

# Brief history of english teaching in vietnam education essay

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This history of English language teaching in Viet Nam can be roughly divided into two periods : English in Viet Nam before 1986 and English in Viet Nam from 1986 up to the present. The reason for this way of division is that 1986 was the year when the Vietnamese Communist Party initiated its overall economic reform, exercising the open-door policy, and thus making the emergence of English as the number 1 foreign language in Viet Nam.

### **English in Viet Nam before 1986**

Most of the former teachers of Russians are now working as teachers of English in Viet Nam. Before 1986, Russian was a compulsory language at universities and at many institutions the teachers of Russian far outnumbered the teachers of English. The collapse of the So Viet Union made a great number of teachers of Russian redundant. These teachers were retrained, usually for a two-year period, to become teachers of English. They started the retraining programs as beginners or false beginners in English. A few made fast progress in learning English and have become confident with their new positions. The majority of them, however, despite their background in teaching and learning, have reported that they have barely benefited from the two years of retraining in terms of English language skills and new teaching methodology. Many former teachers of Russian lack confidence and consider themselves not qualified to teach English. English in Viet Nam before 1986 had a chequered history.

Chronologically, the teaching of English in Viet Nam can be subdivided into 3 periods : the first period extents from the beginning of the French invasion of Viet Nam up to 1954; the second period, from 1954 to 1975; and the third

period, from 1975 to 1986. Each of the periods will be examined in some depth in the sections that follow.

## **English in Viet Nam before 1954**

It is difficult to point to a specific date when English was introduced into Viet Nam. But what is certain is that the language was taught in Viet Nam from the French times and that although English made its presence in Viet Nam during this period, it did not become a foreign language to be learnt as widely as French. It is not quite clear either how English was taught in this period for a number of reasons. First, there are no extant writings on the teaching of English in Viet Nam. Second, there are no extant English textbooks written by Vietnamese authors ; what are left today are some English textbooks in use by that time which were written by French textbook writers and some bilingual English-Vietnamese dictionaries compiled by two Vietnamese scholars known as Le Ba Kong and Le Ba Khanh. It can be inferred from the contents of those textbooks that although some attention was paid to pronunciation drills and reading skills, the prevailing method of teaching English in Viet Nam before 1954 was the grammar-translation method.

## **English in Viet Nam from 1954 to 1975**

1954 - 1975 was the period when Viet Nam was divided into 2 parts - North and South. In this period, each part of the country was politically allied with a world superpower : North Vietnam was allied with the former Soviet Union and South Vietnam with the USA. The status of English, thus, was different in each part of the country. In South Vietnam, English was the dominant foreign

language; it was studied for direct interaction with the USA. In North Vietnam, in contrast, although 4 foreign languages ( Russian , Chinese , French and English ) were recognized nationally , Russian topped the list in the formal educational system ; and like English in the South, Russian in the North was studied for direct interactions with the former Soviet Union. As Russian dominated the foreign language scene in North Vietnam, English was relegated to an inferior status. In upper secondary schools, it was taught only in some classes in towns and in big cities as a pilot subject. ( Nguyen Nhat Quang 1993 : 1 ). At tertiary level, there were two foreign language institutions that offered English as a discipline, namely, the Hanoi Foreign Languages Teachers' Training College ( currently The University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University Hanoi ). Apart from those institutions, some universities offered English as a subject. However, due to the limited use of English in North Vietnam in this period, the goals of learning the language seemed to be confined only to understanding the USA and to fighting against the US invasion on the diplomatic front.

### **English in Viet Nam from 1954 to 1986**

The period of 1975 – 1986 was characterized by the dominance of Russian and the decline of English and French, particularly of Chinese in foreign language education in Vietnam. In this period, Chinese was cast away from the formal educational system, and the targets set for Russian, English and French were roughly as follows : 70% of the school pupils would study Russian, 20% English and 10% French. At tertiary level, Russian continued to predominate in the North. This can be seen in the fact that the number of

students majoring in Russian in this period always far exceeded the combined enrolment of all other foreign languages. In the South, Russian study started to grow very fast: Russian departments with the whole academic staffs coming from the North were established in many universities and the number of students enrolling in Russian both as a discipline and as a subject started to increase. The spread of Russian was further strengthened by Russian aids in education : hundreds of Vietnamese teachers and students were sent annually to the former Soviet Union for both undergraduate and graduate studies. When Russian dominated the scene, English suffered a setback ; it was taught in a limited number of classes in upper secondary schools, particularly in towns and big cities. At tertiary level, the number of students enrolling for English both as a discipline and as a subject also decreased. It was noted, however, that in this period a small number of Vietnamese teachers and interpreters of English were chosen and sent to Britain, Australia, New Zealand and India for graduate studies in English language teaching. The training programmes in Britain, Australia and New Zealand were terminated in 1979 when Vietnam involved in Cambodia. In 1985, Australia resumed its English training for Vietnam under a UNDP Programme until 1992 and from 1992 it was done under a bilateral aid programme between Australia and Vietnam, first known as AIDAB ( Australian International Development Assistance Bureau ) and then as AusAID ( Australian Agency for International Development ), 40 Vietnamese teachers and interpreters of English were sent to Australia annually to undertake graduate studies in English language teaching ( cf. Do Huy Think 2006 ). This programme was terminated in early 2000s. The content of

English language teaching in Vietnam in this period followed both the "adopt" and the "adapt" approach to material development. The prevailing method of teaching English was the structural method with a focus on lexicogrammar, reading and translation skills. Students were first introduced to a sentence pattern; then they were taught to use substitution and transformation techniques to drill in this sentence pattern; then they were asked to make up new sentences based on this sentence pattern; and finally, as a form of consolidation, they were asked to translate their made-up sentences into Vietnamese and vice versa. Some attention was paid to the teaching of oral skills, particularly to improving language accuracy, but because the new sentences were created without context, the fluency aspect of language teaching was sacrificed.

### **English in Viet Nam from 1986 up to the Present**

The period from 1986 up to present is characterized by the rapid growth and expansion of English in Vietnam. This English boom began in December 1986, when at its Six National Congress the Vietnamese Communist Party initiated an overall economic reform known as *Đổi mới* (Renovation), opening the door of Vietnam to the whole world. In the context of economic renovation and of the open door policy, English becomes the first (nearly and only) foreign language to be taught in Vietnam. It is one of the six national examinations students have to pass if they want to get the Secondary School Certificate and is a compulsory subject for both undergraduates and graduates at tertiary level. In a new market economy of Vietnam with the growth of international businesses and trades, and the increasing the number of foreign tourists, the ability to communicate in

English has become a passport to a better job not only in the tourism and hospitality industries but in many other enterprises also. English is taught in schools, universities and evening foreign language centers across the country. There are now more teachers and students of English than of any other subjects. Further, the Đổi mới has created mounting pressures for more and more places to teach English at every stage of far-expanding educational system. At the same time the fast process of globalization - the strongest external force for English language teaching and learning in Vietnam - has made it difficult to maintain the existing and admittedly low standards in its teaching and use. Increasingly, it was being realized in decision-making bodies that without major changes and sizeable inputs in its curricula and courses, methodology and materials, English teaching in Vietnam would soon ceased effectively serve the demands being made on it. The current situation of English Teaching at kindergartens and primary schools in Viet Nam : In the integrative tendency of education, English has been using as a global language. Many parents consider carefully for their children to learn English from kindergarten age. So, they are facing up to a certain impact on the baby's mother tongue. In contrast, learning English from a very young age will bring unexpected effect. Five years old is the period of the child's brain development with the high speed and convenience to activate a variety of the children's early potential, including foreign languages potential. Many international experts call this " golden period " to decide the height of the children's language and foreign language development in the future. A lot of English students, who achieve high award such as Hoang Hai Linh, Do Nhat Nam,,,,,,,,, , have begun to study English

from this period. Accessing to English early will help children develop many types of the intelligence contributed to the success in the future : They will think more positively by exploring a new expression which differ from the ones in their native language. Moreover, the child will understand Vietnamese better, the language will be richer, the interaction will be expanded, the child's emotion will be balanced due to the complement between two ways of communication in both Vietnamese and English. There are many benefits gained from a foreign language. Foreign language opens a whole new cultural world to the child. Children can express themselves in a new and profound approach. Foreign language also helps them take advantages of participating in labor force, to travel and exchange information with people in other countries. The more languages you know, the more opportunities in business, health care, law enforcement, technology, communication, social services and marketing you have. The employer may see through the person , who knows the second language , is a bridge with the consumers. Characteristics of the children are dynamic, high energy, difficult in concentration. Moreover, their remembering capability is still passive and lack of the orientation. The best way to create inspiration in learning English is programs which are not restrictive. Studying with playing will be much more effective than only focusing on the theories. In addition, the programs using music, games also help the lessons less boring. English programs for children that should combine with the introduction of short children's stories, songs, cartoons, games themed language. ... This encourages children learning and becoming more confident in using English. Parents should choose programs that meet these criteria for



their children to achieve the highest efficiency. Currently, there are some English programs, which have been studied professionally and carefully, introduced to the Vietnamese education system with standards adapted to the majority of students ( according to the amount of students / classes of the Ministry of Education and Training ). For example, with the English program is currently popular in the early grades of primary schools in our country, with more than 100, 000 pupils learning is Phonics - LBUK ( Learning Box UK ) , suitable for children aged 5 - 10 years. With friendly and easy-understanding structure, this program helps children speak standard intonation pronunciation, creates habit using English as the second language when entering to the environment completely in English. Hopefully, the development of powerful and prestigious current is created in the primary schools all over the country with many years of experience, Phonics - LBUK will bring for pre-school level students the opportunity to access to English language programs, which is suitable for age and the assurance about an important factor: " standard from the beginning." According to Mrs Le Thi Yen Binh - Director of Phonics LBUK Viet Nam Agency , Phonics is a teaching method that trains students to understand the right way to pronounce the word structure. It can be considered as English spelling which is very close to elementary school students in Vietnamese spelling. So, students can pronounce and read exactly, speak English fluently and naturally. Even in the native country, Phonics has become a recommended method introduced in primary schools to develop language skills of new students when beginning to school. A special feature of Phonics - LBUK is the combination with research on Phonics UK experts and expression as an

interactive software on the big screen, close to elementary school students in Asia. In each lesson, students learn through the cartoon clips and songs as well as the standard English pronunciation patterns. Teachers are trained to use flexible ways of teaching: songs, games, stories, imitating train, coloring, playing communicating, describing, presentations, painting.....which make inspiration to children and help them learn and understand easily as well as remember the lesson. The program has received the high appreciation of the Ministry of Education and Training during the last deployment. Currently, there are 80 primary schools across the country over 25 000 pupils studying this program on school time. Teachers use directly software and special technique teaching of Phonics - LBUK to teach due to the international experts and trainers in our country fostering free for the teachers.

(<http://www.baomoi.com/Phonics--LBUK-Tieng-Anh-chuan-tu-buoc-khoi-dau--mot-huong-tiep-can-hieu-qua/59/4110960.epi>) truy cap 31/3/2013 Most primary schools in Hanoi are now teaching English to pupils in grades 1, 2 instead of 3 as starting class in the project " Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system between 2008 - 2020 " by the Ministry of Education. Mr. Pham Xuan Tien, Head of Primary Education - Hanoi Education and Training Department, said, according to incomplete statistics, more than 400 primary schools in Hanoi have been teaching English linking with 6 programs : Phonics (VPBox), Language Link, Victoria, Dynet, Washington and Binh Minh. (<http://www.tinmoi.vn/ngon-ngang-day-tieng-anh-o-tieu-hoc-011104126.html> ) 31/3/2013 The development of children : 3. 1 Characteristics of kindergarten children Children develop socially and emotionally during the Kindergarten year. At the beginning of

the year some children may be shy and passive. However, with the help of teachers, they usually gain confidence and begin to establish friendships and become an active part of the class. Other children may be too assertive prior to learning from experience of their friends. It is a time of testing and exploring social relationships. Kindergarten children hope to be trusted with responsibility. They usually take part in some activities such as : cooking, bringing things from home, and suggesting solutions to practical problems. Although, some children are still self-centered , they are also able, in a suitable group environment, to help each other. They can show considerable empathy toward people and animals when their own needs do not conflict with the needs of others. The teachers encourage their students letting helpful behaviour become more common in the classroom. Kindergarten children are developing a sense of independence but are also learning to work cooperatively with others. Nexus : conflict. Kindergarten children are more stable socio-emotionally than they were as preschoolers. They are developing a good sense of humour, which they express by delighting in nonsense and playing with language. They may develop specific fears, such as the fear of death, and mistakenly assume that they have caused such events as their parents divorce. Physical activity is one common characteristic of Kindergarten children, although children vary a great deal in the development of physical skills and abilities. Some children are slow and cautious about trying new things; others seem to accept any challenge that is happened. Most Kindergarten children are full of energy, ready to run, swing, climb and jump, and are eager to try their strength by moving big blocks or boxes. They are developing a sense of rhythm, and enjoy such

activities as marching, jumping or clapping to music. This makes them more interesting than standing in one place for a long time. In addition, the intellectual development is also concern. Kindergarten children love to talk. Their intellectual development is reflected in the rapid growth of vocabulary and the power to express ideas. They are developing visual and auditory memory and the ability to listen to others. They still need help in distinguishing sounds, although they can pick up another language and accurately imitate other people's intonations and inflections. They are especially keen to acquire new words (the names of dinosaurs, for example) and to use such words as "infinity" and "trillion". Kindergarten children welcome opportunities to be inventive with language, to play with rhyming, to joke, to explain things to each other and even to argue. Kindergarten children have a powerful urge to find out about things about the environment around them. They ask many questions, often deep unanswerable questions and they love to play guessing games or solve riddles. Their curiosity leads them to figure out concepts and relationships, and become interested in symbols. They enjoy listening to stories, but they do not learn very much from passive attention to the teacher or mere listening to information. The intellectual growth of Kindergarten students comes from exploration, testing and investigating rather than only from listening. During the Kindergarten year, the behaviour of many children changes from the relatively rambunctious behaviour of a four-year-old to the relatively mature and responsive behaviour of a five-year-old.

### 3. 2 General characteristics of the School – Age Child

There are three main characteristics

of the School – Age Child : The Emergence of Logical Thinking ; The childhood peer group and The developing self – concept.

### **The Emergence of Local Thinking : A need for Order**

At the beginning of the second year of life, children are able to represent the world mentally to themselves. They are starting to use symbols in that they can let objects represent one another and can let words stand for objects, people, or events. Preschoolers are limited, however, in that their mental representations of reality are not regulated by a consistent system of thought. They are easily distracted. When solving problems, they often focus on irrelevant aspects of the materials they are working with, while they ignore information that is highly relevant. They are influenced too easily by appearances and too often fail to attend to substance. A preschool child may conclude, for example, that a tall, thin glass of water contains more liquid than a wide bowl even if the child has watched beforehand the liquid being measured in exactly equal amounts into both containers. The tall glass looks bigger and so it must hold more liquid—never mind the fact that the taller glass is also wider. Children of five or six start thinking more logical and more orderly appearance. For example , when asked to sort subjects into groups, the child can define properties of the objects in good order according to size, color, shape, or the number of straight lines they contain. By contrast, the preschool child would have arranged the geometric shapes perceptually rather than logically. The emergence of a logical system to govern one's thinking allows children to perceive the universe as an orderly place. In addition to acquiring the ability to classify materials logically, the child develops an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships, a mature

understanding of the concepts of time and space, and an ability to reason by induction, which involves the postulation of general principles on the basis of particular observed instances. Because the child's thinking is patterned and orderly, the universe assumes the patterns of the child's mind. As will be seen, children's play during the years of middle and later childhood reflects the transition from the stage of prelogical thinking to that of concrete operations, in the sense that play becomes increasingly realistic and increasingly characterized by a need for order.

### **The childhood peer group : A Need to Belong**

Preschool children, even if they spend considerable amounts of time in nursery school or day-care settings, are primarily home centered in orientation. That is, the family is the social unit around which most of their social activities are focused. By the age of five or six, however, children are becoming increasingly peer oriented and decreasingly family oriented. The reason for this transition is that school-age children spend a greater and greater proportion of their waking hours in the company of peers; when they are not actually in school they may be out roaming the neighborhood looking for playmates, and parents often comment that their child no longer wants to spend time in their company. The composition of a childhood peer group is highly variable, with children drifting into and out of a circle of friends, sometimes on a week-to-week basis. Nevertheless, the peer group is a close-knit society, with definite, if unwritten, rules for membership. Children who are different in any way, whether because of physical characteristics, personality traits, manner of dress, access to material possessions, or socioeconomic status, may be quickly excluded. The peer group is a major

socializing agent in middle childhood. It is from their peers, not from parents or teachers, that children learn about the culture of childhood. Peers will teach a child quite effectively, and sometimes very harshly, about social rules and about the importance of obeying them. Peers establish a certain moral order that may differ somewhat from that established by adults. For example, parents may teach their children to inform on a child who is misbehaving, but in the peer culture "ratting" may be a major crime that qualifies the child for exclusion from the group. Peers teach children a variety of physical and intellectual skills that are necessary for group acceptance. Parents may provide instruction in riding a bicycle, but rarely do they teach their children how to do "wheelies" on their bikes or how to jump them across ditches! Such education is usually provided by more experienced children in the peer group. Similarly, many of the jokes, stories, riddles, and slang expressions heard among the "coolest" of grade-school children were never taught to them by adults, but were transmitted directly by the peer group. The significance of the childhood peer group as a socializing agent cannot be overestimated, nor can the importance to grade-school children of being accepted by their age-mates. What is the context in which the transmission of peer culture takes place? What is the battleground on which children fight to gain acceptance and to avoid rejection by the group? It should not be surprising, considering the amount of free time that is spent in play, that the battleground is often the playground—both figuratively and literally. Indeed, it would be surprising if the play of school-age children did not comprise a large portion of their socialization experience and did not enhance the socialization process. In fact, play serves that very

function and is often used to satisfy the school-age child's preeminent need to belong.



### **c. The developing self – concept : A Need for Industry**

**One of the most pressing needs of elementary school children is the need for what psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson (1963) called a sense of industry. As children develop, Erikson wrote, they come to realize that there is no future for them " within the womb of the family", and so they begin to apply themselves to a variety of skills and tasks that are necessary for success in the larger world of adults. They become eager to be productive, to achieve a sense of mastery and a feeling of accomplishment. In more traditional cultures, children's feelings of accomplishment were acquired by their learning to use the tools, utensils, and weapons that adults in their culture needed for survival; in the United States, the " tools" are often acquired in the classroom.**

**When Erikson spoke of the need for industry, he was referring to accomplishment in the world of work, however that may be defined. He was not speaking specifically of play, and, in fact, he even suggested that as children strive for industry, they leave behind the " whims of play". It seems, however, that an ego-building sense of mastery can be acquired in the performance of activities other than those that have as their specific purpose the acquisition of skills. Indeed, why could a sense of mastery not be acquired from the performance of activities that have no external purpose at all? From activities that fall under the definition of play? As will later be indicated, the need for industry is often reflected not only in the classroom activities of grade-school children, but also in their play.**

### **Chapter II : Teaching English to children through songs**

## **I/ Music**

### **Definition of music**

**Music is an art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and color.**

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**the tones or sounds employed, occurring in single line (melody) or multiple lines (harmony), and sounded or to be sounded by one or more voices or instruments, or both.**