

The control of the pre-university Vietnamese levels for international students at Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam

Nguyen Quoc Thuy, Nguyen Thi Doan Trang
Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the issues of Vietnamese language preparation of international students for admission to universities in Vietnam. The article focuses on the control of the formation of language skills and communication skills for pre-university international students at Thai Nguyen University of Education in the socio-cultural and educational-professional fields.

Keywords: *Vietnamese, language preparation, language skills, speech skills, control*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the period of international integration, with the economic development and intercultural exchange, there is an upward trend in need to learn Vietnamese among international students and people from abroad coming to live and work in Vietnam. The ability to use proficiently Vietnamese is deemed a prerequisite to facilitate the comprehension of the mainstream of the distinctive local culture as well as resolving language barriers in social communication, thereby bringing success in life, work, and study. To create a legal basis for teaching Vietnamese to foreigners, on September 1st, 2015, the Minister of Education and Training issued the Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework for foreigners together with Circular No. 17/ 2015 / TT-BGDĐT, to serve as a basis for erecting programs, teaching plans, compiling or selecting educational materials, forming control criteria as well as assessing foreign language proficiency.

Thai Nguyen University of Education is one of the prestigious institutions that teach Vietnamese to foreigners in Vietnam. Vietnamese curriculum is designed based on the "Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework for foreigners" [1] corresponding to the common European framework of reference and is suitable for many learners at each level. Currently, Thai Nguyen University of Education has wholly formed a Vietnamese language teaching program at the intermediate level (B2), meeting the teaching requirements for international students coming to learn Vietnamese on a program of pre-university for admission to different universities in Vietnam.

Table 1. 6-level Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference

Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework for foreigners		Common European framework of reference
Primary	level 1	A1
	level 2	A2
Intermediate	level 3	B1
	level 4	B2
Advanced	level 5	C1
	level 6	C2

The Vietnamese language curriculum is built in a comprehensive orientation towards the development of learners' Vietnamese ability, including a series of crucial factors which are also presented in the Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework for foreigners, such as Language competency (Vietnamese knowledge); Organizing and processing Vietnamese documents; Ability to understand and read Vietnamese language; Ability to communicate verbally and in writing; Ability to create speech and documents written in Vietnamese; Ability to set up communication strategies in social Vietnamese language [2]. Thus, after the Vietnamese language courses at Thai Nguyen University of Education, our international students will be able to:

- communicate with others in Vietnamese, understand the core language knowledge and Vietnamese culture to apply them in communication (in family life, habits, society, work, career)
- use Vietnamese to work or study in different fields/majors.
- develop Vietnamese capacity and understanding of Vietnamese culture through lectures comparing with the language and culture of learners' country.

In terms of program structure, to meet the requirements of learners' Vietnamese level, the program is devised according to the Vietnamese Language Proficiency Framework with a total of 2160 teaching and learning hours. Each level is accomplished in a duration of 360 teaching and learning hours (including theory, practice, and self-study hours). All the lessons of modules are compiled according to topics, reviews and assessment tests [3]. From the practice of teaching Vietnamese over the years, we have found that the control of the training process plays an integral pedagogical part in improving the efficiency and merit of the learning in general and learning Vietnamese for international students in particular at universities in Vietnam. The success of solving pedagogical issues largely depends on the effectiveness of supervision in teaching and learning, which is also the reason why we choose the topic "The control of the pre-university Vietnamese levels for international students in the Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam" for our article.

2. CONTENTS

2.1. The content of the control of the process of teaching and learning Vietnamese

Control is the most crucial component of the process of teaching and learning Vietnamese to international students at all stages. Regard the methodology of teaching Vietnamese, the forms of control remain effective, and they are continually being improved for the most objective assessment of students' knowledge.

The content of the control should:

- meet the requirements for the level of knowledge of international students in Vietnamese at a particular stage of teaching and learning.
- correspond to the program in Vietnamese, taking into account the level of proficiency in Vietnamese, reflecting the content of teaching and learning.

Through the control:

- the level of formation of international students' language skills and speech skills at all stages of teaching and learning Vietnamese is determined.
- the effectiveness of techniques and methods of teaching is inspected, and adjustments are brought into the play to the learning process aimed at forming the required level of language and speech competencies.

Currently, based on the 6-level Vietnamese proficiency test system of the Ministry of Education and Training, control in a test form is becoming an integral part of the system for controlling the Vietnamese knowledge of international students. In the practice of teaching Vietnamese, along with test control, traditional forms of control are also preserved, for example, dictation tests, presentation, the transmission of the content of the read text etc.

2.2. Assessing the quality of learning Vietnamese for pre-university international students at Thai Nguyen University of Education

At Thai Nguyen University of Education, the control in the Vietnamese course in the program of pre-university international students for admission to the universities in Vietnam includes both traditional paper-based tests and computer-delivered tests. The current assessment of the Vietnamese knowledge of international students includes various tests that check the knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar, the formation of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Elementary examinations (A1+A2) are carried out in the seventh week of the first semester in order to check the formation of Vietnamese proficiency of international students at the elementary level. At the end of the first semester the students have taken pre-intermediate (B1) examination that includes comprehensive scrutiny

of the formation of their Vietnamese skills (phonetic, lexical, grammatical) and language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing in communication [4].

The formation of pronunciation skills begins with the first lessons in Vietnamese. It is the most critical task of teaching and learning Vietnamese because normative pronunciation makes the acceptable speech behaviour of international students in real communication. The formation of Vietnamese pronunciation skills is checked in the course of phonetics tests every month. The purpose of the test is to examine the formation of the skills of phonetic and intonational speech of international students. Phonetics test is carried out during speaking and reading lessons and consists of two parts: In the first part, the adequacy of the perception of speech by ear is checked when presented twice and includes the following tasks: listen and write syllables, listen and write words, listen and write sentences on six Vietnamese tone systems. In the second part, the formation of the phonetic skills of students is checked. The tasks which are completed by students are recorded in files. The criteria for assessing the performance of each task and for the overall assessment of the formation of phonetic skills have been developed.

Checking the formation of language skills is carried out in the form of a language proficiency test on computers. The content of the test includes tasks for choosing the required form. As practice shows that the method of checking the formation of language skills in a test form is significant since it is a standardized, unified form of control and allows an objective assessment of students' knowledge. However, it should be noted that this form of evaluation makes it possible to determine the formation of language skills among international students mainly at the level of recognizing the desired form from the proposed options. The test of productive types of speech activity shows the insufficient formation of language skills in international students when they make their statements in a written and oral speech in Vietnamese. For the form of checking the formation of listening and writing skills at this stage, international students ought to take dictation tests.

Undeniably, listening skill causes the most significant difficulties for international students. The six tone systems in Vietnamese also explain the difficulty of hearing Vietnamese speech. According to the analysis of the results of pre-intermediate tests, the most significant number of unsatisfactory marks is caused by the tests of listening and writing skills. Reading skill tests include reading and transferring the content of the text on topics of socio-cultural spheres. During the reading control at this stage, the reading technique is also examined: pronunciation skills, intonation, speech rate. The evaluation of oral speech skill (monologue and interactive, dialogical speech) includes:

- a conversation on topics following the requirements of the necessary level of knowledge of Vietnamese: "About myself", "My family", " My hobby", "My close friend", "I study Vietnamese at Thai Nguyen University of Education", ...
- dialogue on one of the communication situations: "At the department office", "At the library", " At the clinic", "Shopping", ...

During the oral speech, students are assessed on four criteria, including fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. Regard making a dialogue based on a given case, learners ought to perform their ability to participate in a given situation, with a vast enough vocabulary and required accuracy of grammatical structures. Besides, the ability to use some less common and idiomatic vocabulary related to local Vietnamese culture is also considered.

In the second semester, besides teaching and learning Vietnamese by different topics, teaching in scientific style is also conducted, which is suitable for students' future majors. Thus, the formation of general language skills and expressive language skills are implemented in both socio-cultural and vocational education aspects. At this stage, the previously formed skills are consolidated in all types of speech acts, and speech skills are formed to fulfil the requirements of the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels. The lexical and grammatical resource will be expanded and systematized, and the thematic content will also be altered. In the thematic content of teaching and learning, the cultural aspect is widely represented. Lexical topics of the second semester are " The weather in Vietnam", "I live and study in Vietnam", "My Motherland", "Thai Nguyen city where I live and study", "My future speciality"... At the final stage of training, the control of knowledge, skills, and abilities of international students in the Vietnamese language includes:

- control of general language knowledge on the future major of students
- grammar and reading test on the computer.
- verification of written speech.
- oral exam in Vietnamese

As for international students, a form of examination, the language and speaking competence in the educational and professional sphere include:

- Checking the understanding of the content of the lecture;
- Checking the formation of skills in note-taking in Vietnamese.

The understanding of the lecture's content is examined in the form of a test after the lecture, whereas note-taking skill in Vietnamese is carried out based on the outline of the lecture. When checking the lecture notes, the following is assessed:

- the content of the abstract.
- the linguistic use of the abstract.

The grammar and reading tests on the computer consider the formation of language skills corresponding to the intermediate and upper-intermediate levels. Testing of writing skills is done in the form of listening and rewriting down. The writing is evaluated according to 2 criteria: the accuracy of the content and grammar.

Oral exam in Vietnamese includes:

- reading the text of socio-cultural topics and performing test tasks for it.
- reading educational and scientific text and transferring content based on questions to the text.
- conversation on one of the studied topics.

When reading the text, comprehension of the content is evaluated based on test items.

Concerning conveying the ideas of an educational and scientific text, the adequacy of understanding the text, the ability to deliver the primary information of the text using the lexical and grammatical structures of the scientific style of speech are taken into account. In a conversation on topics, the following is assessed:

- The student's ability to take part in the conversation
- The student's ability to give full detailed answers to questions using the studied lexical and grammatical resources.

Granted, most international students have difficulties to wholly comprehend the educational and scientific texts when reading and transferring their content. The summary of academic results in the three years 2017, 2018 and 2019 demonstrates the effectiveness of control of the pre-university Vietnamese levels for international students, which is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Results of learning the Vietnamese language of international students in 3 years [5]

	2017	2018	2019
Excellent	0 %	0 %	7.4 %
Very good	23 %	47.7 %	45.1 %
Good	77 %	46 %	43.8 %
Satisfactory	0 %	6.3 %	3.7 %

The table above shows the proportion of students studying Vietnamese by the academic performance from 2017 to 2019. Overall, there was a sharp fluctuation in the percentage of international students achieving a "Very good" result, whereas the figure for "Good" students experienced a dramatic fall in this period. The percentage of students pursuing the Vietnamese course assessed as "Very good" was 23% in 2017, but by 2018 this figure had rapidly increased by 24.7%, reaching a peak of 47.7% before falling to 45.1% in the next year. The most significant decrease was in the proportion of learners who gained the "Good" result between 2017 and 2018. This figure almost halved in 2018 to 46%, and then continued to decrease slightly to 43.8% in 2019. In the year 2019, 7.4% of international students attending Vietnamese courses were assessed as "Excellent", while the proportion of "Satisfactory" students was less than half, at 3.7%. By contrast, there was no percentage for "Excellent" in 2017 and in 2018.

According to the results of this study, we deem that the control of the pre-university Vietnamese levels for international students is compelling. It helps teachers determine the students' Vietnamese proficiency in each learning period. Based on that, teachers adjust the programs and plans of teaching the Vietnamese language that is suitable for them. Besides, the control of pre-university Vietnamese levels for international students also boosts their efforts to master Vietnamese proficiency, making it easier for them to continue study majors in Vietnam.

3. CONCLUSION

The control system of the Vietnamese language, meeting the requirements for the level of knowledge of a particular stage of teaching and learning, is an open system in the use of forms of control. The betterment of existing forms of control and the search for new forms is an urgent task for the methodology of teaching and learning Vietnamese as a foreign language for pre-university international students at Thai Nguyen University of Education in particular and in Vietnam in general.

4. REFERENCES

- [1] Minister of Education and Training (2015). Circular No. 17/2015/TT-BGDĐT issuing the Vietnamese language ability framework for foreigners. Hanoi, 01 September 2015. Available from: <https://vanbanphapluat.co/circular-no-17-2015-tt-bgddt-issuing-the-vietnamese-language-ability-framework-for-foreigners>
- [2] Minister of Education and Training (2018). Circular No. 28/2018 / TT-BGDĐT on Vietnamese program for overseas Vietnamese dated November 26, 2018. Hanoi. Vietnam. Available from: <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/giao-duc/Circular-28-2018-TT-BGDĐT-promulgating-Vietnamese-language-curriculum-for-overseas-Vietnamese-405427.aspx>
- [3] Thai Nguyen University of Education (2020). Regulations on preparatory Vietnamese language training for foreigners (Enclosed with the Decision No. 2097 / QĐ-ĐHSP, dated June 21, 2020 of the Rector of the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University)
- [4] Thai Nguyen University of Education (2020). Provisions on organizing Vietnamese language proficiency tests according to the framework of Vietnamese language proficiency for foreigners (Issued together with the Decision No. 1866 / QĐ-ĐHSP dated July 17, 2020 of the Rector of the University of Education - Thai Nguyen University).
- [5] Thai Nguyen University of Education. Reporting results of Vietnamese language training for international students in academic years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019.

