

NATIONAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN KOREA AND ITS LESSONS FOR VIETNAM¹

Assoc. Prof Nguyen Hong Con
(USSH, VNU)

During the last fifty years, South Korea has continuously reformed and modernized its national education system aiming to promote its people's intellectual standards and world integration. With regards to national language education in schools, South Korea has made changes to the teaching and learning objectives, curriculum and teaching methodology. It could be certainly said that all these efforts have brought good results. Based on a review of policies and practices of national language education in South Korea, the paper will draw some lessons for national language education in Vietnam. The paper has two main parts: 1. National language education in South Korea. 2. Korean national language education's lessons for Vietnam.

1. NATIONAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN SOUTH KOREA

1.1 Policy of national language education

1.1.1 Like Vietnam, Korea in general and South Korea in particular has a history of continuous struggle for the national sovereignty which encompasses the sovereignty of its national language. Contemporary South Korea provides a good example of how economic and social success could not be separated from

¹ The research was supported by The Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies in International Scholar Exchange Fellowship Program, 2005-2006.

achievement in education and training among which the achievement in language education. Since 1945, with an aim to build a national education, it has adopted many policies regarding language education which highlight the important role of the national language, especially the role of Hangul, the native alphabet of Korean language. From September to October, 1945, by the Ordinance No.6, "Reopening of schools, curriculums, etc.", all existing elementary and secondary schools were ordered open and the formal education of Hangul was began as the medium of classroom instruction. The national language classes were concerned, the exclusive use of Hangul was adopted by the schools and the Korean children was for the first time on their way to learning the native language officially in school with the full support of the Ministry of Education (under the Military Interim Government). As for the writing, the Ministry of Education adopted Hangul Matchumbob (the Rules of Hangul Spelling) which was revised and edited in Hangul with a minimum use of Hanja in parentheses. On May 17th, 1947 the Ordinance No.141 declared that effective 1st July, 1947, the official language of the South Korean Interim Government will be Korean. On July 17th, 1948, the main copy of the Republic of Korea's Constitution was prepared and also signed in Hangul. And on September 30th, 1948 the National Assembly passed the Resolution No.6 "the Exclusive Use of Hangul as the Official Writing System in the Government". The original Hangul legislation reads follows:

The official documents of the Republic of Korea shall be written in Hangul, the Korean alphabetic script. For the time being, however, Chinese characters may be used together with the Korean script when it is necessary. This law becomes effective on the day of its promulgation".

Thus Hangul was recorded as the official position in the Republic of Korea. However, all the government branches and offices did not comply with the law (government documents continued to be printed in the mixed use of Hangul and Hanja without parentheses) with the exception of the Ministry of Education. The Textbook Committee which belonged to the

National Education Review Committee, established the regulations of the use of Hangul in textbooks, according to which “the textbook for the elementary and secondary schools shall be in the exclusive use of Hangul except when necessary Hanja may be inserted in parentheses “. The language textbooks which were in the exclusive use of Hangul with a minimal use of Hanja in parentheses were the only national language textbooks until 1952 when the education in Hanja was introduced a few months after the National Assembly passed “the Resolution of Hanja Use”, making a disappointment for Hangul supporters.

After the Korean War (1953), the Hangul advocacy was once again brought to the national attention. On December 6th, 1957, the Council of State presented to and adopted “the Revised Hangul Plans”. The contents of the resolution were:

Objective – until such time as the new legislation takes place, this resolution will prevail in enforcing the exclusive use of Hangul.

Amendment to the Legislation No.6 – the Ministry of Education is responsible for

creating policies for implementation regarding the Hangul exclusive use.

Implementation policies for the central administration shall be determined independently by each department.

All commercial signs shall be in Hangul.

All public announcements, notices, bulletins shall be in Hangul.

All publications shall be in Hangul.

Beginning January 1st, 1958, the Office of Information shall print all publications in Hangul.

Effective January 1st, 1958, the Ministry of Education shall use Hangul exclusively in all publications.

Proper nouns, professional terms that are confusing unless they are written in Hanja may be inserted in parentheses.

The Revised Hangul Plans which were formally presented to and adopted by the Council of State on December 6th, 1957 was the beginning of a new Hangul movement. March 1st, 1962 Ministry of Education urges all government publications be in Hangul as resolved in the Revised Hangul Plans. April 17th, 1962, Ministry of Education sets up Special Review Committee for the Acceleration of Hangul Plans. Thus, in 1962 most of the Revised Hangul Plans had been carried out. In the years 1967, 1968 the Hangul implementation was urged by Presidential Decrees No. 4389 (December 4th, 1967), No. 3625 (November 5th, 1968). These decrees resulted in making the year 1969 as the year for the exclusive use of Hangul mandate in 1970, and until 1972, the exclusive use of Hangul was probably best implemented in Korea (Lenore Kim, Blank, 1982)

1.1.2. Today, under the Education Law of Korea, the language of instruction in Korean Schools is Korean, which is the official language by custom and practice in South Korea. The instruction is carried out in the Korean language in all kinds of schools (elementary, middle, high and higher schools), with the exception of instruction in foreign languages in some departments of universities or colleges. Meantime, Korean language, as the national language, is a national common basic subject in the NEC's of Korean schools. All Korean language teachers are trained in Departments of Korean language and literature Education from a four-year college or university, and are required to hold a teacher certificate of Korean language and/or literature. Notwithstanding the high status of the Korean language Hanja is still taught at present as a subject (which has recently become non-compulsory) in South Korean schools. The Hanja education begins in grade 7 (junior high school) and continues until graduation from senior high school in grade 12. A total of 1800 Hanja (about 100 fewer than Kanji) are taught: 900 for junior high, and 900 for senior high

(starting in grade 10). Post-secondary Hanja education continues in some liberal arts universities. In Korean language and Korean studies programs at universities around the world, a sample of Hanja is typically a requirement for students. Becoming a graduate student in these fields usually requires students to learn at least the 1800 basic Hanja. Thus, it is evident that South Korea has adopted a policy to promote the national language while not totally say no to Hanja, a language which has a close links to its historical and cultural development. This could be served as a lesson for the language education policy in Vietnam.

1.2. National language curriculum in schools

1.2.1. Korean policy of national language education is realized in the national curriculum of education, especially in Korean language curriculum. The national curriculum which is proclaimed in the form of Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) circulars sets strict regulations for the subject of Korean language to be taught for each school year, included not only their purpose, aims, content but also minimum instructional hours. In all 7 national curriculums adopted since 1955, the Korean language has always had an important place. The 7th national curriculum which has been in effect since 2000 has identified the purposes, aims, instructional hours and the main contents of the Korean language as follows:

- *Purpose of Korean language curriculum in Korea schools:*

- The national curriculum for Korean language instruction has been developed to promote the development of Korean culture and Korea national language, to protect the purity of the national language and maintain the nationalist mentality, to help Korean people use the Korean language effectively and accurately in information-based society, to educate attitudes and competence in creative use of the Korean language in their everyday life.

- To educate the competence in the use of Korean in daily life, to study the phenomena of the Korean language on the basis of

fundamental knowledge of the Korean language and languages, to educate competence in creative expressions of ideas and emotions, competence in accurate and critical interpretation of the contents and aspects of the Korean language, to have a comprehensive look at the objectives, purposes and coherence in the use of the national language.

- To educate aesthetics and competence in understanding the overall diversity in human life through literary works on the basis of basic knowledge of literature.

- Through this to nurture attitudes and love for the Korean national language, correct understanding of the culture of the Korean language.

- *The aims of the Korean language curriculum:*

- To educate attitudes and competence in order to be able to actively contribute to the development of national language and culture, to correctly understand the national language, to creatively and accurately use the national language, to have a comprehensive understanding of the contents, purposes, and coherence of language usage, of the nature of literature, of language and language usage.

- To educate the competence in applying the Korean language in many diverse situations, in understanding the basic knowledge of literature, language and language usage.

- To educate competence in creative expressions of ideas and emotions, in critical understanding of diverse materials about the Korean language, in understanding the principles and effective and accurate use of the Korean language.

- To educate the desires to contribute to the creation and development of national culture and language, to investigate continuously language phenomena with passions and love.

- *Minimum instructional hours of Korean language in schools:*

Under the Seventh National Curriculum, Korean language is one of the national compulsory subjects in all Korean schools from grade 1 to grade 10. The instructional hours of subject is being

differentiated on the basis of a student's academic ability as following:

Schools	Grades	Instruct.hours per week	Minutes per Instruct. hour	Instruct. weeks per year	Instruct.hours per year
Elementary schools	1	6	40	34	210
	2	7	40	34	238
	3	7	40	34	238
	4	6	40	34	204
	5	6	40	34	204
	6	6	40	34	204
Secondary schools	7	5	45	34	170
	8	4	45	34	136
	9	4	45	34	136
High schools	10	4	45	34	136
	11	Elective courses			
	12				
Total					1876

- In Elementary schools, Korean language is taught to children from Grade 1 to Grade 6 : students in Grades 1 study Korean language for 210 instructional hours per year (6 instructional hours per week, 1 instructional hour = 40 minutes), in Grades 2 and 3 for 238 instructional hours per year (7 instructional hours per week), and those in Grades 4, 5 and 6 for 204 instructional hours per year (6 instructional hours per week).

- In secondary schools, Korean language is also a common basic subject of grades 7, 8 and 9: in Grade 7, Korean Language is taught for 170 instructional hours per year (5 instructional hours per week, 1 instructional hour = 45 minutes), and in grades 8 and 9 for 136 instructional hours per year (4 instructional hours per week).

- In high schools, Korean language is a common basic subject for students in Grade 10, with 136 instructional hours per year (4 instructional hours per week, 1 instructional hour = 50 minutes). As for Grades 11 and 12, there are many common basic and elective

courses of Korean language in different areas, and students has to achieve the required number of credits to graduate. In addition to Korean language, students in grades 11 and 12 could select 12 units of Chinese characters and literature classics (See the table below).

Subjects	Common basic courses (*)	General elective courses	Intensive elective courses
Korean language	Korean language (8)	Korean language life (4)	Speech(4), Reading(8), Composition (8), Grammar(4), Literature(8)
Chinese characters And classics		Chinese characters & classics (6)	Chinese literature classics (6)

(*) The figures in parentheses represent the number of units to be completed. One unit indicates the amount of school learning undertaken by a 50-minutes instruction per week for one semester, equivalent to 17 weeks. In addition to national language, students in Grades 11 and 12 are required to achieve 10 credits of Chinese characters and classics in elective courses

- *Basic contents of Korean language curriculum in Korean schools:*

- The basic contents of the Korean language curriculum cover 6 areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, language knowledge and literature knowledge

- To study speaking, listening, reading and writing with an aim to understand the working mechanism of the language and to develop a competence in creative use of the Korean language.

- To study ‘language knowledge’ with an emphasis on the use of language and language rules

- To read and study literary works with an aim to develop a literary imagination in order to fully understand life of literary characters.

The basic contents of Korean Language Curriculum in the seventh NEC areas are presented in the following table:

Areas	Contents		
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of listening - Necessity - Purpose - Concepts - Methods - Situations - Characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of listening - Distinguishing of hearing differences - Tests of content - Reasoning - Evaluation of Perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards listening - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Practice - Listening to information exchanges - Listening to emotive expressions - Listening to the perusable content - Listening to the intimate content 		
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of speaking - Necessity - Purpose - Concepts - Methods - Situations - Characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of speaking - Articulation & Pronunciation - Building of content - Construction of content - Representation & Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards speaking - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking Practice - Speaking to exchange information - Speaking to express emotion - Speaking to persuade someone - Speaking to make intimacy 		
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of reading - Necessity - Purpose - Concepts - Methods - Situations - Characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of reading - Understanding of words - Confirmation - Reasoning of content - Evaluation of perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards reading - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Practice - Reading information exchanges - Reading of emotive expressions - Reading of the perusable content - Reading of the intimate content 		
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of writing - Necessity - Purpose - Concepts - Methods - Situations - Characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of writing - Writing - Construction of Content - Expression - Correcting - Writing in computer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards writing - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Practice - Writing to exchange information - Writing to express emotion - Writing to persuade someone - Writing to make a friendship 		
Knowledge of Korean Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of national language - Characters of language - Characters of national language - The change of national language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studying of national language - Phonemes - Words - Vocabulary - Sentences - Meaning - Conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude to national language - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying of rules - Norms of standard - Correctness of errors - Grammar pronunciation 		
Korean Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of literature - Characters of literature - Images in literatures - Korean literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying and creating of literature - Aesthetic structure of a literature work - Reconstruction of a literature work - Social and cultural pictures in literatures - Creativeness in literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude toward literature - Motive - Interestingness - Habit - Value
	Affect of literature - Poems - Novels - Drama - Chronicle		

(Source: The 7th National Curriculum of National Language)

The contents presented in this table has shown that South Korea has emphasized both the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and the knowledge (linguistic and literary) but language skills are more prioritized. Each content, whether skill or knowledge, has to satisfy the 4 main criteria: understand the essence, master the principles, establish the attitudes and be able to apply in practice. These contents and requirements will be specified in details in accordance with grade levels (details please see Cho Jae Hyun & Bùi Mạnh Hùng 2008).

1.2.2. Comparing the Korean language curriculum with the Vietnamese language curriculum (MOET, 2006) we notice the following differences:

- With regards to naming: Korea's curriculum names the subject "National language". In Vietnam's curriculum, the subject is named "Vietnamese language" in primary school and "philology" (ngữ văn/language and literature) in secondary and high schools. The differences in naming reflect differences in curriculum orientations and contents.

- With regards to instructional hours: The Korea curriculum has fewer instructional hours for the National language subject as compared to those of Vietnam curriculum, especially for the

primary grades: primary students in Korea have from 204 to 238 learning hours/school year (grade 1: 210 hours, grades 2 and 3: 238, grades 4, 5 and 6: 204 hours) whereas Vietnamese primary students have from 280 to 350 learning hours/school year (grade 1: 350 hours, grade 2: 315 hours, grades 3, 4 and 5: 280 hours).

- With regards to the contents: As evident from their naming, the National language curriculum in Korea has paid more attention to the language contents than the literature contents while the Vietnamese curriculum has paid more attention to the literature contents than the language contents. Let us take the high school curriculum as an example. Korean grades 11 and 12 have 44 units (including optional hours) among which only 12 units have contents related to literature (Korean language: 8 units, Speech: 4 units, Reading: 8 units, Composition: 8 units, Grammar: 4 units, Literature Life: 4 units and Literature: 8 units). In the Vietnamese High school curriculum (grades 10, 11, 12) the literature part has the instructional hours double those for the Vietnamese language part (Vietnamese: 20 hours, Composition: 32,5 hours and Literature: 105 hours). Besides, the Korea's National language curriculum has 12 units for learning Hanja and Chinese classic literature which has no parallel in Vietnam's curriculum.

- With regards to the linguistic contents: Korea's National language curriculum gives priority more to educating language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) than to teaching linguistic knowledge (phonetics, lexicology and grammar), and through the education of language skills, it aims at building in students proper attitudes to the national language and culture, building communication and negotiation skills (students learn how to express properly their ideas, know how to listen to others, know how to avoid and resolve conflicts, know how to express and control their emotions, etc.). The Vietnam's curriculum, on the contrary, seems to give more priority to building knowledge than skills and seems to lack the practices relating to real language usages and communication.

2. KOREAN NATIONAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION'S LESSONS FOR VIETNAM

2.1 Policy of national language education in Vietnam

2.1.1 Vietnam is a multi-national and multi-lingual state. It has 54 ethnic groups with different languages cohabiting on the territories of Vietnam among those the Viet (commonly called the Kinh) are the majority consisting in 87% of the country's populations, therefore the Vietnamese language (the language of the Kinh) has been used for many centuries as a language of common communication for all ethnic groups in Vietnam. Although there is no constitutionalized position the Vietnamese language has been playing a very important role in social life as well as in education. In fact the Vietnamese language has become the official language of Vietnam. Yet in order to have the position of the national and official language of instruction as it has been enjoying nowadays, the Vietnamese language has undergone many ups and downs in the history. Together with the domination of Northern feudal dynasties (from 179 BC to 905 AC), Chinese characters have been brought to Vietnam in 2nd -3rd centuries. During 1000 years of Chinese domination, despite the fact that the Vietnamese language is the medium of daily communication of the majority of people in Vietnam, the Chinese language was the official language in administration, education and culture.

In the year 938, with Bạch Đằng victory over the Chinese, Ngô Quyền put a final end to the 1000 years of Chinese domination, establishing a solid foundation for the freedom of Vietnam. Following the tradition of learning from Chinese civilization, the Chinese characters continued to be used in official state documents, in religious rituals and ceremonies, in education and in literary creations. However, with the nationalist consciousness, Vietnamese scholars began to think of creating a writing for the Vietnamese people. In this social and historical context the Nom writing appeared at about the end of the 10th century and has become a relatively complete writing system in the 13th century (Nguyễn Tài

Cần 1979). At the beginning âm om writing was used only to record purely Vietnamese geographical and person names which did not have equivalents in Chinese. However, it has gradually been used in literary creations (Quốc Âm thi tập by Nguyễn Trãi, Hồng Đức Quốc âm thi tập by Lê Thánh Tông, Kiều by Nguyễn Du, etc.), and even in royal communication (Nguyễn Huệ and Tây Sơn dynasties). Although the Vietnamese language during this time did not have an official status, with the emergence of âm om writing, it nevertheless created a qualitatively new bilingual situation in Vietnam society.

During the French colony (1863-1945) the French language replaced the Chinese language in the role of the official language. The French colonial government imposed many policies to strengthen the dominant position of French. In education, French was taught in all levels, in junior secondary and high school French is the main language to be taught. In official and administrative communications, French was the official language. Although the main purpose of this French – based education was to maintain the French domination, the side result it brought about was the emergence of a new group of intellectual, those who inherited the ideas and scientific achievements from the West and put them into application in the Vietnamese context.

Together with the popularizing and educating French to consolidate its official status, in order to quickly eliminate the Chinese influence and to create favorable conditions for management, the French colonial government encouraged people to learn the Quốc ngữ writing – a latinized writing created by Western and Vietnamese missionaries since the 17th century. On the other hand, revolutionists and patriotic intellectuals also saw in Quốc ngữ an important role in eradicating the illiteracy thereby encouraging people to learn it. As a result, Quốc ngữ has gradually been popularized and has created deep changes not only in socio-cultural life (mass media, literary work, education...) but also in the status and social function of the Vietnamese language thus preparing it to become the official language of an independent state.

2.1.2 The August Revolution in 1945 has opened up a new era for Vietnam and the Vietnamese language. For the first time in its history the Vietnamese language has become the official language of the government, is officially used in administration, in education of all levels, including university education. That the Vietnamese language has been used in education, especially in university education, has sped up its development. It has become structurally and functionally improved. Even during the 1954-75 period in the South of Vietnam, although English had a very strong impact on socio-cultural life, the Vietnamese language still played the main role in social life and in education.

Being used as language of instruction in schools, the Vietnamese language and the Quốc ngữ writing have become important tools for illiteracy irradiation and literacy popularization for people, especially for common people. For the first time in history, literate people in Vietnam has occupied the majority of its population: if before August Revolution more than 90% Vietnamese people were illiterate, the literate people nowadays occupy almost 94% of population. Vietnam is one of the countries with the highest proportion of literate people over the total population (CIA World Fact Book, 2005).

To develop the socio-linguistic functions of the Vietnamese language and to consolidate the official status of Vietnamese in the society in general and in education in particular, the Vietnamese government has adopted many appropriate policies concerning language and language education. Constitution of 1946 has the following statements relating to languages:

- “In primary schools of ethnic minorities, people have the rights to learn in their own languages”. [article 15]
- “Candidate (...) has to know to read and write Quốc ngữ”. [article 18]
- “People of ethnic groups have the rights to use their native languages in court”.

[article 66]

Constitution of 1959 states:

- “Ethnic groups have the rights to maintain or change their customs and traditions, to use their languages and writings to develop their cultures”. [article 3]
- “People’s Court guarantees that citizens of ethnic groups in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have the rights to use their languages and writings in court”.

[article 102]

Constitutions of 1980 and 1992 kept those statements unchanged. Specifically, Decision 53/CP issued on 22/3/1980 by the Prime Minister explicitly states the status of Vietnamese in the social life and in education as follows:

“The Vietnamese language and writing are the language and writing for common communication of all ethnic groups in Vietnam (...). Therefore, all Vietnamese citizens have the rights and obligations to learn and to use them”.

The Education Law issued on December 10th 1998 has one article to talk about language in education. It is in this law that the Vietnamese language is called for the first time the official language. This article about language in education says:

“1. The Vietnamese language is the language officially used in schools in Vietnam.

2. The Government creates favorable conditions for ethnic groups to learn their languages and writings. The teaching and learning of languages of ethnic groups are done in accordance with government instructions”. (Education Law, pp. 9-10)

The official status of Vietnamese as language of instruction in schools has not only been legally consolidated, its learning and teaching as a special school subject has also been particularly emphasized. In the school curriculum since grade 1 to grade 12, the Vietnamese language and literature have always been compulsory

subjects with 120 to 180 instructional hours per year (4-6 hours/week). The objectives of this subject is to establish and develop linguistic skills, educate the linguistic and literary knowledge for students. The contents of these subjects focus on the following areas:

- Knowledge of Vietnamese (phonetics and phonology, grammar, vocabulary)
- Skills in using Vietnamese (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- Vietnamese literature

In schools of ethnic groups which have their own writings, in the primary school, students learn mainly in the native languages while Vietnamese is taught as a second language. However, in higher grades (junior high and high schools) Vietnamese gradually replaces ethnic languages and becomes language of instruction. Thanks to this policy students of ethnic groups upon graduating from high schools can easily enter universities where only Vietnamese is used as the language of instruction.

2.2. Difficulties and challenges in national language education

2.2.1. Although the Vietnamese language has been taught in Vietnamese schools for more than half a century, and the Vietnamese language subject has always occupied an important place in the school curriculum, paradox ally the competence in Vietnamese of Vietnamese students is getting poorer and poorer, especially their speaking and writing skills. According to a research done by the Institute of Education strategies and curriculums (2006), student's Vietnamese language test results at application level has decreased from lower to higher grades: grade 3 students have the average scores at *Application level* only 0.55 point higher than the pass score (compared to 1.32 points at the *Comprehension level*); grade 6 students have the average scores for the *Application*

level (7.13 points over 12 maximum) lower the average scores for the *Comprehension level* (4.48 points over 8 maximum) and *Recognition level* (6.67 points over 10 maximum); and grade 8 students have average scores at *Application level* counting for 52.13% of the maximum scores while the average scores at *Comprehension levels* reaching 70.8% of the maximum scores. Many reasons have been suggested to explain this phenomenon, among those curriculum contents and textbooks are seen as important barriers. Curriculum and textbooks are blamed as putting too much emphasis on theories to the benefits of practical activities. And this have negatively affected the quality of the teaching and learning of Vietnamese, the competence of Vietnamese students in using Vietnamese and also students and parents' attitudes towards the national language and the national language instruction.

2.2.2. Vietnam is a multilingual state with Vietnamese being the most common language used in communication and it is therefore reasonable to choose Vietnamese as language of instruction in schools. However, besides the obvious advantages, the use of Vietnamese as language of instruction in schools however also has one limitation, that is it impeaches Vietnamese students from learning and using foreign languages, because the Vietnamese language is too much different from other international languages, especially in technological terms and nominations. Vietnamese students have to invest a lot of time to learn foreign languages but the results are still very modest. According to a recent research (Vu Thi Phuong Anh, 2004) after the 3rd year of learning at university, Vietnamese students have the average scores of 360-370 in TOEFL, and these results are very low, may be the lowest compared to those of other countries in the world. And this certainly has a negative inverse effect on Vietnamese language and other school subjects.

2.2.3. On the other hand, the exclusive use of Vietnamese as the official language of instruction in schools also creates certain difficulties for students of ethnic minorities in the first years,

especially those ethnic groups who do not speak Vietnamese and have their own writings. The tests of the Vietnamese language subject for grade 1 minority students in 40 mountainous provinces in the school year 2007-08 have shown the high percentages of poor results: 22.5% for Hà Giang province, 17% for Đắk Lắk province, 16% for Gia Lai and 15% for Bình Thuận... (Ethnic minority Department website, 22/08/2008). In reality the percentages of grade 1 minority students who do not have the basic skills and knowledge in Vietnam to be able to continue the higher grade education could be far higher. And this is one of the main causes of high and increasing drop- outs among minority students (Youth Electronic Newspaper Weekend, 22/01/2008). In the past years the Vietnamese government has adopted many policies regarding the development of languages and writings, the teaching of Vietnamese for students of ethnic groups, yet we are still facing with many unsolved problems (Trần Trí Dõi 2003). To solve these problems, we think more comprehensive research are needed in order to come up with scientific and more appropriate solutions for the bilingual education policy in Vietnam ethnic minorities schools.

2.3. Lessons from Korean national language education

2.3.1. Just like Korea, Vietnam has chosen the national language as the official language – the language officially used all over the country. The experience of Korea shows that in order to enhance the legitimacy of the national language as the official language, it is important for the government to prepare all the necessary legal conditions for the legitimization of the national (Vietnamese) language on the one hand, and to adopt language and language education policies appropriate to each stage of development of the country and of the national language on the other hand.

2.3.2. Just like Korea, Vietnam has chosen the national language as the language of instruction in schools and universities. This language education policy has positive effects on the

development and enhancement of the status of the national language, on the irradiation of illiteracy and on the popularization of basic education for all people. Yet it also has certain negative effects because it creates a linguistic barrier for Vietnamese people, especially for students in entering into the world. The experience of Korea shows that it is not necessary to apply the policy of national language education too rigidly in schools, especially in colleges and universities. In order to have people capable to overcome the linguistic barrier to access world knowledge, along with the teaching and learning in the national language, it is important for universities, especially technical, technological, economic and natural sciences universities to have teaching in foreign languages, especially in English. To do this, besides changes in language education policies, human resources preparation (teaching staffs and students), it is important to have international cooperation with foreign universities and professors from other countries.

2.3.3. Just like in Korea, in Vietnam the national language is not only the language of instruction in schools but also a compulsory school subject. It is evident that the quality and effectiveness of this subject leave much to be desired. Experts agreed that the main reasons should be looked for in curriculum contents, textbooks and teaching methods. Experience of Korea shows that it is important to have a unified state-based curriculum frame with the participation not only of scientists but also of school teachers and students parents, and textbooks should be written on the basis of that unified curriculum frame. The curriculum should provide students with (1) skills necessary to use the national language (listening, speaking, reading and writing), (2) knowledge about the national language, and (3) knowledge about the national literature among which the linguistic skills should receive a special attention. In addition, just like in Korean language, the Vietnamese language has a great amount of Sino-Vietnamese words, therefore it is important to pay a due attention to the teaching of Sino and ă om characters in the national language instruction.

2.3.4. However, it is also important to notice a certain difference in language policy and practices between Vietnam and Korea. In the socio-linguistic context of Vietnam, the choice of Vietnamese, a language spoken by over 87% population of the country as the official language in social interactions and in education is a correct solution. Yet, different from Korea, Vietnam is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state, besides the Viet people who speak Vietnamese, there are more than 50 other ethnic groups speaking different languages with very different levels of development (some have writings, some do not have writings, some groups have many people speaking Vietnamese almost fluently, some groups have few people speaking Vietnamese). Therefore, Vietnam can not follow the same language education policy as that of Korea. Changes need to be made to suit the specific levels of development and linguistic situations in each ethnic group.

REFERENCES

1. Bộ Giáo dục và đào tạo Việt ẵm, 2006: *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn Ngữ Văn*. ẵxb Giáo dục, Hà ẵội.
2. Ho Wah Kam & Ruth Y L Wong (ed.), 2004: *Language Policies and Language*
3. *Education*. Eastern University Press.
4. *Hiến pháp nước Việt Nam ĐCCH* (1946, 1960) và *nước CHXHCN Việt Nam* (1980, 1992).
5. Iẵ CA, 2005: *INCA Summary Profile - Education In Korea* (Online)
6. Korea Institue of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), 2005: Major Activities: Currriculum and Evaluation. Educational Assessment (Online).
7. Korean Ministry of Education and Human Recourses Development, 1997: The Seventh ẵational Education Curriculum: Korean Language Curriculum.

8. Lenore Kim, Blank, 1982: *Language Policies in South Korea since 1945 and their probable impact on education*. The University of San Francisco, California.
9.   nguyen Hong Con, 2006: *Language Education in Korea and it's Lessons for Vietnam*. A research project report supported by the KFAS.
10.   nguy  n T  i C  n, 1979: *Nguồn gốc và quá trình hình thành cách đọc Hán - Việt*.    xb KHXH, Hà   i.
11. Republic of Korea: *Constitution of the Republic of Korea* (Wikipedia)
12. Statutes. Republic of Korea: *The Education Principle Law*
13. Trần Trí D  i, 2004: *Thực trạng giáo dục ngôn ngữ ở vùng dân tộc miền núi ba tỉnh phía Bắc Việt Nam - Những kiến nghị và giải pháp*.    xb ĐHQG, Hà   i.
14. Viện    ngôn ngữ học, 2000: *Chính sách ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam*. Đề tài cấp nhà nước, chưa xuất bản.
15. Vu Thi Phuong Anh, 2004: *Research project report. Testing and Accreditation Center, University of Social Science and Humanities*, Hochiminh City.
16. Vu Thi Thanh Huong, 2005: Globalization, Language and Cultural Identity in Vietnam. In "East Asia in Globalization: Conflicts and Compromises", conference proceeding, Seoul   tational University and Harvard Yenching Foundation.