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Bilingual Policy of Singapore and Policy Implications for Vietnam in the Context of National Integration

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Abstract

Language and language policy is one of the basic issues and an important foundation for social development. Language policy is related to a series of issues such as ethnicity, religion, culture, media, education, national security, etc. and becomes a strategic content for each country, especially for nation building and development by the government. The development of a language policy that is appropriate to the language situation will contribute to promoting the overall economic and social development, which is essential for maintaining stability and integration. The research topic of the article is the bilingual situation and policy of Singapore, thereby giving policy implications for Vietnam in the context of international integration.

Key words: bilingual education, language situation, multilingualism, language policy, bilingual policy, developmental government, Singapore, Vietnam.

Introduction

When studying the miraculous development of Japan, Professor Chalmers Ashby Jonhson proposed the concept of: “Developmental State” (DS). A DS is a model of state management, in which the State sets development-oriented policies, creates an environment and conditions for economic entities to bring into full play all potentials in an environment of fair competition, strengthens monitoring to detect possible imbalances, ensures macroeconomic stability and improves people's living standards.

In explaining the concept of: “Developmental government”, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc emphasised at the first point... “it must be a government that proactively designs a good system of laws, good policies and good institutions to maintain a developed economy, rather than passively coping with actual developments”. According to Dinh

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Dung Sy 40, when considering the connotation of the relationship between politics and the rule of law, the concept of policy should be explored in the following aspects: (i) Policy is a concrete expression of the general political line. The policy is determined based on the general political line, the political programme of the ruling party; (ii) The policy is the basis for making the law, or in other words, the law is the result of institutionalisation. There may be policies that have not been legislated (institutionalised), or may never be legalised because they are not selected for legalisation when they are no longer relevant to new ideas or change of reality. But there will be no non-policy or outside-policy laws. In that sense, the policy is the soul, the content of the law, and the law is the form, the means of expression of the policy when it is acknowledged, "moulded" by "powerful hands", that is, issued by the state in a legal order. As such, the policy is always associated with political power, with the ruling party and with the state - public power apparatus. We often talk about a principle of organizing the exercise of political power, that is: "The Party sets the guidelines and policies, the State institutionalises the Party’s policies and policies into the laws"41.

Therefore, it can be said that the design and development of appropriate policies on all aspects of life and society plays a very important role for a country. One of the policies that contribute to promoting the stable and social sustainability of each country and nation is the language policy.

According to Nguyen Van Khang, “Language along with the national flag and the national anthem are the three elements to form and affirm the independent position of the nation”42; “Language is a social phenomenon, a mirror of society”43. National consciousness is always attached to the awareness of language, therefore, the language is the criterion and symbol of cultural identity and national pride. After any nation gains independence the selection of a "national language" becomes a top issue. According to statistics from 147 Constitutions of the world, 110 out of 147 constitutions have regulations related to the language mentioned44. Language is associated with the survival and prosperity of a nation as a tool to direct all activities and social development. Language issues is related to national unity and national stability45. Language is an essential component in the development of a civilisation and is an essential element to promote and maintain the peaceful development. Foreign languages too, act as a bridge for knowledge, making the world "flat" as people around the globe are no longer limited by the language barrier. The implementation of the language policy, which emphasised the role of English - the global language, in the island nation of Singapore has proved, the late Prime Minister Ly Quang Dieu a success.

40Director of the Law Department, Government Office.
41Dinh Dung Sy, Chinh sach va moi quan he giua chinh sach va phap luat trong hoat dong lap phap, https://thongtinphapluatdansu.edu.vn/2008/09/16/1673/.
It has transformed a poor fishing village into a thriving migrant community, a resourceless island into an Asian dragon.

The Arabs have a famous adage: “Learn a language, and you will avoid a war” – (temporarily translated into Vietnamese “nếu bạn học thêm một ngôn ngữ, bạn sẽ tránh được xung đột”). This is also the content that Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke at the Koerber Foundation in Berlin, Germany in March 2014.46.

This has once again asserted that the issue of multilingualism or policy on issues related to different languages in a country, is an indispensable policy in the establishment of a developmental state and global integration. The issue of bilingual policy in Vietnam is to demonstrate "proactive designing of good policies to maintain the developed economy". As directed by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc: "The developmental government is a Government that is more proactive in establishing institutions and laws, not only operating on what the law is available", "The Government apparatus must be more dynamic, have more initiatives, study the surrounding world more in order to apply along with the Party's guidelines and policies to be more proactive, not to be passive."

As is known, language plays an important role in human life, social community and ethnicity. The language also goes beyond the national scope and acts as a bridge, bringing the community to integrate into the region and the world. “Language is one of the most important elements of national enlightenment consciousness, the means of national unity”77 As a result, governments in countries that are increasingly conscious of the impact of languages are shown by developing language policies in concordance with their country’s language situation.

**Language situation**: According to V.Yu.Mikhaldenko: “The language situation is the distribution that has been formed over a long period of time in a given territory in different forms of existence (literary languages, conversational languages, dialects) and the various forms of expression (spoken and written) of the languages currently operating in this territory”. The language situation is made up of several factors, ethnicity-demography, linguistic factor, material factors, and the human factor. Based on the number of languages, the language situation can be divided into two categories: single component language context and multi-component language situation. Vietnam and Singapore are both multi-ethnic countries, so the language situation in both countries are classified as multi-component language situations.

**Language policy**: There are currently many definitions of the language policy. Avronin, Isaev defines the language policy as, “an integral part of the national policy of a state, a class or a party” and “is the linguistic dimension of the party and state's policy on national issues”88. Nguyen Ham Duong said that: “Most of the language policy refers to the conscious, organised, and scientific intervention of society in the operation and development of language of society. In other words, the language policy is the leadership of linguistic requirements of society based on scientific understanding of the rules of language, putting language into the general trajectory of society, making service language

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matching with the development of society”\textsuperscript{47}. According to Nguyen Van Khang\textsuperscript{48}, in the past, the language policy was only recognised as a part of ethnic policy; nowadays, the language is related to a range of issues such as ethnicity, religion, culture, media, education, security and defence, becoming a strategic content when referring to national policies on these issues. According to Nguyen Van Khang, there is no similar language policy among countries, even in those having similar political backgrounds, as each country has its own language policy. In general, it is built on theoretical premises as well as a common framework of the foundation such as language situations, political and social conditions, etc., so the language policy can be attributed to some models such as: (i) language assimilation policy; (ii) recognition policy of the different language status; (iii) non-intervention language policy; (iv) national language stabilisation policy; (v) regional language policy; and (vi) language internationalisation policy. From the actual language situation of each country, the language policy issue needs to be adjusted accordingly, it should be built on the basis of a harmony between national interests, creating a language uniformity and diversity. It is also important to consider transnational language policy (as regional language policy). A language policy in accordance with the language situation must be: making the language to become a symbol of political, cultural, social; a tool of political solidarity among different ethno linguistic communities within the country.

**Bilingual policy:** Bilingualism and more broadly, multilingualism is common throughout the multi-ethnic countries of the world. This is a linguistic-social phenomenon related to the language policy of the state, especially in countries and territories with many ethnic groups living together but speaking in different languages. According to Nguyen Duc Ton \textsuperscript{49}, in a multilingual society, there are two phenomena that are related but different, which need to be clearly distinguished, that is bilingualism and diglossia (Nguyen Van Khang call it bilingualism và multilingualism\textsuperscript{50}). According to Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1972), bilingualism refers to two languages of an individual. And two languages in a society is called diglossia\textsuperscript{51}. Diglossia is a word derived from Greek, referring to two languages that a speech community uses, one in which is used for some of these situations and functions, and the other is used for a number of other situations and functions. For example, a speed community may use the minority language they inherit from their family for religious purposes or use in an informal social environment (informal situations). And majority language is used by this community in workplaces, schools or on the mass media (formal situations).
When referring to linguistic policy, there are usually three most mentioned areas: (i) Language selection (defining and assigning social functions of the language); (ii) Language protection (the protection of linguistic and cultural diversity); (iii) Multilingual development (facilitating development of several languages of the same function).

The role of Language policy in the Developmental government: The proactive development of language policy in accordance with language situation in the country and the world trend which will contribute to promoting the synchronous development of the economy and society is essential for maintaining stability and integration.

The concept of "Developmental government" was developed by researcher Chalmers Johnson from the 1980s, before he studied the miraculous development of Japan. He realised that in that miraculous development, the role of the state was very important. The Japanese state not only created a framework for development, but also directed and promoted that development. Later, in addition to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and others, were all considered as developmental states. The very basic characteristic of the developmental government model is that the government directly sets an industrial development plan (with great ambitions) and strongly invests in mechanisms, policies and other incentives to promote industrial development. According to the researchers, this is a state model in the middle of the Anglo-American governing state (under the free market theory) and the central planning state (according to the traditional socialist model). The developmental state does not stand outside the market, but it does not change the market. The developmental state actively intervenes in the market to promote development and realise the development goals that have been set. It is a state management model, in which the state sets development-oriented policies, creates an environment and conditions for economic sectors to bring into full play their potentials in the competitive environment and international integration; and ensures macroeconomic stability.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the policy system is the cornerstone of the developmental government. When a country builds a right policy system, it will mean successful construction of a developmental state, with the function of public authority, social management, service and provision of public services.

Language issues in multicultural and multi-ethnic countries are both scientific, political and important in the process of economic development, political stability, cultural preservation and national unity. The language policy of a country exists and develops depending on the language situation and the future needs of society - the language needs, which is the gap between the existing language and the future according to the laws of movement and development. This is the relationship of building a Developmental state, consistent with the development trend, in parallel with the language policy and in accordance with the laws of economic and social motivation and development. In other words, the language policy and the Developmental government have an integrated relationship in the political environment, with the overall goal of moving towards the nation's development. The foundation of the development is the crystallised human knowledge to build a policy system consistent with the development of a nation. And the prerequisite for improving knowledge is language. The use of global
language is the leading policy of any country in the period of integration and development.

BILINGUAL POLICY OF SINGAPORE

The effect of bilingual policy on economic and social development

Through Table 1 and Figure 1 (source from Washington Post) we can see the important role of English as a global language. In the world, the number of people learning English is greater than the total number of people learning French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, German and Chinese. English is widely used thanks to the effect of countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and developed countries around the world in important areas such as military, economics, science, politics, informatics, culture, etc.

Table 1: Number of countries using different languages52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Diagram of the number of people using common languages53

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Bilingualism has been the cornerstone of Singapore's language policy since the election of the People’s Action Party (PAP) in 1959. This policy requires that every person must be fluent in English and their mother tongue. This policy was constituted in the Constitution of Singapore, in Article 37, regulating Singapore’s official languages by ethnic groups: Malayu (for Malay community), English, Mandarin (for Chinese) and Tamil (for Indian). English is the working language of Singapore (in formal contexts), while the mother tongue of ethnic groups helps to reinforce personal values and cultural awareness. Bilingual policy in Singapore was implemented primarily through the education system, requiring students to learn English and their respective mother tongue. In addition, annual campaigns are organised to promote the learning and speaking of the mother tongue and to encourage the correct use of English grammar among Singaporean communities. The Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism was established in 2011 to help nurture the love of bilingual learning in children in this country.

In the 1980s, Singapore’s leaders had a movement "towards change" with a focus on renovating the government’s management mechanism to adapt to change. Bilingual policy is one of the positive impact policies, helping Singaporeans to adapt well to the pressures of globalisation. As such, it can be seen that Singapore's goal is to build a government which is responsible for and serves the socio-economic development of the people.

The bilingual education policy is one of the first policies of the newly established independent government. This policy is implemented as a way to unify different ethnic groups while providing an anchor for students for their cultural and ethnic heritage. With the implementation of this policy, English high schools are expected to offer a choice of Mandarin, Malayu and Tamil as a second language. English is offered as a second language in non-English high schools. Schools are also expected to use students' native language as a medium of instruction for Citizenship and History lessons. Due to the growing popularity of using English as the language of international trade, non-English high schools face declining enrolment. By 1987, all schools were converted to English intermediate schools. In terms of higher education, English has been used as a medium of teaching since 1979.

Since the implementation of the bilingual policy, the population of bilingual people who know English has been increasing. According to information reported on the Singapore Census of Population 2010 website, the proportion of bilingual people in the population increased by 13.5 percent between the most recent census data released in 2000 and 2010.

Bilingual education policy also gives policy makers, educational leaders and teachers immediate language ability and access ability to learn from other education systems, especially English-speaking countries. From teaching materials to curriculum development, teacher education, school management and leadership, Singapore began the important task of building the nation through the education system. Educators have gained international access to countless resources around the world through various
stages of education development, from the life-oriented stage of the 1960s and 1970s to the efficiency-oriented stage in the late 1970s to 1980s.

Table 2: Comparison of the use of English and mother tongue in Singapore over the years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese dialect</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>34.%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other languages</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to education, English proficiency remains Singapore's most important asset for international trade. With the economic development of China and India, the introduction of Singapore's bilingual policy has proved the importance of this issue. With Malay-speaking regional neighbours, Singapore has richer cooperation prospects and advantage of exploring opportunities outside the region. The use of four official languages in Singapore means that while Singaporeans have the ability to use English as an international language, cultural and heritage relationships are not lost by mastering a second language closely linked to the national language of one of the major racial groups in Singapore. Therefore, this policy has the knack for uniting the Singaporean community in a language that no racial group can claim to be biologically biased while allowing different ethnicities to honour the diversity of languages.

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associated with multi-ethnic, multicultural styles. In today's digital age, where the transmission of information takes place at a blistering pace, the high level of language competence to effectively process, transfer and communicate information on a global platform will only grow in importance.

**Limitations of bilingual policy in Singapore**

While bilingual policy has made significant contributions to the development of education, economy, society, and people in Singapore, we cannot deny the limitations of this policy such as:

According to a Singapore Ministry of Education report, 1978: Evaluating the bilingual policy, under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister -Dr. Goh Keng Swee, showed that its bilingual policy is not fully effective. The Goh report criticised the inefficiency of the bilingual policy leading to the main cause of language education problems in Singapore. Although the bilingual policy has increased the overall literacy rate, according to the statistical figures, less than 40% of students with education enrolment have minimum competence level in two languages at a time:

At least 25 percent of elementary students do not meet the minimum literacy standards.

Only 11 percent of the recruited armed forces meet English proficiency fully.

Despite an increased access to language in curriculum at schools, teaching strategies are ineffective in raising students' language proficiency levels.

The bilingual policy in English and Malayu, Chinese or Tamil are all a burden for students because these three native languages have absolutely nothing to do with English. Mandarin Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, Malayu belongs to the Austronesian language family, and Tamil belongs to the South Asian language family. These three languages are themselves on the same continent, but they are not related to each other, not to mention the connection with a Western language, English.

When using English as a teaching language, traditional Confucian values cannot be improved throughout the school because both teachers and students are ethnically diverse and textbooks are not written in Chinese. The "many tongues, one language" policy is also a risk of diminishing the traditional moral values of students through increased access to Western culture. They are educated in English from an early age so they are fluent in English. It is very easy for qualified people in Singapore to study and work in a better environment like the UK, Australia because they have their own key - English, and this becomes a drawback as it promotes brain drain from Singapore.

After years of widespread use of English, sociologists have observed that Singapore's culture is clearly divided into two layers: the upper, very strong layer, a lifestyle based on English of different ethnic communities and the lower, weaker layer including Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures, such layers have harmonious but separate coexistence. Institutionally, all three languages: Mandarin Chinese, Malayu and Tamil
are still equal to English but in reality, the native languages and the original cultures of the ethnic groups are weakening in Singapore.

Phenomenon of Speakers Without a Native Tongue (SWONAL) is a common phenomenon in Singapore today, especially for the 3rd generation since 1986 when the bilingual policy was officially successful in this country. Babies born in the present face the reality that their parents try to teach them the first language as native language but when they go to kindergarten as well as start their social interaction, it is compulsory to have to switch to the English language. Therefore, in order for their children not to be slow with the curriculum as well as to maintain their native language, all families have to face a challenge. They are forced to teach their children English to keep up with the curriculum and it is difficult for children to balance the knowledge of both languages. It is even more difficult for children whose parents are from different ethnic groups. For example: Father is of Chinese origin and mother is of Indian or Thai or Vietnamese origin (very common in Singapore).

From the first day of its establishment, the Singapore government has been aware and prepared enough good conditions in all aspects to set a basic language policy: all students must prioritise learning English, and the ethnic languages of the three main ethnic groups located at a backward position. An interesting point about cultural policy in Singapore is that Bahasa Melayu is defined as the national language, the national anthem is also composed and sung in Bahasa Melayu, but the Constitution stipulates that people and the government can use one of four administrative languages (English, Chinese, Bahasa Melayu, Tamil) to transact with each other. Important and official documents of the state, particularly when it is necessary to disseminate a certain policy to all citizens, all four languages must be used. People can use one of these four languages when making formal communication and asking the government to respond in the same language. In the current Singapore Parliament, the majority of parliamentarians speak in English, but occasionally there are Tamil (one of the ethnic minorities with Indian origin in Singapore), or Chinese, or Malayu parliamentarians speak in their languages, their speeches are translated into English through cabin translation. Parliamentarians have the right to do so, and perhaps in the days of the founding, more parliamentarians used languages other than English to speak in parliament than currently. When there is a dispute over the meaning of vocabulary, the State takes English as the standard language. Even the oaths that the students read during the national flag salute are shown mostly in English.

After many years of implementing the English-important policy, most Singaporeans now use English, although the older generation still use Chinese ethnic languages and dialects fluently. However, overall, in studying, setting standards in science, law, industrial and commercial transactions, international integration, etc., Singaporeans must use English no matter how much their Queen's English standard meets. The journey of a transition on the language policy of the Singapore government is not difficult, but it has achieved a lot of success, with a multi-ethnic country like Singapore, the bold application of bilingual language policy in unity has helped this country shorten the path of international integration and rise to become the Dragon of Asia.
Implications for Bilingual Policy in Vietnam during the Integration Period

Singapore and Vietnam are located in Southeast Asia, so there are some similarities in cultural and historical circumstances. Both are multi-ethnic and multilingual countries, although there are different linguistic situations but the implementation of language policies in the two countries will have a basis for similarities. However, each country has different policies in its steps.

In a research on "The situation and language policy in Vietnam during the period of industrialisation and modernisation of the country and international integration", Mr. Nguyen Duc Ton also said: "Due to the diversity of the linguistic situations, so if a country has a multi-language situation, it is difficult to implement the plan to develop a single language across the territory of that country ... Therefore, in a commune with multi-ethnic groups, the only way to unite languages and for people from different ethnic and linguistic communities to understand each other in the process of communicating will be a bilingual phenomenon (or multi-language). Vietnam is not an exception". Referring to the experience of bilingual education model in many countries around the world, based on analysis of similar and different linguistic situations in the development of bilingual policy of the surveyed countries, Mr. Nguyen Duc Ton also gave the conclusion that: "Vietnam can fully teach bilingual programs with two types: Vietnamese - international language (first of all, English) for Kinh students and ethnic minority language (native language) and Vietnamese for ethnic minority students, from the time children start going to school".

By implementing the Foreign Language Project 2020, Vietnam has affirmed its interest in the universalisation of international languages to improve human resource capacity, educational level, etc. towards globalisation in the region and the world. However, the implementation of Project 2020 faces many shortcomings due to objective reasons such as: different routes for teaching and learning foreign languages, uneven language proficiency of teachers, low number of teachers trained in foreign countries, high fees of examination for international English certificate and limited time; basic-level programs, curriculum, learning materials, irregular updates to the output standard of foreign language competency for students; lack of learning materials, and unattractive materials for students.... Therefore, in 2017, the Ministry of Education and Training submitted to the Government, to supplement the project for the next period and the Government approved the project to amend and supplement, issuing a new decision for the project for the period of 2017-2025. The implementation of the national foreign language project will be one of the nine focal points of the Ministry of Education and Training. However, the national foreign language project is still only a program to improve the capacity of teachers, not a policy to improve human resources capacity in languages. This has caused us to slow down in globalisation. During his trip to Vietnam in 2007, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew suggested many ideas, especially educational ideas. "If winning in the education race, we will win in economic development". At the same time,

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55 Nguyễn Đức Tôn (2016), Cạnh hướng và chính sách ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam trong thời kỳ công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa đất nước và hội nhập quốc tế, Nxb Khoa học xã hội, tr.24.
56 Nguyễn Đức Tôn (2016), Cạnh hướng và chính sách ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam trong thời kỳ công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa đất nước và hội nhập quốc tế, Nxb Khoa học xã hội, tr.65.
Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew also suggested that, “Universities in Vietnam should have English textbooks in the fields of engineering and technology, because if only using Vietnamese books, they will definitely fall behind.” In fact now all international working engineers have the ability to speak English very well. He warned that if all future Vietnamese students could not hear and speak English fluently, and they could only read English, they would lag behind57.

In order to answer the question "How not to fall behind?", being good at English is the only way. This is what Mr. Lee Kuan Yew emphasised. With the Singapore Government, selecting English as a working language it helped to prevent the emergence of ethnic conflicts, giving Singaporeans competitive advantage. According to Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, it is required to persistently pursue the policy of "many tongues, one language" to bring English into schools. “Today, Singapore has a great advantage because of that. This is an unforeseen reward for implementing this regulation by Singapore”. So, what are we to do?

**Policies need to be made to use English as a second language**

Vietnam is a multilingual country with 54 ethnic groups, the majority of Kinh ethnic group is accounted for, and Vietnamese is constitutionally the national language. But Vietnamese is not an international language and we cannot integrate into the world community if we only use Vietnamese.

Thus, if it is not legalised to study English as well as to affirm that studying and passing the international standard exams of English is a mandatory condition for not only students, teachers and other people, we will not only fail to implement the 2020 Project approved by the Prime Minister, but also never achieve the criteria for developing human resources for integration and globalisation. The “Rather master than worker” mentality of the Vietnamese will remain forever with an overloading condition, theory outweighs practice. Tourism development, FDI attraction, economy, and all other policies will accordingly slow down, because we do not have enough resources to receive them.

Legalisation of English as a second language will proactively standardise teachers, lecturers – important subjects of the policy. This standardisation is an opportunity and challenge for all teachers in the transition process. Teachers in Singapore have really made efforts and attempted to move from teaching using Chinese to teaching by English. “We have undergone and witnessed shocks and tears when they had to switch from Chinese to English in a short time”. Legalisation will give people the sense of learning English as a necessary need, thereby increasing the ability of self-study, self-improvement to self-deal and connect. Legalisation is the highest leverage to implement policies and realise goals towards a rich, strong country and civilised society.

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(i) **Application of the mother tongue, Vietnamese and English as the three languages used officially in Vietnam**

Lesson from Singapore shows that the maintenance of the mother tongue helps maintain the culture and the values of each nation. This is suitable for the language situation in our country with 54 different ethnic groups. The maintenance of ethnic languages does not necessarily have to be taught at training institutions, but the Government encourages and directs by introducing policies for minority languages such as: building ethnic language centres in ethnic minority areas, maintaining traditional customs and festivals, etc. in order to promote and maintain the cultures of ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities will be taught in two languages: Vietnamese and English to standardise training. This is a difficult problem, but if it is maintained that ethnic groups desire to either learn their own language and Vietnamese or learn English and their own language, it will be difficult to agree on standardisation of national language. Minority languages are culturally valuable but do not represent a nation and have no value in international trade.

(ii) **Use English as the language of trade transaction**

If English is neither prescribed as a trading language nor taught by subjects in educational institutions, the maintenance of English as the official language will only be a formality. When English becomes the language of transaction, it means that all people have to read, understand and speak in this language.

In fact, there are many subjects claiming that they do not need to know foreign languages, especially English because their working environment, communication,... are not used or not related to English. Lessons from Singapore show that the Government’s application of bilingual policy, forcing people to rise up to integrate with the trend, avoiding the evasions that learning English is unnecessary, is accessible to new human knowledge, that subjective and ideological thinking always arises whenever a new problem arises. It requires a determination from top to below to be able to teach and learn well. With a global perspective, the National Assembly, the Government and Ministry of Education and Training have been guiding and orienting foreign language strategies for our country in the current period of intensive international integration, including the special role of English. Only when both the political and social systems are involved to guide and support the education and training sector will this strategy be successful. This provision is the tool to ensure effective policy implementation.

**Focus on investing in the quality of lecturers and teachers with practical measures**

Vietnamese education needs to increase teachers’ salaries adequately, because when salaries are high, they will focus on investing on research for their teaching, thereby the quality of lectures will improve. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew said, *"If the administrative system is good, the investment in a lot of revenue will be high, the salary for officials will be high, talents will be attracted, so that the administrative apparatus will work well."* Therefore,

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in order to create good education, the most important condition is to have a team of high quality and dedicated teachers. Salary increment for teachers is a measure that not only affects the economy but also their psychology, just like the Singapore Government has done.

In addition to salary increment, training and retraining of foreign language teachers, should also be planned in detail and systematise qualifications by maximizing the rigor of national examination centres.

Quality of teachers includes qualifications, communication ability and teaching experience. Therefore, the standard certification only meets one of the three criteria above. In fact, there are teachers who meet professional standards but the ability to impart knowledge and teaching experience are weak, so the final effect of one teaching hour is often very low. Therefore, in order to comprehensively change the quality of foreign languages, it is necessary to assess and select more qualified teachers, instead of only assessing Foreign language ability. Qualified certificates issued by Vietnam are only valid in the country and have not been widely recognised, so teachers tend to take the prestigious and internationally valued exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, etc. Therefore, teachers will “kill two birds with one arrow”, both “paying the debt” which is the certificate of proficiency assessment in foreign language prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Training, and having an international English certificate, which is convenient for learning and research abroad. For teachers, the issuance of a certificate of Foreign language standard achievement only, also stops at the response in terms of administrative procedures, the assessment results have not really helped the teaching profession of teachers yet. In addition, the certificate, normally, is abandoned after issuance, as the completion of “debt payment” after one exam, which does not create motivation for further professional improvement. Thus, the participation in self-review and taking Foreign language proficiency assessment exams are crucial for teachers.

**Communicate about the role of learning English**

This is a tool to implement the policy for the purpose of explaining to the people about its necessity for the country in general and for each individual in particular. We have lagged behind all the countries in Asia, not just in ASEAN. It cannot be compared with countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, etc. because they have been ahead and travelled outside their country to work in international languages. However, even in countries such as Laos, Cambodia or Myanmar – that have been newly opened for less than 03 years, the percentage of people speaking English is much higher than that of Vietnam. There is a need for communication tools to promote and communicate the role as well as importance of the policy.

Currently, Ministry of Education and Training has also introduced a 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam to be the basis for unifying the competency requirements for all taught foreign languages, bases for the program, bases for teachers to select content, teaching methods, helping learners understand the content and requirements for each level of foreign language competency, creating favourable conditions for cooperation and exchange of education, recognition of diplomas with countries applying the Common European Framework of Reference
It has been 04 years since the promulgation of this Circular, but it has been inefficient to really develop its spirit in the society. The Project 2020 is almost treading water. Thus, if it is not taken as seriously as Legalisation of learning English policy, invest in the quality of teachers as well as promote the importance of such policy.

Conclusion

Vietnam’s cultural origin, historical context and national situation are very different from Singapore, therefore, it is difficult to find a “Singapore model” to apply and reform the teaching and learning of English more effectively. Questions to ask are: What are the purposes of learning English by Vietnamese students? Which level should students study, sufficient or advanced? Is it the State’s responsibility to organise the good studying of English?

“When meeting Vietnamese leaders of many generations, Mr. Ly Quang Dieu gave frank comments and until now, it is startling to re-read them. After more than 20 years of looking back, many judgments about Vietnam produced by him since the 1990s have now become a reality”. It was the statement given by the Deputy Foreign Minister Dang Dinh Quy during the premiere of the Vietnamese version of Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew, published on the official visit to Vietnam by the Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong and on the two-year death anniversary of the former Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew. Deputy Minister Dang Dinh Quy believed that Mr. Yew is the legendary leader of Asia and the founder of modern Singapore. Many Vietnamese leaders, from the General Secretary Do Muoi, Former Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet and other leaders, have considered Lee Kuan Yew as a sincere, profound friend of the leaders in particular and of Vietnam in general. Deputy Minister Quy said that in the book "Quan điểm của một con người về thế giới", there are about 5 pages about Vietnam, containing frank comments about the leadership and future generations of Vietnam. These sincere advice have been listened to and acquired by Vietnamese leaders. After 20 years of looking back, many of his comments and advice to Vietnam since the 1990s up to now have become a reality.

With the desire to control the entire national education policy, of course, the government shall execute an English learning program so that the people can learn and compete with the world. But this program cannot be the same as Singapore because Vietnam has a more homogeneous culture and English (and Western culture attached) is difficult to be imposed above Vietnamese and Vietnamese culture.

Vietnam officially joined ASEAN and became the seventh member of this organisation on July 28th, 1995 and the language to communicate in ASEAN is English. Therefore, the recognition of English as a second language (rather than a foreign language) should be a policy that really needs attention in the process of building and perfecting the Developmental State.

A thread running throughout here is that it is impossible for the development and competition among countries during the Industrial Revolution 4.0 to lack English skills

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59 According to promulgated Circular on the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam No. 01/2014/TT_BGDV
in order to acquire and exchange technology, science, attract investment, update our country's commodity information with the global market..., in general, meaning the world integration. The design of language policies, especially those focusing on the role of foreign languages, particularly English in the context of integration, is a strategic issue at national level. In the roles of the Developmental State, the issue on consulting and designing language policies is not only the work of social science researchers but also the strong involvement of the Government so that Vietnam can change vigorously and confidently to enter into the world and bring the world closer to Vietnam.

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