency in their own MT. A new set of standards are created and adjusted to standardise the requirements for learners who learn Vietnamese as a second language.

Pre-school materials include a teacher book (in MT or bilingual language), a pre-reading book in MT, a big book and a storybook in both languages. Other materials are also recommended. In Grade One and Grade Two, materials include teacher books (in native or bilingual language), textbooks and workbooks for students in their MT, Vietnamese document sources to develop language listening/speaking skill and books stories in two languages. The content materials of subjects do not translate directly from national documents but are compiled to be culturally appropriate and at the same time compatible with national standards at each school level.

Moving up the education ladder from Grade Three to Grade Five, the materials include teacher books (bilingual), textbooks and workbooks for students (bilingual, except teaching MT and Vietnamese as a subject). Starting from 3rd Grade, content materials (student books and workbooks or other supporting materials) are compiled bilingually using adjacent design. The content pages in ethnic minority languages are not direct translations of the Vietnamese content pages, but both versions are required to meet the expected learning outcomes or programme standards. The interpretation and prose sections are compiled separately to ensure the authenticity of the prose and cultural appropriation in each language. This design is to help teachers and students understand the concepts and vocabulary of both languages. Applying a bilingual approach facilitates the flexible application of teaching and learning activities based on needs of students. The academic evaluation and test are also in bilingual format. In cases of teaching MT and Vietnamese as subjects, the subject tests use the language of the language subject as language for assessment.

Training teachers

The mother tongue-based bilingual education programme requires the development of human resources in each region, including teachers, principals and other educational staff. Teachers should be able to speak and write in their mother tongue and have cultural knowledge of both languages. Teachers need to understand the approach and should be equipped with the knowledge to use bilingual teaching methods and each specialised language teaching methods appropriately for each school level. In some cases, teachers also have to teach multi-grade classes, especially at the pre-school level or the first year of primary school.

Minimum training components for teachers include:

1. Word training and mother-tongue (L1) training
2. Word training and Vietnamese training (L2)
3. The principles and methods for learning MT and Vietnamese
4. Methods of teaching and learning bilingually for content subjects
5. Use new materials appropriately to each grade
6. Application of action research into daily work.

Monitoring and evaluation framework: action research

The BE programme is implemented in accordance with the action research method. This research method allows teachers to identify problems arising in teaching and intervene with actions aimed at solving the problems during the process. Monitoring and evaluation of the research is conducted on the basis of action research models. Teachers create plans to outline what has to be improved (the changes that teachers want to bring). The teacher then implements the plan and observes the impact of that action in a specific context. Finally, teachers consider these impacts and use them as a basis for developing the next plan, making follow-up actions and continually doing so in a continuous cycle. The exchange between action and consideration in a continuous cycle integrates both theory and practice. The review process consists of two parts:

1. Consideration: This involves reviewing the objectives of the action, collected data, analysis of data, the methods used and their usefulness, and those involved or those providing the information.
2. Plans for the next cycle: This is a highly participatory process, in which stakeholders at all levels work together to plan, act, observe and learn from experience. Monitoring and evaluation are integrated into the model and implemented continuously.

The MTBE model has been piloted on two groups of kindergarten and ethnic minority primary students from three provinces: Lao Cai, Gia Lai and Tra Vinh. The Mong, Jrai and Khmer minorities are three ethnic groups whose written languages are chosen to implement

bilingual language-based education. Two groups of students participate in bilingual education based on their mother tongue:

1. First group: starting from the 2008–09 school year (five-year-old kindergarten) and ending at 2013–14 school year (5th Grade primary school)
2. The second class: starting from the 2009–10 school year (five-year-old kindergarten) and ending at 2014–15 school year (5th Grade elementary)

School year The student	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
First group	Kindergarten 5	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	
Second group		Kindergarten 5	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade

Table 5: The subject scale being conducted for action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education

Results of mother tongue-based bilingual education in Vietnam

The evaluation and comparison on Vietnamese competency of kindergarten pupils in BE experimental classes have been measured according to five criteria (C1–C5) at the beginning

of the school year and at the end of the school year. The results are described as below:

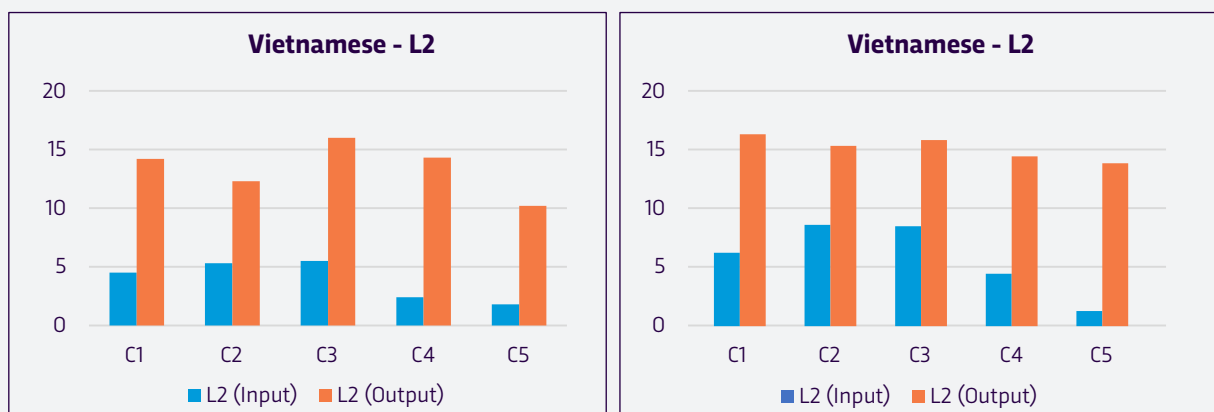


Figure 1: Chart of assessment of Vietnamese language ability of five-year-old kindergarten children (1st group on the left, 2nd group on the right)

C1. The ability to receive and express the language in communication; C2. Develop the awareness of social environment and express through language; C3. Develop the awareness of natural environmental awareness and express through language; C4. Listen to simple storytelling by pictures and understand meaning (story told in L1, but details minimised); C5. Listening to understand requirements and act accordingly.

After completing the bilingual education programme, statistics show that kindergarten students develop comprehensively in all five areas of the pre-school programme, especially on language competency and communication. In terms of mother tongue (L1), the language of the child has been developed remarkably. Students have the ability to communicate in their mother tongue fluently: they know how to express thoughts and describe actions and events in a picture. When students re-tell a learnt story, the child expresses affection with actions and the story is interesting and attractive. In daily communication, students exhibit some socialised behaviours: listen carefully to others and communicate with facial expressions. Students who are actively engaged in learning activities, such as playing letter cards and games regarding sound system, perform well in acquiring their mother-tongue language.

In terms of using Vietnamese (L2), children are bold and confident when answering questions in Vietnamese. Children can understand and use simple sentences in communication: they can say "thank you" and "sorry" and answer simple questions such as "Who is this?" and "What is this?". The survey shows that children are relatively flexible. They use some MT words for a small number of Vietnamese words that they forget, and when hints are given the children remember immediately and answer the question correctly. Children can listen and understand the contents of a simple and familiar story in Vietnamese.

In conclusion, the five-year-old kindergarten children who participated in the action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education performed better compared with their counterparts. Children progressed rapidly in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Children who learnt in mother tongue are bold, confident, creative and fast learners. Children like school and achieve high attendance rate (nearly 100 per cent). Good attendance was maintained until the end of the programme. As a result, language barriers were removed, children developed their Vietnamese competency rapidly and Vietnamese language competency of children in bilingual education was better than children who do not take bilingual classes. Overall, mother tongue has been strengthened and developed. Finally, teachers have had access to the implementation of new educational methods, which meet the physiological interest and characteristics of ethnic minority children.



Education results of primary students when learning bilingual education

Independent assessment and evaluation results from the Primary Education Department – MOET and Capra International Inc – Model Number 2300076425 (Research Center for Ethnic Minority Education, 2008) affirmed that bilingual education has fundamentally changed the quality of education for ethnic minority students. The Bilingual Education Programme has achieved good results. The percentage of students classified as 'good' and 'rather good'

accounts for the majority and gradually increased from 1st Grade to 5th Grade. The rate of students classified as 'average' decreased gradually from 1st Grade to 5th Grade. The percentage of students classified as 'weak' was very small. Students' performance ranking in the academic programme of bilingual education from first group and second group are shown in the charts below.

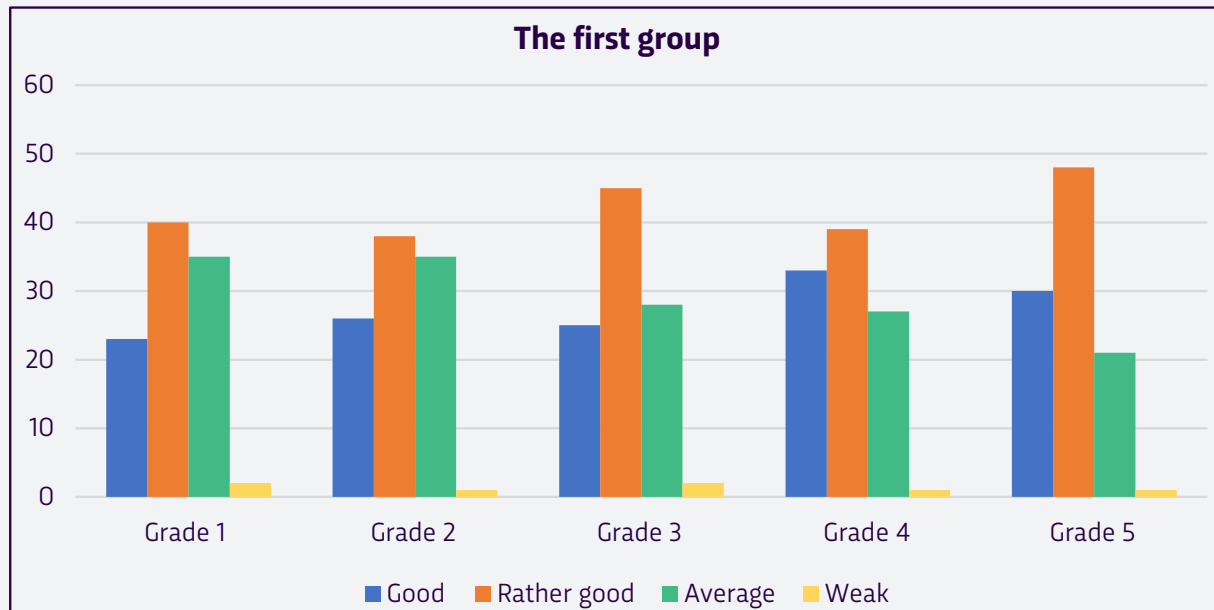


Figure 3: Ranking ratio (%) of bilingual students in the first groupchildren (1st group on the left, 2nd group on the right)

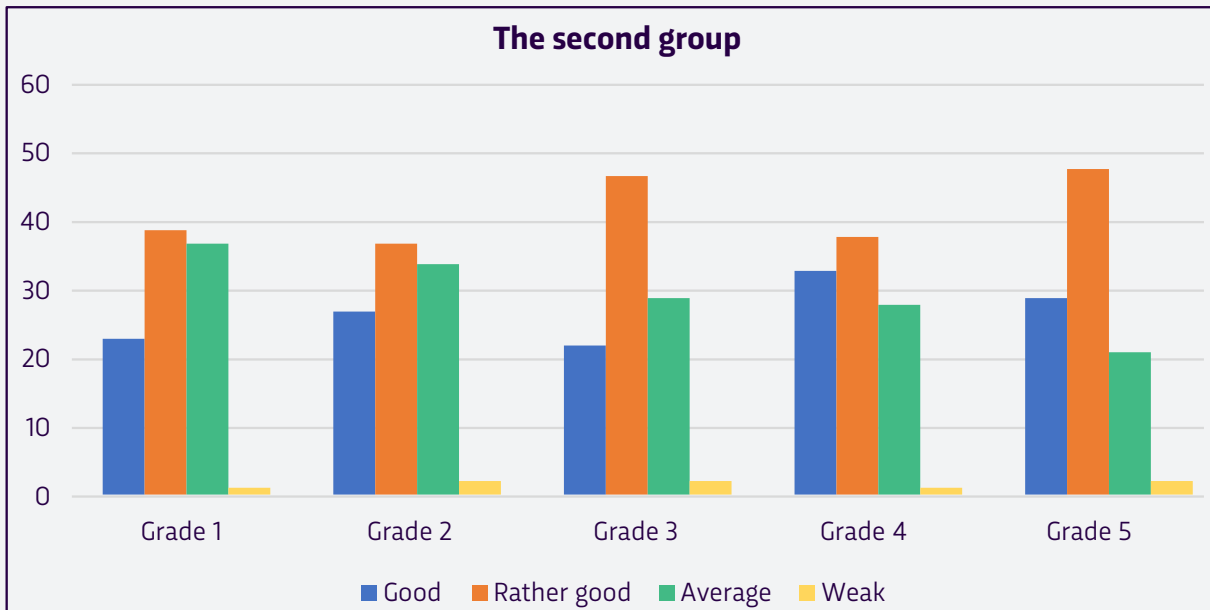


Figure 4: Ranking ratio (%) of bilingual students in the second group

The results of the evaluation showed that the educational outcomes of students learning bilingual programmes is better than students without bilingual education in all subjects of the primary programme. The attendance rate of bilingual students is very high, reaching 99–100 per cent. In the process of learning, bilingual students participate in active learning activities enthusiastically and have the habit of self-study.

The quality of learning is sustainable and more effective than high school students in all aspects: knowledge acquisition, capacity development, intellectual development and confidence in communication. In addition, teachers and management staff have access to the implementation of new educational methods, which meet the physiological characteristics and special needs of ethnic minority students.

Scientific conclusions and lessons learnt from Vietnam

From the results of experimental research on action research of MTBE, some scientific conclusions can be drawn. Mother tongue-based bilingual education is an appropriate solution for language development (both L1 and L2), improving the quality of education for ethnic minority children, creating the educational environment in which ethnic minority children develop their languages comprehensively and firmly. With the foundation built on their mother

tongue (L1), ethnic minority children not only learn Vietnamese well (L2) but also can study foreign languages well (L3). Experimental results confirm that action research on mother tongue-based bilingual education is an appropriate and feasible approach for Vietnam. The study is based on linguistic, psychological and educational evidence and inherits the positive elements of previous BE approaches, with all shortcomings of the early transitional BE,

strengthened BE and transition BE overcome. Ethnic minority children become bilingual speakers who acquire both their ethnic language and Vietnamese. In order to maintain and replicate the approach of mother tongue-based bilingual education in ethnic areas, it is necessary to have a sufficient legal basis and to

prepare necessary resources for the implementation, such as training and retraining of bilingual teachers, developing programmes, compiling textbooks and bilingual reading materials, ensuring sufficient facilities, utensils and bilingual teaching equipment, and acquiring consensus of the ethnic minority communities.

Lessons learnt

After many years of experimentation on different bilingual education models, some of the following lessons learnt can be drawn:

- The selection of a suitable and feasible bilingual education model is the first important condition to ensure the model will be highly effective when implemented. The action research model of mother tongue-based bilingual education is a model suitable for ethnic minority areas in Vietnam. The model has overcome the limitations of previous models. Currently, the action research model of mother tongue-based bilingual education is being maintained and replicated in many ethnic minority areas.
- Implementing mother tongue-based bilingual education must be approved by the Government with consensus of local authorities, educational institutions and ethnic minority communities.
- A specific roadmap is needed for implementation. It starts from experimenting on a narrow scale, assessing and adjusting both the content and implementation methods, and continues to replicate after successful experimentation and advocacy for support-implementation policy.
- Teachers and educational managers are important to ensure the successful implementation of mother tongue-based bilingual education. Therefore, it is paramount to recruit and train qualified teachers to implement bilingual education. Teachers who are not well prepared can distort the bilingual education model and affect the quality of education. Therefore, it is necessary to bring BE contents and methods into training and retraining in universities and pedagogical colleges in ethnic minority areas.
- Programmes and materials are important elements of mother tongue-based bilingual education. Documents should be well prepared and adjusted in time to suit the needs and characteristics of students of each ethnic minority group.

Conclusion

Mother tongue-based bilingual education is affirmed as an appropriate, feasible educational approach for ethnic minority children. It is a new initiative in which bilingualism is immersed in education: MT is the basis of the initial foundation to help children acquire Vietnamese language and scientific knowledge quickly and smoothly. MTBE education has brought a range of benefits. In terms of ethnic education, it has contributed to the quality improvement of pre-school and primary education in ethnic minority areas. It has overcome language barriers faced by ethnic minority students. In addition, it has contributed to the improvement of the professional capacity of teachers and managing staff involved during the implementation. Furthermore, MTBE education mobilises the participation of the community and parents in the educational process.

With regard to science and technology, MTBE is seen as a new scientific solution that can meet the requirements of developing education in ethnic minority areas. It has been successfully tested as an approach to education and is suitable for ethnic minority children in Vietnam. The solid foundation of their MT language facilitates the acquisition of a second language, Vietnamese, and scientific knowledge. Importantly, MTBE has confirmed the principle of teaching Vietnamese to ethnic minority children as a second language.

Ethnic minority communities have also benefitted from MTBE. It has contributed to the preservation, promotion and development of ethnic languages and cultures. It has also connected three partners: school, family and community (society).

MTBE has had benefits for education authorities and related organisations primarily since results of programmes are paid attention to, learnt and shared among international organisations and countries around the world. As a result, MTBE has been proven with scientific and practical evidence that it is appropriate to be implemented as part of the national education for ethnic minorities. In order to strengthen the scientific and practical basis of special policies on ethnic minority education, further research and experimental test will need to be continuously carried out on other ethnic groups.



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