Chapter 14
Expanding Knowledge and Enhancing Understandings of Language and Education Issues in Global Vietnam: Coming Together

Phan Le Ha and Dat Bao

In this wrap-up chapter, we discuss and reiterate the contributions made by the volume as a whole and by the individual chapters. This chapter has resulted from many conversations between two editors—Phan Le Ha and Dat Bao. Presented with a collection of chapters, most of which are from authors rather new to writing for research publication and academic research in English, we have, admittedly, realized what a daunting task we have been taking up. We recall finding ourselves engaged with our diverse linguistic, academic, cultural domains and repertoires, as we were interacting with the authors and trying to understand what they were conveying in their chapters. We have found ourselves on multiple occasions turning to Vietnamese sources for verification. We have also felt surprised by new knowledge and fresh ideas that are crafted in ways that may not necessarily accessible to those who only write in English. This very process has not only enhanced our own knowledge but has also brought back writing norms that we may not take into account as much when writing and publishing in English.

In the sections that follow, we articulate more elaborately a number of noticeable contributions of the volume and of the individual chapters.

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Contributions to Studying Contemporary Issues
in Vietnamese Language Education and Development

The volume, comprised of empirical, documentational, and conceptual contributions, addresses a vast range of issues and challenges regarding the Vietnamese language in the face of change, educational and economic reform, transnational mobilities, globalisation, and the nation-building project. Among these issues and challenges are linguistic differentiation, ideological tensions, literacy reforms, and the demand for curriculum improvement. For example, Ngo, Nguyen and Smith (Chap. 2), Ngo and Tran (Chap. 3), Hoa Do (Chap. 5), and Tran (Chap. 7) are concerned with how language use and education, and language maintenance play out in a variety of contexts in global Vietnam. Amidst such undertakings, challenges arise where linguistic-grounded issues turn into sociopolitical problems, discrimination enters school curricula, reform experiences resistance, and Vietnamese language as a heritage language becomes more marginalized.

At a more specific level, the authors of several chapters make it loud and clear that literacy practice in Vietnam (including materials, material development, and pedagogy) as well as the conceptualization of the curriculum for Vietnamese language teaching need extensive revisions at all levels, given the fast-changing landscape of education and the diverse student body. For example, Ngo, Nguyen, and Smith (Chap. 2), with a focus on the Vietnamese national schooling system, present factual information and highlight a number of issues concerning literacy, illiteracy eradication, and state policy in literacy reform. Based on a compilation of facts and events, these authors make it clear that existing methods for teaching Vietnamese literacy are ineffective and need to revamp. Relatedly, Ngo and Tran (Chap. 3) address the internationalization of Vietnamese language programs in higher education institutions in Vietnam, with a particular look at higher education reform, teacher development, and curriculum development for teaching Vietnamese to international students and to Vietnamese who learn the language as their heritage language. They have hinted a range of problems in existing programs such as low quality in teaching, insufficient number of teachers to meet current demands, irrelevant background and skills among teaching staff, and unsystematic teaching and learning resources. At the same time, the authors have observed that there remains strong resistance to change in Vietnamese higher education institutions when it comes to reform. Also, innovations emerge few and far within joint programs in certain universities, but innovations are nowhere happening on a national scale. Drawing on their initial observations and the limited resources that they could access, the authors call for more collaboration, resource sharing, and systematic training of Vietnamese language/culture teachers to meet the increased demand for internationalization and reform. They also raise readers' awareness of many nuances in the tardiness of teachers and curriculum development in Vietnamese studies programs in Vietnam.

Several chapters in this volume, such as Tran et al. (Chap. 4), Tran (Chap. 7), and Nguyen and Tran (Chap. 8) focus on different dimensions of the teaching of Vietnamese. If Tran et al. advocate for the teaching of Vietnamese as a pragmatic and

intercultural approach, Nguyen and Tran are concerned about educational equality and equity for minority students when it comes to how language barriers may hinder their access to education. For Tran, the maintenance of Vietnamese heritage language is central to her chapter. The advocacy of these ideologies in action is founded on a series of problems including the inefficiency of Vietnamese language pedagogy in many programs (Tran et al.), the persistent suffering of minority students for failing to catch up with mainstream peers because of their lower proficiencies in Vietnamese (Nguyen and Tran, Chapter 8), and the decline of Vietnamese as heritage language among many communities outside of Vietnam (Tran, Chapter 7). What is presented and discussed in these three chapters points to the importance of L1 in language learning and teaching (for instance, see de la Fuente & Goldenberg, 2022; Hall & Cook, 2012; Zhao & Macaro, 2014) as well as advocates for the learners' rights to access mother-tongue education particularly at an early age, which is in line with UNESCO's education agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) "Quality education for all". At the same time, Nguyen and Tran provide more evidence of the continued at-risk status of (minority) mother tongues in education in multilingual settings despite the availability of favorable policies and discourses around them, as argued by Tupas (2014). As well, these chapters bring to the fore questions of culture, identity, heritage, and access, all of which are closely tied to language, whether among immigrant students, international students, minority students, or those in the diaspora, the questions that are briefly foregrounded in the Introduction Chapter.

Vietnamese as a heritage language and language issues in Vietnamese communities outside Vietnam are examined in more depth in several chapters including Tran (Chap. 7), Hoa Do (Chap. 5), and Dam (Chap. 6). Take for example, drawing on an empirical study with teachers and principals from community language schools in Australia, Hoa Do (Chap. 5) presents readers with a nuanced account of tension in language ideology, practice, discrimination, standardization, maintenance, and development. The author also highlights challenging issues regarding language policy and planning, and educational impacts. Hoa Do discusses two Vietnamese language varieties and how they play out in education. Because of historical reasons associated with the Vietnam War and the underlying tensions between/within Vietnamese communities in and outside Vietnam, linguistic and ideological differentiation regarding the Vietnamese language in these communities poses many challenges to teaching, learning, and language development. Such differentiation has also become a topic of debate whereby each variety gets justified and mapped onto perceived relevant social groups. The author shows that tension (and discrimination) occurs between the socio-political statuses of the Vietnamese language and the acquisition by learners. There are clear differences between the peripheral Vietnamese language as employed by community language schools outside of Vietnam and the fast-changing Vietnamese language in Vietnam. Vietnamese users in and outside of the country do not seem to appreciate each other's language policy. While the former may view the language use of the latter as obscure and politically unpleasant, the latter may perceive the language use of the former as frozen, old-fashioned, and retrogressing. Hoa Do (Chap. 5) makes it clear that language planning needs to consider

linguistic differentiation among various Vietnamese education communities. Likewise, in local–global Vietnamese contexts and contact zones, there remains very little scholarship on linguistic differentiation, linguistic-grounded (socio-political) problems particularly discrimination through language varieties in the school curriculum, language in education, linguistic challenges regarding linguistic discrimination, community language school, and Vietnamese language standardization. These issues demand serious scholarly attention. Indeed, drawing on her long-term work on Vietnamese language in the diaspora, Tran (Chap. 7) also calls for more comprehensive studies into Vietnamese as a heritage language across all contexts where Vietnamese communities reside (i.e., beyond such dominant contexts as the USA, Europe, and Australia).

Contributions to Addressing Contemporary Educational Issues in Global Vietnam and Larger Social Issues More Broadly

Many changes taking place in global Vietnam together with the increased mobility of people and ideas to and from Vietnam have brought about layers and layers of opportunities for and challenges in the development of the Vietnamese language and its associated educational matters in and outside Vietnam. These opportunities and challenges, while being addressed alongside each other, are often blurred, as seen, for example, in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in university curriculum and training (Thu Do, Chap. 11), in overseas-trained parents' anxiety about and hope for their children's language and cultural re-integration upon returning to Vietnam (Dam, Chap. 6), and in the pronounced importance of having more systematically developed educational books for Vietnamese children that explicitly educate them about national and cultural identity as Vietnamese in this globalized world (Dang et al., Chap. 10). In the same vein, the availability of more nuanced information about the Vietnam War as a result of globalization and the media may enable Vietnamese students to have more balanced views of history and hence enhance their learning (Ha & Bellot, Chap. 9). Nonetheless, the impact of the War on Vietnamese students' worldviews has risen to be both opportunities for teaching critical thinking and of concern for educators in high schools in Vietnam when it comes to questions of nationhood, heroism, and alterity in present-day Vietnam. These authors also highlight how the education of Vietnamese youth could help build understanding, compassion, forgivingness, and positive views for moving forward.

In contemporary Vietnam, education on the move associated with people's mobilities between Vietnam and the world has been picked up in much scholarship (see for example, Phan, 2022; Tran & Marginson, 2018). Accompanying such mobilities are many issues concerning the education and language development of children whose parents have brought them along and/or left them behind. Drawing on the

data collected from 12 parents who were PhD students in Australia and intended to return to Vietnam after their graduation, Thuy Dam (Chap. 6) examines the how and the why regarding these sojourner parents' family language policy in relation to their children's language and educational journeys in Australia. She has found that in these families, the children were all switching back and forth between Vietnamese and English, moving across these languages, and mixing them in their communication. It also seemed that these children's English proficiency was getting improved much while in Australia with their parents. At the same time, the author also detected low motivation among the children and even their parents when it came to learning and maintaining Vietnamese for the kids. The parents were aware of the fact that their children would need to relearn Vietnamese upon leaving Australia, but they were also busy with their studies and could not help much with their children's Vietnamese language. They may have also hoped that their children could pick up Vietnamese easily once they went back to Vietnam. Although the parents in Dam's study were not necessarily categorized as immigrants, their duration of stay in Australia was long enough for their children's language development to be affected (about four years for full-time PhD students if they did return to Vietnam upon completion); and hence, these families could also be regarded as short-term immigrants. Hence, the many dilemmas and ambivalence involving whether and how to keep the children's home language/mother tongue and also letting them learn the language of the host country to the full for educational purposes are also seen in Dam's research participants. Likewise, Tran (Chap. 7) also touches upon these language issues within varied Vietnamese diasporic communities in global Vietnam.

These language issues and educational matters are among those extensively discussed in Dixon and Wu's (2014) state-of-the-art article on home language and literacy practices among children of immigrant families in a wide range of global contexts. Relatedly, drawing on her study on the maintenance of Vietnamese language among first-generation Vietnamese parents and their second-generation Vietnamese children in Melbourne, Australia, Tran, G. (2023) makes a strong case for how Vietnamese as heritage language has been preserved and identified as cultural capital among many of these Vietnamese as they navigate their multiple journeys through lives, work and education in multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual Australia. In the same vein, in her work conducted with Vietnamese mothers in Canada and their efforts to keep the Vietnamese language for their children, Tran, T.T.H. (2023) also offers rich insights into the everyday language practice and principles pursued by these mothers, amidst many challenges. These multiple realities and possibilities, to some extent, relate well to what Dam discusses in Chap. 6. The Vietnamese families Dam studied, only practiced what they needed to and tended to believe in what they had to do so as to cope with their children's educational situations while in Australia. That the language demand and medium of instruction for education in Australia and Vietnam differ greatly would create many challenges to their children's education and acquisition of cultural values when the context of study changed eventually. Nonetheless, these parents did not have a clear view of what to do in the future and how to ease their children's paths to reintegrate into the educational system in Vietnam. What happens to these children's education and their Vietnamese language as they

(re)enter school in Vietnam after a few years in Australia, and what choices their parents may make regarding their education are among the many questions that require scholarly examination in the years to come. This real-world issue coupled with pressing questions underlying language and education and other (re)adjustment matters are globally relevant, and speak to the larger literature on repatriation (or reverse mobilities) that includes the experiences of repatriate families and their children (for example, see Ismail et al., 2015; Klemens & Bikos, 2009; Knocke & Schuster, 2017; Van Gorp et.al., 2017). This real-world issue is becoming ever more fundamental to increased diverse mobilities globally, including mobilities in global Vietnam, a phenomenon that language and education researchers and practitioners are also called upon to address, particularly when scholarly publications on this topic remain highly limited despite the mushrooming literature on mobility more broadly, as Knocke and Schuster (2017) posit in their systematic and comprehensive literature review of repatriation.

Talking about education these days appears incomplete without mentioning graduate employability in relation to the purpose of education, particularly higher education globally. Regarding Vietnam, graduate employability has become a major interest in recent scholarship including an emerging body of literature dedicated to this topic, both internally and transnationally (see for example Tran et al., 2023). Along this line, Thu Do in Chap. 11 offers rich insights into the important connection between translation/translator training in universities and the complex practice in the industry. As stated in the chapter, the connection between ICT skills and translation skills is not given sufficient attention in education programs in many settings, not just in Vietnam. The current increase of automation, the emergence of new demands, and forms of communication with new technologies becoming a cornerstone of the translation profession are triggering substantial changes in the role of a translator and in translator education. Different challenges have been posed by the integration of professional skills into the academic translator training environment. One of the main issues is related to the mismatch between university translation graduates' competences and market needs. Both translation skills and ICT skills ought to be recognized as needs and employment skills in university curricula. For translators to be successful in their jobs, it is essential for them during training to acquire ICT efficiency (in consideration of speed, quality, and local context) and to drive themselves to be explorers with a strong sense of willingness to try out diverse technological tools for diverse uses. Drawing on an empirical research study conducted with 246 educators, students, and employees in Australia and Vietnam, Thu Do argues that education/translation programs need to consider integrating technology competence and technology training with translation skills. Some examples include the use of translation memory tools, machine-aided translation systems, multilingual document management applications, and website and software localization. She also shows that having translation skills alone would not work in today's translation-work contexts.

Related to graduate employability are human capital, higher education, and student identity—matters that Felix, from a conceptual perspective, explores in Chap. 12. Felix observes that although the higher education student population makes up a significant part of the youth workforce and of Vietnam's population

more generally, this group has remained more or less unstudied. In particular, in linking this population with human capital and the country's development, he argues for the importance to pay scholarly attention to student identity in Vietnam's higher education. He also makes it explicit that students are a critical force in the development of potentials and futures within the institutional setting of the academy. In the context of post-COVID-19 higher education and economic development, it is even more essential to conceptualize higher education in close relation to human capital development, of which the quality, the outlook, and the education of students play decisive roles. As scholarship on Vietnam's higher education has recently been on the rise as Felix shows, it is also time for researchers to study the student population with regard to their education and aspirations.

Other important, though modest in scale and scope, contributions this volume makes to knowledge about contemporary issues in education can be seen in Duong et al. (Chap. 13). These authors are the very first authors in Vietnam and elsewhere to identify and showcase the significant yet often overlooked and unknown role of religious communities in teaching Vietnamese learners literacy and numeracy skills, moral education (i.e., compassion, charity, and equity, etc.), and socialist education curriculum and values for the past many decades. Despite these communities' undeniable role in the overall national education picture, the authors of Chapter 13 show that these religious communities have been faced with many obstacles, and have constantly been struggling with finding funding to help them maintain their educational mission. As such, their enormous contributing potential to Vietnam's education has been greatly hindered. Yet, little has been done from the part of the government and other relevant authorities to address this problem. Duong et al. hope that their modest work would shed some light on this important yet little-known aspect of education in contemporary Vietnam. Enabling these religious communities to contribute to the education of Vietnamese students could potentially help solve many problems relating to equity, equality, and access to education especially among disadvantaged and less-fortunate students and communities and among those individuals on the margin or lacking opportunities. These very issues of equity, equality and access to education are also investigated in Nguyen and Tran (Chap. 8).

To date, issues surrounding languages and access to education among ethnic minority students remain largely under-researched. In this regard, Nguyen and Tran's Chap. 8 is much needed. Based on their empirical data that included interviews conducted with village and school leaders, teachers, and parents in a central highland context in Vietnam, the authors point to many persistent stereotypes towards students of ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly those that are stemmed from language proficiency and educational achievement matters. These students were reported to be negatively affected by the Vietnamese-only language policy in place, and this problem continued to disadvantage them in comparison with students of the Kinh background—the majority population of Vietnam. Equity and educational equality for minority students have not been properly addressed in Vietnamese education, as Nguyen and Tran show in their chapter. They, hence, demand that the gap in learning contents between the majority Kinh and the ethnic minorities be bridged, the long-existing ethnic stereotypes be addressed, and the Vietnamese-only language policy

be rethought. These recommendations, however abstract, are important as they call for attention at all levels, from education and language policy conceptualization, teacher training and curriculum to pedagogy and classroom practice concerning language, knowledge acquisition and education for ethnic minority communities and for multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual communities in contemporary Vietnam.

Final Thoughts

To sum up, however modest, the authors contributing to this edited volume, in varied ways and to varied extents, all make new contributions to knowledge and knowledge production in language and education as well as in the field of Vietnamese studies. Through their examination of language ideology, practice, linguistic discrimination, language standardization, and language maintenance and development, they have provided analytical insights and empirical evidence into many intercultural communication matters as well as many tensions embedded and arising in the domain of Vietnamese language and education in global Vietnam across time, space and community. The chapters collectively have brought to the fore many nuances and persisting problems in the curriculum development of Vietnamese language programs in and outside Vietnam, regardless of the call for ideological healing among diverse Vietnamese communities in global Vietnam and regardless of the demand for internationalization and higher education reform in the country itself. They have also addressed critical educational issues concerning social justice, equity, equality, and access. They show well-articulated observations of emerging issues and topics in language and education across the educational system in Vietnam, in and outside mainstream education in global Vietnam. These issues are globally relatable and are connected to larger educational and social debates identified and interrogated by scholars around the world, such as those debates regarding identity, language and culture, mother tongue education and medium of instruction, globalization, mobility and diaspora, and so on.

At another level, in this volume, by placing Vietnam and the Vietnamese language and educational matters at the center of inquiry from a global and evolving perspectives, we (the editors as well as all the contributing authors) have turned the dominant center-periphery dichotomy on its head. To a great extent, issues of language, globalization, and global identities have often been framed through the lens of hierarchical/binary power relations, and/or through a dichotomy between hyper-central languages, such as English, and peripheralized and marginalized local languages and cultures (see for example, Barnawi, 2018; Canagarajah, 1999; Nonaka, 2018; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phan, 2008; Phan et al., 2014; Phillipson, 1992; Tsui, 2020; Tupas, 2014; Windle et al., 2020). We have taken up scholarly attempts to challenge hegemonic views and frameworks of globalization, particularly in terms of knowledge production and in the domain of language and education studies. This is an important conceptual contribution this volume has collectively made. As demonstrated throughout the

book and briefly discussed in this chapter, the many findings, facts, discussions, analyses, and debates provided in the contributing chapters offer scope for comparisons and bring about refreshing perspectives vis-a-vis long-held and hegemonic ideas about top-down globalization, particularly in relation to issues surrounding language education and development, medium of instruction, curriculum, textbooks, mainstream education, community education, ideologies, culture and identity issues, nation building, and mobility matters.

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