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Measures to enhance Vietnamese language skills for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children in kindergartens in Nghe an province

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Abstract

Enhancing Vietnamese language proficiency for ethnic minority children is a vital task to ensure equal learning opportunities and improve educational quality. In Nghe An province, most Thai ethnic preschool children use their mother tongue for daily communication. This leads to limitations in vocabulary, pronunciation, and Vietnamese communication skills when they enter the 5–6-year-old stage, a period of preparation for Grade 1. Literature appreciation activities are considered an effective tool for language development, helping children expand their vocabulary, practice listening and speaking skills, and develop communication abilities. However, using these activities to enhance Vietnamese for Thai ethnic children in kindergartens remains limited in terms of content and methodology. Based on this reality, this research focuses on proposing measures to enhance Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation activities, contributing to more effective language development and higher quality in preschool education for ethnic minority areas

Keywords: Measures; Vietnamese Language Enhancement; Literary Works; 5–6-Year-Old Preschoolers; Literature Appreciation; Thai Ethnic Group

1. Introduction

Language is a special social phenomenon formed and developed through human communication. It is not only a tool for information exchange but also plays a key role in the cognitive, thinking, and personality development of an individual. According to Lev Vygotsky, language is the primary means by which children organize their thoughts, acquire social experience, and develop higher psychological functions [7].

Many studies in psychology and preschool education show that 5–6-year-old children have the ability to use language flexibly. They can choose appropriate words, build sentences, combine speech with gestures and facial expressions, and adjust their tone to suit communication contexts [4], [6]. Developing coherent language at this stage is particularly important, as it helps children become confident in communication and creates a solid foundation for acquiring knowledge when entering Grade 1 [5].

According to the Ministry of Education and Training, language development is a key area in the Preschool Education Program, emphasizing the need to enhance Vietnamese for preschoolers, especially ethnic minority children [1]. However, for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children, Vietnamese is not their mother tongue. Thus, many children face limitations in vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure, and confidence when communicating in Vietnamese. Since children mainly use their mother tongue at home and in the community, their exposure to Vietnamese is infrequent, affecting their ability to receive educational content and integrate into primary school [2].

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The reality in Nghe An province - where many Thai ethnic children live - shows that enhancing Vietnamese for preschoolers has been implemented in various forms. However, the results are uneven. Some language development activities are fragmented and do not yet fully utilize educational tools suited to children's psychological characteristics and ethnic cultural identity [9].

Literature appreciation activities are considered one of the most effective means of language education for preschoolers. Through literary works such as stories, poems, and folk verses, children are exposed to Vietnamese in vivid, emotional, and image-rich contexts. This helps them expand their vocabulary, practice pronunciation, develop coherent expression, and foster emotional and aesthetic values [3], [8]. For Thai ethnic children, organized literature activities also help create interest and encourage them to use Vietnamese boldly and confidently in daily communication.

Given the vital role of language in children's comprehensive development, the requirements of the Preschool Education Program, and the educational reality in Nghe An, researching measures to enhance Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation is essential. This study aims to propose feasible and appropriate measures to improve children's Vietnamese development, creating a firm foundation for their long-term learning and improving the quality of preschool education in ethnic minority areas.

2. Research content

2.1. Research objectives

The objective of this research is to propose and develop measures to enhance Vietnamese language skills suitable for 5–6-year-old children in Thai ethnic areas. These measures aim to improve children's listening, speaking, and communication abilities in Vietnamese, helping them become confident in learning, creating a solid foundation for Grade 1, and contributing to the overall quality of preschool education in ethnic minority regions.

2.2. Research methods

2.2.1. Survey Method

A direct questionnaire survey was conducted to understand preschool teachers' awareness of the role of enhancing Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation. The questions were designed to be diverse and objective, including closed-ended and open-ended questions with clear, easy-to-understand content.

2.2.2. Conversation and Interview Method

Direct conversations were held with 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic preschoolers during literature activities to assess their understanding of poems and stories, their ability to remember words, use sentences, and express themselves in Vietnamese. The conversations used short, simple questions suited to children's cognitive levels.

2.2.3. Product Analysis Method

Studying teachers' educational plans (lesson plans, literature activity plans) and the activity products of 5-6-year-old children (story illustrations, storytelling products, character role-playing, poem recitations...) to evaluate the status and development level of children's Vietnamese through literary works.

2.2.4. Mathematical Statistics Method

Using mathematical statistical methods to process data collected from survey questionnaires and observation results according to the Likert scale, serving as a basis for analyzing, comparing, and evaluating the current status and effectiveness of measures to enhance Vietnamese for ethnic minority children

2.3. Measures to enhance Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation in Nghe An province

Based on the theoretical framework and practical survey results at kindergartens in Thai ethnic areas, we propose several measures to enhance Vietnamese for 5-6-year-old children through literature appreciation activities. These measures ensure both practicality and suitability for the psychological characteristics and the capacity to acquire Vietnamese as a second language for Thai children.

2.3.1. Creating a rich literary-Vietnamese environment both inside and outside the classroom to enhance Vietnamese for Thai ethnic children

Purpose

- To help Thai ethnic children develop Vietnamese vocabulary and listening-speaking skills through exposure to and recreation of literary work content.
- To create opportunities for children to actively communicate in Vietnamese when participating in storytelling, conversations, and dramatization activities.
- To encourage children to boldly express their thoughts and feelings in Vietnamese.

Content

- Organizing activities to retell stories based on pictures, models, or in the children's own language.
- Letting children play character roles through puppet theater, story dramatization, shadow puppets, and hand puppets.
- Practicing Vietnamese pronunciation through short character dialogues: greetings, calling, and answering.
- Organizing language games based on the content of the works: "Who says the character's words correctly?", "Guess the object through verses", "Find the missing word in the story".
- Encouraging children to express emotions and describe character actions using simple Vietnamese sentences.

Procedure

Through an expressive poetry reading lesson: "The Liberation Soldier"

- Step 1. Introducing the poem (5 mins)
 - The teacher prepares poem illustrations (e.g., a soldier holding a gun, wearing a hat, carrying a backpack). Read the entire poem slowly, point at the pictures, and explain simple keywords in easy-to-understand Vietnamese (e.g., "The liberation soldier is a brave person who liberates the country. He is very happy!"). Ask each child to repeat keywords like "Uncle Liberation Army" (pronunciation guide: "uncle" as in "little boy" [little boy], "prize" as in "award" "award". If Thai ethnic children find pronunciation difficult, repeat 2-3 times and give praise to encourage them.
- Step 2. Guiding expressive reading (10 mins)
 - Divide the poem into 2-3 short segments (e.g., Segment 1: "Uncle Liberation Army/A bucket hat with a folded brim that flares out over the shoulders"; Segment 2: " The whole family is so happy, Uncle!/ America cried like many children when they lost."; Segment 3: " I clasped my hands together and begged my mother for food/ She became a liberator crossing the Truong Son mountain pass"). The teacher reads as a model with gestures (carrying a backpack, wearing a hat, holding a gun...), and children repeat in groups (divide the class into 3-4 groups). Encourage expression: "Read loudly and happily like the soldier! If you forget, I will remind you." Gently correct pronunciation (e.g., if a child says the word "phóng" incorrectly, guide them: "Phóng as in 'phong' in 'phong cách' [style]").
- Step 3. Group practice (10 mins)
 - Each group chooses a segment of the poem, reads it expressively, and adds self-created gestures (e.g., group 1 pretends to hold a gun like the soldier, group 2 dances). The teacher moves around to support: correcting pronunciation (e.g., "phóng quân" clearly), adding vocabulary (if the child forgets "vui vẻ" [happy], suggest: "The soldier is happy!"). Encourage creativity: "What else do you think the soldier does?"
- Step 4. Recreation and discussion (5 mins)
 - The whole class stands up to perform again (each group presents). Then, sit in a circle for discussion: "Why do you like the liberation soldier?" (e.g., child answers: "Because he is happy!").

End with individual praise: "Lan, you read very well, I like it!"

Total time: 30 minutes.

Specific assessment

Observe and record the number of children participating expressively (target: at least 80% of children, e.g., 28/31 children). Record new words (e.g., the child uses "tiền tuyến" [frontline] correctly 5 times).

2.3.2. Diversifying forms of literature appreciation at multiple times of the day to enhance Vietnamese for Thai ethnic children

Purpose

- To help children have regular exposure to Vietnamese, not limited to formal literature lessons.
- To create opportunities for Vietnamese and literary works to become a natural part of children's daily lives.
- To enhance the ability to listen, understand, and remember Vietnamese words.

Content

- Arrival time: The teacher tells stories using pictures, lets children watch illustrative videos, or listen to Vietnamese audio stories.
- Outdoor activities: Linking story content with real objects (e.g., looking at a banana tree - mentioning the story "The Legend of the Banana Tree"; looking at a chicken - telling the story "The Rooster and the Puppy").
- Corner play: Letting children play character roles from stories (e.g., the shop corner using the context of the story "The Three Girls").
- Meal and Nap time: The teacher repeats verses or short stories; asks children: "Which character do you like?", "What did Friend Squirrel do in the story?"
- Afternoon activities: Reviewing new words through games: "Guess what happens next", "Arrange pictures in the correct story order".

Procedure

Through a storytelling lesson: "The Farmer and the Bear"

- Step 1. Arrival time (5 mins)
 - When children enter the class (early morning), the teacher prepares the picture story "The Farmer and the Bear". Tell a brief introduction (e.g., "Today I will show you an AI video of a story about a skillful farmer who works hard and meets a greedy, lazy bear!"). The teacher plays the AI video for the children. Ask stimulating questions: "What do you think of the farmer? How is his health? Where does he work?" so children can answer in simple sentences.
- Step 2. Main storytelling (10 mins)
 - Have children sit in a circle; the teacher tells the entire story slowly, combining storytelling with gestures and a tabletop theater (sa bàn). Stop to ask simple questions (e.g., "How did the farmer feel when he saw the bear? Does the bear work like the farmer?"). The teacher asks questions for children to answer in simple sentences. Let children point at the character pictures and repeat keywords like "bác nông dân" (pronunciation guide: "bác" [uncle] as in "bác sĩ" [doctor], "nông dân" [farmer] as in "nông dân trồng lúa" [rice farmer]). Encourage children to say: "The bear is greedy!; The farmer is hardworking". Combine with a Mindmap, letting children choose images to stick on the board (e.g., the teacher asks which characters are in the story? Children will pick character photos to stick on the board so they can visualize the characters as well as the entire story content.)
- Step 3. Outdoor activity (10 mins)
 - After the lesson, go to the playground. Link the story with real objects (e.g., the teacher points to a radish in the vegetable garden so children can associate it with a detail in the story: "The farmer in the story grows radishes; he takes the root while the bear demands the top"; the teacher points to a rice plant in the field and asks the children what it reminds them of in the story? "The farmer grows rice, the greedy Bear demands the root while the farmer takes the top"; the teacher points to a corn plant, asking the children which part of the story it relates to? "The farmer grows corn, the greedy bear demands both the root and the top"). Children retell briefly. The teacher supports if the child forgets: "The farmer is hardworking; the Bear is lazy!"
- Step 4. Corner play and Afternoon activities (10-15 mins)
 - During corner play, let children role-play (e.g., the shop corner where the farmer sells radishes, corn, and rice to the bear). Review words and sentences through games: "Guess what happens next" (child continues the sentence: "The

Total time: 30-40 minutes.

Specific assessment

Observe the number of children participating in retelling (target: 70%, e.g., 25/31 children). Record vocabulary (e.g., the child says "Uncle is skillful!" correctly 10 times).

2.3.3. *Enhancing language and communication development activities through literary works to support 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children in using Vietnamese effectively*

Purpose

- To develop Vietnamese language skills through hands-on manipulation, simulation, and creative content generation from literary works.
- To help Thai ethnic children memorize new words and sentence patterns through the "doing - saying - playing" approach.
- To overcome common challenges for ethnic minority children, such as shyness and incorrect pronunciation.

Content

- Visual arts activities based on stories: sculpting characters or coloring story scenes, followed by children describing them using short Vietnamese sentences.
- Ordering story pictures combined with descriptions (e.g., "This is the mother hen").
- Small group role-playing: children imitate character actions and speak corresponding dialogues.
- "Relay storytelling" activities: each child says one sentence to continue the story.
- Language games: finding words to describe characters (fast/slow, kind/fierce...), and choosing word cards that match pictures.

Procedure

Through an expressive poetry reading lesson: "The Liberation Soldier" for 5–6-year-olds

- Step 1: Introducing roles (5 mins)
 - The teacher prepares simple props like soldier hats and plastic toy guns to attract attention. The teacher introduces the character "The Liberation Soldier" using short, easy-to-understand language combined with illustrative gestures (strong walking style, holding a gun).
 - The teacher models how to play the role of the soldier, performing movements while reading short, clear verses, for example: "Chú là chú em / Chú đi tiền tuyến" (I am your uncle / I go to the frontlines).
 - Afterward, the teacher has children repeat short phrases, emphasizing words that Thai ethnic children often mispronounce, such as: chú (uncle), đi (go), tiền tuyến (frontlines). The teacher encourages and gently corrects pronunciation to help children feel confident speaking Vietnamese.
- Step 2: Role-play practice (10 mins): Divide into small groups (3-4 children/group).
 - The teacher reads the entire poem expressively once in a clear, slow voice suitable for the children's reception. During the reading, the teacher uses gestures and facial expressions so children can easily understand the content.
 - Next, the teacher lets children read the poem in various ways: reading after the teacher line by line, reading in small groups, and individual reading combined with role-playing movements.
 - Throughout this process, the teacher encourages Vietnamese communication by asking simple open-ended questions: "What is the liberation soldier doing?", "Where is he going?". This helps children expand their vocabulary and form short, clear Vietnamese sentences.
- Step 3: Taking turns (5 mins)
 - The teacher organizes children to take turns playing the soldier role using props and reciting key verses. Children are encouraged to speak loudly and clearly, using eye contact and gestures.
 - The teacher plays the role of the narrator or a dialogue partner, creating simple communication situations such as: "Where are you going, Uncle?" or "What is your mission?". Children answer with short sentences based on the poem, practicing linguistic reflexes and boldness in using Vietnamese.
- Step 4: Feedback (5 mins)
 - At the end, the teacher comments and praises the children's efforts, especially those who were bold in speaking Vietnamese. The teacher repeats some important words and verses to reinforce the content. Praise example: "You performed well and said 'chú giải phóng' clearly!". Correct pronunciation gently if needed (e.g., "Let's try the word 'phóng' again").

2.3.4. Collaborating with schools, families, and the Thai community to support Vietnamese language through literature appreciation activities

Purpose

- To create consistency between school, family, and community to improve children's Vietnamese usage.
- To provide a Vietnamese language environment at home, not just at school.
- To preserve Thai culture while enhancing Vietnamese through bilingual Thai-Vietnamese folk tales.

Content

- Guiding parents to tell Vietnamese stories to children for 10-15 minutes every night (using pictures or bilingual versions).
- Organizing "Storytelling Festivals" with the participation of Thai parents telling stories in Vietnamese.
- Sending simple storytelling audio files for parents to play for children at home.
- Encouraging families to collect Thai folk tales and retell them in simple Vietnamese.
- Organizing community field trips: visiting stilt houses or attending the *Xen ban* festival, linking them to corresponding literary stories.

Procedure

To implement the partnership between the school, family, and the Thai community, the process is carried out systematically throughout the school year. First, the school organizes meetings with parents and Thai community representatives to agree on goals, such as improving Vietnamese skills and preserving Thai culture through bilingual folk tales. During this stage, materials are collected, including Thai folk tales (e.g., stories about the *Xen ban* festival or stilt houses), translated into simple Vietnamese with illustrations. Simultaneously, storytelling audio files are recorded (10-15 minutes each, performed by parents or Thai artisans in clear Vietnamese) along with poems/stories related to occupations like farming or handicrafts. To ensure effectiveness, short workshops are held at the school to train parents on how to tell stories and encourage Vietnamese conversation at home.

After preparation, implementation at school begins with the "Festival of Children Learning about Careers through Poetry and Stories." Thai parents are invited to read poems or tell stories in Vietnamese directly to small groups (5-10 children at a time), focusing on family occupations like rice farming or brocade weaving. This is followed by discussions where children draw pictures or re-enact the stories. The school then sends the illustrations and audio files home via group apps or USB drives with instructions for parents to play them for children every night.

For home and community implementation, parents are encouraged to tell Vietnamese stories at home for 10-15 minutes each night using bilingual versions to increase interaction. The school provides simple audio files (5-10 stories per month) for repetitive listening. Families are also encouraged to collect Thai folk tales from grandparents and retell them in simple Vietnamese to share with the school. Additionally, community field trips are organized 1-2 times a month, such as visiting a Thai stilt house or participating in the *Xen ban* festival, linking these experiences to literary stories to help children connect culture and language.

Finally, assessments are conducted after each activity and monthly through simple surveys with parents and children regarding interest and Vietnamese progress. Children's progress is tracked through small tests, such as retelling stories, to compare results before and after the measures. Plans are then adjusted based on feedback for example, increasing simple audio materials if children struggle or organizing more guidance meetings if community participation is low. This ensures a unified environment for children to develop Vietnamese while preserving Thai culture.

3. Conclusion

Enhancing Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children is a task of particularly important significance in preparing children to be ready to enter the primary school level, while simultaneously contributing to the goal of improving the quality of preschool education in ethnic minority areas. Based on theoretical research, current status surveys, and analysis of results obtained at several kindergartens in Nghe An province, the study has clarified the role of literature appreciation activities in the development of the Vietnamese language for older Thai preschoolers.

The research results show that, although the team of preschool teachers has become aware of the importance of enhancing Vietnamese for children through literary works, the organization of activities still encounters many difficulties such as: the influence of the mother tongue, children limited Vietnamese vocabulary, children not yet being

bold in communication, and the coordination between families and the school not yet being truly close. From that reality, the study has proposed four groups of measures to enhance Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation activities, including: raising the awareness of teachers; diversifying the forms of organizing activities; overcoming difficulties in the implementation process; and innovating and improving the efficiency of organizing activities toward a child-centered approach.

The measures were built on a scientific and practical basis of preschool education, ensuring suitability for the psychological, linguistic, and living characteristics of Thai ethnic children. The results of the teacher opinion survey show that the proposed measures have high feasibility and received positive consensus, contributing to creating a rich Vietnamese environment and increasing opportunities for children to hear, speak, and use Vietnamese naturally in daily activities. Through this, children not only expand their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation and coherent expression but also become more confident and bolder in communicating in Vietnamese.

Besides its practical significance, the study also has reference value in the work of researching and organizing language education activities for preschool children in ethnic minority areas. The measures to enhance Vietnamese through literature appreciation activities can be applied flexibly and adjusted to fit the specific conditions of each individual preschool educational institution, contributing to improving the quality of caring for and educating children in a comprehensive way.

However, due to limited time and research scope, the results of the study only reflect the current status and the effectiveness of the measures at several kindergartens in the research area. In the coming time, it is necessary to continue expanding the scope of the survey, researching more deeply the coordination between the school – family – community in enhancing Vietnamese for ethnic minority children, as well as evaluating the long-term impact of the measures on the language development and learning results of children at the primary school level.

In summary, enhancing Vietnamese for 5–6-year-old Thai ethnic children through literature appreciation activities is a suitable direction that is feasible and brings practical effectiveness. The synchronous and flexible implementation of the proposed measures will contribute to improving the capacity to use Vietnamese for children, creating a solid foundation for the long-term learning process and contributing to the goal of sustainable educational development in ethnic minority areas.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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