

“CAN A BASKET HIDE AN ELEPHANT?”— ENGAGED LANGUAGE POLICY
AND PRACTICES TOWARD EDUCATIONAL, LINGUISTIC, AND SOCIO-
ECONOMIC EQUITY IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

Scholars concerned with education and socioeconomic equity increasingly argue that globalization and neoliberalism have brought about a troubling trend toward commodification and expansion of English language education (Coleman, 2011; Heller, 2012). Language and education scholars (Appleby, 2010; Phillipson, 2012) warn that English language spread largely entails linguistic and cultural homogenization, broad socio-economic stratification, massive resource exploitation, and deteriorated social welfare. Taking these concerns into account, this study employed engaged language policy (ELP) (Davis, forthcoming; Davis, Phyak, & Bui, 2012) to explore Vietnamese language policy and planning from the perspectives of global ideologies, national agendas, and local transformation. At the macro level, this account describes how language policies, neoliberal ideologies increasingly fail to realize linguistic, cultural, economic equity. Drawing on Freire's (1970) critical consciousness-raising approach, meso and micro analyses focus on portraying the dialogic processes of researcher, teachers, and minority students in a remote and mountainous province as they interrogate the impact of language policies and practices on their lives and work. Our collective findings indicate that, contrary to the state's goal of promoting English for socio-economic and educational advancement, language policies largely threaten social, educational and economic development, and minority students' linguistic and cultural ecology. Since students in the region speak minority languages at home, they are disadvantaged by a Vietnamese as medium of instruction and English as required subject school policy. The study thus emphasizes the urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness among cultural and linguistic complexity;

language/literacy education; socio-economic needs; and local agency throughout the macro, meso, and micro level processes of language policy decision-making and implementation. It strongly recommends respecting home languages for effective schooling, a strong economy, resourceful citizens, and social security at local and global scales. To this end, the study advocates taking ELP as an effective epistemological and agentic approach at the center of language policy research; it cultivates and repositions individual and collective agency at the forefront of language policy activism while creating a respectful and intellectual forum between the researcher and multiple actors to facilitate transparent and transformative education, diversity, social welfare, and an egalitarian society.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

We are living in times of neo-liberal imperialism which, disguised as globalisation, intends to transform any social endeavour with a humanitarian value, including education, into a matter of market value (Dahlstrom & Mannberg, 2006).

The far-reaching currents of neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism have found a point of convergence in Vietnam, which now stands at a crossroads in terms of choosing the most appropriate version of reform for its education system (Pham, 2009; Vinh Ha, 2012). Like that of many Asian countries (e.g., Clayton, 2006; Song, 2011), Vietnam's eagerness to re-orient education toward the imperatives of a globalized and marketized economy has resulted in ongoing education-policy reforms, especially with regard to language policies. English in Vietnam has been triumphantly reincarnated: once the language of the enemy, it is now the language widely regarded as best able to help people achieve their dreams of material success and privilege (Do, 2006). As Wright (2004) comments, English is the foreign language that most Vietnamese people desire to learn.

In early 2000, the Vietnamese government proclaimed English a compulsory subject for all students nationwide, asserting that Vietnamese citizens have to be equipped with English language skills in order to access a range of professions, compete in the global economic market, advance technology, engage in nation building, and ultimately integrate Vietnam as a member of the global community. Since that time, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training has been opening doors for a broad spectrum of international universities, corporations, and non-government organizations (NGOs) to promote collaboratively English in the country.

Despite the government's accelerating interest in embracing English, the relationship between Vietnam's English language policies and socio-economic development, educational equity, and preservation of cultural and linguistic heritages, especially those of individuals from minority and limited socio-economic backgrounds, has not yet been widely documented. In countries such as India, Nepal, Pakistan, America, Cambodia, China, Egypt, and Namibia, by contrast, a large number of scholars have laid especial emphasis on unraveling the ideologies that underpin English language policies, as well as their roles within society and their impact in theory and practice on a whole gamut of issues including linguistic and cultural diversity, identity, educational equity, and social welfare (e.g., Coleman, 2011; Erling & Seargeant, 2013; Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012; Ramanathan, 2005).

Scholars concerned with indigenous and minority language policies (e.g., Hornberger, 2006; McCarty, 2006), transnational scholars (Appadurai, 2001; Davis, Cho, Soria, & Bazzi, 2005; Luke, 2011), and critical researchers (Phillipson, 2012; Street, 2004) have warned that taking language policies for granted has had serious "side effects" (Zhao, 2012) in a large number of countries, including the failure both to acknowledge students' own linguistic and cultural heritages and to provide them with high-quality English instruction. Consequently, such policies may rob students of valuable opportunities to acquire the content knowledge necessary to attain a secure sense of their own culture, language, and identity, and thereby to preserve their social and economic security (e.g., Appleby, 2010; Coleman, 2011; Shamim, 2011).

This research study seeks to uncover the complexities, challenges, and possibilities associated with Vietnam's English language policies—which mandate that

English is a compulsory subject to be taught via Vietnamese, not the native languages of minority groups. For minority students in a multilingual mountainous province, 85% of the inhabitants belong to 11 different ethnic groups. With attention to the critical agencies of students and teachers, this dissertation concentrates on the ways in which teachers and minority students interpret, challenge, and negotiate Vietnam's English language policies to better acknowledge and accommodate the needs of minority students (Menken & García, 2010; Morrell, 2006). In particular, this research study uses critical dialogue with teachers and minority students to question the role of the government's mandates on English in developing minority students' educational and socio-economic capital. Furthermore, it attempts to determine whether or not minority students in this area need English at all, and if so, for what purposes. Aside from English, the minority students in this study—who come from a highly multilingual setting—must also maintain their native languages while fulfilling the crucial task of learning Vietnamese in order to integrate successfully into mainstream society. Therefore, this dissertation also seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' and students' views of the respective roles of students' native languages and Vietnamese, as well as English. Furthermore, while several scholars have expressed serious concerns about the devaluation or disappearance of minority cultures and languages as a direct result of ambiguous English language policies (e.g., Rubdy & Tan, 2008; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007), this study collaborates with teachers and students to work toward promoting a linguistically and culturally responsive and equitable language policy. The study as a whole argues for an engaged language policy which promotes critical collaborative dialogue with teachers

and students in order to analyze, interrogate, and work toward achieving equity and diversity.

In the effort to provide a comprehensive research study, I begin with discussion of the ways in which neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism have influenced the spread of the English language worldwide. Next, I present the wide-ranging and significant influence of English language policies on education, linguistic and cultural preservation, and educational, social, and economic development in a number of countries. The following part of this chapter describes the ways in which neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism impact economic, educational, and especially English language policy and planning in Vietnam, and outlines the research questions and significance of the study. The final section provides a description of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Transnationalism, and English Language Spread

Neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism are intertwined in all academic disciplines, and have had a crucial role in reorganizing political, economic, social, and educational agendas worldwide, and extending the influence of the English language in a great number of countries (Block, 2006; Heller, 2010; Ricento, 2012). For this reason, the following section provides a discussion on the nature of and connections among such potent agents and their far-reaching influences across time and space.

Globalization. Emerging around the late sixteenth century in Western Europe when feudalism was collapsing and capitalism was reinforced (Heron, 2008), globalization refers to an ongoing system of organized, highly complex political, cultural, and economic agendas supported by modern technologies. It is a “globally diverse set of

technical practices, institutions, modes of power, and governing strategies” (Leshkovich & Schwenkel, 2012, p. 380) and capitalist markets and sets of social relations (Keller, 2002). Appadurai (1996) defines globalization as intersecting flows across national borders through five dimensions—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes—which closely reflect the historical, linguistic, and political situations of different actors in the globalized world. Building on Appadurai’s (1996) work, Kellner (2002, p. 286) provides a nuanced perspective of globalization: “a highly complex, contradictory, and thus ambiguous set of institutions and social relations, as well as one involving flows of goods, services, ideas, technologies, cultural forms, and people.” Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) further explain that globalization has radically restructured social relations and local spaces through the interventions of electronic media and migration, which refashion space and culture as “borderless,” thereby forming new translocal spaces and forms of public culture.

Neoliberalism. Rising in the US and UK prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s and flourishing since the 1970s as a major element of globalization, neoliberalism refers to a dominant political mindset and a systematic, organized, and global economic doctrine of capitalism (Holborrow, 2012; Kotz, 2000; Sapiro, 2010). Arguing that the state’s roles should only be limited to areas such as defining property rights and facilitating contracts, neoliberalism advocates for economic liberalization through wide-ranging spectrums of capitalist rationales including (a) embracing an unregulated capitalist system (a free market economy); (b) the minimization of interference from the nation-state in financial sectors, privatization, shrinking social welfare programs to open ample avenues for profit restoration; and (c) the appearance of greater market

competitiveness and control. As a result, neoliberal forces powerfully ignite fast movements of economic, educational, social, and ideological reorganizations and changes in both developed and developing countries (Abri, 2011; Heller, 2012). Furthermore, underpinned by the rationale that a borderless world relates to capital, neoliberalism promotes freedom and democracy through privatization, education, and commoditized language learning (especially the learning of English), which many believe to have an important role in determining the fate of human beings and their environment. Kubota (2011) argues that neoliberals construct such a powerful ideological basis for the acquisition of English that it becomes almost impossible for most countries to even imagine national economic security or nation-building outside the neoliberal market model without promoting English.

Transnationalism. Besides globalization and neoliberalism, transnationalism plays an active role in rapidly shifting and reorganizing educational and socio-economic agendas in the modern world. Being the prominent global phenomenon at the end of the 20th century, transnationalism is believed to be a product of the globalization of capitalism and technological revolutions. It especially refers to the expansion of social networks that facilitate the reproduction of transitional migration, economic organization, and politics across national spaces (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). As a condition for cultural connectedness and mobility, transnationalism further creates a greater degree of connection between individuals, communities, and societies across borders, bringing about changes in the social, cultural, economic, and political landscapes of societies and destinations. Generally speaking, transnationalism refers to a construction of worldwide networks and interconnected transborder relations of individuals, groups, transnational

corporations, and national boundaries (The New School for Social Research, 2012) in a borderless global space for multilevel and multinational activities. As Levitt and Schiller (2004) describe, transnationalism is “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (p. 1009). In an era of merging local and global networks, transnationalism entails cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space (Ong, 1999), as well as the “process by which immigrants force and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their socialites of origin and settlement” (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc-Szanton, 1994, p. 7). In the context of migration, immigrants and refugees “take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in the networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states” (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7; Warriner, 2007).

In summary, defining these three global phenomena indicates globalization as a multifaceted, overarching framework that facilitates the development of neoliberalism and transnationalism. That is, globalization can be understood as systematic sets of organized political, economic, cultural, and ideological agendas that regulate neoliberal and transnational discourses. Neoliberalism, however, tends to exclusively focus on capitalism, for the sake of fostering privatization, consumption, and economic benefits (Kubuta, 2011; Macedo, Dedrinis, & Guanari, 2003), which mainly serve the developed neoliberal corporations and countries (Kotz, 2000). Transnationalism, on the other hand, supports the ongoing spread of globalized neoliberal strategies with transnational political and economic strategies (e.g., outsourcing, imported cheap labor) and the powerful forces of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across time and space (e.g., institutions and

nations). Transnationalism further entails wide-ranging complexities, hybridities, ambiguities, and negotiations in politics, cultural logic, identity formation, ideology, and practice between two or more nation-states. Hence, we can see that such compelling doctrines result in the ongoing dominance of a world capitalist economic system (Kellner, 2002) operated through a plethora of political, cultural, economic, and ideological strategies to achieve the global aims of capitalist gains, market expansions, multifaceted dependence, and power. In addition, the support of advanced technologies further facilitates such global capitalist agents in increasingly expanding, restructuring, and occupying global, national, and local spaces, ideologies, and decision-making toward a global market economy. It further fosters the marketizing and mystifying of English as a neoliberal instrument for capital gains, success, and fulfillment. In reference to English, Heller (2010) observes that “the shared language imposed by colonialism becomes available for the maintenance of privileged market control and access under new conditions” (p. 106).

Although neoliberal, globalized, and transnational phenomena have had a profoundly important role in bringing diverse beliefs, languages, and cultures into contact with each other via the Internet, television, transnational organizations, and multinational companies, they have also posed challenges to educational, cultural, and economic equity, human welfare, and diversity (Canagarajah, 2005; Ricento, 2008; Rubdy & Tan, 2006; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007). Globalization researchers such as Stiglitz (2003) and Spring (2006) have argued forcefully for the need to question the promises made by neoliberal and transnational ideologies, because the triumph of capitalism has neither brought the promised economic and educational benefits nor succeeded in reducing

poverty and ensuring stability in the developing world. By the same token, Spring (2006) questions the consequences of marketization for people's quality of life, encouraging scholars and policy makers to find ways in which modern technology and economics can free the world's population from meaningless, harmful, and/or dissatisfying occupations. He expressed doubt as to the capacity of globalization to facilitate human beings' efforts to attain more nutrients, medical care, shelter, satisfaction, and leisure time.

Similarly, the educational researchers Bourdieu (1991), Luke (2011), and Spring (2006) maintain that the most striking feature of neoliberal and transnational doctrines is the standardization of the education systems they promulgate. Regulating educational standards according to the global market metric turns students into obedient and uncritical human beings while posing a serious threat to their indigenous cultures and knowledge (Spring, 2006). Moreover, under the compelling forces of globalization, English language is privileged and has spread rapidly around the globe (Heller, 2010; Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012). However, scholars have claimed that the primacy of the English language is taken for granted in national decision-making and implementation processes worldwide, leading to the absence of equitable and transformative language policies capable of accommodating the needs of disfranchised and minority populations (Appleby, 2010; Erling & Seargeant, 2013; Luke, 2011; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007). Critical language educators (e.g., Canagarajah, 2006; Davis, 2009; Lo Bianco, 2010; Luke, 2011; Tollefson, 1991), indigenous language-planning researchers (e.g., Hornberger, 2008; McCarty, 2006), bi/multilingual education activist scholars (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012; Wiley, 1996), and globalization researchers (e.g., Appadurai, 2000; Block, 2004) have expressed serious concerns about the erosion of local languages, cultures,

epistemologies, and various forms of capital possessed by indigenous communities. It appears that the standardized form of education born in and promoted by the neoliberal ideology has created binary struggles between foreign languages (especially English) and local languages; between Western and local culture; and between market-oriented and culturally and linguistically responsive, boundary-crossing education.

English language expansion. Heller (2010) argues that in order to legitimize the reconstruction of capitalism and the circulation of resources, the global neoliberal agenda works to commoditize a form of language capitalism that emphasizes the expansion of markets and increases the importance of the English language for the following processes:

managing the flow of resources over extended spatial relations and compressed space-time relations; adding symbolic value to industrially produced resources; facilitating the construction of and access to niche markets; and developing linguistically mediated knowledge and service industries. (p. 103)

As a result, these strategies contribute significantly to governments' intensive and extensive eagerness for the high-speed expansion of English. Furthermore, looking at the national level, it is crucial to indicate that there is not much difference in the accelerative movement of embracing and appropriating English in both English colonized and non-English colonized settings (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). It can be interpreted from a wide range of English colonized settings in Asia and Africa (e.g., Coleman, 2011; Markee, 2002; Rubdy & Tan, 2008) that they have gone through an interactive transformation and expansion from a colonial to a neoliberal language. For instance, colonial English countries such as Hong Kong, the Philippines, and India are taming English for historical,

socio-economic, and political processes and are promoting it as an integral part of these countries' efforts to integrate in the global market economy, for technological advancement and nationalism. Together with national languages, colonized countries, moreover, consistently utilize English as an instrument for the national identity, and historical reconstruction, deconstruction, and proclamation both domestically and internationally (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). In both non-colonial English and colonial English-speaking countries, a number of language scholars such as Coleman (2010), Kirkpatrick and Sussex (2012), Rubdy and Tan (2008), and Tollefson and Tsui (2007) hold that English has been expanding as a multinational and multifaceted tool, performing a broad gamut of purposes, such as a vehicle for economic betterment, increased employability and productivity, nation-building, technological advancement, fulfilling personal needs, and serving the cause of national integration (Clayton, 2006; Coleman, 2011; Kariya, 2010; Rubdy & Tan, 2008; Spring, 2006; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). For instance, countries such as Malaysia (Davis & Govindasamy, 2007), Nepal (Phyak, 2011), India (Agnihotri, 2007), Pakistan (Hossian & Tollefson, 2007), Bangladesh (Shamin, 2011), Cambodia (Clayton, 2007), and Japan (Silver & Steel, 2005), as well as countries in Africa (Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia) (Coleman, 2011), have adopted English as a main foreign language, official language, and even medium of instruction for students of minority linguistic backgrounds. Williams (2011) observes that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the extreme favoring of English has led various governments to introduce the language as the medium of instruction even when children do not use it at home. Similarly, Phyak (2011) described the governmentally imposed overhaul of

Nepal's education system from a Nepali monolingual to a multilingual curriculum that requires children in both private and public schools to study English from grade one onwards. In Uganda and other African countries (Coleman, 2011; Williams & Cooke, 2002), the neoliberal English influence is so profound that minority parents insist on education in English for their children.

In order to legitimize English as the vehicle of mainstream education, many governments have argued that the language is closely linked to increased educational opportunities, economic value, and social equity. For instance, the Bangladeshi government launched an "English in Action" program on the assertion that:

... unemployment and growing income inequality [are] two major constraints which may prevent the country from achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals. 'English in Action' will be an important contribution in assisting Bangladesh to overcome such constraints and to improve the livelihoods of its people. (Alexander, 2008; Seargeant & Erling, p. 11, 2011)

Similarly, Meganathan (2011), citing a government report from 2006, describes the use of the English language in India as "a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life" (p. 1). Pandey (2011) also describes the rapid spread of English in India, which has culminated in the building of a temple to the "English Goddess" by Dalit (formerly "untouchable") villagers. Pandey (2011, p. 215) illustrates a Dalit village leader speaking about the establishment of the temple in his village, as follows:

English is the milk of a lioness ... only those who drink it will roar. ... With the blessings of Goddess English, Dalit children will not grow to serve landlords or

skin dead animals or clean drains or raise pigs and buffaloes. They will grow into adjudicators and become employers and benefactors. Then the roar of the Dalits ... will be heard by one and all.

It is clear from these statements that the hegemony of the English language has been expanded not only by governments but by a wide range of actors. Moreover, the rapid spread of English indicates the success of neoliberal capitalism in making both governments and individuals believe in English as a powerful tool to solve various deep-seated social issues such as class division, poverty, and unemployment.

As part of this neoliberal agenda, English has been privileged and commoditized not only through endogenous national strategies but also through the exogenous forces exerted by corporations, international schools, a wide range of philanthropic and educational-exchange missions, Western-duplicate programs, the Internet, television, transnational organizations, and multinational companies (Appleby, 2010; Heller, 2010). Researchers such as Block (2004), Gray (2012), Luke (2011), and Phillipson (2012) have indicated that the investment of Western countries in English language education, the production of materials for an English language curriculum, English testing agencies, and international schools are critical strategies for promoting English inside developing countries, alongside other neoliberal economic and political agendas. Language policy educators such as Seargeant and Erling (2011) and Phillipson (2012) have reported that this neoliberal approach to English is reinforced on an ongoing basis in countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, Burma, and Ukraine by the U.S. and U.K. governments' global push of English language teaching (ELT). Additionally, Phillipson (2012) holds that the partnership between the U.S. Department of State and the teaching English as another

language (TESOL) International Association reflects their joint aim to “work in coordination with US companies, universities, publishers, and other ELT stakeholders to enhance their international outreach and operations” (p. 1). It is apparent, therefore, that the influence of English has crossed national borders in its expansion to numerous education systems, signaling the fluid transmission of neoliberal doctrines and a movement toward the homogenization of world culture (Macedo et al., 2003; Pennycook, 2003; Ricento, 2012). Likewise, Macedo et al. (2003) remark:

...colonial ideology with globalization as its hallmark continues to promote language policies which package English as a ‘super’ language that is not only harmless, but should be acquired by all societies that aspire to competitiveness in the globalized world economic order. As a result, many countries, including many developed nations, eagerly promote an unproblematized English education campaign, where those citizens who opt not to learn English become responsible for their own lack of advancement. (p. 16)

Despite the extreme eagerness to embrace marketable education and the English language on a large scope and scale, the results of commoditizing English have been divisive and for the most part disappointing. In the following section, I discuss the influence of English language policies on a wide spectrum of socio-cultural and economic factors in a large number of countries, especially in developing contexts.

Promoting English language policies: the rhetoric and the reality. Critical researchers in LPP (e.g., Canagarajah, 2005; Ricento, 2008; Rubdy & Tan, 2006; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007) have expressed grave concerns about the capacity for English language policies to cause the serious depreciation and even extinction of local cultures

and languages. The symbolic value of English is often mystified, giving people the strong yet nebulous belief that acquiring English equates to educational, social, and economic advantages. Consequently, individuals belonging to linguistic minority groups often devalue their native languages, or even refuse to receive education in their own tongue (Shamim, 2011; Wedell, 2011). This difficulty is currently ongoing in Pakistan as well as many other countries. As Mustafa (2012) forcefully asserts:

The country [Pakistan] is in a state of linguistic confusion. On the one hand, people are desperate to be seen as being proficient in English when they are actually not. At the same time, they are ashamed of their own language; though that is the only language they can communicate in. (p. 1)

Similarly, Tembe and Norton (2011) and Paulson and McLaughlin (1994) describe the disinclination of parents in Uganda and Namibia to accept the use of native languages in schools, and rejected them as the sole medium of instruction at every level of schooling. In the U.S., the privileging of English implicit in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act seduces people into believing that English is the sole language of national loyalty, opportunity, and success. As Wiley (2007) observes, it is widely believed that “one (singular) language is necessary for national identity. Loyalty to the nation is demonstrated by speaking the national language...bilingualism reflects disloyalty” (p. 253). In other words, this doctrine rejects the possibility that languages can coexist while also embedding the assumption within the minds of immigrant/indigenous/minority people that there is a causal relationship between gaining English fluency and achieving success, integrating oneself with society, and becoming affluent (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Wiley, 2007).

Furthermore, the increasing permeation of English has created serious divisions and collisions between Western and non-Western pedagogical and cultural values. Phillipson (2012) claims that few English educational packages from the West align well with Asian teaching contexts, and thus prevent students from accessing the full wealth of knowledge embedded in their own cultural and linguistic traditions (Fairclough, 2003; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Kirkpatrick and Sussex (2012) and Phillipson (2012) further challenge governments' 'quick fixes' for distributing English to the masses, such as importing native speakers, starting English instruction very early in students' lives, and mandating its use as either a major subject or the primary medium of instruction. Generally, there is a serious tendency for taken-for-granted English language policies not only to weaken the vitality of local languages and cultures but to arouse linguistic conflict and confusion among parents, local communities, and children, especially in developing contexts (Canagrajaph, 2005; Coleman, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Shamim, 2011; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007).

The other damaging consequence of the hegemony of the English language in developing countries is that it frequently enhances the socio-economic disparity between "haves" and "have-nots" (e.g., Bhatt, 2005; Erling, 2013; Shamin, 2011). These and other researchers have argued that promoting monolingual English language policies is a means of reorganizing and reproducing resources for the benefit of elites. For example, English language promotion in Pakistan, India, and Indonesia has enhanced the symbolic capital of these nations' cosmopolitan multilingual elite, while at the same time closing off opportunities to those from a less advantaged socio-economic background (Mutafa, 2012; Rubdy, 2008; Williams, 2011). As Mustafa (2012) states:

Such is the power of myths about language in Pakistan that a public demand has been created for English. People believe that English is the magic wand that can open the door to prosperity. Policymakers, the wielders of economic power and the social elites have also perpetuated this myth to their own advantage. The door of prosperity has been opened but only for a small elite. (p. 1)

Furthermore, language policy scholars such as Rubdy (2008) argue that in the worst-case scenario, subordinate classes fail to gain both fluency in English and the ability to participate in the world by using it. As a result, they are never able to satisfy the demands of the job market. Addressing the reality of English usage, Hossain and Tollefson (2007) contend that the language's hegemony raises significantly more ethical questions within countries still struggling with extreme poverty and high illiteracy rates. According to Coleman (2011), rather than convincing people to spending a large amount of time, energy, and money on obtaining English language skills, policy makers should emphasize more practical pursuits, including learning national languages and obtaining vocational training. It appears that strategies for democratizing English education are capable of fulfilling the economic ambitions of a handful of elites, but not those of the general population (Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Tsui and Tollefson (2007) note that in Asian countries, "English is a language of the educated elite and is not commonly used in daily interactions" (p. 4). A number of other scholars in diverse geographic settings in Asia and Africa have warned that ambiguous English language policies threaten the educational opportunities of children, especially those belonging to minority groups and/or from limited socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., Shamim, 2011; Tembe & Norton, 2011; Williams, 2011). They argue that the association of speaking

English with educational “success” is misleading, as more often than not, English serves merely a decorative function. Yet it is not merely symbolic of cultural and linguistic invasion, but may prevent children from gaining educational and linguistic capital at school (e.g., McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Shamin, 2011). Moreover, numerous studies of English language policies in countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have indicated that the unprepared or ambiguous adoption of English language teaching without seriously taking into account minority students’ socio-linguistic complexities and needs has often driven these students to despair, which in turn has led them to perform poorly in school (Agnihotri, 2007; David & Govindasamy, 2007; Hossian & Tollefson, 2007; Lamb, 2011; Rahman, 2007). In addition, English is often squeezed into an already-overwhelming curriculum, thereby significantly reducing the time available for students to learn other subjects. Such unresponsive and irresponsible language policies thus prevent children from gaining equal access either to English or to other areas of content knowledge that may offer them considerable social, educational, and economic opportunities (Beckett & Postiglione, 2012; Hu, 2005). Likewise, Williams (2011) reports that the use of English as the medium of instruction in the education systems of three African countries, Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia, has brought no benefits, or few benefits, for children who speak other languages but do not speak English at home. Both Coleman (2011) and Williams (2011) caution that such ambiguous and non-negotiable English language policies may drive children to drop out of school; furthermore, they are less likely to complete their primary education when the languages used at home and school are different, and English is the medium of instruction. These policies, therefore, are threatening students’ social welfare, and equipping them only for

low-wage, low-prestige, and insecure jobs. Accordingly, such policies fail to uphold class, race, and language equality and social mobility (Bulter & Inno, 2005; Paulson & McLaughlin, 1994; Silver & Steel, 2005; Warriner, 2007).

Another argument related directly to ambivalent English language policies states that in most cases, English has no power to challenge existing social issues. Seeking to determine the role of English in improving socio-economic situations in developing countries, Coleman (2011) and Williams (2011) conclude that the language is impractical and unsupportive in terms of resolving deep-seated social issues pertaining to the environment, healthcare, and poverty. Williams (2011) opines that the use of English as the medium for education, as in several Sub-Saharan African countries, brings few or no benefits for students. Rather, he argued, the death rate among children whose mothers have completed (English-medium) primary education in these countries is not very different from that of children whose mothers have no education. Williams (2011) concludes that policy makers often fail to understand how difficult it is to conduct state education in a language that few learners, and not all teachers, have mastered. In a similar vein, Coleman (2011) find a lack of evidence to support claims that learning English assists national development by significantly reducing the social risks involved in childbirth, as per data obtained by the United Nations Development Program in 2010. In fact, the use of local languages was more effective in campaigns to reduce the alarming maternal mortality rate in the world's least-developed countries. He notes:

...going back to the UNDP data concerning the risks involved in childbirth, what has English got to do with this? Clearly, not very much, or at least not directly. However, language more broadly does have a very important role to play. One

way in which the dreadful maternal mortality rate in the least developed countries could be reduced would be by providing far more practical training for nurses, midwives and traditional childbirth helpers in language which they understand and in language which they themselves can then use with mothers (Wariyar 2010). Very often, this will mean using a local language rather than an official language—and quite possibly a language which has never been written down, a language which has no recognised standing and which is held in low esteem. Foreign languages, however prestigious, are of no value at all in such circumstances. In many circumstances, therefore, using a local language may be a far more ‘urgent public requirement’ than using English. (p. 7)

This review of literature surveying the spread of the English language reveals that English generally serves to prohibit those from minority and segregated backgrounds from gaining access to socio-economic and educational capital, while severely damaging their chance of gaining linguistic and cultural affluence. Besides these disturbing influences, another question that should be raised is as follows: What benefits can English language use actually bring to people, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds? It seems obvious that the positive outcomes of English are profoundly limited. Seeking to identify the contribution made by the English language in developing contexts, Coleman (2011, p. 18) and Tsui and Tollefson (2007) propose that English may play the following positive roles such as: (a) increasing employability; (b) facilitating international mobility (migration, tourism, studying abroad); (c), unlocking development opportunities and accessing crucial information; and (d) acting as an impartial language in contexts in which other available languages would be unacceptable.

However, these scholars made the clear proviso that more often than not, these benefits are in the hands of middle-class elites and/or members of the ruling class, rather than those who belong to minority and/or economically disadvantaged groups. It appears that the roles of the English language are still extremely ambivalent, and should be investigated further in the complex socio-political, linguistic, and economic setting of each country investigated.

In terms of linking the role of English to larger neoliberal and transnational agendas, we can see that neoliberalism has achieved its aim of promoting English in order to obtain lucrative benefits and increase consumption through a wide spectrum of economic, political, and cultural practices. English has already been promoted as a highly valuable and desirable commodity, and one that multiple actors – including governments, corporations, and individuals – are actively involved in distributing, collaborating, and consuming. However, we can draw from the literature discussed above on shifts in English language usage that the strategies implemented by many governments to promote English as an instrument for localizing labor and bringing about a transition to a market economy has very limited or no benefits for the masses, especially those from minority-language and economically limited backgrounds. It may be worth noting that a small number of people from urban areas have been able to use English to increase their linguistic, educational, and economic capital; yet in most cases, the trend of embracing English has created severe conflict, met with resistance, and exacerbated the suffering of rural, poor, and minority communities across nations. In particular, taking the primacy of English language policies and aspects of their implementation for granted has resulted in the widespread failure to uphold social justice, welfare, economic equality, equitable

education, and linguistic needs at the grassroots level. Moreover, such policies are increasing the hegemony of English and devaluing other languages' intellectual and spiritual knowledge content and diversity. Many scholars (e.g., Bhatt, 2007; Phillipson, 2012) have reached the conclusion that the ultimate beneficiaries of English are a small number of national elites who wield the language as a symbolic means of reallocating their resources, increasing their mobility, and preserving their distinction from less advantaged groups within society. In its current state, therefore, English language policy planning is largely synonymous with planning social, educational, economic, and linguistic forms of injustice for the majority of the population.

Aligning the literature review with my research study indicated that previous studies have helped me to gain a nuanced understanding of the increasingly detrimental influence of English language policies in a variety of contexts. In the process of examining the various kinds of influences that result from the government initiated English language policies, this research account, drawing on the notion of engaged language policy, also seeks to determine whether and how an English language policy can be designed to address the linguistic, socio-economic, and educational needs and challenges of minority groups, without damaging or devaluing their linguistic and cultural uniqueness.

Prior to exploring these concerns with particular reference to the central case study of English language policies in Vietnam, the following section of the study contextualizes Vietnam's English language policies in the backdrop of neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism.

Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Transnationalism and English Language Spread in Vietnam

The extreme eagerness to promote market-oriented neoliberal policies under the guise of globalization has impacted tremendously on Vietnam's economy, education, politics, and foreign relations (McCargo, 2004). Contemporary scholars have worked to transform Vietnam's traditional war-based associations into a focus on national endeavor (Gainsborough, 2009, 2010; McCargo, 2004). Since 1986, leaders have sought to uplift the country from its "muddy days" of economic malaise, famine, poor infrastructure, deficiency of skilled workers, foreign aid, illiteracy, and corruption with a free-market reform program known as *Doi Moi* ("Renovation"). Under a "socialist-oriented market economy," *Doi Moi* decentralizes state control by fostering local and private enterprise. In agriculture, *Doi Moi* reduces the state's ownership of land and grants citizens long-term land ownership and the freedom to invest in market products. In addition, the campaign offers Vietnamese businesses the right to establish trade relations with foreign markets for the purposes of both importation and exportation. The country also promotes trade liberation, creating a global market economy by allowing competitive forces to enter Vietnam from abroad. In sum, *Doi Moi* replaces central planning with local, national and global markets (Kokko, 2004)

Furthermore, the liberal economic policies of post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam continue to leave plenty of room for the involvement of private sectors, foreign donor agencies, and investors all over the world. Consequently, transnational organizations such as the World

Bank,¹ the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the United Nations, as well as other governmental organizations,² have been investing huge amounts of money in education, infrastructure, healthcare, and agriculture in Vietnam. The outcomes, however, are often questionable, due to the unexamined state of the country's top-down administration and the political complexities of both external organizations and the country itself (Dang, 2009). As Hayton (2010) argues, the marriage of state control and decentralization has been “distorting the economy toward the wants of the few rather than the needs of the many” (p. 4).

With the aim of supporting the country's economic transition, Vietnam's politicians have adopted ideologies that foster a less authoritarian and more multi-faceted, multi-segmented, and multi-layered model of governance (Gainsborough, 2010; McCargo, 2004). Unlike Vietnam's post-war period, for example, when national channels hosted predominantly media from Soviet countries, the country's current approach emphasizes international integration, inviting into its borders diverse television networks such as Star Movies, CNN, BBC, and Fashion, as well as regional stations that feature duplicated Western programs. Fast-food restaurants have spread widely in big cities, promoting the perception of a fast-paced and modern urban lifestyle. Similarly, the reform of Vietnam's Internet policy in 1997 encouraged a multiplicity of social and political interactions and interpretations, and provided more fruitful opportunities for people to pursue personal and professional interests and

¹ Until 2007, the World Bank's educational assistance totalled some \$535 million in the areas of grants, loans, and technical assistance.

² Vietnam has received support from international organizations such as UNICEF, and bilateral development agencies and important donors in Canada, the United Kingdom, Holland, Japan, Norway, Singapore, and the United States.

communication with the world. As a result, people in Vietnam now seek to learn English to fulfill a vast number of personal and career aims (Do, 2006; Hoang, 2009).

Globalization not only mobilizes the country's economy but also plays a vital role in shifting centralist political ideologies toward external and internal pluralism. In order to catch up with the global market economy and avoid economic isolation, Vietnam's central party-state has increasingly entered into dialogue with local organizations and individuals, which Kerkvliet (2001) has described as "mobilizational corporatist" politics (p. 268). Alternative designations include "soft authoritarian-corporatist" politics (Dixon, 2004; McCargo, 2004, p. 3) and "discursive politics"³ (Tran, 2004). Furthermore, the government's documents and decisions indicate a growing dialogue between the party-state and wider society in the effort to maximize domestic and international pluralism and democratization.⁴ This effort is reflected in various attempts to resolve post-war conflicts, support citizens' mobilization, and foster domestic economic investment. For instance, internal and external communities alike were pleased by Vietnam's decision to restructure its policies to promote "full national ethnic solidarity" and welcome Vietnamese expatriates back to the country. This not only stimulated the expansion of international relations, but sought to equalize deep-seated, wartime-derived conflicts (Decree No 78/2009/NĐ-CP; Decree No 36/NQ-TW; *Nhan Dan Newspaper*, 1991). Furthermore, the government has promoted a wide range of campaigns, such as *Hoa binh de phat trien* ("development in peace") which

³ A political shift that guides authorities toward providing more consultation and encouraging the exchange of views and information between citizens and political leaders (Tran, 2004).

⁴ I am conscious of, and concur with, Zingerli's (2004) argument that the notion of democracy is greatly contingent upon the setting of a given country and political regime.

stimulates diplomatic dialogue around the globe. These, in return, bring the country economic gain, and prevent its becoming politically isolated from the international environment. Moreover, in order to facilitate the rapid transformation of its political, economic, and foreign investment systems, Vietnam has initiated a series of inclusive policies such as *da phuong hoa* (diversification) and *da dang hoa* (multilateralization) (Politburo Resolution No. 13, May 1998) and solemnly declared: “Vietnam wishes to befriend all countries in the world community” (Dosch & Ta, 2004, p. 197). All these agendas create ample conditions for English expansion in the country.

In addition to the economic and political shift toward globalization, Vietnam has undertaken a vast array of education reforms that vividly highlight the transition of educational spending from the state to individuals (Gainsborough, 2009; London, 2011). That is, although the state claims to be the main provider of education, the chief financial responsibility for educational costs now lies with households as a result of state-sanctioned and nationally promoted campaigns driven by imperatives such as *giao duc la quoc sach hang dau* (“education is the national priority”) and *xa hoi hoa giao duc* (“socialization of education”).⁵ These “socializing” reforms reflect both the reduction of the state budget and the provision of legal permission for “people-founded” political contexts (*truong dan lap*) wherein local authorities exercise wide-ranging control over the choice of educational investors, curricula, and human resources, and determine a wide

⁵ Here, the “socialization of education” refers to the social mobilization of resources for education, with an increasing share of the costs of education borne by consumers rather than the state. London (2004) argues that “socialization” in the Vietnamese education-policy context “carries a meaning precisely opposite to the term’s conventional North American and European meaning, that is, ‘socialisation’ in Vietnam refers to the shifting of costs from the state onto society” (London, 2004, p. 132).

range of fees to meet citizens' demands. This major shift in the responsibility for educational funding emphasizes the non-state provision of education and requires other resources to be generated, while at the same time increasing the demand for "extra study," especially learning English. The direct effect of making households the primary provider for education is, on the whole, to modernize and mobilize education in a variety of ways for certain social groups, especially middle-class families. As Blanc (2004) argues, "access to health and education in Vietnam is crucially linked to the ability to pay" (p. 154). This democratizes the educational choices of middle-class elites, but not those of individuals with low socio-economic status and minority backgrounds. Generally, then, democratized education means more opportunities for elites to study at a public school, at an international school, or abroad.

Furthermore, the ongoing movement toward neoliberal education has given many an "extremely fragile confidence" in the equity, quality, and equality of education for the masses (Doan, 2004; London, 2011; Pham, 2009; Van, 2012). Education in Vietnam has certainly undergone major reforms, and the Ministry of Education frequently reports educational achievements such as illiteracy reduction and the success of policies for the inclusion of ethnic minority groups. However, international education scholars (e.g., Ericson, 2012; Haydon, 2010; London, 2011), Vietnamese educators (Doan, 2011; Van, 2012; Doan, 2004), and a vast array of local newspapers (e.g., *VnExpress*; *Dan Tri*; *Tuoi Tre Online*) and international media (e.g., *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*) have expressed their concerns about a wide spectrum of issues, such as equality, inappropriate curricula, "brain drain," and unequal distribution and access across regions and ethnic groups. Children from rural areas, poor communities, and linguistic minority groups

perform poorly due to the predominance of monolingual and monocultural educational discourses and unresponsive curriculum (Bui, 2009; Truong, 2007). Doan (2004) further argues, “most local newspapers do not hesitate to describe educational innovations in Vietnam as messy, confused and disappointing” (p. 143). Pham (2009) has persuasively argued that the national slogan, “Vietnamese people use Vietnamese products”—or, more specifically, their public schools-as-products—has been rejected by the masses due to the country’s lack of high-quality education. In a paper entitled “Do Vietnamese want to study in public schools (at the current time)?” (my translation), Pham (2009) explains how the insufficient condition of education and educational administration, weak relationships between school and parents, mismatched evaluation systems, poor-quality educational practices, and problematic university expenditure have led to the “collapse of the belief in the quality of public education.” (p. 1).

While Vietnam struggles to find “the most appropriate play for its demanding education theater” (Pham, 2009, p. 1) (my translation), in the globalized world, inhabitants of big cities are increasingly liberating themselves from the country’s limited educational quality by studying abroad.⁶ This contributes to ideological, cultural and linguistic shifts, especially among today’s youth. Nguyen (2004) observes that the notion of success has been privatized and commoditized to suit the rapidly increasing emphasis on neoliberalism, and to meet the demands of the market. Rather than viewing individual success as a means of contributing to national reunification, expressing patriotism, and reinforcing socialism, young people nowadays tend to define “success” in terms of high incomes, educational attainment, and foreign education. The

⁶ Vietnam has shown the greatest increase worldwide in the percentage of its population learning abroad (16%) (Pham, 2009).

student youth increasingly use media and technology such as blogs, Facebook, and YouTube to publicize themselves and their ideologies. They use their new media flexibly to create spaces (Bhabha, 1994) in which to publicize their worldviews about issues such as gay/lesbian rights, educational reform, and ethics (Kieu Trinh, 2013). They also express resistance to and actively reshape established cultural norms by adopting Westernized activities such as breakdancing and skateboarding, as well as Western fashions. Clearly, therefore, globalization and neoliberalism have pluralized, hybridized, and commoditized Vietnamese culture, especially within urban centers. Citizens, especially young minority people, are beginning to negotiate their indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledge vis-à-vis the other regional and Western cultures that intersect their own in everyday life.

Vietnam's social and linguistic landscapes, especially in big cities, are often said to "alter in a night." Fast-food restaurants have added to the perceived modernity and convenience of the urban lifestyle. When commuting to the big cities from rural areas of Vietnam, one continually witnesses new signs and billboards promoting tourism, various forms of technology and entertainment, and supermarkets. These are described in both national languages and/or limited (but present) English, which signals the country's welcoming of modernity. In relation to the unprecedented use of English in public spaces and media, however, Vietnamese individuals such as Minh Long (2009, p.1) have expressed serious concerns about the ever-growing trend of "Englishization" and the "favoring of Western ideas about luxury" in Vietnam. According to them, the Westernization of public spaces and media is not only unpersuasive in a country in which 75% of the population comprises farmers who do not know or need English, but also

undermines the need to respect and preserve the Vietnamese and other minority languages (Minh Long, 2012).

English language policies in Vietnam. Transnational and neoliberal ideologies have further impacted English language policies. The Vietnamese government initiated general curriculum and English language policy reforms in 2000 and 2001 (Decrees Nos. 40/2000/QH 10 and 14/2001/CT-TTg) that required Vietnam to “urgently develop and implement the curriculum nationwide to meet the needs of the country’s modern development.” The reforms further emphasized student-centered pedagogical approaches, stimulating students’ creativity with the ultimate aim of developing and globally integrating the nation. Based on the premise that education should focus on student-centered and self-study approaches similar to those of the West, a new series of Western-oriented textbooks was introduced in 2006 for use by all students nationwide, regardless of their different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

The most recent foreign-language reform, the National Foreign Language Project 2020, which was implemented in 2008, has been described as the most notable language reform in Vietnam’s history. The project requires young Vietnamese citizens to be equipped with English language skills in order to improve national and regional employability and enable them to compete confidently in global job markets against citizens of countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, and China in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation’s (ASEAN) economic integration. Strongly emphasizing the economic and educational value of studying English, the project’s executive director argued that people in these countries have taken most of the available transnational jobs, ranging from construction to service-industry opportunities, because

of their good English skills (Nguyen, 2012; Pham, 2012). According to the government, therefore, the need to promote foreign languages, especially English, is ever more pressing. According to data provided by the government, as many as 20 million students will be benefited from this project (Decision 1400/QD-TTg, 2008). English has already been mandated a compulsory subject for all students nationwide from Grade 3 onwards. Going even further to secure the place of the English language as a required subject, the Ministry of Education has piloted the teaching of mathematics, physics, and chemistry using English as the medium of instruction, in preparation for its future expansion.

Furthermore, in an attempt to ensure that by 2020 most school graduates are obtaining a minimum required level of English, Decision 1400/QD-TTg took an intensive focus on re-training more than 80,000 English teachers in public schools, after the government discovered that only 10% of them had passed the test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and international English language (IELTS)⁷ tests.⁸ Regardless of skepticism from international commentators and various local educators, who believe that the project is unrealistic and completely unachievable at the present time (Ed Parks, 2011), these 80,000 schoolteachers are expected to become confident intermediate-level users of English. On the whole, all of these national English agendas have significantly facilitated the training and re-training of university students, lecturers, and teachers in collaboration with regional and international counterparts to promote English in Vietnam (Decision 1400/QD-TTg, September 30, 2009).

⁷ For instance, 700 teachers from Ben Tre Province in the Mekong Delta were tested, and only 61 obtained the required score (500). In the capital, Hanoi, teachers' IELTS results showed that only 18% had made the B2 grade.

⁸ TOEFL and IELTS are used as the measurements of Vietnamese teachers' English proficiency.

The scholarship above unveils the worldwide agendas of globalization and neoliberalism that consistently attempt to control space, ideologies, benefits, and human and natural resources across continents. It further portrays the spread of the neoliberal impact of the English language sweeping through many (if not most) countries in which English largely marginalizes indigenous, minority, and limited socio-economic student backgrounds from social and educational achievement. Furthermore, scholars across disciplines (Davis et al., 2012; González, 2010; Low & Merry, 2010; Spring, 2006) consistently call for an urgent need of collaborative and agentive interventions to solve wide-ranging global and local issues and promote an equitable language policy. Building on such empirical spate of literature on globalization and English spread, I argue that there is a great deal of research needed to unravel and promote consciousness of the highly potential harms of neoliberal language policies. Therefore, in this study, I employ engaged LPP as it is one of the most effective, fully collaborative, and agentive approaches in raising consciousness in people at the grassroots level who are consistently affected by the catastrophic influences of neoliberal language policies. Furthermore, in moving beyond traditional approaches to LPP research, which takes descriptive and top-down worldviews as the center of the research process and implications, engaged LPP embraces the full participation of the local actors—as creative and highly capable agencies and language policy makers and actors (McCarty, 2011; Menken & Garcia, 2010; Tollefson, 2013) —and the researcher in analyzing, interrogating, and appropriating unequal language policies. This promising approach further serves endangered indigenous/minority languages and cultural preservation, identity

proclamation, and ethnic diversity appreciation. In what follows, I provide a brief discussion of the engaged ethnographic method.

Engaged language policy. The present study draws on critical and engaged language approaches⁹ to examine the complexities and outcomes of the current English language policies in Vietnam using data collected in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural mountainous province in Northern Vietnam. As many as 85% of the people residing in this province come from different minority groups, and share a sense of pride in their rich cultural and linguistic heritage. However, the linguistic and cultural affluence of these minority people has not provided them with advantageous living conditions, as they continue to face a vast number of challenges such as poor healthcare and infrastructure, limited democratic transparency, and segregation. Moreover, people from minority groups in this area depend heavily on subsistence agricultural practices and government aid in the form of technology and transportation, as this province is the least developed and the fifth poorest in Vietnam.

Together with healthcare and other social issues, minority students in the region also face tremendous linguistic challenges. Students from minority groups have their own native languages, which they use at home. On starting school, however, they largely find their native language invalid, because Vietnamese is the medium of instruction for all school subjects. Exacerbating this difficulty, English is enforced as a compulsory subject from Grade 3 onwards, and is taught via Vietnamese. These linguistic situations create formidable challenges, as many students perform poorly in both content subjects and English language classes, and are deprived of the opportunity both to learn academic

⁹ I discuss these approaches in more detail in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Vietnamese and to use their native languages. In direct relation to these language issues, researchers such as Swinch (2010) have found that the challenge of obtaining healthcare (delivered in Vietnamese) is often daunting for minority students and their parents, especially as at least 40% of them have never learned or spoken Vietnamese.

As minority children speak their native languages at home, school very often becomes a threatening environment that prohibits students from gaining social and cultural capital. To add to this stressful situation, students of minority backgrounds often face the additional problems associated with a low socio-economic status, an unresponsive curriculum, high drop-out rates, mismatched evaluation, and the unprofessional behavior of teachers who are mainly drawn from the dominant ethnic group and have little or no linguistic, cultural, or professional experience of working effectively with these students (Bui, 2009). As a result, minority students' opportunities to obtain linguistic, socio-economic, and political capital in mainstream society are extremely limited. Poor-quality education, varying knowledge of Vietnamese, low socio-economic status, and de facto segregation are the major factors responsible for limiting minority students' educational and life opportunities.

My experiences as a teacher in this province, and ongoing conversations with my teaching colleagues and students about English learning, highlighted the ambivalence and contesting ideologies that underpin the current English language policies, and the consequent trepidation about their outcomes. I realized that the ignorance manifested in the region's poor community-based planning, limited sense of belonging, lack of shared socio-cultural principles, and discriminatory linguistic behavior has made the English language mandates much more complex than policy makers have often assumed (Dorian,

2005). Directly challenging the premises on which the government's decision to promote English was based, it seems very likely that the language policies will meet with resistance and reactionary behavior not only for their failure to provide students with a high-quality knowledge of English, but for their threat to socio-cultural and economic access, and their discounting or devaluation of Vietnamese and native languages, skills, cultures, and identities. At the same time, my study uses this complex multilingual setting to explore the essential and varying bi/multilingual needs of minority students in order to help them participate confidently in mainstream society as well as to preserve their identity and culture.

My observations and experiences, my sense of connectedness, and my conversations with teachers and students led me to ask several questions, including the following:

1. What are teachers' and students' experiences of the government-initiated English policies?
2. What are the roles of English in developing minority students' educational and socio-economic opportunities and protecting or threatening students' linguistic and cultural diversity in this province?
3. Do minority students in this province need English at all? If so, for what purposes?
4. What are minority students' and other students' views of the roles of their native languages and the national language (Vietnamese) in comparison with English?

5. In what ways can researchers engage with teachers and students to work toward promoting more linguistically and culturally equitable language policies?

The above questions are key to the effort made by this critical and engaged language policy account to take an activist stance by engaging with both teachers and students to explore and raise awareness of Vietnam's current English language policies. My engaged ethnographic research with both teachers and minority students focuses on critically analyzing, interrogating, and interpreting the ways in which these English language policies affect minority students' socio-economic opportunities, educational equity, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Furthermore, this study aims to empower teachers and students to resist discrimination and create a more linguistically and culturally responsive language policy that promotes equity and social inclusion.

Significance of the study. This study expects to provide Vietnamese policy makers with insight into a range of topics associated with the realities and challenges of the government's current English language policies, as voiced by teachers and students. The most recently launched English language policies, in the National Foreign Language Project 2020, have heightened English learning to a 'extreme temperature' in Vietnam, mobilizing all agents from various disciplines in the distribution, learning, and teaching of English. However, despite the great deal of money, time and energy invested in developing and implementing these educational reforms, it seems that if they are not built upon reliable empirical studies of language policies, they will either be ineffectual or, worse, pose risks and costs to a wide range of social groups in Vietnam, including students. This engaged ethnographic research is thus expected to inform the country's

policy makers of the associated challenges and complexities, along with ways of promoting a more equitable language policy.

Furthermore, my literature review revealed that research studies of English language policies in complex multilingual settings in Vietnam are extremely limited in number and scope. This dearth of rigorously researched literature has created various obstacles to the democratization of education and the implementation of high-quality, responsive English language or other education policies that are able to accommodate cultural and linguistic minority populations in Vietnam. Therefore, by investigating language policies using a critical and reflective approach and suitable methods of engagement, this study hopes to inform researchers, policy makers, and teachers at multiple levels of the significance or lack of English needs for minority populations and the consequences of its enforcement. Moreover, I hope that the results of this study will provide policy makers, educators, investors, and others with significant knowledge of these issues, along with suggestions as to how to create high-quality and equitable language policies, appropriate pedagogical practices, relevant curricula, and valid teacher-training methods, while at the same time protecting and accommodating the country's own national and native languages and cultures.

Having gained an understanding of the challenges resulting from a deficiency of rigorous literature on English language policies in Vietnam, I expect this study not only to inform Vietnamese educators and policy makers of the complexities and probable outcomes of the English LPP currently operating in the country, and the alternatives to this system, but to provide relevant and useful information for Language policy researchers, practitioners, textbook writers, and educators who work in transnational and

cooperative spaces both within Vietnam and in other regions. The ultimate aim is to promote and guide the creation of a responsive and responsible language policy (Davis et al., 2012).

Transnational Language policy scholars such as Canagarajah (2005), Davis et al. (2012), Menken and García (2011), Rubdy (2008), Shohamy (2006), and Warren and Mapp (2011) have called for collaborative engagement to resist unresponsive LPP and advocate positive linguistic and sociopolitical changes. While thus engaging with communities, teachers, and students to analyze, interrogate and find ways of appropriating the current language policies, this study also seeks to suggest ways of developing a more equitable and responsive on-the-ground language policy approach that prioritizes students, teachers, and communities over policy makers.

Finally, this dissertation expects to contribute empirical knowledge that helps build solid theoretical, pedagogical, and pragmatic foundations for LPP, so as either to “tame” the unprecedented influence of English or to turn it into an additional language supportive of students’ native languages and cultures, thereby maximizing their rich local and international meta-linguistic repertoire.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation engages with teachers and students in critical dialogue about the effects of English language policies on minority students in a highly multi-ethnic and multi-lingual setting in Vietnam. It also seeks to empower minority students and teachers to critically interrogate existing policies, and negotiate and promote a more equitable and responsive language policy.

To support these major goals, Chapter 1 of my dissertation discusses the relationship between neoliberalism, globalization, and transnationalism, and the expansion of English language use. It also looks at how these factors have assisted the spread of English in Vietnam. The final sections of Chapter 1 describe the purposes and significance of this engaged ethnographic study.

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the field of LPP, which is becoming ever more political, critical, and multifaceted, and subsequently takes a focus on bottom-up LPP in order to address local needs. The next part of the chapter focuses exclusively on LPP as the foundation for a discussion of two dominant English phenomena and Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, which guides this research account. In addition, this chapter addresses theories of multilingual language and literacy learning and translanguaging, which offer valuable insight into means of interpreting existing linguistic practices and promoting democratic and effective equivalents on behalf of minority students and teachers.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theory of engaged ethnography, a methodological framework for this study. To this end, the chapter describes Paulo Freire's theory of consciousness-raising, which frames the creation in this study of critical dialogue with both minority students and teachers concerning Vietnam's language policies. Together with Freire's theory, Chapter 3 also discusses critical ethnography and engaged ethnography as key means of empowering teachers and students to unravel, question, and promote equitable language policy and diversity. The final section of this chapter offers a description of the researcher's positionality, and addresses the ongoing and interactive nature of data collection and analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 consist of a portrayal of engaged LPP, which includes the researcher's engagement in dialogue form with teachers and students to interpret, interrogate, and find ways to promote a linguistically and culturally responsive and equitable language policy. Specifically, chapter 4 portrays my collaborative engagement with minority students in exploring their language attitudes on three languages, their native language, Vietnamese, and English. Chapter 5 reflects how the schools of these minority students interpret the current English language policies through exploring teachers' views, challenges, and needs. It further documents teachers' ideological, pedagogical transformation and curriculum appropriation, which fosters students' academic performance while validating their linguistic and cultural diversity as an effective resource for teaching and learning.

Finally, Chapter 6 explores the implications of this study by comparing the results of the study with the literature review of English spread and the promising rationales of neoliberalism. It also theorizes the notion of engaged ethnography LPP employed in this research study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for promoting equitable LPP by foregrounding multiple actors such as young people, teachers, and communities as policy makers working to promote multiculturalism and active democratic participation and thereby to resist monoculturalism and monolingualism, and develop a just society.

Chapter 2. Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is to engage minority students and teachers in a mountainous region of Vietnam in critically interpreting and challenging the country's recently implemented English language policies, in order to negotiate local recognition of the needs and diversity of minority-language groups. The study also aims to foster teachers' and students' collaborative efforts to create more equitable language policies and education practices. Therefore, this conceptual framework begins with a discussion of recent trends in language policy research—first top-down and then bottom-up methods—and then moves toward an exploration of the complex intersections of language ideologies, language policies, and local language-education practices. The second part of the chapter addresses the expansion of neoliberal English language practices, and how these practices relate to the roles and consequences of English usage in Vietnam. The final part of the chapter discusses theories of multilingual language and literacy learning, which provide an essential foundation for my own engaged language policy and planning (LPP) practices with teachers and minority students.

Language Policy

In the context of widespread globalization and transnationalism, research has moved toward unraveling the complex ideologies, processes, consequences, and struggles associated with language policies. As a result, it has become increasingly critical, multifaceted, and interdisciplinary. In the early 1960s, language policy studies tended to focus on national language policies, nation building, standardization, and officialization at the macrocosmic level (e.g., Ferguson, 1966; Haugen, 1966). Their principal aim was to find solutions to problems with language policy, which made them linear and restricted

in scope, repeating the circular process of identifying a problem, formulating an appropriate policy, implementing and evaluating that policy, and revising accordingly (Shouhui & Baldauf, 2012). Moreover, early LPP researchers tended to employ a positivist research framework, using official acts and documents to interpret language policies (Warhol, 2012). However, LPP scholars have increasingly taken a critical stance over the past two decades that challenges the earlier top-down approach (e.g., Davis, 1994, 1999, 2012; Hornberger & Ricento, 1996; McCarty, 2011). These and other researchers argue that the early work on language policy—which was not only mainly descriptive but politically and ideologically neutral—failed sufficiently to problematize the interdisciplinary use of language as a mechanism of social control, complete with hidden ideologies favoring the socio-economic interests of the ruling elite (Tollefson, 1991; Ricento, 2000; Warhol, 2012). The field of LPP has subsequently seen an increase in the number of studies that move beyond this traditional positivist and top-down research model in favor of a postmodern critical approach (e.g., Hornberger & Ricento, 1996; Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2012; Tollefson, 2008) that questions the ideological, socio-structural, and historical complexities of LPP (Canagarajah, 2011). LPP researchers have become conscious of the critical linkage between LPP and social justice, and the considerable impact of social and economic inequalities on the lives, social welfare, language, culture, and self-identification of minority, immigrant, and segregated populations (e.g., Coleman, 2011; Shohamy, 2006; Tollefson, 2013). As Wiley (1996, p. 104) contends, “there is usually more at issue [in LPP] than just language, because decisions about language often lead to benefits for some or loss of privilege, status, and rights for others.”

As language policy is to a large extent politically, linguistically, and socially situated (e.g., Davis, 2012; Ricento, 2008), experts in the field have argued that LPP research cannot be detached from the government's larger political, linguistic, and socio-economic agendas (e.g., King & Hornberger, 2008; Lo Bianco, 2008; McCarty, 2011). This research trend is reflected in a number of studies. Taking a combined socio-historical and political approach, Davis (1994) investigates the roles of a wide range of political, economic, social, and linguistic conditions in shaping language policies in Luxembourg. She recommends taking into account socio-economic and political complexities in order to uncover the hidden ideologies embedded in language policies, and argues for the importance of on-the-ground research models in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the struggles and inequalities that dramatically affect working-class children. Similarly, researchers such as González (2010) and Zenella (2005) working with Latino immigrants, have called for the deconstruction of policy makers' political and cultural objectives to address the difficulties faced by immigrant peoples and engage them in the process of interrogating issues of language diversity and social justice. These authors contend that neither language nor schooling is a neutral site; rather, both are associated with contested and contesting discourses of power. Likewise, based on their work with immigrant and indigenous communities, González (2010) and McCarty (2011) advise LPP researchers to reflect continually on the purpose of schooling, paying particular attention to the roles of language and literacy in the process of excavating the ideologies that underpin political economies and educational discourses. This critical-research framework has been taken up by a large number of researchers, including Clayton (2006), Coleman (2011), Song (2011), and Rappa and

Wee (2007), who unpack the linguistic ideologies and realities of LPP with reference to a wide range of socio-political, economic, and linguistic shifts in Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, and several other Asian countries.

In parallel with the movement toward investigating language policy in its social, economic, and political contexts, scholarship has begun to move away from the national, official, “top-down” approach to address “bottom-up” language policy practices (McCarty, 2001; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Tollefson, 2002). Drawing on socio-cultural theory¹⁰ and ethnographic approaches, a number of scholars scrutinize language policy at the micro level, both inside and outside the school setting. They focus on language shift, maintenance, revitalization, and endangerment, as well as bilingual education, the roles of schools and teachers, and the medium of instruction policies. For instance, Hornberger (1998) investigates bilingual education in Quechua communities in Peru; McCarty (2002) explores bicultural education in a Navajo community in the U.S.; and Shohamy (2010) examines community resistance to Israel’s centralized monolingual educational mandates. Other researchers focus on micro level language policy with reference to local and classroom practices and teachers’ roles as policy enactors in schools in contexts such as that of the U.S. (e.g., Johnson & Freeman, 2010) and France (Helot & Young, 2006; Helot & de Majia, 2008). These and other scholars undertaking on-the-ground language policy research (e.g., Freeman, 2004; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) call for the formation of a space in which educators and community members can negotiate and address community needs and create more equitable bilingual educational practices. They also emphasize local agency and the self-

¹⁰ Sociocultural theory offers a perspective from which to examine LPP by uncovering the relationships between language and power (e.g., Gee, 1996; Warhol, 2012).

determination of local/indigenous people (McCarty, 2002) challenging unequal official language policy and bringing about change through grassroots movements.

While continuing to explore language policy as locally grounded, LPP scholars are paying increasing attention to language policy as an instrument of power in the intersections between global, national, and local ideologies, policies, and practices (e.g., Davis et al., 2012; Hill & May, 2011; McCarty, 2011; Nicolas, 2011). Shouhui and Baldauf (2012, p. 3) state that this research movement emphasizes the complexity of LPP research, which can and does occur at different levels—macro, meso, and micro—and enter into previously “uncharted territory.” Researchers embracing this approach argue that language policy is never free from constraints, but rather constructed by larger power regimes that limit individual agency and bring about institutional challenges (Tollefson, 2006). In order to grasp the complex trajectories involved in language policy, language policy scholars pay special attention to unraveling language ideologies: a critical and political mode of analysis (Pennycook, 2000; Tollefson, 2006) that pinpoints the intersections of global, national, and local frameworks. For instance, Hopson (2011) and Phillipson (2012) scrutinize the multiple ideologies at stake in the juncture between global and local within Namibia and the U.S. They suggest that ideologies include the neoliberal and transnational doctrines that underpin the expansion of English language usage; the covert and overt national agendas involved in legalizing the English language; and on-the-ground attitudes toward English language policies. McCarty (2011) argues that the major aim of unraveling ideologies at multiple levels is to gain an in-depth understanding of the agencies involved in the creation of language policies (e.g., neoliberal, national) and their agendas (e.g., capital gain, assimilation, nation building,

discrimination), as well as identifying those who benefit from language policies (e.g., global corporations, national elites, and others powerful groups or individuals who benefit from capital gains and enlarged power/status), and the consequences of such policies (e.g., the loss of language and identity, educational inequality), especially for disfranchised communities. Therefore, critical analysis of language-related ideologies enables LPP researchers to determine how language ideologies shape language policies and is intertwined with power, race, class, and identity (Baugh, 2000). McCarty (2011) and Tollefson (2006) hold that examining language ideologies at multiple levels also reflects language policy researchers' efforts to transform perceptions of "language as a problem" (Ruiz, 1988)—the harmful ideological agenda which aims to suppress bilinguals and multilinguals and assimilate children into usage of the dominant language—into an understanding of language as a right and a resource (Ruiz, 1988; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The latter approach promotes linguistic human rights, education in the mother tongue, and bi-/multilingualism for all. A number of scholars not only investigate language policy through analysis of language ideologies and language policies, but also link these two components with language practice at the local level. In particular, they focus on various dimensions of language practices, including linguistic experiences, behavior, agencies, engagement, resistance, inequalities, struggles, rights, identities, and the transformation of language policy into practice at the intersections of global and local contexts (e.g., Shohamy, 2006; Song, 2011; Williams, 2011; Wyman, 2009). In so doing, they allow the actions and voices of the multiple actors involved in these practices to be seen and heard (Hill & May, 2011). Canagarajah (2011), for example, investigates the ideologies, negotiations, and hybrid practices of Tamil diaspora

communities seeking to preserve their culture and language in the context of global, national, and local meeting-points between their native country, Sri Lanka, and their new homes in the U.S, Canada, and the United Kingdom. He shows how Tamil diaspora communities, who face civil war in their native country and the constraints of national language policies in their new countries, have reconciled their ambivalent attitudes to language maintenance by means of a shift from upholding their heritage language to upholding their ancestral culture. He urges LPP researchers to look critically and carefully at such complexities, and to remain sensitive to the differences in language maintenance and language needs between diaspora communities in different socio-historical settings. Nicolas (2011), who pursues a comparative approach across communities, documents the ways in which Hopi youth redefine the national language policy discourse that threatens the preservation of their native language and their access to educational equity. At the same time, she illustrates their hybrid linguistic practices and conflicting language ideologies, and calls for the empowerment of youth as creative language policy makers at the intersections between global and local. Addressing indigenous Maori communities, Hill and May (2011) investigate the implications of macro-level language policies for indigenous language maintenance and multilingual education. They emphasize the role of national language policy in supporting Maori-language maintenance and bilingual Maori schools. The ethnographic educators Combs, González, and Moll (2011) explore the enactment of Arizona's Proposition 203 to uncover the national discourses and ideologies that attempt to assimilate immigrant students into official English language usage. They also portray the interruption of official English-only policies by bilingual teachers' linguistic and pedagogical

interventions. These researchers argue that even in mandated English-immersion classrooms, children can create hybrid or third spaces in which to capitalize on their multilingual and multicultural funds of knowledge for learning. It is clear from the above scholarship of recent LPP research that scholars are engaged in examining the connections between language policy and practice, and the multiple trajectories of LPP—official and unofficial, de facto and de jure, macro and micro, national and local—not only across studies, but within the scope of each individual study (McCarty, 2011; Hornberger & Johnson, 2011). We also see that recent LPP research addresses extremely diverse topics, including the rights of linguistic minorities, language usage and attitudes to language usage (Canagarajah, 2011), language diversity and maintenance (Combs et al., 2011; Nicolas, 2011), and socio-political and socio-historical agendas and inequalities (Combs et al., 2011; Hopson, 2011). In general, we can conclude that the recent trend in LPP scholarship is remarkably dynamic, interactive, complex and multilayered, addressing numerous discourses and processes, distinguishing between voices, disclosing covert agendas, perspectives, and motivations, and examining the various consequences of LPP within and among populations and across boundaries.

Within this research trend, which addresses language policy and practice at the intersections between global, national, and local trajectories, a number of researchers have begun to move in the direction of language policy advocacy. This research approach engages individual actors and institutions (governments, language policy makers, teachers, domestic and international organizations, youth, and communities) (Coeho & Henze, forthcoming; Menken & García, 2010; Shohamy, 2006; Smith, 2012) in critically analyzing official language policy, while fostering their respective agencies in bringing

about ideological and implementational transformation. Unlike previous research studies, which tended to neglect the agencies of language policy actors, this framework stresses the roles of various actors in actively shaping, mediating and creatively resisting LPP in numerous political and social contexts (e.g., Jaffe, 2011). This emphasis on agency allows LPP researchers to explore individuals' constant negotiation with and co-construction of a series of discursive language practices in education and within society at large (Davis, 2009). Researchers seek to open spaces for individuals to intervene collaboratively in unequal language authority, to resist such authority, and to form their own worldviews, personal identities, and desires with respect to language. In support of this research movement, the anthropologist and educator González (2010, p. 257) explains that advocacy research works to address such core concerns as “who has access to resources, in whose interest is research undertaken, and how [...] policy research [can] be driven in a way that is respectful of and responsive to communities.” LPP scholars such as Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) hold that the emphasis on agency in the fashioning of language policy represents LPP's movement away from language policies as single entities to “language policy making” as a form of engagement designed to dismantle unequal language policies and create spaces for change. Many studies stress the agency of teachers in mediating and negotiating between policies, pedagogical practices and institutional constraints (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007); and numerous LPP researchers seek to engage teachers in identifying and interpreting the meeting-points and clashes between national language policies and the practical application of those policies. In so doing, they aim to empower teachers as epicenter language policy makers. In engaging teachers in this way, scholars create a space in which for them to interpret the

impact of national language acts or laws (such as the No Child Left Behind Act in the U.S., and other countries' use of English as the medium of instruction) on their own professional agency, as well as the consequences of these acts and laws for indigenous/minority students, communities, schools and broader social and political settings. Coeho and Henze (forthcoming) engage with rural Nicaraguan teachers and NGO leaders to encourage and assist their analysis of the uses of English in their communities, seeking to promote teachers and students as co-explorers of language policies in order to implement more effective school practices. Together, these recent research studies call for the validation of teachers as leading language policy makers/planners capable of challenging teaching practices that severely damage students' cultural and traditional epistemologies and impede their access to education and wellbeing. In their work to empower teachers as critical language policy makers, Menken and García (2009) and Shohamy (2006) insist that teachers are not simply recipients or passive translators of official policy, but active and creative agents capable of collaborating with their students, with their students' parents, and with community activists to resist and appropriate top-down language policies, support educational equity, and safeguard linguistic and cultural diversity. In short, the work of engaging teachers helps them to negotiate and challenge national language ideologies and policies, while opening new ideological and implementational possibilities for micro, meso, and macro level change (Hornberger, 2006).

Besides engaging teachers in critical dialogue about LPP, and helping them to intervene successfully in policy making and implementation, a number of LPP scholars engage with other individuals and communities (including academics, policy makers,

authorities, activists, and institutions, and, notably, indigenous/minority youth) to unravel the nature, application, and consequences of LPP, and bring about a collective movement toward educational and social change. Ethnographic language policy scholars such as Canagarajah (2005), Davis et al. (2012), Hossian (2012), Hornberger and Swinehart (2012), Luke (2011), McCarty (2008), Romero-Little (2012), and Smith (2012) also advocate educational equity and language policy engagement through a specific emphasis on local history, culture, and indigenous/minority epistemologies. Drawing on the Freirian model of consciousness-raising, and viewing local history, culture, and knowledge as forms of capital, Davis et al., (2012) engage actors at the macro, meso, and micro levels (including national language policy makers, community members, minority youth, and teachers) in critically interpreting, interrogating, and appropriating national language policies that legitimize English while ignoring and/or silencing other indigenous/minority languages. Furthermore, their research exposes the significant lack of correlation between the promises made by global and neoliberal proponents of English language usage and the educational success, socio-economic development, and linguistic and cultural preservation of indigenous and minority groups in both Nepal and Vietnam. Hornberger and Swinehart (2012), McCarty (2008), and Romero-Little (2012), ethnographers working with indigenous communities, draw on globalization theory and frameworks for the participation of young people in critical research (Appadurai, 2006), to engage the indigenous youth of the Hopi, Yup'ik, and Navajo communities in defining their countries' unresponsive language policies, their own linguistic ideologies, and language shift on a national scale. The researchers also stress the hybrid linguistic practices of indigenous youth, and the associated potential for indigenous-language

maintenance. They argue that indigenous and minority languages must be valued and used as the medium of instruction within schools in order to uphold these communities' right to equitable education, and accommodate their cultural and linguistic heritage. Based on their significant experience of and dedication to the task of engaging indigenous and minority adolescents, along with various other groups within communities, the aforementioned researchers conclude that the recent emphasis on advocacy research opens up the possibility of ideological and implementational transformation at multiple levels. Such transformation reflect local actors' increasing recognition of predetermined language policies, and their enhanced collective agency in promoting democratic education, protecting the identities of local people, and fostering multicultural and multilingual policy planning. In addition, these researchers emphasize the agency of local actors as social and political activists capable of interpreting, resisting, and shaping language policy and practice at local, national, and global intersections across countries, space, and time (McCarty, 2008).

In summary, it can be argued that the increasing emphasis in language policy research on the interaction of language ideologies, language policies, and practices has ushered in an era of engaged LPP. Therefore, engaged LPP can be defined as a remarkably constitutive, interdependent, interactive, and fully socio-historical and political activist endeavor that engages multiple agents in scrutinizing and addressing highly complex global and national socio-political agendas, motivations, voices, linguistic human rights, equity, access, and diversity across boundaries and contexts. Specifically, it is a “globally informed and locally enacted” (Davis et al., 2012, p. 17) dynamic movement that accommodates individual and collective human inquiries about

language policy, as well as interactions and negotiations with, resistance to, and transformation of such policy in the interests of social change. It is clear, in short, that researchers of engaged LPP have moved beyond earlier incarnations of language policy research—abstract, politically neutral, and text-oriented – to engage multiple actors in close critical analysis of language policy at the intersecting macro, meso, and micro levels. The macro level requires researchers to closely and critically define the role of language policy as social practice by unraveling the connections between language policy and transnational, global, and neoliberal ideologies. Engaged LPP at this level means researchers engagement in analyzing official language policy texts and interpreting the processes and consequences of language policy decisions in relation to global doctrine and language agendas (e.g., English as neoliberal ideology). They also scrutinize the immediate consequences of language policy in economic terms and with reference to healthcare, individual and community wellbeing, and conflicts that may further disadvantage linguistic-minority groups (Luke, 2010; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). The meso level of engaged language policy involves researchers engaging multiple communities in the process of collaborative research (Davis et al., 2012; Phyak & Bui, forthcoming). This encourages researchers who belong to or have close relationship with minority and/or marginalized communities to critically assess their socio-political and educational conditions in the interests of creating and promoting more equitable practices. Engaged LPP at this level thus entails far-ranging and in-depth analysis of language policy and practice, carried out in dialogue and active participations between individuals, institutions, and policy makers. Researchers seek to engage government officials, profit and non-profit organizations, educational authorities, teachers, administrators, parents,

students, and community activists in dialogue on overt and implicit language policy and its application while working toward proclaiming linguistic human rights and equitable language education and enhancing awareness of social issues for certain populations, institutions, and/or communities. Thus, they open critical spaces in which to negotiate multicultural identity and agency. At the micro level of engaged LPP, researchers address local responses to language policy—appropriation, resistance, and transformation—as they occur in everyday social practice. Many researchers have examined the roles of local historical and political settings in linguistic suppression and fully exercised their political commitment to work with local actors including teachers, children, youth, parents, and community members to address local needs and the potential for positive transformation. Therefore, engaged LPP at the micro level opens a space for both researchers and local actors not only to support the language and education rights of minorities, but to address a broad spectrum of the challenges that directly face minority groups, including threats to equity, health, land rights, and human rights. This engaged LPP process also enables local authorities, teachers, and students to enrich their own knowledge and experience of consciousness-raising with regard to unequal education and language policies. This promisingly further helps them to exercise their agencies as local leaders capable of creating positive changes in their communities.

The trend of language policy scholarship looking at the interplay of global ideologies, national policies, and local practices, and the notion of engaged-LPP are particularly salient to the research study described here. It leads me to investigate Vietnam's English language policies from global and national language policy processes to the local social and educational practices of a mountainous area of Vietnam. In

particular, engaged LPP offers a research framework within which to engage with teachers and minority students, seeking not only to determine whether the current English language policies address their socio-economic, educational, and linguistic needs but also to open a democratic space for raising consciousness, validating minority languages and cultures, and appropriating and transforming unequal language policy. As a whole, engaged LPP guides this study to unravel and challenge the central issues of power relations, hidden ideologies, and identity, as well as the roles of neoliberal English language agendas in constraining multiculturalism, preventing equitable schooling, and threatening the languages of minority communities.

Besides the discussion of the recent trends in language policy research, which offers an important framework for this account, I draw on other valuable theories to inform my engaged ethnographic interaction with teachers and students regarding a wide spectrum of issues related to current English language policies. Therefore, the following section of the chapter describes in more detail the relationship between the expansion of English and Vietnam's language policy. This is followed by a description of Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction and language as symbolic power. The final section outlines the theories of literacy learning and multilingual language learning that have been of particular value to this research account.

Vietnam's Language Policy: Neoliberalism and English Spread

In Chapter 1, I mentioned neoliberal English language doctrines and the remarkable speed and scope of the expansion of English language usage across continents. This section looks in more depth at the relationship between neoliberalism and the English language spread as a means of interpreting the roles and outcomes of

Vietnam's language policy, especially its requirement that minority student populations use English in school.

Neoliberalism has become a compelling force in influencing public and private lives, sectors, and decision-making (Holborow, 2012), especially in pushing the global spread of English (Piller & Cho, 2013). Scholars such as Holborow (2012) and Stiglitz (2003) define neoliberalism as an economic doctrine that fosters global expansion for advanced capitalism and was reinforced in the wake of the Great Depression and World War II. Arguing that the state is inefficient in promoting market freedom, neoliberal ideologies promote 'free' market, financial deregulation, and widespread privatization of public services. Thus, through 'free' economic ideologies, neoliberalism claims to provide citizens with social freedom, economic rights, and employment choices. Critics of neoliberalism, such as Holborow (2012), Phillipson (2002, 2012), and Tupas (2001), argue consistently that the spread of English is inseparable from a larger neoliberal project in which English is used as a 'soft'-power instrument to construct a new global economic order with a corresponding system of power and control. Furthermore, seeking to extend the hegemony of English to promote capitalism, the neoliberal agenda has extended the use of English enormously, through socio-linguistic processes such as nativization, hybridization, and localization. In reality, English as international language (EIL) and English as lingua franca (ELF)¹¹ (Crystal, 2003; McKay, 2003) are products

¹¹ EIL is the result of the fluid integration of cultural heritage and popular culture, of continuity and tradition, and of border-crossing, global appropriation, and the transformation of the local (Pennycook, 2003). Pragmatically, it refers to the use of English between any two second-language (L2) speakers of English, regardless of whether those speakers share the same culture. ELF is defined as the use of English between speakers of different first languages who use the English language as a supplementary and shared means of communication (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008).

of the economic, educational, and technological agendas of neoliberalism. English has become a cosmopolitan language, commoditized and localized at a rapid pace across regional, national, and international boundaries (Lin & Martin, 2005; Phillipson, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). As neoliberalism is the set of interlocking ideologies that underpins a “gung-ho, freewheeling, unlimited market capitalism” (Holborow, 2006, p. 7), English becomes both a visible commodity (in the form, for instance, of music and other media, language schools, textbooks, and call centers) and an invisible one: a global and political agenda for reproducing ideologies such as that of free trade, the global village, and interconnectivity (Tupas, 2001). In turn, these economic environments create favorable conditions for English to become a new source of capital gain. Furthermore, in fostering the flow of capital in a borderless world, neoliberalism delegates political control to an increasing number of multidimensional corporations (including the U.S’ global financial bodies - the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the European Union) and imposes increasingly stringent conditions for trade in services, labor, technical assistance, and economic and educational aids (Holborow, 2006; Luke, 2011; Tupas, 2001). It also cultivates an ideology of consumerism among individuals by elevating brand-name products and promoting shopping as a fulfilling life experience (Kobuta, 2011). In education, the neoliberal project leads countries rapidly to embrace standardization for academic excellence, uniformity, privatization, marketization, internationalization, and English curriculum and instruction (Gray, 2012; Luke, 2011; Piller & Cho, 2013).

As neoliberalism continues to encourage the spread of English, the ubiquity of the language has met with increasing criticism for the threat it poses in various domains of

society, politics, culture and economy (Rapatahana, 2012). Coleman (2011), Luke (2011), Phillipson (2008; 2012), and Tupas (2001, p. 87) warn that the neoliberal English agenda, as legitimized by various public and private programs and institutions internationally, must be seriously challenged as it has “wreaked havoc upon much of the developing world” and created “metropolitical economic and political centers” in developed nations. Holborow (2012), Phillipson (2008), and Tupas (2001) censure institutions such as the World Bank in the U.S. and the International Monetary Fund as ideological centers of capitalism that subjugate developing nations, economically colonize, and create corrupt leaders through language-aid (mostly English language) programs, debt-relief programs, and reform initiatives oriented toward Western standards (Luke, 2011). Rooted in the capitalist framework, these and other neoliberal organizations further reduce governments’ responsibility and accountability for education, health, and social welfare (Holborow, 2006; Pennycook, 2003; Stiglitz, 2003) by privatizing public institutions that provide basic goods and services for the masses (London, 2011). Thus, in developing countries, the neoliberal English language project can serve to considerably increase rather than ameliorate the suffering of citizens of these nations (e.g., Bratt, 2005; Williams, 2011; Whiteheads, 2011). Kobuta (2011) argues that the spread of the English language is extremely complex, and dependent on a whole series of ideologies and practices, including those relating to gender. She calls for critical analysis of questions such as for whom and for what purposes English is used. In agreement with Kubuta (2011), scholars such as Coleman (2011) and Rapatana (2012) describe English explicitly as an “upper-class”—that is, legitimized—standard used by only a small number of educated people worldwide for cultural and economic production. Holborowl (2012)

holds that the neoliberal doctrine has been found to be highly contradictory and English mostly has yielded no or very little linguistic and cultural materials for the masses in the neoliberal world order. Yet, scholars who criticize neoliberalism's privileging of English, such as Lo Bianco (2010) and Luke (2011) express more serious concern about its erosion of local languages, cultures, and traditions, especially those belonging to linguistic minorities and economically disadvantaged communities. We can see that the global hegemony of English clearly poses an unprecedented risk to educational quality and equity by preventing people from obtaining socio-cultural capital, and dispossessing their languages and cultures.

In its support for the neoliberal agenda, Vietnam has actively and enthusiastically reformed English language education through a series of national strategies, namely English-curriculum reform, teacher training, incentive policies for foreign English graduates/teachers (e.g., travel and housing plans), and various forms of international cooperation (Nguyen, 2012; Kieu Trinh, 2012). English is already a compulsory subject from Grade 3, and taught via Vietnamese. Furthermore, the government has also made preparations to introduce English as the sole medium of instruction in the near future. In light of scholarly critiques of neoliberalism and the English language spread, however, I argue that Vietnam's English-oriented language policy may be "gung-ho" (Holborow, 2006) rather than realistic, especially for citizens who struggle merely to survive and have limited academic Vietnamese like the student population in this research study. In particular, aligning with the studies on the impacts of the English language policies, this study asks who benefits from learning English according to Vietnam's language policy, and whether students—especially the minority students in this research—are able to gain

access to high-quality English education that can significantly support them in obtaining other forms of social capital. Drawing on the literature examined above, my research study also inquires into whether these students achieve educational success and a solid linguistic repertoire of all three languages (their native tongue, Vietnamese, and English). It is possible that the standardized English language policies may, on the contrary, marginalize students from minority ethno-linguistic backgrounds, and deprive them of the unique traditions and epistemological frameworks that underpin their identities and agencies and ensure the diversity and stability of society at large. I address these concerns through description and analysis of engaged LPP dialogue with minority students and teachers in Chapters 4 and 5.

In addition to drawing on the theoretical framework of neoliberalism and the English language spread as an entry-point to identifying the roles of English in Vietnam, this research study draws on Bourdieu's influential theories of social reproduction and language as symbolic power. These theories have a crucial role in aiding understanding of the social, linguistic, and educational inequality propagated by Vietnam's "one-size-fits-all" language policies. I discuss these theories in the following section,

Bourdieu's Theories of Social Reproduction and Language as Symbolic Power

In scholarship on the ways in which practices within educational and other social institutions may mirror larger social and political agendas and linguistic and educational inequality, researchers across disciplines have drawn on Bourdieu's (1991) social reproduction theories that involve the intersection of censorship, symbolic power, capital, field, and habitus (Grenfell, 2012; Luke, 2008).

Bourdieu holds that for individuals to effectively perform in a certain field such as school, they need to possess the acceptable habitus, a set of transposable dispositions obtained through socialization, that one develops through particular class- and culture-based ways of seeing, being, and occupying social space. Habitus represents speakers' social characteristics—both mental and physical—with regard to their ways of speaking, gesturing, and embodying communicative actions in a given language or discourse (Hanks, 2005). Bourdieu suggests that if speakers wish to produce discourse successfully within a particular field, they must perform the forms and formalities of that field. However, he argues that these forms and formalities most often draw on the language and discourse expectations of upper class members and, thus, legitimize certain ways of speaking while silencing others. This process works to automatically intimidate speakers and censor speech without any overt signs of intimidation or censorship. Bourdieu calls this effect “censorship naturalization”—“the muting of critique and individual expression according to what is rewarded or sanctioned in the field” (Hanks, 2005, p. 76). Bourdieu (1991) further holds that language's symbolic power is camouflaged and legalized by and within a gamut of educational discourses and mechanisms such as educational mandates, standards, evaluation systems, and the “one-size-fits-all” curriculum. Symbolic power in language and education not only refers to the specific type of power generated by the sanctioning and naturalization of language and education policies, but also describes most forms of power that are dependent on each other and utilized in social life.

In sum, Bourdieu's (1992, p. 97) field theory describes “a network or a configuration of objective relations between positions,” representing structured social spaces formed by discourse and social activity. Schools are one example of the many

intersecting social spaces that an individual may encounter; s/he then takes up a position within that space according to how much capital s/he has (Davis, 2009; Hanks 2005; Kramsch, 2008; Luke, 2008). Applications of the habitus theory generally emphasize the need for students to be aware of language and literacy as situated practices manifesting larger systems of power relations, both in and out of school (Grenfell, 2012; Kramsch, 2008).

Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction provide a crucial framework for understanding inequitable education in relation to Vietnamese as a standardized language and the "one-size-fits-all" language policies explored here. His theories especially offer insight into the operation of social reproduction on three intersecting levels: national policy, schools, and communities. I first explore social reproduction and the symbolic power of language in the context of Vietnam's national language policies. My investigation further seeks to determine whether the standardized Vietnamese-language instruction, and the uniform application of compulsory English language policies, curriculum, and evaluation throughout the country, endow minority students with sufficient linguistic capital for them to access Vietnamese and potentially English resources and negotiate social, educational, and economic advancement; or whether such policies greatly disadvantage minority students. At the school level, Bourdieu's theories guide my exploration of the ways in which the schools of minority students in this ethnographic account actually provide them with legitimate skills, knowledge, and training (given current language policies) to foster success. It further delves into how these minority students resist, negotiate and adapt the national language policies at the school level. More directly, they help to answer the following critical questions: How do

schools in this mountainous area respond to the nationwide language policies? What does standardized Vietnamese and English curricula mean to the teachers and students? What are the educational outcomes of these policies? How far are minority students' native languages and cultures validated and used as valuable resources/sources of capital to scaffold everyday teaching? Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework also aids interpretation of the ways in which social reproduction plays out at the grassroots level: that of the community. It sheds light on the consequences of the national language policies, as well as communities' voices and agencies. For instance, drawing on Bourdieu's theory, I would like to understand how far the policies do or can support minority youth and their communities in gaining access to high-quality education in the interests of creating change in their communities? What roles do minority home languages, Vietnamese, and English play in these communities in perpetuating or eliminating such long-lasting challenges as poor healthcare, poverty, illiteracy in standard Vietnamese, and erosion due to deforestation? What are the actual needs of minority youth and teachers, and what actions do they take in response to the national language policies?

These inquiries require a critical investigation of minority students' and teachers' needs, voices, practices, and struggles. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need to foster students' and teachers' agency as crucial "on-the-ground" policy makers capable of resisting unequal language practices and promoting diversity, equitable education, and human welfare. In order to achieve these goals, engaged-LPP scholarship suggests that understanding students' social and linguistic capital is of foremost importance in providing them with a high-quality and democratic education. The following section

provides a discussion of theories of multilingual language and literacy learning. These theories are crucial to this engaged ethnographic account, given its focus on multilingualism, and help to guide me in creating meaningful engagement with teachers during which they are empowered to re-evaluate education resources, pedagogical practices, and their own agentive roles in appreciating and connecting students' linguistic and traditional epistemologies to their everyday teaching practice.

Theories of Multilingualism and Literacy and Language Acquisition

Vietnamese is the sole language of instruction for students belonging to diverse multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, whose native languages are rarely, if ever, respected at school. In principle, therefore, the minority students involved in this research study may face extremely limited access to high-quality education and rich linguistic skills, and are thus prevented from proclaiming their cultural and linguistic assets, voices, and identities. Theories of multilingualism and literacy learning are crucial in guiding my engagement with minority students, especially their teachers, and helping them to capitalize in their teaching practice on the linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge that their students bring from home to school. These theories also have an important role in suggesting ways of transforming the traditional perception of minority students' languages and cultures as invalid or a hindrance to education into recognition of their value as effective and abundant resources for teaching and learning.

An increasing number of scholars (e.g., Canagarajah, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2010; Helot & O'Laoire, 2011) are embracing multilingualism and urging a reconsideration of language policy and teaching to accommodate the considerable linguistic complexity, fluidity, and flexibility of multilingual populations, whether in a

single country or as part of diasporas/immigrant communities (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Leu et al. (2005) view multilingualism as “a powerful national asset, and multilingual students as global citizens” (p. 3) who have the potential to construct their future dynamically through global connections. Arguing against monolingual instructional approaches that marginalize the voices, restrict the educational access, and weaken the linguistic and cultural pride of multilingual students, numerous scholars urge policy makers and teachers to regard multilingualism as the norm: a teachable, flexible, and feasible practice (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; García, 2007, 2009) or a “pedagogy of the possible” (Helot & O’Laoire, 2011, p. xv) that should constitute educational praxis in all schools.

Language-education researchers and linguistic theorists define multilingualism in a variety of ways. Building on the straightforward view of multilingualism as employing and combining more than one set of linguistic principles (Cenoz, 2009), Lahtemaki and Leppanen (2011) describe multilingualism as a mediating practice with various dimensions, which constantly mobilizes and capitalizes on language users’ identities, relationships, and possibilities for action. Similarly, the linguistic theorists Blackledge and Creese (2010) define multilingualism as “an inventive, creative, sometimes, disruptive play of linguistic resources, a complex performance of multiple choices [...] situated in social and political contexts” (p. 56). Another important feature of multilingualism is its multimodality: it incorporates not only symbolic resources such as language but also various material practices such as multimedia technology, communication channels, and media that convey gestures, sounds, visuals, and other semiotic symbols (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Lahtemaki & Leppanen, 2011). It also

represents a variety of linguistic and textual activities, including code-switching and code-mixing, which are used to construct and transmit knowledge and negotiate identities via social interactions in the classroom (Lin, 2008), and translanguaging (García, 2007), which describes multilingual learners' creative moves between languages and ability to comprehend input in one language and conduct a task in another language. The linguist Lähteenmäki (2010) deconstructs multilingualism according to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of heteroglossia, thereby disclosing the complex intersections between language diversity, the negotiation of identities, and different socio-ideological representations. These features of multilingualism demand that language teachers are capable of coordinating different languages and seeking actively to promote learners' meta-linguistic development. Therefore, multilingualism cannot be seen as a static skill; on the contrary, it is inclusive of multiple practices across diverse languages, cultures, and contexts. Thus, although researchers offer various perspectives, explanations, they tend to agree that multilingualism is understood as providing a rich set of language resources accessible to both individuals and groups. These resources are highly complex in form and function, and depend on the social, political, historical, and linguistic contexts that underlie each specific variant of multilingualism.

Building on this definition of multilingualism as a complex and dynamic social practice, linguistic educators (Helot & O'Laoire, 2011; García & Sylvan, 2011) wholeheartedly embrace multilingual practices in the classroom, and stress the importance of teachers' role in providing opportunities for students to revise traditional power relationships, centralist, institutionalized policies, and unresponsive pedagogical practices. These and other scholars (e.g., Weber & Horner, 2012) are apprehensive about

teachers' potential underestimation of the complexities of a multilingual classroom, and their possible limited ability to exploit the potential of plurilingual students. They call for a paradigm shift from the conventional top-down monolingual approach to focus instead on teachers' and students' agencies, ideologies, and ecologies (Helot & O'Laorie, 2011; García, 2010; Hornberger, 2006), in the interests of promoting language policies suitable for the multilingual school and classroom. Thus, promoting multilingualism means inviting teachers and students to exercise all of their possibilities and potentialities and draw on their rich multilingual resources at the level of the classroom. This will help both teachers and students to create their own effective and empowering local policies (Helot & O'Laorie, 2011). However, we must also ask how should teachers might adopt multilingualism as a norm in the classroom. Helot and O'Laorie (2011, p. xviii) explain in great detail that adapting multilingual practices to the multilingual classroom means (a) acknowledging the diversity and variability of identities in migratory [and multilingual] contexts; (b) recognizing the potential of multilingual classroom ecology in language education; (c) transcending traditional socio-cultural barriers to implement a multilingual curriculum; (d) defending teachers' inclusive policies and exploiting students' meta-linguistic awareness at the pedagogical level; and (e) redefining linguistic power relations to empower minority languages. I believe that these approaches are crucially relevant for my critical dialogue with teachers on appreciating and capitalizing on students' abundant linguistic and cultural resources in evaluation and everyday teaching.

Researchers of multilingualism report increasingly successful outcomes in a wide range of settings. Rather than seeing multilingualism as merely acceptance or tolerance of students' linguistic variety, rigorous studies across Europe, South America, and Asia

have argued that the cultivation of a multilingual educational environment is crucial to ensure positive outcomes for bi/multilingual children (e.g., Helot & O’Laorie, 2011; García, 2009, 2011; Lin, 2008). Such an environment can enhance the equitability of students’ access to and participation in education, and facilitate their creation of a plurilingual repertoire and their construction of multiple identities (e.g., García, 2009; Lin, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012), as well as fulfilling their academic needs and rights, and supporting their achievements (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Weber & Hornberger, 2012). Moreover, Castek et al., (2005) and Larson, Ares, and O’connor (2011), among many other multilingualism researchers, describe the benefits of multilingual practices to students’ cognitive flexibility, their ability to think more abstractly, and their ability to think independently, These scholars further contend that multilingual speakers have metalinguistic and metacognitive advantages, which include the capacity to combine languages creatively and draw on an enriched understanding of other cultures and ways of life.

The theories of multiculturalism discussed here accurately apply to the multiple language and literacy practices of the linguistically and culturally diverse student populations involved in this study. They offer ample opportunities in which to engage teachers in the process of unraveling attitudes to and perceptions of multilingualism in school and informing teachers of multilingualism as increasingly rich, multifaceted, and multimodal forms and practices that they can employ in their multilingual classrooms. The theories also offer a framework for comprehensive dialogue with teachers regarding the need to respect and capitalize on students’ multilingual resources in their everyday teaching practice. Discussion of the role of multilingualism in the education of minority

students also provides a means of awakening teachers' awareness of minority students' own multilingual backgrounds, identities, the endangerment of their languages, as well as their linguistic rights and pride.

My critical engagement with teachers and students draw not only on the theoretical framework of multilingualism, but on theories of language and literacy learning that foster the construction of linguistically and culturally effective teaching and learning practices. As noted by scholars concerned with literacy and language acquisition, the rapid geopolitical, economic, linguistic, and ideological transformation of the globalized era have generated considerable debate regarding theories of language and literacy (e.g., Block, 2009; Luke, 2011). Commenting on the multiplicity of perspectives on language and literacy in today's research setting, Davis et al. (2012) observe that postmodern researchers have for some time been dynamically engaged in identifying and constructing a "new mode of truth, method, and multimodal representation" (p. 16) as they activate reflexive techniques and deconstruct static social configurations such as gender, class, race, and geographical borders. For instance, linguistic theorists such as Castek et al. (2005), Larson et al. (2005, 2011) and Street (2003, 2012) recommend that rather than viewing literacy from a fixed and linear perspective, one should regard it as a value-laden, dynamic and multifaceted process, continually contested through social, historical, local practices, and always imbued with particular meanings and power. Thus, we can see that the notion of multiliteracies in the postmodern era is closely connected with theories of multilingualism that stress the use of multiple communication methods, hybrid text forms (images, sounds, gestures, and animation) complex social relations, and compound processes of identity formation (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). The New London

Group (1996) and Street (2003) view all of these forms as “new literacies”: a term that acknowledges the process by which literacy has become increasingly diverse, deictic, and locally, socially, and globally bounded.

In light of the fact that cultural and linguistic forms of diversity have become central to literacy and language learning worldwide, a number of literacy scholars such as González (2005), Luke (2008), and Street (2012) are calling for a reconceptualization of language and literacy learning. Today’s theoretical perspectives on literacy learning place particular emphasis on the need to capitalize on and make connections between the educational setting and students’ existing funds of knowledge, including the local, traditional, and familial narratives and knowledge content that students from diverse groups bring to the classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Furthermore, rather than approaching the teaching and learning of language in a narrow sense, these theories encourage teachers to consider issues of discourse, register, genre, and writing (Street & Leung, 2010) to ensure that students in turn obtain a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices, and develop the concrete academic literacies and skills necessary for genuine linguistic interaction (Scalone & Street, 2006). Furthermore, literacy and language acquisition are strongly rooted in students’ identities, personal styles, learning strategies, and experiences of literacy in their own cultural milieus (e.g., Helot & O’Laoire, 2012; McLean, Boling, & Rowsell, 2009), with which teachers should be familiar in order to address their students’ needs adequately and help them to build strong linguistic repertoires. In their effort to establish fruitful theories of language teaching and learning for teachers who work with multicultural and multilingual students, especially in the contexts of English as a foreign language (EFL) and immigration,

applied linguists such as Echevarria and Graves (2003), McLean, Boling, and Rowsell (2009), and Verplaetse (2008) promote sustainable and inclusive teaching approaches designed to develop students' diverse literacy skills through awareness of what different students need to know and need to develop. Such approaches include modifying teachers' questions/responses, adapting the curriculum, allowing students to use their first languages, designing assignments based on language proficiency, and promoting collaborative learning. These models of inclusive teaching also emphasize the importance of teachers' broad understanding of the backgrounds, values, and socio-cultural situations of the students with whom they work. All of these approaches empower teachers to provide significant support for students' academic development and language learning while respecting them as unique individuals with rich linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds.

As we live in an era of ambivalence, transition, and conflict, literacy and language theorists such as Gee (2008), Luke (2008), and Street (2012) suggest that literacy learning must be situated with reference to the broader social setting, as a social practice (Street & Leung, 2010) whose development accompanies a social turn (Gee, 2000). Thus, theories of literacy and language learning at the postmodern turn emphasize students' skills in making critical connections between their literacy and language learning and socio-political and educational issues (Larson et al., 2011; Street, 2012; Street & Leung, 2010). In other words, students are not only required to learn language skills such as reading and writing, but to engage with the deep and complex issues related to the uses and meanings of literacy in different places, times, and contexts (Street, 2012). Through literacy and language learning, students are socialized into the ability to deconstruct

theories of monolingualism, assimilation, and multiculturalism, as well as concepts such as the loss of indigenous/minority languages (e.g., Lee, 2009) and the need for equitable access to social services and information (e.g., housing, education) in their neighborhoods and society at large (Appadurai, 2006; Morrell, 2008). Furthermore, directly related to the transformation of literacy learning into a broader social practice is the notion of a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994), a discursive space in which for students to engage in analysis of the dominant discourse as a means of affirming their own linguistic and cultural identities and heritage (Davis et al., 2012). Arguing that language learning is neither politically nor ideologically neutral (McLean, Boling, & Rowsell, 2009), language theorists recommend that teachers use this “third space” as a way to empower students from various linguistic backgrounds to act as critical researchers and ethnographers of their own literacy learning (Davis, 2009; Morrell, 2008). McLean, Boling, and Rowsell (2009), drawing on Lemke (1998, p. 3), argue for the establishment of this approach as an interactive learning paradigm, which “assumes that people determine what they need to know based on their participation in activities where such needs arise, . . . in consultation with knowledgeable specialists.” Studies by Appadurai (2006), Davis (2009), and Morrell (2008) echo the orientation toward literacy, urging students to utilize literacy practices in and out of school settings to challenge social and educational norms and resist oppression. In their research, minority students were guided to deconstruct texts using critical language awareness (CLA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) approaches to identify the ways in which ideological discourses—social, cultural, and linguistic— are embedded in both their native languages and the dominant language. Such theoretical approaches allow students to develop high-order thinking

skills, meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic abilities, and proficiency in the critical analysis of marginalization and agency, while capitalizing on their home cultures, languages, and traditions as valuable resources for their academic learning. At the same time, they gain expertise in English as an academic language, along with the content knowledge necessary to achieve their future career goals. These studies show that effective literacy learning empowers students both as critics of texts and as social analysts, informing them that texts can be deconstructed, negotiated, and appropriated to increase educational access equity and the quality of language learning.

Theories of multiculturalism and literacy and language learning provide a crucial foundation for me to fully participate in dialogue with both teachers and minority students. This dialogue serves to interrogate students' experiences of literacy acquisition through Vietnamese and English language policies, teachers' literacy teaching practices, students' authentic and rich linguistic and cultural capital, and ways of using minority students' traditional narratives, knowledge, learning styles, and identities to scaffold teaching. In the process of dialogue, this theoretical framework helps to bolster teachers' sense of the need for ideological and implementational transformation of the national language policies. Generally, the scholarship on language and literacy acquisition is of assistance in posing the following questions during our critical dialogue: Who has the power to define and name "literacy and language learning"? What does teaching Vietnamese and English language mean to the teachers? What are the students' experiences of literacy and language learning at home? In what ways can teachers help socialize minority students into different discourse, register, and genre, to prepare them for academic literacies and meta-awareness of linguistic interaction? How can teachers

draw on their students' abundant cultural and linguistic resources to teach more effectively while creating a third space for students to link English language learning with broader socio-political matters? How do teachers and students challenge and appropriate the dominant ideologies of literacy and language learning?

In summary, this chapter on the conceptual framework of the study began with the shift in emphasis in LPP research from top-down approaches toward more political, critical, and multifaceted bottom-up approaches. In stressing the need to make connections with ever-wider national, regional, and global contexts, current LPP research increasingly seeks to problematize language policy by actively unraveling the interplay between global ideologies, language policy at the national level, and language practices at the local level. The complexity addressed by LPP research enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of what counts as language and what counts as language policy (McCarty, 2011); whose agendas lie behind policy creation; and who benefits from such policies (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). This chapter also outlines the relationship between the spread of the English language and Vietnam's language policy, which offers a context for addressing the influences and outcomes of this language policy in the following chapters. Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction alongside various theories of multilingualism and literacy and learning, also play important roles in guiding and describing my dialogic engagement with teachers and students in subsequent chapters. In the following chapter, I first relate theories of multilingualism and multiple literacies to research methodologies through discussing the critical and engaged ethnographic approach used in this research, my own positionality as an engaged ethnographic researcher, and the co-constructive nature of ethnographic data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3. Engaged Ethnography

In the process of dissecting the power relations and socio-linguistic inequalities embedded in language policies, a number of postmodern researchers draw widely on the critical theories and activism of Friere (1972), one of the foremost scholars in directly addressing sociopolitical structures of inequality in literacy and education. The purpose of this study is to engage teachers and students in critical dialogue to raise awareness about the problems of unequal language policy and work toward creating an equitable language policy and promote cultural diversity. Therefore, Chapter 3 provides a discussion of critical and engaged ethnography, beginning with the history of Paulo Freire's critical literacy approach to reading both the word and the world. It then describes the concepts of critical ethnography and engaged ethnography, which are the key research methods used in this study. The remaining sections of the chapter provide further detail about the research site, my positionality as an ethnographic researcher, and the ongoing and interactive nature of engaging dialogue and ethnographic data analysis.

Critical and Engaged Ethnography

Since critical and engaged language policy research particularly focuses on unraveling social, economic and cultural injustice, linguistic human rights, and diversity impacting marginalized and disenfranchised communities across settings (Luke & Dooley, 2009), a large number of scholars draw on historically produced and culturally situated critical approaches. As the most influential critical approach, widely adopted and developed across disciplines, Paulo Freire's (1972) inspirational work on critical pedagogy and literacy can greatly inform language policy research. Freire (1972) views education and learning as an act of political and cultural power (Mayo, 2007; Street,

2003) where dominant or oppressive group use it to dehumanize disfranchised people while redistributing social injustice. His entire professional career centered on critical pedagogy to directly challenge dominant discourses and collaboratively work with the poor and oppressed people across countries toward transforming unequal, undemocratic, and oppressive situations and social relations (Darder, Baltodono, & Torres, 2003).

Influenced by Karl Marx's theories of capital and class-based conflict in the 1980s and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning as fundamental social practice, Freire provides striking examples of his experiences working in literacy campaigns with illiterate disfranchised adults, peasants, and the extreme poor in Brazil, Chile, Africa, and Europe. His most famous and enduring account, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) stresses the interconnection between education and politics. From these perspectives, literacy is the product of the class-based ideology that the elite class uses to transmit the reproduction of the power structure. Therefore, Freire holds that literacy must be understood and used as "a vehicle by which the oppressed are equipped with the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices" (Freire, 1972, p. 159). He further argues that literacy is a human capacity that needs to be activated for the "indispensable transformation of a society whose unjust reality destroys the majority of people" (p. 106). Friere and his colleague Macedo (1978) further called for teaching literacy as the way to enable people to read the word as the way to read the world. As they argue:

Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world.... [T]his movement from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world. In a way, however, we can go further and say that reading the word

is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of writing it or rewriting it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work. For me, this dynamic movement is central to the literacy process. (p. 25)

Through this compelling notion of reading the word and the world, Freire and Macedo challenge the traditional methods of education, a mechanism of systematic oppression, and calls for educating learners to go beyond passively analyzing and understanding texts. Reading the word means seeing “underneath, behind, and beyond texts, seeing how texts use power over us, over others, and on whose behalf, in whose interests” (Molden, 2007, p. 50). Thus, literacy learners from marginalized backgrounds must engage themselves in decoding and encoding, expanding, and qualifying against the literacy discourse promoted by political elites or oppressors. Therefore, the word is an instrument to explore and critically analyze the world in order to understand how education and other social, political, and economic systems benefit some while taking away freedom, humanity, and social justice for others. The act of reading the word and the world empowers students to challenge existing structures of social injustice, inhumanity, and power relations (Gee, 2000; McDaniel, 2004). Freire views this critical literacy approach as a reoccurring circle of reflection, transformation, and action.

The explicit model of deconstructing the text and transforming it into action is his notion of consciousness-raising, a critical analysis of society and individual within it using egalitarian, empowering, and interactive approach (Diemer & Voight, 2011). Freire criticizes oppressors use of schools as one means by which they deny human agency thereby turning students into passive receivers of information, also known as “banking” education. In other words, the teacher “owns” knowledge and “deposits” it in students

minds resulting in a view of education as abstract, isolated, and unattached to the world. Instead, he calls for a democratic form of education, a set of critical perspectives and practices necessary in developing individuals' understanding of problems in their social settings and education system. This helps them find ways to pursue decolonization, freedom, and liberation. In particular, he believes in the importance of critical consciousness-raising as a means for the oppressed to rise against their oppressors and resist dominant structures of control. Thus, the pedagogy of consciousness-raising is a powerful tool capable for raising awareness of the oppressive social order and promoting the agency of minority social groups to avoid (re)inscribing and (re)producing contradictions and asymmetries in power relations (Vassallo, 2012). Furthermore, Freire believes that the most appropriate technique for consciousness-raising is authentic critical dialogue or problem-posing pedagogical methods. The problem-posing premise levels out the power relations between teachers and students and enables them to learn together through dialogue. It emphasizes people's right to ask questions on the hows and whys and find out the causes of inequities that impact their lives. In other words, Freire argues for dialogue as a pedagogical process, in which teachers and students actively reflect on their learning through discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities, processes that are embedded in particular theories of knowledge (Bartlett, 2005). He promotes a dialogic problem posing method as a means of engaging in the act of promoting education as the practice of freedom rather than a practice of domination.

In promoting critical dialogue for consciousness-raising, Freire emphasizes that such dialogue is not a means by which one person imposes changes on another, but rather an act of collaborative and respectful creation to prevent the continuation of

dehumanizing aggression. In particular, he argues, critical dialogue includes critical reflection in which the teacher and students, for example, participate in analyzing social and moral inequalities such as social, economic, and gender issues that constrain well-being and human agency. Freire (1972) strongly holds that the promotion of critical dialogue within education and society cannot take place without love – or, more specifically, a sense of both one’s right and one’s duty (as a teacher or student, for example) to participate in a caring dialogue that rejects inequalities and accommodates diversity (Darder, 2009). Other forms of critical dialogue that are characterized by arrogance, which Freire (1972) associates with self-sufficient elites, reminds us that the right kind of dialogue requires intense faith both in others’ power and one’s own ability to become more fully human, and to fashion an equitable world. Grounded in love, humility, and faith, Freire’s (1972) model of dialogue entails a horizontal relationship between parties, each of whom must trust that the other is truly and concretely dedicated to the pursuit of democracy. Freire also places a particular emphasis on the role of hope in creating dialogue. Hope does not involve merely waiting, but rather fighting in the hope of promoting consciousness in others. Finally, critical thinking, which he defines as the process of bringing about action and change without fear or risk, has a fundamental part to play in fostering critical dialogue. I believe that these elements are powerfully salient tools for researchers engaging in critical consciousness dialogue with multiple actors.

We can see that Freire’s critical approaches to education and literacy meaningfully establish principles for the evolutionary of critical LPP research studies and epistemologies to achieve justice, diversity, and multilingualism. In adopting and

transforming Freire's critical pedagogies, a number of postmodern scholars (e.g., Davis, 2005, 2009, 2012; Luke & Dooley, 2009; McCarty, 2011) have appropriated critical consciousness-raising in their ethnographic work toward critical approaches to LPP research. These methods are highly capable of unraveling the complexities, ambivalence, and contesting nature of language policies. In the following section, I introduce the notions of critical and engaged ethnography, the foundation of this research account. These notions guide me in entering into critical, collective, and co-constructive dialogue with teachers and minority students to promote more equitable language policies, diversity, and socio-economic security.

Critical and engaged ethnography. Language policy consists of ideological constructs and complex social practices that both reflect and consistently reproduce the distribution of power within society (Levison & Sutton, 2000; Menken & García, 2009). Moreover, language policy is portrayed as covert, overt, top-down, bottom-up, de jure and de facto (McCarty, 2011). Therefore, grounded in Freire's (1972; 1978) and others' critical literacy approaches, for the last two decades, the field of LPP has seen an increasing number of researchers who actively prioritize critical ethnography to unpack the highly complex, multifaceted, multi-layered nature of language policy.

Critical ethnography is defined as a reflective and critical way of conceptualizing that is situated, systematic, long-term, in-depth, and empirical (McCarty, 2011; Wolcott, 2008) to address the "process of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" (Madison, 2012, p. 6). Consequently, researchers using this approach most often develop rich experiences and close relationships with the communities they work with, or have a strong bond as "cultural insiders" (McCarty, 2011). The landmark scholarship of eminent

linguistic anthropologist, Dell Hymes (1974) suggests that critical ethnography should build a world culture that is moral and avoids falling into “the service of domination” (p. 53). This critical ethnographic approach stresses the researchers’ compelling interdependent principles of ethics, responsibilities, and credentials (Brayboy & McCarty, 2010; Madison, 2012) when working with stakeholders in their communities. It further emphasizes the researchers’ strong sense of commitment and compassion for people’s suffering and actively argues for greater human freedom, well-being, and equity. Unlike traditional and post-positivist language policy approaches, which are largely contingent on official texts, documents, and quantitative data to interpret LPP, critical ethnography also emphasizes language policy research as a larger socio-cultural system that includes multi-approaches and multi-data types (Davis, 2012) such as participant observations, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and sociolinguistic surveys (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011). Such rich data sources both contribute to research credibility and help uncover the systematic processes of implicit and explicit policy making and its consequences (Stritikus & Wiese, 2006).

However, how does critical ethnography help interpret LPP? Centering on key concerns—ideology, social inequalities, agency, and power relations (Davis, 2005, Hornberger & Johnson, 2011; McCarty, 2011), critical ethnography guides LPP researchers to analyze how implicit, de facto language policies are emerged, resisted, appropriated, negotiated, and implemented in various contexts. It further shows researchers the ways to “drill beneath the surface of official policy” (McCarty, 2011, p. 3; Shore & Wright, 1997) and disrupt the status quo and taken-for-granted language policy assumptions (Madison, 2012) to bring into light underlying power relations and interpret

how language policies are legitimized in society at large. In this regard, LPP scholars suggest moving beyond the analysis of language as text or abstract entity and toward dynamically unveiling the politics of language in relation to micro, meso, and macro levels of language policy as I discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 2) (McCarty, Collins, & Hopson, 2011). Madison (2012) and McCarty (2011) believe that if we know “how to read” the whole of LPP processes; we will grasp the means to transform the inequities by moving from “what is” to “what could be” (Madison, 2012, p. 5) while creating abundant implementational and ideological spaces in education. Critical ethnography as described here significantly helps me in investigating and interpreting closely and thoroughly national language policies as a practice of power that operates at multiple intersecting levels.

A number of researchers have started to take an advocacy research perspective in viewing critical ethnography as an act of “progressive-political commitment” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008, p. 423; McCarty, 2011) within the communities in which they work. This perspective consistently foregrounds human agency to interrupt socio-political inequalities while diversifying local interpretations, implementations, and resistance as opportunities for social change. Advocacy researchers work with local stakeholders to create a collaborative space that allows the actions and voices of the central actors to be seen and heard while creating broader and potentially positive LPP outcomes for the people they work with. Through the in-depth, multifaceted, and multilayered research processes and collaborations with multiple actors and their communities, we can see that critical ethnography actively sets a solid ground for the meaningful development of critical collaborative research and engaged ethnography.

Building on critical ethnography, a number of researchers have paid close attention to means for engaging with and empowering students and teachers to vocalize and enact their resistance to unequal socio-political and educational practices, including those relating to language. Davis (2009) recommends promoting the agency of young people from minority groups as a “tool to foster and awaken a sense of justice” (p. 2) that may in turn lead to more equitable educational, social, and economic policies. Her research shows young people in high schools, community colleges, and universities engaged in critical examination of their language and identities, exploring Hawaiian Creole English, the relationship between local culture and English discourse, and the agency and marginalization of non-native English speakers. In other settings, researchers such as Duncan-Andrade (2007), Hornberger and McCarty (2012), Fine and Cammarato (2008), and McCarty et al. (2012) have charted the efforts of students from indigenous/minority groups to explore and interrogate the linguistic, social, educational, and economic inequalities that directly impact their lives and communities using participatory action research (PAR). These forms of engagement allow young students to use their own linguistic and cultural capital to question and reflect critically on educational and political concerns.

Embracing Freirean theories of critical consciousness-raising, Davis et al. (2012) recently proposed the term “engaged ethnography” to theorize their collective ethnographic collaboration with a range of intersecting global, national, and community actors serving as official and localized policy makers. Rather than simply documenting the realities of language policies, engaged ethnography creates a collaborative third space for the researcher and multiple actors (e.g., policy makers, students, teachers, community

members) to analyze and interrogate the hidden agendas associated with language policies, linguistic rights, and social equity and inclusion. These researchers of engaged ethnography have argued that this approach also provides guidelines for researchers and language planners who strive to engage community members through an understanding of the centrality of history, place, and culture. Moreover, engaged ethnography exemplifies the commitment to promoting social justice undertaken by researchers who possess transnational and political awareness and yet remain members of their local communities. Their close connections with their native communities give them credibility as well as strengthen their personal dedication to engaging local and indigenous/minority groups in cooperative research, reflection, and action. This engaged ethnographic approach has gained a particular currency with indigenous scholars and those who have strong bonds with their research communities in the U.S. and other international contexts such as Vietnam, Taiwan and Nepal (e.g., Bui, 2012; Davis, 2012; Malsbary, 2012; Lin, 2012; Phyak, 2012). These researchers have actively engaged with government officials, villagers, indigenous/minority young people, and teachers, carrying out collaborative critical reflection on the language policies and plans that impact adversely on linguistic human rights, social welfare, educational opportunities, and cultural preservation. Davis et al. (2012) concludes that engaged ethnography serves as a tool that “moves toward personalizing and politicizing ethnography rather than removing actors, including researchers, from the centrality of action as is usual in critical ethnographic reports” (p. 3).

In identifying the nature of three approaches: Friere’s (1972, 1987) pedagogies of critical literacy and consciousness-raising, critical ethnography, and engaged

ethnography, we can see that each approach contains the ability of inheriting and evolving from previous approaches. I also realized that while scholars of critical approaches such as Freire (1973) create compelling theoretical foundations for later critical ethnographic approaches, his pedagogies largely rest on binary and linear relationships such as the oppressors and the oppressed and/or teachers and students rather than the highly complex intersections of people from international, national, and local levels, and from deeply multicultural and multilingual settings, and across time and space. Thus, Friere's notion of authentic dialogue embodies more of a theoretical framework for critical researchers rather than provide them with hands-on techniques of consciousness-raising and dialoguing from postmodern perspectives, especially when they promote consciousness-raising with people from different cultural backgrounds, power stances (for example, authorities at macro, meso, and micro levels), and socio-economic status. Critical ethnography provides LPP researchers with theories and practices to unravel language policy thoroughly, critically, responsibly, and collaboratively. In addition, my review of scholarship on critical ethnography indicates both increasing complexity of researchers' work involving working with multiple actors (e.g., Hornberger, 2006; Hornberger & McCarty, 2012; McCarty, 2002) and/or use of a critical framework to understand LPP processes and consequences (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Kobuta, 2011; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Yet, although a number of critical ethnographic studies promote collaborative research in which language policy researchers work with researched communities, it is not yet so comprehensive in what way and to what extent the researchers take this approach in relation with their research agenda. Thus, engaged ethnography, I believe, opens ample spaces for engagement across societal

levels, agencies, and actors in the here and now and in the future. It also clearly shows the researchers' interactive political commitment, which indicate clear intentions and a strong desire to engage multiple actors in long-term, processual, interactive studies to address people's desires, needs, and hopes for positive change. It further mobilizes both the researchers and multiple actors as epicenters of LPP research, decision-making, and transformation. Generally, besides some major differentiations of these three approaches, we can also see they have a striking similarity. That is, regardless of time, location, and historical contexts, they wholeheartedly work in one direction: promoting social justice, equity, and diversity, especially for the poor, disfranchised, indigenous and minority backgrounds. I view my research account as inheriting all the strengths of these approaches and uncovering hidden ideologies, inequalities, and struggles in efforts to address current language policies. It further takes engaged ethnography as a major instrument for promoting democratic and dialogic engagement with teachers and minority students.

In the following section of this chapter, I describe my research setting. Although some images of the landscape and people of my research site are provided in the introduction, I feel that a more detailed discussion of the site is vital to the research process: it aids logical interpretation of the purposes, results, and implications of the current English language policies in Vietnam, as well as my dialogic engagement with minority youth and teachers.

Description of the Research Site

My study was conducted in a multiethnic and multilingual province in Northwest Vietnam, which is home to 10,297 people belonging to 11 ethnic minority groups: Thai

(54%), Kinh (18%), Hmong (12%), Muong (8.4%), Dao (2.5 %), and the remaining Kho Mu, Xinh Mun, Khang, La Ha, Lao, Tay, and Hoa populations. Minority groups make up nearly 85% of the population (the remainder are Kinh, the economically dominant Vietnamese group), and commonly inhabit high plateau, mountainous areas, and sites near water resources.



Figure 1. Living near the mountain or water resources. Minority people's typical lifestyle.

By contrast, most of the Kinh people live in urban areas of the province, and work for the government or run private businesses. Since 2000, the province has witnessed an increase in the number of migrants from big cities where they face serious job scarcity and population density. Migrants with university degrees usually obtain jobs in the public sector, while their less highly qualified counterparts work in the service sector; running their own businesses, for example, or working on agricultural farms. Although there are, to date, no concrete data on the economic gains of migrants who work in the service

sector, they are widely known to take advantage of the cheap labor force from minority communities. Of those who are long term residents of the province, as many as 80% of the people depend on agriculture-related activities.



Figure 2. Main income is from subsistent agriculture. Minority people are selling their homegrown products (longans and vegetables) on the street.

Many minority groups possessing their own alphabets and languages have inherited valuable legacies in the form of literature, folk songs, customs, handicraft techniques, architecture, epics and legends (Dang, Chu, & Luu, 2000; Salemink, 2001). Minority people often pride themselves on being stewards of a rich cultural tradition, including agricultural practices, fishing customs, hand embroidery, medical knowledge and healing techniques, and methods of farming and animal-rearing (Cam, 2007). Through such traditional activities as the bamboo dance and the fan dance, minority groups in this region express their great communal spirit and solidarity. These events also function as cultural spaces, attracting a number of indigenous academics to watch and

analyze competitions such as catching fish and crossbow-shooting.



Figure 3. Minority people’s rich festival. Thai minority people’s water spraying festival¹².

People in this province hold rich cultural festivals such as praying for rain, a New Year hair-washing competition, giving thanks to one’s ancestors, and events surrounding the exchange of agricultural produce. Despite this rich linguistic and cultural heritage, however, minority groups often face such problems as severe poverty (Schwind, 2010), land erosion, deforestation, and a shortage of clean water.¹³

¹² Available at <http://vietbao.vn/Kham-pha-Viet-Nam/Le-hoi-Kin-Pang-Then-cua-dan-toc-Thai-trang/80107900/146/>

¹³ Only a small number of people in this area (21.8%) have access to a source of water that conforms to standards set by the Ministry of Health.



Figure 4. Everyday home chore. Minority children's typical home chores are raising buffalos or planting corn in the mountain.

Although the province is the sixth largest in the country in terms of land area, it is also unfortunate enough to be ranked as the fifth poorest province in Vietnam (VNHELPP, 2012), with a large number of households' living below the poverty line. The average income per person is only \$138 per year - far below the equivalent rates in big cities such as Hanoi (\$1,850 per year) and Hochiminh City (\$3,000) (Xzone Specialist, 2012). The Tay, Thai, Muong, and Nung minority groups suffer the greatest poverty (Baulch, Nguyen, Phuong, & Pham, 2010). Most of the minority populations in this province are dependent on the sale of agricultural produce as their primary source of income. However, sustaining agricultural practices can be challenging, because not all of the land in this area is viable for farming. Moreover, deforestation is a critical issue. Responsible for 50% of the soil erosion in hilly and mountainous areas, deforestation presents a serious threat to the large number of residents whose lives depend on income

from agriculture. Moreover, natural resources such as forests, plants, and wild animals face exhaustive exploitation due to food shortages.

Challenging life conditions severely impede the efforts made by parents of ethnic-minority students to invest in education for their children. It is common that parents in large families are willing or able to invest only in one child whom they believe to have the highest educational potential, while the child's siblings must work to support the family finances. That said, many parents value education and believe that their educated children will in turn help the family to extricate itself from a subsistence lifestyle. In the province in question, approximately 40% of the minority students come from extremely remote areas without their own high schools. The students thus rent rooms in neighborhoods surrounding the nearest schools or live in dormitories. They return home approximately once a week to visit their parents and bring food and other necessities back to their schools.

Not only do minority students have to struggle with formidable socio-economic challenges, they are also consistently trapped in authoritative linguistic situations. Minority students possess their own language(s) at home which is often their sole language of communication. However, their home languages are neither used in school nor function as a supporting language for minority students' academic transition; instead, they have to begin schooling in Vietnamese as early as age six. In addition to such overwhelming linguistic situations, all students have to learn English through Vietnamese, usually when starting grade six. However, according to various comments from teachers of minority students, their limited Vietnamese proficiency prevents them from gaining academic understanding in Vietnamese, let alone in English. As a result,

minority students often feel detached from school, perform poorly, and/or discontinue their education after they finish secondary school (at the age of 15). Furthermore, the linguistic complexity not only attacks minority students' schooling but also their social welfare such as healthcare. Healthcare services are provided to minority people in Vietnamese, not their native tongues, which significantly reduces their opportunities to access effective health-care programs. Health researchers such as Schwind (2010) have argued that understanding the linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of minority groups is crucial to the provision of high-quality and responsive primary health care for local people.

In sum, besides the rich ethnolinguistic and cultural knowledge, minority people in this region are largely vulnerable to a wide range of formidable challenges including poor healthcare, unresponsive education, linguistic and cultural marginalization, frequent natural disasters, and harsh geographical and climatic conditions, and limited social transparency. I argue that these factors are crucial because they add more complexities into the interpretation of the governmental language policies.

As the core characteristic of critical and engaged ethnography is longitudinal, in-depth, and responsible to the community, researchers are play a central and responsible role throughout the engaging processes. The following section acknowledges this role through portraying my positionality in this research study.

Researcher's Positionality: Struggles, Experiences, and Commitment

To frame the discussion of my background and ontology, I have drawn on ethnographic insights into the role of the postmodern and researchers of indigenous and/or minority communities of researchers such as Angrosino (2007), Davis (2012),

Grbich (2004), Madison (2012), and Smith (2012). These ethnographic scholars generally argue that postmodern research emphasizes the importance of the self in the investigative process. In other words, the researcher is reflexively “turning back” (Davis, 1999) to connect his/her historical and social construction, cultural background and views, moral responsibility, and social relationships (Grbich, 2004) with representation and interpretation of participants’ life experiences. In addition, the researcher’s overt and hidden assumptions (which underlie feelings, professional opinions, and worldview, for example) play a critical role in framing the relationship between researcher and participant, the research process itself, and the quality and presentation of information. As Madison (2012, p. 8) holds, positionality is vital because “it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects”. These researchers have, thus, enriched my knowledge of empirical ethnographic research and reminded me of the importance of reflecting on my own selfhood as researcher, especially in this critical and engaged ethnographic research study. I recognize that my personal struggles, experiences, and multiple identities as a community member, a teacher, a social activist, and an engaged ethnographic researcher who was born, grew up, and has worked in the research setting have profoundly shaped my understanding of the life experiences, challenges, and educational setting of local minority groups. This deep personal experience in the research setting and with participants has also shaped my dedication to helping unveil teachers’ and students’ struggles and perspectives of the official language policies as well as gain agency and raise their voices in transforming unequal social, political, and educational situations.

My experience of segregation from the dominant Kinh people has helped me to understand how minority students in this area cope with the same social issue. As part of its efforts to rebuild the country after Vietnam gained independence in 1975, the government sought to persuade teachers, engineers, and scientists to migrate from delta to mountainous areas in order to integrate their lives with those of ethnic minorities, and thereby build a wealthy and happy life, as the government often campaigns. Responding to this national call, my parents (who worked as an agricultural engineer and a schoolteacher) moved to work with minority people in the mountainous region that is also my research setting. As a result, my siblings and I were born in this region and have lived with many minority children. I never had the sense of being segregated during my childhood. In 1997, however, when I passed the university entrance exam to study in Hanoi—the only child in my community to do so—I experienced for the first time the shock and discomfort of living with so many mainstream Kinh (Vietnamese) people in such a big city. I quickly lost all my initial confidence as the first person from my hometown to study at a national university. Many people discriminated against me on the assumption that I was a minority girl and came from a region that people in delta areas often assumed to be full of creepy forests and poisonous water. The parents of some of my friends in Hanoi prohibited them from associating with me, believing that I was accustomed to a minority lifestyle that involved eating in caves and living in dirt-holes (a kind of backward and primitive lifestyle). In fact, I still experience similar discrimination and segregation of this kind elsewhere in Vietnam.

Although these were traumatic experiences, they helped me realize the differences of who I am and the unique place that I come from, allowing me to sympathize deeply

with minority groups who have to cope with social and ethnic discrimination on a day-to-day basis. Such deep-seated and de facto prejudices fundamentally shape people's views of minority groups, and thus their treatment in the educational setting and elsewhere. For example, I have experienced and witnessed how a combination of limited educational training and long-held prejudice has led many teachers in this region of Vietnam to behave unprofessionally toward their minority students, and to discount these students' skills and considerable potential for learning. My personal struggles as well as understanding of discrimination in the classroom setting have led me to take an "activism stance" (Fine, 1994) in order to explore students' social challenges and seek to convert teachers' ideological and behavioral prejudices into an appreciation of minority students as highly capable, creative, and active learners and citizens. Together, my unhappy memories of social exclusion, profound sense of connectedness with the people and the land, and my desire to erase social discrimination and promote social and educational equities have provided me the ability to converse easily and appropriately with local authorities, teachers, students, and parents during my fieldwork.

My personal experiences and professional life as a teacher in the research setting has enabled me to carve out a meaningful space for supporting and collaborating with local people. Rather like Smith (2012), who possesses an indigenous Maori researcher's perspective as a cultural insider of her research community, I feel that I have been socialized into ways of thinking, defining problems, and making sense of the local people, place, and culture. After graduating with a B.A. degree from Hanoi National University, I returned to the province to work directly with students from minority groups and mountainous regions. My love for teaching and my keen sense of responsibility for

the students' learning was soon rewarded, as for the first time in this mountainous area some students passed the national English aptitude exams, and were given the opportunity to study in any national university of their choice. My participation as a key trainer in local workshops and provincial representative in broader educational events nationwide allowed me to have multiple ways to know more colleagues who also directly worked with minority students at intersecting levels. I had a chance to share with them new teaching approaches and philosophies while being informed about minority children's schooling across sites. Thanks to all this and other fulfilling experiences, I gained trust and respect from the authorities, my colleagues, and students. This has been tremendously valuable in helping me to "bring my belongings" (Madison, 2012, p. 10) with me to the fieldwork. I gained smooth and effective access to schools and engaged in productive dialogue with both teachers and students.

My professional collaborations with teachers and volunteer workers have also profoundly enriched my academic knowledge as well as my understanding of education for minority students. In particular, I have learned how the country's education and language policies are interpreted, constructed, conveyed, and/or resisted by minority students and their schools. I also realized that because policy makers and teachers move in entirely different orbits, teachers are usually provided with sparse and ambiguous training that fails to take into account minority languages and cultures. Indeed, after the new English language policies were enacted and the new curriculum launched, many teachers shared with me their opinion that minority students would not benefit at all from such policies. In connecting my professional positionality and epistemologies of the disturbing language policy issues with this research study, I constantly think about what I

can do that will make my soul feel right? How am I going to do this the research and who will ultimately benefit? And, in what ways will my work make a difference in teachers' and students' lives?

In general terms, in pursuing my research project, I found myself returning to my land, my colleagues, my students, and the local people with an evolving commitment to extending our critical stance and participation in society. I hoped to make our concerns and desires more widely known; to work toward equality in education; and to promote an appreciation of the lives, skills, and resources of minority groups. My personal and academic experiences, my sense of belonging to the local culture, and my desire to secure more equitable education and language policies, especially for minority students, greatly inspired and supported my pursuit of this research. I also felt a sense of responsibility for vocalizing the concerns and desires of teachers and students facing the harsh and often unsatisfactory reality of the recent English language policies. Finally, I wanted to empower students and teachers, as front-line Language policy makers (Meken & García, 2010), to create equitable education and language policies that suit their socio-economic and cultural needs. I am grateful for the respect and trust invested in me by individuals in various communities and schools to pursue this study.

I am currently collaborating with a number of teachers in the research setting to promote knowledge-sharing across borders while at the same time sustaining our personal relationships. We have created an online space via email to update each other and discuss new pedagogical techniques and materials, along with the socio-political situation and the progress of students' learning. The evolving transnational dialogue has offered invaluable support in the process of completing my dissertation as well as

strengthening our commitments toward more equitable education and social justice for minority people at large.

Ongoing and Interactive Nature of Data Collection and Analyses

Dialogue with teachers. My wide range of connections with fellow high-school English teachers enabled me to engage in numerous effective dialogue with them. Most (85-90%) of the teachers belong to the Kinh ethnic group and had at least three years teaching experience in this region. They all obtained undergraduate degrees in English teaching and literature. About 10 percent of the teachers came from the delta area where job scarcity forced them to migrate to this region. All of the teachers had been living in this region for at least 10 years. Critical dialogue with 15 teachers from two schools (seven and eight teachers respectively) took place in various locations, including the teachers' homes and schools, and coffee shops. I deferred to the participants' choice of location for our dialogue to ensure that they felt relaxed and safe when we shared our views on the recent English language policies.

I understood that regardless of my advantages as a member of the research community, it was crucial for me to take all of my research goals and processes seriously, as they could directly affect the trust the local people had invested in me and my long-standing relationships with them as well as the quality of my dialogic engagement. I found Smith's (1999, 2012, p. 137) advice for indigenous/minority researchers particularly salient in this respect:

They [researchers of indigenous communities] have to be skilled at defining clear research goals and 'lines of relating' which are specific to the project ... Insider

researchers also need to define closure and have the skills to say 'no' and the skills to say 'continue'.

Smith's description of the roles and duties of the insider or indigenous researcher offered "food for thought" during my research journey, and helped me always to think critically about my methods of engagement, the relationships I created with participants, and the quality and richness of our dialogue. I was careful to keep clarifying my sense of how and why things were happening, and continually looked for ways to create effective and respectful dialogue with both teachers and students. Furthermore, following Heath and Street (2008) and Smith's (2012) observation that "the critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity" (p. 137), I kept a journal in which to reflect on what I had heard and observed during my fieldwork each day. In the course of planning and interpretation, I also took into account Grbich's (2004) advice that:

The removal of any emphasis on predictability, generalizability or finite endings and the constant troubling of secure patterns by juxtaposing, checking against other nodes, overturning discourses and seeking multiplicity should prevent simple conclusions from being sought or constructed. (p. 5).

I felt that these methods helped me plan my research carefully and interpret my participants' words and actions without the risk of missing important details or generalizing about our dialogue. In addition, I drew on McCarty's (2011) and Smith's (2012) conceptualizations of the role and responsibilities of researcher as a cultural insider to help me foreground ethical imperatives and the need to respect people's voices for change. As Smith (2012) states:

Insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. (p. 139)

In light of these scholars' insightful research advice, I began each dialogue with an awareness of the need for dynamic dialogue in which the participants' voices are respected. In order to maximize the richness of our critical discussions, I gave the teachers time to reflect on the discursive themes (Appendix A) if they preferred before we entered into dialogic conversations. During our dialogue, I reminded myself to be patient while actively listening to their ideas and taking notes. I also provided a brief summary of their responses before we followed up with another question or idea. As part of my effort to promote active meaning-making dialogue, I encouraged the teachers to ask me questions and share their concerns in order to make our conversations more productive. I also kept in mind Smith's (1999, 2012) theory of knowledge-sharing, which involves not only sharing themes, but undertaking analysis of a given research problem to gain insight into the way knowledge is constructed and represented. In the context of this research, sharing knowledge entailed interrogating and challenging the English language policies under discussion, and proposing alternative solutions for the sociolinguistic inequalities that impede the lives and education of minority students. We examined a variety of topics, including the following: (a) participants' views on the current English language policies, curriculum, and teacher training, along with students' performance; (b) their own proposals for new or modified policies; (c) their understanding and application of a linguistically and culturally responsive teaching approach; (d) the role of the English

language in the province; (e) the roles of students' native languages and Vietnamese; and (f) the influence of English on students' lives, education, and socio-economic opportunities.

Underlying the process of creating dynamic and in-depth dialogue (Wolcott, 2008) with teachers from several schools, I was conscious that I was researching indigenous/minority people with the aim of describing their world according to their specific worldview. Yet, the work of Smith (1999; 2012) and Freire (1972) also reminded me to remain aware of my Western education, and to ensure that my engagement with local and minority groups involved “bringing to the centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes, and practices” (Smith, 2012, p. 125) rather than imposing what I had learned on them. To this end, I encouraged the teachers to co-construct dialogue by beginning with open themes such as: “What would you say about the current English language policies?”, “To what extent are students benefiting from these policies?”, “How do you feel about integrating students' linguistic and cultural heritages into your teaching?”, “Have you tried...?”, “How do you feel about...?”, “Is there anything more you can draw from our conversation?”, and “What do you think you would do differently if you were a policy maker?” I made effective use of these kinds of questions as well as insights of doing research about and with indigenous/minority people in both my conversations with teachers and students and my classroom observations.

Dialogue with minority student youth. In addition to my dialogue with the teachers, I had extensive dialogic conversations with 16 minority students (aged 17-18) in the eleventh and twelfth grades at the same schools as the teachers with whom I had previously engaged in dialogue. Furthermore, working at the same research site for my

M.A. fieldwork in 2009 had made me aware that the minority students were usually more active, confident, and vocal during focus-group discussions. I also learned that these students tended to prefer to have time to think before responding to a question. During my fieldwork, therefore, I usually provided discussion topics (Appendix B) at the outset and gave the students an appropriate amount of time (between 5-10 minutes) to brainstorm with their peers. They would let me know when they were ready to discuss the topics with me in Vietnamese.



Figure 5. Brainstorming the dialogic themes. These minority students are brainstorming the dialogic themes to prepare for our dialogue.

I found that the students delved into the topics very actively and enthusiastically: they took notes, negotiated with each other, and took on board their peers' opinions. On returning to this community to carry out fieldwork for my Ph.D, I wanted to make sure that the students and I had a safe space for our collaborative dialogue. I was grateful for considerable support from all of the schools in this respect. The principals and teachers

were happy to provide me with private rooms in which to have conversations with the students in a comfortable environment. In performing conversations with the student youth, I draw on Gbrich's (2004) insights that postmodern research capitalizes on practices of co-construction whereby the researcher brings into play the voices of a range of people in a more transparent manner. Accordingly, I fostered an environment of knowledge-sharing to motivate the students to share their experiences, desires, and attitudes in relation to the recent English language policies. Together, we explored a range of topics, including (a) their views on the English language in this mountainous area; (b) their personal purposes of using English; (c) the roles and consequences of using English at the present time for socio-economic and educational opportunities; (d) their classmates' ideas about learning English; (e) the participants' views on English teaching in their schools, including the curriculum and methods of evaluation; (f) their views of their native languages and Vietnamese; (g) their suggestions for an English-teaching technique that accommodates linguistic and cultural diversity; and (h) their proposals for new or modified language policies. All minority student youth showed strong engagement and inspiration in our dialogue. Being conscious of losing salient information in student and teacher engagement, besides my researcher's role and consciousness-raising agendas, I considered myself as a "constant learner" (Heath, 2008, p. 30) who entered the field with curiosity and desires to deepen my understanding by opening myself to any further questions, insights, and comments from both the teachers and students. Indeed, this practice offered me a key to fully enter into the dialoguers' lives, helping me gain deeper insights into their stances, feelings, concerns, and struggles in education and everyday life.

Observation. Angrosino (2007) argues that, together with participation, observation—the most powerful means of validation—is the anthropologist’s ideal technique. I believed that my engaged dialogue would be strengthened by observing the socio-political operation of the schools, especially the participants’ linguistic and cultural settings, both inside and outside the classroom. I thus characterized my role as that of “participant observer” (Angrosino, 2007), as I sought to immerse myself in the cultural, social and political complexities of policy implementation and thereby enrich my dialogue with the participants. Drawing on Angrosino’s theories of observation in the postmodern context, I used observation to frame my interaction with the teachers and students at the heart of my collaborative research study.

In particular, I spent time observing six teachers (three teachers per school) from the same two schools as the teachers and students with whom I engaged in dialogue. Two observations were undertaken with each of the six teachers. Each class I observed had between 35 and 45 students. When carrying out my classroom observations, I drew on Bloome’s (2012) discussion of classroom ethnographic practice to explore what was happening in the classrooms with an emphasis on social and cultural processes, seeking to identify “complex human activities and relationships in their fullness” (p. 12). In particular, I used the questions proposed by Bloome (2012) as my protocol for observing and interpreting teaching and learning practices and the complexities and contradictions of the current English language policies. Bloome (2012) guided ethnographic researchers’ classroom observations using a critical and socio-politically focused set of questions, beginning with “what is a classroom?” (p. 13). These questions enable the researcher to identify and describe the socio-cultural setting of the classroom by

comparing and contrasting its nature and function to those of other everyday contexts. The next question proposed by Bloome (2012) was “who and what are in the classroom?” (p. 15). Rather than focusing on the mere presence of furniture and material objects in the classroom, Bloome sought to highlight the meanings of these objects for teachers and students, and how they connected the classroom to external spaces and institutions. Bloome’s (2012) final question, “what happens in a classroom?” (p. 18), helps the researcher to understand participants’ actions and reactions while acknowledging that what happens in a classroom is complex and multilayered. As Bloome (2012) maintains:

Classroom ethnography contributes to reconceptualizing what a classroom is and what happens there: it illuminates a subset of a society's socialization and enculturation efforts; it articulates the relationship of dominant social, cultural, and linguistic groups to non-dominant groups; it generates new directions in curriculum and instruction that address long-standing inequities; and it challenges extant educational theories of learning and knowledge. (p. 7)

Bloome’s approach to classroom observation provided meaningful techniques for me to understand how teachers and students translate the official language policies. They further offered an additional channel to interpret how school, through instruction, linguistic practices, and curriculum (re)produce social (in)equality for the minority students.

I had not expected the teachers whose classes I observed to ask for feedback on their teaching after the lessons were over. The teachers often approached me to ask something like: “How was my teaching?” or even “I felt I did not perform the teaching period well today. I am still not confident about my teaching English speaking skills.”

However, this formed a crucial part of my research: not only did it enable me to provide the teachers with constructive comments, but it also offered the opportunity for member checking. This in turn helped me to clarify my understanding of why and how the teachers had taught as they did during my observations or how some students did not seem to participate. Equally importantly, I took care to contact each of the teachers to thank them for their participation, and to ask follow-up questions if there had not been time to do so after the lessons. I included all of the resulting information in my field notes for the purposes of clarification and reflection.

To enrich my dialogue further and reinforce my relationships with the participants' schools, I took part in such activities as school-wide staff meetings, and spent my spare time talking with teachers in staff rooms and coffee shops. I also travelled to my student participants' communities to observe their lifestyles, and discussed English teaching and the education system with their parents. I was meticulous in adding field notes to my journal, and spent a large amount of time transcribing and reflecting on participants' responses, and deciding whether and how I needed to adapt my dialogue with teachers and students.

Survey. Drawing on the suggestions of LPP researchers such as Davis (2012), Hornberger and Ricento (1996), and McCarty (2011) regarding the use of multiple data types, I also conducted open-ended survey questionnaires (Brown, 2009) on the current language policies with 182 minority students (200 surveys distributed) drawn from the same schools as those at which I had carried out dialogue and observations (Appendix B). The surveys were designed and distributed after my dialogic conversations with the teachers and students. My active listening and transcribing the students' and teachers'

responses significantly offered me with insights into designing the survey questionnaire to obtain a more nuanced picture of the official language implementation in tandem with extending my consciousness-raising to more minority student youth. I believed that the surveys would offer another source of relevant data to strengthen and inform the inferences made from my observations and dialogue.

From my knowledge and experience of conducting research, I was aware that conducting surveys had to be well prepared. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, therefore, I visited the classes involved to introduce myself, the purposes of my research, and its potential to promote more democratic language policies and decision-making capable of taking into account the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of minority students. I responded to all of the students' questions about my research because the validity of my results depended on their fully understanding the survey. Making the surveys anonymous encouraged the students to provide truthful responses and I also explained to them how important their responses were to my future work and that of other policy makers. I asked the students not only to outline their views but to give a real-life example for every answer. In addition, as the survey consisted of 10 open-ended questions, their teachers and I gave them ample time (at least two weeks) in which to respond. As a result, 182 surveys from the two schools (100 from one school and 82 from the other) were returned to me within a two to three week period. The topics addressed by the surveys were very similar to those I had discussed in a conversational setting with the students' peers, and included the following: (a) their views on the role of English in obtaining socio-economic and educational opportunities; (b) policy makers' ultimate purpose in promoting the use of English in the province; (c) the consequences of using

English at the present time; (d) their classmates' general perceptions of English; (e) their views on English teaching in their schools, including the curriculum and methods of evaluation; (f), their views of their native languages and Vietnamese; (g) their idea of an English-teaching technique that accommodates linguistic and cultural diversity; and (h) their suggestions for new or modified language policies.

Despite my eventual sadness and anger in discovering the ambiguity and irresponsibility of the current English language policies, I was delighted by the students' and teachers' truthful, detailed, and thoughtful reflections, even in their responses to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

According to Delamont and Atkinson (2004), data analysis following the postmodern turn should be a method of “social presentation rather than data analysis in a narrow sense” (p. 130). In light of this argument, I considered it important for me to analyze my data with reference to my participants' socially and politically bounded setting to illuminate their intentions, desires, and real-life experiences and the changes they have undergone. With regard to the role of data analysis in LPP, McCarty (2011) holds that such analysis must uncover the situated logic of policy making, both implicit and explicit, and offer insight into the practices and realities of LPP. It should also differentiate between the dominant group, whose ideologies, agendas, and rights are greatly legitimized, and the subgroup, whose rights and beliefs are minoritized by the agendas of the dominant group. Furthermore, researchers should seek to understand the ways in which transnational language-education policies may under-privilege locally situated knowledge and thus undermine the language rights and beliefs of minority

groups (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011). McCarty (2011) points out that “the core concern in LPP scholarship is the role of education inside and outside of schools in structuring social and linguistic inequalities” (p. 12).

While taking into account the above insights into data analysis, I also regarded McCarty’s (2011) framework for the analysis of LPP inquiries as vital to the reflective process. The use of this framework required me to pay close attention when interpreting language policies in order to align my data analysis with the following questions: (a) what does educational policy look like in social practices? (b) who does it, with what purposes, to and for whom, and with what consequences? (c) how do policy processes normalize some languages and speakers, and marginalize others? (d) how are people and communities defined by these policy processes? and (e) how do minoritized-speech communities exercise agency in the face of oppressive language policies? McCarty’s (2011) work served to orient my technique of critical analysis, which I used to evaluate data drawn from the survey, interviews, and observations carried out during this study.

In general terms, the critical discussion of LPP data analysis has led me to uncover marginalized voices, covert motivations, ideologies, unintended consequences, and agentive actions to create an alternative model of LPP that promotes social justice and accommodates linguistic and cultural diversity. This body of research has also shaped my epistemological methods and the inferences I draw from my data. In addition, I have become aware of the importance of emic perspectives and participants’ beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral habits to my analysis of surveys, conversations, field notes, and observational data. As the literature treats field notes and observational data, along with

the results of open-ended surveys and dialogue, as ethnographic/qualitative data, I have taken the same approach to the data types obtained from my study.

I also utilized an ethnographic approach to data analysis and interpretation, with emphasis on an inductive and recursive process that allows patterns, themes, and categories to emerge from data rather than imposing them a priori (TESOL, Ethnography guidelines, 2001). To this end, all of the dialogue was transcribed. The first step in the process of qualitative data analysis was to read all of the dialogic transcripts and observational notes (Maxwell, 1996). I also took into account Delamont and Atkinson's (2004) reminder that "field-notes are not a closed, completed, and completed final text; rather they are indeterminate, subject to reading, coding, recoding, interpreting, reinterpreting" (p. 671). After transcribing the dialogue and field notes and spending considerable time reading the transcripts, I followed Spradley (1980), Delamont and Atkinson (2004), and Creswell (2007) in creating an initial set of themes for the data. These were revisited several times, along with the field notes and transcripts, to identify salient themes with multiple meanings or values, and to discover missing information. The last step in the analysis of the observational and dialogic data was to generate "universal themes" (Spardley, 1980, p. 152) that expressed universal semantic relationships between the themes previously identified.

The data from the open-ended surveys were also categorized into themes similar to those addressed in the dialogic and observational data. For my questions (concerning students' perceptions of (a) the importance of English and (b) the importance of their native languages/Vietnamese), I used simple square symbols to indicate the number of students in the two schools who had agreed or disagreed that these languages were

important, or else had expressed another opinion on the matter. These data were combined with the observational and dialogic results for mutual confirmation and constant comparison to enable a rich description of the data that helps me resist possible preconceptions about my participants and their situations (Heath, 2008). My engaging results with teachers and minority students in Chapters 4 and 5 were drawn on the process deep and careful reflexivity (Heath & Street, 2008; Madison, 2012) in which my self-perceptions, methodological setbacks, and mental states, and voices and actions of the dialoguers are greatly interwoven. Yet this process was always analyzed and interpreted within the historical and structural constraints and contexts of my research study.

Credibility. In line with common perspectives on research credibility that place heavy emphasis on structured processes such as expert review, triangulation, and rich and thick description (Creswell and Plano, 2007; Maxwell, 2005, Patton, 1999), I argue that the credibility of critical and engaged ethnographic research in the postmodern context is strongly correlated with the researcher's selfhood and his/her ontological and epistemological assumptions and agendas. As I believe that all of these important criteria come into play at the very beginning of the research process, I will briefly outline the strategies I used to ensure that my study reached for the highest credible potential.

Triangulation. According to Patton (1999), triangulation means comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means. Creswell and Plano (2007) stated that exploratory research designs should select a range of individuals to minimize threats to validity and reliability. In this study, therefore, I chose to work with a variety of students and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of

the research problem. In addition, triangulation methods helped me to (a) draw comparisons between the observational, dialogic and survey data; (b) check the consistency over time of the participants' opinions on the English language policies; and (c) compare the perspectives of the participants from different points of view, for example triangulating teachers' views with those of minority students. These methods are further reflected in the data chapters.

Member checking. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checking “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). After transcribing all of the conversations, I sent a summary of the themes to each participant and solicited his/her feedback. I further asked the participants questions when I felt unsure about their responses. This strategy significantly minimized the possibility of misinterpreting the participants' responses.

Explicit comparisons. Explicit comparisons (Creswell, 2007) allow the researcher to compare the results drawn from a sample to those of other studies in the literature as a means of increasing credibility and strengthening the findings of the study. I used this strategy to compare my research findings with theories framed by earlier researchers to test and strengthen the results of my ethnographic research. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of this study was considered as another instrument for explicit comparison which was blended in the result sections to make the account comprehensive, accessible, and reflective cultural critique and intervention.

In summary, in Chapter 3 I first discussed critical theories, especially drawing on Freire's history of critical literacy of reading the word and reading the world as an important theoretical foundation for the evolutions of critical ethnography and later

engaged ethnography. Furthermore, I provided a description and reflection of the key methodological approaches: critical ethnography and engaged ethnography to guide this research account to uncover hidden agendas, contradictions, and resistance, empower its actors, and bring about ideological transformation by inquiring into social justice in language and education policy making. Directly following the methodological approaches to language policies, I introduced the research site in great detail including minority peoples' cultures, languages, struggles, and geographical, social, and political lives and situations, which can allow me to have an in-depth interpretation of the results of this research study with the intersection of minority people's lives, linguistic and cultural contexts, and socio-economic and educational development. Finally, I reflected on the implications of my own positionality for my role as an ethnographic researcher, my methods of planning and conducting research and engaging participants, and my techniques of data analysis. The following chapter (Chapter 4) describes the results of my reflective engaging dialogue with minority student youth.

Chapter 4. Engaging Students

Drawing on critical, collaborative, and transformative approaches (Freire, 1972; McCarty, 2011; Menken & García, 2010; Warren & Mapp, 2011), the centrality of history, culture, and place (Luke, 2011), and an engaged ethnographic framework (Davis et al., 2012), I engaged young minority students in a dialogic exploration of Vietnam's current language policies as these impact their experience of educational equity, educational and socio-economic opportunities, and linguistic human rights. These activities created a space for minority students to develop critical awareness of language policies, voice their needs, and exercise agency in promoting an egalitarian language policy. In the following, I depict the dialogue undertaken with minority youth, during which we analyzed a number of salient aspects.

Rhetoric and Realities of English Language Policies: English or Illiteracy, and Everyday Survival?

Repositioning students as active agents for socio-political change (McCarty & Wyman, 2009), my dialogue in the summer of 2011 with minority youth from different schools began with exploring the reality of English language policies to uncover the relationship between English and educational and socio-economic development (Coleman, 2011; Van der Aa & Blommaert, 2011). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the country's eagerness to promote English language nationwide has fashioned it as a competitive commodity (e.g., Heller, 2010) with which Vietnamese youth must be equipped in order to enhance their employability and contribute to national economic development. However, scholarship (Coleman, 2011; Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012) uncovering the relationship between promoting English language and socio-economic resolutions across countries in Africa and Asia argues that the spread of the English

language has neither responded to poverty by creating economic opportunities nor solved deep-seated social problems, especially for those from linguistic-minority and disenfranchised backgrounds. On the contrary, English language mandates have been argued to widely reduce educational and linguistic equity, to cause serious damage to the welfare of already-disenfranchised social groups, and to widen the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' (e.g., Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Researchers such as Kobuta (2011) and Rubdy and Tan (2008) further express considerable skepticism about the functionality of English given a relatively small number of people in both developed and developing societies come into contact with English or have need for it in their everyday lives. Such empirical warnings about the antagonistic influences of English language spread suggests that current English language policies in Vietnam may actually hamper students, who struggle merely to survive, from obtaining the educational support needed for gaining increased economic benefits.

Through critical discourse of themes connecting English language spread with minority family's daily hardships and formidable life struggles, these minority youth discussed a series of related topics, beginning with the real-life context of English usage in this remote, multilingual, and multicultural region. Our dialogue showed minority students' active participation in detailed discussions of the practical usage of English, and revealed that this language has a very limited functionality for poor people and minority students in their region. In particular, we began our dialogue with the question I proposed: "What are the real purposes of using English in the province?" Since these groups of students were given time (5-10 minutes) to analyze the dialogic themes with their friends, I noticed that they provided insightful and clear analyses. During our

dialogue, a Thai minority student, Mai,¹⁴ genuinely acknowledged the impracticality of the English language policies by expressing:

I think that English is used for very limited purposes in this region. Most of the people who know English are teachers who use the language to teach. In contrast, there is little need for English in local tourism. Yet, although English is a popular language [nationwide], it is rarely used in our region because people here still have to cope with severe poverty, limited socio-cultural understanding, and low living standards. What can we use English for, especially when many people are still illiterate [in Vietnamese]? I think the roles of such types of language are not seen in this province as they are stated [by national policy makers.]

Together with Mai, our favorable engaging environment fostered minority youth's professional identity and agency (Morita, 2004) in mediating between the usefulness of learning English and the pressing socio-economic issues raised by their socio-economic struggles and their future needs (Smith, 2012; Wyman, 2012). As Chua, another student vigorously contended:

It is already challenging enough for students from this remote area to be literate in Vietnamese. After learning English, students return to their agricultural livelihoods. To whom do they talk English then? And for whom do they write English?

These two students' critiques showed their awareness that English is rarely necessary in this region. Their reflective remarks challenged the optimistic ideologies of the national English language policies to legitimize English as the "normalized product" or a "correct

¹⁴ All participants' names used in Chapters 4 and 5 are pseudonyms.

language” (Bourdieu, 1991) that all minority students have to acquire. Yet, these minority youth’s sincere and critical expression of the extremely limited functions of English in this province called for policy enforcers to look closely and carefully at the socio-economic and educational struggles, geographical characteristics, and immediate needs of the people in their community. Such insights reflect minority youth’s thoughtful, responsible, and comprehensive understanding (Lee, 2009; Messing, 2009) of the need to prioritize social welfare, literacy skills, sustainable economic development, and the provision of basic education for minority groups rather than imposing on them an unresponsive English language mandate. Furthermore, their critical reflections are characteristic of the awareness exhibited by other minority youth of the mismatched language policies that operate locally across social classes and ethnicities (McCarty & Wyman, 2009; Rampton, 2006). Such students’ expressions support the claim that native youth have great potential as the youngest tier of policy makers (McCarty, 2009): they exhibited an insightful understanding of educational, socio-economic, and social welfare inequalities, and thus could make useful contributions to the development of equal language and education policies (Davis et al., 2012).

Minority youth’s complex utilization of English. Following the exploration of the hypothetical functions of English in this province was a discussion of minority students’ reasons for using English in their everyday lives, which provided fruitful insights into the benefits – or otherwise – of English in this region. Information obtained from the dialogue, together with my observations of English usage in this province, suggested that English was chiefly used for learning and testing purposes, as it is required for graduation. Other students described the use of English in tourism and banking.

However, my experience of living in this region, and my interactions with teachers, indicated that the latter activities attract only a very limited number of Kinh people, who usually come from large cities. I also found that the responses made by the minority students during our dialogue strongly resembled those collected from the open-ended survey questionnaires. Interestingly, both the dialogue participants and the 182 students surveyed repeatedly described using English for entertainment purposes, such as listening to music and playing video games. Specifically, 85% of the respondents used English to listen to songs, 10% to conduct research in English; 5% to make friends online, and 15% to play games. Together with their formidable challenges including illiteracy, poverty, and a distinctly limited English-learning environment, these youth's diverse uses of English directly show strong evidence of the missing link between minority students' learning English and their social, economic, and educational advancement.

Representing the 10% noted above who conduct research in English, a small number of minority students whose parents are governmental officials tended to use English for more academic purposes, such as researching online information. I also discovered that a few minority students with good English skills tended not to rely on the Vietnamese translated versions of news. As Lu shared with me:

I do not want to depend on the Vietnamese translated versions of news because they are often not very faithful to the original versions in English. When I find some very interesting news, I would like to understand it by translating it myself.

As a daily Vietnamese newspaper reader, my comparisons of the English and Vietnamese translations of the national newspapers generally indicated the same issue. Translators

tended to remove and simplify translations of the original English versions. However, another important aspect is how to engage these minority students to be critical consumers of not only textbooks and curriculum but also a vast array of information, including news and online sources in English. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss this further but it offers ideas for future research studies. However, it is clear that the critical consciousness obtained from our dialogue foster minority students' abilities as critical information interpreters and responsible decision-makers/activists for themselves and their communities.

In addition to using English for information purposes, I asked these youth their reasons for using English to play online games or to listen to music. Denh, a Muong minority student, explained:

I use English to play video games. Nowadays, there are many foreign imported games in Vietnam. If I did not know English, I would not know how to play these games, as I would not understand their goals and characteristics.

Noticeably, all minority students in our dialogue and the surveys admitted that although they often listen to music with English lyrics, they did not necessarily understand them. Another student, Mua, explained as follows: "Although I use English to listen to music, most of the time I do not understand the lyrics. I listen to English songs because their melodies and sounds are interesting." I found similar experiences among the minority students' survey responses, who often described Western music programs as "interesting" and "new," depicting an "active and different culture and life-style" that they would like to experience. Aligning these youth's online linguistic practices with the perspectives of literacies and multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011), it can be suggested that such

online modalities and semiotics (e.g., music, news, symbols, games) could be utilized as a set of resources for learning and critical literacy deconstruction (Malon & Street, 2008) when both teachers and students are aware and supported.

Our dialogue and the survey data indicated that English is also used by 42% of these minority students for computer-related and electronic tasks, including learning how to use a computer and related software and operating other electronic devices (e.g., cell phones). The minority youth explained that knowing English vocabulary significantly helped them use computers and other technology. Think shared his experience: “I use English to install computer software. If I do not know English, it is hard for me to understand the command tasks.” In relation to Think’s reflection, I found from responses made in the dialogue and the survey that communicative forms of English are largely inessential in this region, due to its distinct socio-linguistic and remote geographical characteristics. Instead, more “instructional” or “technological” English teaching may better facilitate students’ computer-science education. It is thus recommended that instead of presenting English as a commodified skill with which minority youth must be equipped to compete with regional employees—a goal that they are evidently far from achieving—official policy makers should take into consideration promoting English to advance students’ technological literacy skills. This may, eventually, help minority students to become technologically skilled citizens capable of addressing poverty, accessing welfare systems (e.g., health, education, environment) (Madon, 2000; Shirin, 2000), negotiating their own socio-economic opportunities, and making a greater contribution to sustainable national economic development. This emerging role of

English in improving minority students' technological education may be a productive direction for future research.

In summary, we can interpret from students' practices of using English that they are highly complex (Kobuta, 2011; Lee, 2009) and largely in contrast to the assumptions underlying the government's goal of promoting English for an individual's social and economic resource development. Instead, the language policies set political and social conditions and constraints for the production of power, resources, and distinction for those who are already privileged (Bourdieu, 1991; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007) through privileging English and Vietnamese. Furthermore, from my observations of and conversations with these young minorities, it seemed that their usage of English expressed their curiosity and eagerness to extend their agency beyond the restricted educational mandates that largely fail to accommodate their creativity and manifold cultural and linguistic practices (Doan, 2004). On the other hand, I argue that their multifaceted approach to English use may also signal the far-reaching and harmful influence of neoliberal English language agendas (Phillipson, 2012; Rapatahana and Bunce, 2012); that is, the English language has been commodified for profit in the form of products such as music, games, and other entertainment programs, which can lead young people from minority backgrounds to become potential victims of market exploitations. Such taken-for-granted English language agendas can also negatively and insidiously shape the beliefs and practices of local youth in the image of the dominant Western culture and lifestyle. In this regard, Rapatahana and Bunce's (2012) synopsis of studies on the global domination of English warned that the spread of English is a threatening, pervasive, and complex process capable of destroying the epistemological

and ontological foundations of indigenous life. Moreover, we could see that the implicit and explicit utilization of English by minority students displays their constant struggles with the national “linguistic authority” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 62), negotiations with the dominant Western world culture, and their attempts to safeguard their cultural and linguistic traditions in the face of overwhelming globalization and English spread (Lee, 2009; McCarty, 2009). Therefore, engaging the minority youth of this region in deconstructing the essentialism of English offered them a fresh and equal academic forum to develop and deploy their critical awareness of the ways in which languages are distributed and legitimized within and outside schools and society (Bourdieu, 1991), and how this shapes social identification and perpetuates educational and social inequalities (Wyman, 2012).

Resistance to English for all. We move from analyzing the roles of English in the province to understanding what the compulsory English education meant to these minority youth. It must be acknowledged that many students in our dialogic conversations and surveys believed that English could be important for multiple purposes such as advanced education, job opportunities, transnational business management, and personal explorations. However, when putting the English mandate in the context of this region and with people who struggle with compelling deprivation, poverty, and limited knowledge of standard Vietnamese, they argued for not being imposed upon by this mandate. In an in-depth dialogue, Hoa, a student, offered the following comment:

I think I do not agree that everybody has to learn English. Policy makers should not require all students in Vietnam to learn and speak English as fast as the wind

[i.e., fluently] simply due to the hegemony of English worldwide....It is peoples' careers that decide whether or not they need English.¹⁵

Similar to Hoa, the minority students involved in our dialogue not only expressed their resistance to the compulsory English mandate, but made a crucial connection between compulsory English education and the minority people's life practices. Henh, a fellow student, insightfully responded:

If we examine the roles of English with reference to the social and linguistic conditions of our province, I think that we need to rethink the compulsory English language policies. People should be given the freedom to decide whether they want to learn English. In our province, for those whose everyday lives and careers have no connection with English, what is the language for? People whose career choices and interests lie in raising buffalos, pigs, and chickens do not consider English to be essential. I think that learning English should be encouraged, but not enforced for all students.

In response to Henh's reflection, Lien, another student, showed her rejection of English mandatory education when comprehending the linguistic and practical challenges faced by minority students like her peers. She remarked:

In my opinion, it is not right to mandate that all students learn English. Minority students already find it very difficult to become fluent in Vietnamese. If we learn English without having the opportunity to use it, the language is useless.

¹⁵ This and some other direct quotations are taken from my collaborative publications with Davis and Phyak (2012) and Phyak (forthcoming).

In comparing the students' dialogic responses with the students' survey reflections, I realized that many students held similar, proactive opinions on the compulsory use of English in education. A male student made the following remarks:

I agree that not everybody has to learn English. As everyone has their own interests, it is irrational to demand that students learn English just because English usage is a dominant trend in society. We live in Vietnam, where not everybody needs to work with foreigners nor has the opportunity to migrate to English-speaking countries. It is thus not necessary to force students to learn English. In reality, many students are uninterested in or even hate English; they learn it to meet the requirements and pass exams, and to ensure that they are not considered rebels. But, in fact, their ways of learning English are themselves like *học một cách chống đối* [acts of rebellion]!

Such views above are representative of the critical opinions of the English compulsory language policies held by the youth involved in this study. Engaging youth in the dialogue about English mandates illuminate their critical resistance to “symbolic domination” (Bourdieu, 1991) of English, which is arranged and controlled by the interest of people in power. The students' thoughtful reflections, especially the comment regarding “acts of rebellion,” censure the knee-jerk and ad hoc mechanisms of the national language policies that replicate the capitalist emphasis on English while disregarding a wide range of highly complex issues including people's career choices, socio-economic needs, academic freedom, academic knowledge of Vietnamese, and an environment for English use (Kobuta, 2011; Ramanathan, 2012). Therefore, minority students' genuine expressions cast doubt on the ability of the national stated policies to

embrace the English language critically and responsibly, taking into serious consideration important factors such as to what extent, when, where, why, and for whom English is needed throughout the processes of language policy decision making (Kobuta, 2011). Furthermore, these minority youth's thought-provoking opinions on and criticisms of the compulsory English language education reflect their in-depth, on-the-ground understanding of their communities' historical, political, and social challenges. At the same time, such remarks indicated youth's ability to connect English learning to broader national and global contexts, including whether English is needed for immigration or working with foreign companies (Romero-Little, 2012).

I believe that the dialogue offered minority youth a space for their genuine voice, truthful reflections, and active engagement of the educational and socio-economic issues that directly impact their lives and future. Such rich dialogue fosters and advances their ideological and critical awareness of the official optimistic agendas, practicality, and roles of the English language policies (e.g., McCarty et al., 2011), and this is exhibited throughout the students' highly logical expressions above. Yet, when we closed this topic to discuss other matters, Han's following reflection added to the further development of minority youth's ideological transformation of the realistic roles of English:

What I have learned from our discussion is that I have to rethink a great deal about the topics we have addressed. I have gained insight into many issues related to the promotion of English. I must now think more critically about what we need English for, and why we learn English.

When Han said: "I have to rethink a great deal of..." in the excerpt above, I believe that minority students' ideological transformation is not only emerging during our dialogical

conversations, or the here and now, but also continued to be nurtured when they connect and reconnect what we deconstructed in this research study with their educational and social realities in their future. Thus, such engaging dialogue promises a solid foundation for students' positive ideological and agentic evolutions.

In sum, engaging with young people from a minority background helps them to unravel the realities, functions, and uses of English, and reinforce their democratic citizenship, voice, and agency (McCarty et al., 2012; Lo-Phillip, 2010). Minority students are provided with an academically democratic space in which they can fully deploy their professional agency by critically deconstructing the reality of the English language policy mandate in their native land. This dialogic engagement revealed the students' great awareness of the paradoxical mismatches between learning English and prioritizing deep-seated provincial issues including economic deprivation, illiteracy, and low living standards. Their unanimous agreement that the English language policies are unrealistic in this region indicated their potential as language policy makers of their own learning, capable of envisioning a complex picture of language policies and making decisions with responsibility, competence, and sensitivity to the need to protect the local community's sense of place and culture. Engaging youth here further indicates that language policy making can produce a negative impact on individual and national identity, security, and well-being (Coleman, 2011; Phillipson, 2012; Torres, 2002). Youth's dialogic voices strongly suggest that promoting English for minority students in this region is extremely complex and urge top-down policy makers to seriously analyze its roles, benefits, risks and costs (Coleman, 2011). Yet, minority youth's reflections suggest that policy makers re-conceptualize key factors such as geographical characteristics, socio-economic and

political terrains, and youth's hybrid and complex linguistic behavior, personal desires, and professional trajectories. The mandated English policies for these minority youth here seem to mainly continue the negative economic, social, educational, and cultural repercussions while threatening their cultural heritage and socio-political status (Torres, 2002).

The English language policies reflected by students' expressions exhibited a high degree of ambivalence and harm to the minority students' education and social success rather than endowing them with competent English knowledge. I invited these minority youth to express their ideologies of learning English in the following section.

Ideologies of Minority Youth toward English: “Don't Like or Don't Care...”

Positioning minority students' inner voice, interests, and needs (Morita, 2004) at the heart of our in-depth dialogue, minority students provided rich expressions on their attitudes toward learning English. The minority youth's discursive narratives showed that most were uninterested in learning the language for a wide range of reasons. The students in my group discussions described English language learning as *khó* (“difficult”), *khác biệt* (“strikingly different”), *không thực tế* (“impractical”), and *nhàm chán* (“repetitive”). They also noted that it is common for their peers to fall asleep during lessons. Their accounts were corroborated by my classroom observations: instead of paying attention to the teachers, many students exhibited overt resistance by listening to music on their cell phones, sleeping, or looking out of the window. Only some students at the front of the class participated in answering the teachers' questions or carrying out group work. However, the teachers tended to ignore these comparatively “disruptive students” because, as they explained during our dialogue, the time allotted for each class (45

minutes) was too short for them to teach even their attentive students effectively, let alone attempting to discipline the more disorderly individuals. Therefore, sitting at the edge of the class in the heat of summer, I noticed that teaching and learning English seemed like an act of torture for both teachers and students. The former kept teaching to fulfill their responsibility to the students; the latter simply attended to their own business. When I asked the students to describe their peers' common perspectives on learning English, students (Lo A Mua and Huong) remarked as follows:

Lo A Mua: I think students nowadays, especially my classmates, do not like English. For example, when it is a time for a Vietnamese literature or math period, they seem excited, but they feel very stressed whenever we have an English period. Many students feel bored with this subject.

Huong confirmed by adding:

In general, my classmates do not like or care about English. They are only interested in gaining a passing grade in this subject, rather than enriching their knowledge of it.

The students also noted the goal of learning English as unrealistic as they said "there is no environment in which to develop the language." Similarly, I found the responses made to the survey robustly confirmed the students' lack of interest in English. In particular, as much as 85% reported that they neither liked nor cared about English and only 15% claimed to enjoy learning the language. A female student made the following observations in response to the survey:

Unlike other subjects, the English learned at school is rarely relevant in practice. It seems to me that students use English because they like listening to English music; this does not mean that they like English itself.

Minority youth's genuine and personal voices in the dialogue and the survey illuminated their highly conscious attitudes of the unrealistic English language policies and their ideological and dynamic opposition to the policies. The engagement activities with these students opened up a space for them to frankly voice their ideologies on the relevance, or otherwise, of English language policy discourse in schools. Through the dialogic conversations and students' reactions to the English language policies, it confirmed that these young students resist the imposition of dominant and unresponsive educational discourses in a variety of ways, fashioning alternative strategies to fulfill their goals and purposes (Canagarajah, 1999; Morita, 2004). Their own real-life narratives verified that the promise-laden rhetoric of the national English language policies consistently fails to deliver; in fact, these policies depreciate the agency, identity, and aspirations of these minority youth (Coleman, 2011; Davis, 2005, 2009).

The Multiple Roles of Vietnamese and Students' Native Languages: "It Is Fine for Us not to Know English but Unacceptable for Us to Forget Our Mother Tongues!"

In this study, minority students' rich linguistic repertoires are rarely translated into academic success, as they are censored (Bourdieu, 1991) by dominant educational discourses that attribute little or no value to their languages at school or in society at large. Moreover, minority youth speak their native languages primarily within their own communities, as these are the languages of belonging, respect, and identity. On starting school, however, minority children are taught in Vietnamese, which is the sole language of instruction. English is mandated from Grade 3 onward, and is taught through

Vietnamese. According to many teachers, however, students' academic performance is limited by their lack of proficiency in Vietnamese. Despite rigid language policies and given this is a multilingual province, it is crucially vital for minority students to obtain both proficiency in Vietnamese and their native languages for various social, educational, and communal purposes; as such, I further encouraged these minority youth to define not only the roles of English but also Vietnamese and their native languages. This redefining the roles of different languages fostered their sense of belonging and pride while empowering them as ambassadors of their own ethno-linguistic and ethno-cultural knowledge bases (Romero-Little, 2012). Through a series of discussions, I sensed that they were emotionally connected and inspired when talking about their cultural bonds and linguistic heritage. I found our discussions particularly dynamic and reflective when the students compared the need for Vietnamese and their native languages in the contexts of society, education, everyday life, and identity. Since minority students are required to study in Vietnamese rather than their native languages, both socializing and keeping up with the pace of mainstream education tended to overwhelm them. Given that living in a multilingual environment also requires them to move constantly between languages (e.g., Cummins, 2005; García, 2009), I first encouraged them to express their views on the relative need for the Vietnamese language. Unraveling the long-standing and de facto tradition of segregating minority groups and their languages, these youth realized that they may face extreme difficulties in obtaining social and economic capital, especially if they do not speak standard Vietnamese. Indeed, some of the students indicated that their parents' primary reason for sending them to school was to ensure that they knew how to read and write in Vietnamese. This shows that some minority parents' foresaw challenges

in their children's future if they lacked knowledge of Vietnamese language in the mainstream Vietnamese-speaking society. The dialogue with minority students also indicated their critical awareness that fluency in Vietnamese is vital for navigating into mainstream society for a variety of everyday, educational, and professional purposes, as well as for broad ethnic solidarity. Another Hmong student, Denh, explained:

The Vietnamese language is useful to us because we need it to communicate in our everyday lives, in our jobs, in educational settings, and for other essential purposes. Therefore, the role of Vietnamese is very different from that of English, because in Vietnam not every activity requires English, so not everyone needs to know English.

Thu, another student, described the need for Vietnamese in similar terms:

We need Vietnamese because we live and work in an environment in which everyone uses Vietnamese but not English. It would be hard for us to operate within society if we did not know Vietnamese.

Furthermore, minority students provided powerful judgment and full comprehension of the functions of different languages when they were asked to compare the importance of Vietnamese with English; that is, they vigorously agreed that they needed Vietnamese much more than English. A student in our co-constructive dialogue, Luong, corroborated this by revealing the multiple linguistic needs:

I think we need to examine students' need for Vietnamese and English seriously. Besides our native languages, Vietnamese is also important to us because we have to use it every day outside our own communities. In English, due to the rigid curriculum, we only know how to say a few simple words such as "hello,"

“goodbye,” “thank you,” and “sorry”. Therefore, we do not know the language well enough to gain access to life opportunities by using English.

With regard to the same idea, another student, Chua, genuinely proposed a challenging question: “What is English for, given that many people in remote villages never meet any foreigners throughout their lives?”

These agentic remarks of the roles of Vietnamese signaled that the students recognized the need for cultivating standard Vietnamese, a “right utterance” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 44), to position themselves within society and to operate effectively in educational and formal domains (Joseph & Ramani, 2012). We could see that in addition to the linguistic capital of their native languages, Vietnamese is clearly another important form of linguistic capital that can be transferred by these minority students into other types of capital such as social relations, educational opportunities, and mobility. As Bourdieu (1991) argued, if speakers wish to produce discourse successfully within a particular field, they must understand and master the forms and formalities of that field. In this case, because the Vietnamese language has been standardized as the ‘official code’ of mainstream society, youth from minority backgrounds must utilize Vietnamese in as appropriate, natural, and confident a manner as possible to meet the demand of “formal markets” (Bourdieu, 1991) such as employment and education. Conversely, if they fail to adapt their Vietnamese to mainstream linguistic norms, they risk being prevented from accessing higher education, employment, and other opportunities. Such dialogic results of exploration of the linguistic negotiations and needs of the minority youth in this particular region of Vietnam support evidence provided by researchers of young minority groups’ activism in the U.S. (Delpit, 2006; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2006). In these

studies, indigenous and immigrant young people recognized that the inability to express oneself in Standard English seriously inhibits attempts to enter mainstream society. Similarly, our engaged dialogue allowed minority students to express their inner selves in discussion of the role of Vietnamese in gaining equal access to social, political, and economic opportunities, and the consequent and paramount need for effective and responsive Vietnamese-language education.

After gaining insight into the functions of Vietnamese in a wide range of domains, the dialogue with minority students elicited collaborative responses regarding the value of their heritage languages both across time and space. Minority youth engagement strongly portrayed their pride of the intrinsic value of and their great desire to reclaim ancestral languages. With an emphasis on safeguarding their native languages, we collaboratively deconstructed the question: “Do you think learning English is more important than learning one’s native language?” Without exception, all of the students involved in the survey and dialogue forcefully rejected this idea. Clearly, therefore, these engaged dialogue illuminated the enduring ethnic pride of the native youth, and offered them a forum in which their demands for equitable linguistic rights and recognition of their cultural and ethnic identities would be heard. This is echoed in a Hmong student’s, Lu, eloquent expression:

Everyone who has a strong ethnic pride will completely disagree with this idea. Our mother tongue is our ethnic soul, spirit, and the language we respect most in our hearts. Thus, it is impossible to say that English is more important than our native tongue.

During our dialogue, the students continued to defend the importance of their native languages (Lee, 2009; Wyman, 2009). Moreover, all of the students who responded to the survey provided persuasive reasons for preserving their ancestral languages. They felt that these languages exemplified their “ethnic beauty, commitment, pride, identity, and respect for their loved ones” and “protected their traditional knowledge.” Some students added that their mother tongues have become even more important in the wake of globalization, whose rapid changes include language assimilation and the consequent risk of language extinction. As one student explained: “Our native tongues are very important. It is fine for us not to know English but unacceptable for us to forget our mother tongues.” A Muong minority student, Chua, agreed wholeheartedly:

If I did not speak my native language, people in my community would not accept me as a member of that community. Vietnamese and English have almost no function in my village because we only speak our own language. I use my language to communicate with my parents because this is our way of speaking, and also because they speak little Vietnamese. Moreover, if I spoke Vietnamese to friends in my village, they would shun me. After all, it would be very odd for me to use Vietnamese with my own people. It would be something very *không thể chấp nhận được* [unacceptable].

The phrase *không thể chấp nhận được* emerged frequently in the students’ discussion. This word expressively indicates minority students’ spirited and sentimental attachment to, and strong defense of, their heritage languages, while also implying that English has no currency in their homes and communities. The reflections of these youth also, therefore, highlighted their awareness of the need to resist global assimilation (Joseph &

Ramani, 2012) and the hegemony of Vietnamese and English only. The students' ideologies regarding their heritage languages considerably resembled those of Navajo and Yup'ik indigenous youth in the U.S. As Lee (2009) and Wyman (2012) argue, indigenous/minority languages are extremely significant because they are the languages of one's family, community, history, and elders, ethnic pride, and spiritual bonds. In this account, youth's descriptions of the numerous important roles of minority tongues directly debunk the top-down assumption that minority students need to learn Vietnamese as early as possible, which leads to an emphasis on Vietnamese and English teaching at school to the exclusion of minority languages. The students' defense of their native tongues reflects a gamut of ethnic and linguistic complexities that must be taken seriously by national authorities and policy planners if they are to open ample ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger, 2006) for the democratization of language teaching.

Another salient point came from my observations of and dialogue with young minority students was their strong awareness of the depreciation of their native tongues in the course of schooling. Minority students' native languages become a burden rather than a sustainable resource (García, 2009, Helot & Ó Laoire, 2011). Mua, a student, expressed his frustration in this regard during a group discussion: "We are not permitted to speak our native tongue in class because teachers think that we are making fun of them or saying something irrelevant. As they cannot understand us, they think they will be unable to control the classroom." The students' frustration with the silencing of their voices (Bourdieu, 1991) at school defied the uncritical vision of the official policies, which attempt to homogenize minority identity by incorporating it into mainstream society, and

treat native languages as invalid. Such hidden agendas were reflectively described by May (1999) in the following terms:

The language and culture of the dominant group comes to be viewed as the only vehicle of modernity and progress, and the only medium of ‘national’ identity. Alternatively, other cultural and language affiliations are viewed pejoratively as merely ‘ethnic’ and relatedly, as regressive and premodern. (p. 45)

However, although their native languages are discouraged, ignored, or devalued at school, the youth still reported using these languages for multiple academic and communicative purposes; they were well aware of the power of their mother tongues. As Joseph and Ramani (2012), scholars of multilingualism, explained, “it is through the use of their mother tongue that students can tap the internalized, intuitive, tacit, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic knowledge” (p. 29) and develop “rational thinking in formal education” (p. 31). Similarly, Hornberger’s (2003, 2006) studies of biliterate educational practice for indigenous groups such as the Quechua in the South American Andes, the Guarani in Paraguay, and the Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand indicated that combining indigenous languages and the dominant language as mediums of instruction for children fosters dialogism and meaning-making, increases access to wider social discourse, and ensures the active maintenance and revitalization of native languages. In this study, the minority youth described using their native tongues both within and outside class settings, despite the fact that these languages are largely prohibited. This extensive usage reflects the students’ understanding of the potential of their native languages, in collaboration with the dominant language(s), to help them comprehend lessons, communicate ideas, and foster a communal spirit by helping their peers,

especially when they seem to be unable to grasp the content knowledge conveyed in Vietnamese. Furthermore, minority youth's daily negotiation between their heritage languages and the dominant language(s) is part of their opposition to the latter's privileged position, and their attempt to stabilize and safeguard their mother tongues (McCarty & Wyman, 2009). These heritage language practices reveal, by way of contrast, the insensitivity and lack of rigorous and theoretical linguistic knowledge that characterize the country's dominant educational discourses. It shows how official policies fail to validate the value of students' native languages and how to build on the internal wealth of minority languages and cultures to foster sustainable and effective educational outcomes for minority groups (Cummins, 2005; García, 2009). The engaged dialogic activities in this study provided its minority youth with a powerful means of expressing their multiple linguistic practices and desires, and voicing their resistance to the ignorant mandated education and language policies.

Another noticeably important point in our dialogue is while students understand the role of Vietnamese, their linguistic behavior suggests that they wish to appropriate Vietnamese rather than be assimilated by it. During our collaborative scrutiny of the real-life roles of different languages, the students expressed their disapproval of Vietnamese as the sole medium for instruction, and their ambivalence toward the imposed English language policy, while also critically interrogating the reasons for the silencing of their native languages in schools. During our dialogue, a minority student, Hoa, noticed the following about the three languages:

I think that the language policy is neither effective nor appropriate for students. I realize that learning English is very difficult although I try very hard to learn it...

In addition, I realize that learning Vietnamese is also important for our future. I would like to request that policy makers provide opportunities for us to learn our native languages. Why do we have to learn English? Is it true that people [policy makers] think that we will become *khon* [smart] if we learn English?

This is a good example of the students' insightful and critical understanding of the complexities of multiple language usage; an understanding which stems from their own ideologies and life experiences. The young people creatively exercised interweaving languages and dialects for distinct purposes, according to different social practices, functions, and domains. This kind of linguistic behavior challenges the monolithic and monolingual view of culture (Joseph & Ramani, 2012; Wyman, 2009), and demands serious attention to the multilayered dynamism of young people from minority backgrounds, their complex multilingual environments and linguistic needs, and the potential of their native languages for rational and scientific conceptualization (García, 2009; Joseph & Ramani, 2012). The minority students' expressions of discursive linguistic agency signaled the possibility of a harmonious linguistic ecology between their native languages and Vietnamese for different semiotic systems, modes of meaning, and goals, while affirming their loyalty to native "cultural and linguistic practices with their hybridities and complexities" (García, 2009, p. 377; Messing, 2009). Yet, in requesting that their native languages be taught in schools, the students voiced their desire for a more socially equal and multilingual education system that allows them to participate as critical citizens in a global world (Joseph & Ramani, 2012; Lee, 2009). Indeed, the minority students' reflection of not being allowed to use their native languages to explain important concepts to their peers during English classes expressed

their desire and request to enable them to move freely and reflectively between their native languages and Vietnamese both in and outside the classroom. Such freedom of linguistic movement enhances democratic practice, communicative potential, identity formation, and creativity (Cenoz & Gortor, 2011). Moreover, the dialogue and survey responses also showed these students to be creatively seeking space for their own languages in mainstream education although their languages are banned. It is clear that raising awareness of the adverse consequences of language policies can help young people from minority backgrounds to take the roles of critics and arbitrators of language mandates. As Rampton (2006) and Wyman (2012) argue, young people are just as aware as adults of inequality and difference, and are capable of interpreting class hierarchy, regional and international relationships, and language use. The use of the word *khon* (“smart”), which arose during the student respondents’ critical analysis of the relevance of English teaching, underlined the importance of validating their cultural and linguistic heritage. In other words, it shows these students’ potential to envision and create “preferred futures” (Pennycook, 2001) for endangered language minorities (McCarty et al., 2009) across time and space, and to act as insightful and responsible educational policy enactors.

Our dialogue was further guided by the postmodern perspectives of literacy learning discussed in the conceptual framework chapter (Chapter 2). Drawing on the important theories of creating a space for minority students to actively “read” both the word and the world (Freire, 1978) or thinking about and acting beyond language and literacy practices (Street, 2012), I provided the space for minority youth to analyze, interrogate, and critique the roles of the languages. This dialogic space further allowed

students to exercise agency as constructive and critical curriculum analysts in the context of their unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds, education, and society (Morrell, 2008; Street & Leung, 2010). In what follows, I portray how our dialogue regarding school curricula reveal students' sense of responsibility, their thought-provoking perspectives on education, and their capacity to determine and fulfill their own educational needs.

**Curriculum as a Dominant Agent of Academic Marginalization:
“Incomprehensible,” “Unrealistic,” and “Insignificant”**

Contradicting the government's optimism regarding policy and curriculum reform, minority students' expressions in our critical dialogue indicated that Vietnam's recent English language curriculum are largely jeopardizing the learning opportunities of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and treating their knowledge systems, worldviews, and socio-economic understanding as invalid (Bourdieu, 1991; Tollefson, 2001). Although the majority of students in our dialogue praised the new textbooks for their attractive appearance and *cao siêu* (“superior”) topics such as economic reform, ASEAN, and spacecrafts, to name only a few, they also critiqued the textbooks' content in that it was irrelevant to their socio-linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, most of the students described feeling overwhelmed by the extremely large amount of knowledge and alien vocabulary provided in every lesson. Confusion and resistance to the curriculum also arose when its contents contradicted students' inherited cultural and social values. Our critical dialogue showed that a large number of students and teachers criticized the curriculum for the ambiguity of knowledge it sought to impart, and its impractical values in our dialogue with each other. Moreover, repetitive content was one of the major reasons for students' lack of interest. Dialogue about the curriculum

empowered these minority youth to act as critical curriculum analysts. A female student, Du, explained:

The curriculum and textbooks are impractical. Topics such as economic reform or the lives of women are repeated every year, and deeply socially oriented. They are not psychologically sensitive to our ages and needs. I think the curriculum attempts to cover a wide range of areas, but does not go into depth, so we forget everything after studying it.

Du's response indicated her rejection of the new pedagogy, with its top-down management, and the underlying ideologies that marginalize students who do not conform to Westernized academic interests and needs. Du's views are representative of the sensitive and critical stance held by these students on the dominant educational discourse, and their agency in resisting an unresponsive curriculum.

Notable terms that emerged from both the dialogue and the survey data regarding the new curriculum were *quá khó* (overwhelmingly difficult), *mơ hồ/xa xôi* (remote), *không ý nghĩa* (insignificant), and *không lôgic* (illogical). Furthermore, analysis of the current unbalanced curriculum fostered the students to make insightful and respectful recommendations for improvement. For instance, they requested topics more relevant to everyday life in Vietnam. In the words of one student, "we need to develop a curriculum that is brief and comprehensible." Another student, Thu, expressed her idea of what would count as a relevant curriculum:

Policy makers should develop English textbooks that are suitable for minority students in our remote region. We need concrete examples and lively pictures to

illustrate the content conveyed. Moreover, the textbooks should be understandable and realistic. In general, we should avoid vague and ambiguous textbooks.

My observations suggested that the minority students were extremely serious about their suggestions for improvements to the curriculum, as evidenced by their detailed feedback during our dialogue and in their responses to the survey. Listing the problems with the current curriculum, Han, a female Thai minority student, commented as follows:

I am a minority girl. I have always had doubts about learning English. For instance, I find it very difficult to understand different types of words and develop a sentence in English. For me, a higher-quality textbook would have explanations and suggestions in Vietnamese. In addition, it would include details relating to local life and culture, and focus on developing students' life skills. I also wonder how I am expected to learn English before I am proficient in Vietnamese.

Obviously, Han's response exemplifies her peers' struggles with learning English, and the irresponsibility and ignorance of the current English language policies. We can further interpret that these students' reflections called for a refashioned policy based on empirical theories of language acquisition, multilingualism, traditional knowledge, and socio-linguistic development (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2008; González et al., 2005; Morrell, 2008) to foster their interests, effective learning, and rich meta-linguistic development. My observations of classroom practice and analysis of the students' criticism of the new textbooks helped me to sympathize with the considerable psychological stress and challenges caused by the current English curriculum. Such words and phrases as *chúng em là học sinh dân tộc thiểu số* ("we are ethnic-minority students"), *không phù hợp* ("inappropriate"), *mơ hồ/lơ mơ* ("intangible"), and especially

không hiểu (“incomprehensible”) came up frequently in the students’ responses and their survey answers. Together, these terms censure the failure to acknowledge the identities of minority groups, validate their differences, and create a responsive and high-quality curriculum. The students’ detailed reflections, including vivid real-life examples of the failings of the curriculum, provided strong evidence of their responsibility and their desire for democratic changes to the country’s language policies. A female Muong student remarked as follows:

Policy makers should understand minority students’ learning psychology; that is, if lessons are interesting and relevant to their lives, their learning will be more effective. However, such inapplicable concepts as a picnic in the park or a contest on TV make us feel insecure, insignificant, and as if our minds are surrounded by thousands of walls [i.e., unable to imagine the situations depicted]. As we face numerous difficulties, including the need to travel a long way to school, a limited vocabulary, mismatched teaching and learning methods, and discouragement, we are very keen to give up learning English. Moreover, nothing that we have learned stays in our minds.

We can see that this minority student provided a nuanced awareness of a wide range of hindrances to learning and insecurities arising from the current curriculum while requesting the comprehensive understanding of minority students’ needs, identity, and multilayered struggles. In mentioning textbooks’ inappropriate references to picnics and television contests, she explicitly revealed the ambivalence and incompetence of the official language policies, as well as the “hegemonic construction and imposition of western knowledge and the concomitant delegitimation of indigenous knowledges” (May

& Aikman, 2003, p. 193) that characterize the new curriculum. The textbooks overwhelmingly depict Western and modern lifestyles that minority students are unable to imagine. Instead of asking students to write about a picnic, for example, I argue that students might more happily and effectively work on tasks such as describing a day of harvesting corn with their parents or a memorable indigenous cultural event. The dialogue undertaken in this study revealed the critical insights, realities, and manifold challenges of the minority youth in this region of Vietnam, while additionally confirming that minority youth are entirely capable of exercising self-determination (McCarty, 2002) and working actively to disrupt the unresponsive and unjust curriculum.

As stated above, the dialogue highlighted not only the ability of minority students to provide constructive critiques, but provided an equal forum for them to offer meaningful suggestions for improvements to the curriculum that may better help them grow as intellectual citizens. As Lipman (2002, p. 411) argues, the “commitment to educate all students requires the deployment of significant material and intellectual resources.” Another student, Mai, offered the following critique and recommendations:

The topics should not be skimpy and repetitive. For example, teachers should eliminate some lessons on reading and replace them with speaking tasks. The textbooks do not differentiate clearly between British English and American English. The topics are boring. For example, it is not necessary to know how many people participate in a given sport. It would be more useful to focus on a sporting figure to teach students what made them famous, and which of their values we should learn from.

Mai's expression here signaled minority students' critical awareness of the weakness in the curriculum, which largely ignore the desires, needs, and values of minority students. Furthermore, the students' critiques of the skimpy and insignificant content of the curriculum, and the confusion it creates between British English and American English, reveal the state's English language policies to be poorly prepared, irresponsible, and unable to manage multiple types of English (e.g., McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). The curriculum also considerably underestimates the potential of minority youth in shaping meaningful policy and effecting positive socio-political change (McCarty et al., 2009). Thus, by empowering minority youth as critical analysts of their own curriculum and educational discourse, the dialogue enabled these students to voice their objection to the poor quality of the curriculum and unpack the implicit agendas that exclude minority languages and cultures and limit access to mainstream education and society (Davis et al., 2005). Their responses powerfully exemplified their awareness of their own needs and ability to determine salient sources of knowledge that will help them to become politically and socially knowledgeable and confident local and global citizens. Similarly, my extensive observations of classroom practice and analysis of the survey data provided persuasive evidence that the open-ended curriculum marginalizes teachers and students and profoundly inhibits their access to favorable learning environments and educational opportunities. Consequently, learning English seems to be of little actual interest, and brings much anxiety and stress, to both teachers and students. Therefore, the curriculum explored in this study can be viewed as a "secret code" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 51) or an instrument for the "consistent social, political, and educational memorization and marginalization" (May & Aikman, 2003, p. 139) of minority peoples. Therefore, the

English language policies can predominantly serve as a filter to select those privileged enough to gain access to the dominant educational discourses (Bourdieu, 1991; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007).

Students' Reactions to a Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach: "The Way for Us to Understand the Beauty of Our Languages and Cultures..."

Drawing on theories of multilingualism (e.g., García, 2009; Helot & Ó Laoire, 2011) as democratic, effective, and teachable practices and postmodern perspectives on literacy and learning as culturally and historically bounded, dynamic, and multifaceted (e.g. Street, 2012; Moll et al., 1992), my engagement with minority youth aimed at fostering the construction of linguistically and culturally effective and responsive learning practices. My collaborative and respectful dialogue with minority youth dynamically highlighted the potential use of their native languages as a cultural and linguistic resource in the classroom. During these interactive conversations, the students were engaging with a possibility—namely a mutually reflective teaching approach—that they had rarely or never experienced in school. In particular, the dialogue reflected the students' genuine awareness of the fact that their own languages and cultures are not addressed in Vietnam's current education policies. As part of the development of their own agency, the students began to challenge traditional expectations of the segregation of minority students, and provided recommendations for teaching methods that would incorporate their own linguistic and cultural knowledge. This allowed them to defend the need for recognition of their distinctive cultural backgrounds, and to express their desire to be heard. Moreover our critical dialogue showed that these minority youth were particularly energized and inspired by discussion of how best to weave their historical,

cultural, and linguistic resources into teaching and learning. They began to realize that their linguistic and cultural knowledge could offer a unique, important, and interesting new approach to teaching. In a group discussion, Han asserted: “We have almost no opportunities to talk about our linguistic and cultural wealth. In my opinion, it does not seem right to learn other things while we still do not know much about our local knowledge and culture.” Likewise, 98%¹⁶ of the students involved in the survey strongly supported the idea of embedding students’ language and culture in English teaching. The benefits of this responsive teaching practice were argued to include preparing young people from minority backgrounds to introduce their cultures and languages to the outside world, while also enriching their knowledge of different cultures. I found out that expressions of the culturally and linguistically reflective approaches to learning such as *không làm mất đi tiếng mẹ đẻ và truyền thống* (“not losing our native languages and traditions”) and *cách để hiểu về vẻ đẹp của văn hóa và tiếng mẹ đẻ* (“the way for us to understand the beauty of our languages and cultures”) arose frequently in both our dialogue and the surveys. Furthermore, I was thrilled to find that the students showed their high-level thinking of the importance of this method in nurturing their academic progress, with some reflecting: “It would help to increase our ability to make comparisons and synthesize knowledge.” With especial regard to English, many native students argued that this linguistically and culturally responsive approach would help them to “feel that English is easier,” “see English as something more responsive, interesting, and meaningful,” and “have the feeling that learning English is real.”

¹⁶ The rest of the students (2%) did not provide their opinion of this survey question.

I particularly appreciated when a student made the following remark about this approach during our dialogic discussion: “From the deepest corner of my heart, I feel that integrating minority languages and cultures in teaching is very important. But somehow I cannot explain why.” Such emotional responses helped me to understand that the idea of incorporating local languages and cultures into mainstream education elicited a sense of both surprise and connectedness from many minority youth because, in reality, they had seldom or never experienced this type of teaching at school. Students Du and Nam said: “We have never been asked this type of question.” I felt that they were profoundly happy to discuss this responsive pedagogical practice, which was echoed in a large number of responses to the survey. Similarly, a female student, Lien, commented:

I think connecting minority students’ language and culture to the teaching of English is very important, because this is one of the ways in which we can express our confidence in our origins.

She further emphasized:

Embedding our ethnic traditions and cultural knowledge within an English-speaking culture when learning English does not mean that we oppose the teaching and learning of English. On the contrary, it enables us to learn English more effectively while preventing us from losing our ethnic and cultural traditions. By weaving our cultural and linguistic heritage into the process of learning English, we will become more aware of the distinctiveness and richness of our ethnic cultural background and identity.

This minority student’s thought-provoking comments reflect her deep understanding of the fact that the process of learning a language is integrally connected to the learners’

funds of history, language, and culture (Davis et al., 2012; Luke, 2011). Or as May and Aikman (2003, p. 144) note, it requires that one take “diversity as a starting point and put diversity at [the] centre” of effective education and social justice for multilingual and minority students. Thus, rather than presenting literacy as static, the incorporation of cultural and historical funds of knowledge into English teaching reflects the postmodern understanding of literacy as a set of decontextualized, dynamic, situated, and multifaceted local practices that foster students’ meta-linguistic development (e.g., Schultz, 2006). Furthermore, examining this student’s reflection on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching pedagogies at a deeper level and rethinking the phrase “...embedding our ethnic traditions and cultural knowledge within an English-speaking culture...does not mean that we oppose the teaching and learning of English,” we can debunk the remarkably rigid ideologies and mechanisms that teaching English means teaching English and nothing else. This directly opposes Bourdieu’s (1991) and Gee’s (1996) notion of discourse as a combination of ways of talking, believing, valuing, doing, and being that must be understood in order to nurture the multiple literacies of minority students. Such narrow-minded state-mandated ideology prevents both teachers and students from creatively and freely comparing and contrasting forms of knowledge, and weaving together the predetermined knowledge conveyed in textbooks with students’ vital sense of cultural and traditional connectedness. We can interpret that the students’ comments displayed their sharp ideological transformation of the importance of treasuring and publicizing their identities and cultures in the classroom rather than feeling ashamed of their origins. They could also encourage teachers to act “out of the box” by insisting that the incorporation of local cultures and languages “does not mean that we

oppose the teaching and learning of English,” and encouraging them to take the chief role in determining their own teaching content and methods. McCarty et al. (2012) describe this kind of teaching practice in terms of the re-scaling and re-emphasizing of indigenous resources and languages in schools, which enable students’ socio-linguistic resources to be stratified and distributed across time, place, and space. Furthermore, this form of pedagogical activism helps to connect local languages and epistemologies with their equivalent global processes (Canagarajah, 2005; Freire, 1972; Street, 2012), thus promoting equity and providing spaces for teachers and learners to become true owners of their education. It empowers young people like the minority youth in this study to reclaim their rights, closes the gap between center and periphery, democratizes linguistic and cultural flows, and dismantles global and local language hierarchies (Appaduarai, 2000; Hornberger & McCarty, 2012).

Multiple Approaches to Evaluation: “We Would Like to Have Multiple Ways of Evaluating Our Learning Abilities...”

My experiences of working with minority youth and teachers indicated that not only the standardized curriculum but the standardized process of evaluation is impeding students’ academic success. Educational researchers such as Herman and Golan (1996) and Luke (2011) argue that the standardized testing system restricts curriculum content, reduces teaching time, reproduces academic inequalities, and ignores linguistic and cultural diversity. Our critical dialogue undertaken in this study actively took into consideration a number of related topics, including the comparison of several possible ways of evaluating students’ learning outcomes while creating academic freedom for both students and teachers. My ethnographic classroom observations and student discussions suggested that many teachers are frustrated, negative, and judgmental, and at

times behave unprofessionally toward minority students in and out of the classroom. In the following comments, Huong critically analyzed her experience of diversified testing as well as her teacher's typical teaching behavior:

My teacher does not care much about students' different abilities. If she requires the class to take a test, all of the students are given the same questions. There are no concerns about students' individual skills or abilities when testing. In fact, if the teacher asks us to write a short composition [in English] as a test requirement, only some of the students can do the task; the rest of the class do not even understand the instructions. We would like to have multiple ways to evaluate our learning abilities.

This student describes not only the difficulties associated with a third language, English (which, as previously discussed, is of questionable utility), but the confusion and limitations of expression caused by standardized testing. This type of evaluation has eroded teachers' creativity and silenced students' voices by failing to acknowledge the presence of multiple identities and indigenous knowledge within the academic space.

During our dialogic discussions of various ways of evaluating students' learning, we inquired further into creative evaluation methods including writing essays, poems, songs, and news reports, drawing pictures, and developing group projects. Realizing that the students might think that these approaches were beyond their ability due to their limited English, I explained during our discussions that neither a poem nor a news story is necessarily a lengthy piece of writing. Such tasks should be carried out in a simple fashion, based on the new vocabulary or grammatical structures that students are learning at the time, and can be as short as a few sentences or a paragraph. Sometimes, I

demonstrated my ideas with examples such as writing a five-sentence news report on the school sports competition using the past tense that the students already learned. Similarly, when students learn about traditional festivals, they could be encouraged to collect pictures and artifacts and write captions related to their topics. After making these suggestions, I observed that the students became extremely interested in these teaching/evaluating approaches, while also showing awareness of the lack of such approaches in their experience of learning and testing. Chenh remarked:

In reality, I am never encouraged to do such creative tasks. I would like to be evaluated using these methods, because they are very interesting and would inspire me to learn English. At the same time, they would enable me to maximize my creative strengths and identity.

Similar to Chenh, Huong also enthusiastically expressed her idea like a true language researcher: “By using these evaluation methods, I would have plenty of ways to develop our creative, imaginative, meta-cognitive, and synthesis skills.” The results of the survey also evinced the students’ interest in implementing these teaching approaches. I noticed recurring expressions such as “We should...,” “I would like to try...,” “I would like to explore...,” and “plunging ourselves into the creative learning environment.” As one student explained:

I am rarely encouraged to write a story, a song, or a piece of news in English because my school and teachers have not allowed us to do tasks like this. I myself think that these are very interesting approaches, and that they would help us to avoid rigid pedagogical approaches, revise what we have been taught and

remember things in greater detail. However, I think that in order to do these things effectively, we would need to have clear instructions from teachers.

We can see that as well as exhibiting great enthusiasm for these approaches, the students lamented the lack of variety in their customary methods of evaluation (Evans & Hornberger, 2005). Yet they were careful and mindful in their recommendation that teachers apply the new approaches cautiously, with clear instructions, and initially at a basic level.

In relation to Bourdieu's (1991) social reproduction theory, this standardized testing is one form of euphemism (Bourdieu, 1991), which privileges and reinforces certain types of habitus and expressive disposition while regulating other forms of expression. In this case, the standardized evaluation prevents students and teachers from, respectively, gaining and implementing an effective and creative education that accommodates diversity and promotes individual agency. This problem resonates with criticisms of the U.S.'s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, whose method of standardization shows an "aggressive resistance to difference [and] an assault, direct and indirect, on multiculturalism" (Davis, 2009; Hall, 1996, p. 468). All of the students' responses indicated the potential activism of minority youth, the urgent need to address increasing educational and linguistic inequalities (Hornberger, 2006), and an alternative evaluation system that goes beyond static and unequal standardized testing, instead transforming and democratizing teaching and learning to incorporate students' multiple strengths and identities (Lipman, 2002).

Students' Desires and Solutions for Educational and Linguistic Policy Transformation: "I Think that in order to Ensure Effective Teaching, We Need to Address Students' Abilities and Needs..."

This engaged ethnographic account also fostered students' perception of their own agency in negotiating between educational discourses and their individual positions, identities, desires, and practices. Our collaborative dialogue documented the students' ideological transformation through exploration of the series of subjects listed above. When closing our conversations, in the interests of empowering the students to promote change, I kept in mind recommendations made by Davis (2009, p. 209): "in order for resistance and agency to be activated, discursive, personal and social resources must be available to the individual." Davis (2009, p. 209) defines discursive resources as the "availability of recognizable alternative discourses that provide new ways of being in the world". I created a space for the students to explore and deploy their personal resources (knowledge, skills, and ability) and to realize their own potential as epicenter policy makers while addressing issues of critical concern to them and developing policy on their own terms (Appadurai, 2006; McCarty et al., 2012). These minority youth and I co-constructively appropriated and created possible solutions to the inequalities perpetuated by the current English language policy. For instance, the students sought very respectfully to develop better teaching methods and better textbooks. The term *hiểu tâm lý học sinh* ("understanding students' psychology") came up frequently in our conversations and in the survey responses. Minority youth expressed their desire for teachers who understand their cultures, languages, and ways of conceptualizing the world. Many also asked for a new type of textbook more appropriate to their socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. In one student's words, "we want to have a lot of equipment to learn English and teachers who understand minority students' psychology and backgrounds." As a minority student, like Han, also suggested that:

Teachers should not make the learning environment stressful for their students because we will feel afraid of them and see learning as out of our control. I think that if we did not feel intimidated by our teachers, we would be more active and learn more effectively.

Through our dialogue, the minority students were also aware of the pedagogical mismatches and requested changes, as Mai said: “Our teachers have to make us feel that English is interesting. They have to provide us with quality lessons and appropriate teaching pedagogies.”

The above are examples of the suggestions provided by the student participants for improvements to teaching. They voiced their rejection of both the current pedagogical practices and their top-down management, emphasizing instead their own potential to ameliorate the mechanisms of teaching and the curriculum. Chua, a student, acted as a true language policy arbitrator:

I realized that teachers should not follow textbooks too strictly. They need to invest time in planning their lessons to include more attractive activities based on the textbooks’ topics. In this way, they will encourage students to become involved in classroom activities, and avoid stressful situations in dealing with students. This will also allow teachers and students to work together to solve the problems faced by students.

The results of the survey were highly consistent with the data obtained from the dialogue. Taking the role of policy arbitrators, minority students described their consciousness and desire to change pedagogical approaches and improve the curriculum. Minority youth constantly requested that they be taught using “comprehensive, realistic, new, and

attractive” approaches that incorporate students’ numerous strengths. Their suggestions reflected their hope of creating schools that accommodate and celebrate diversity and needs (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002), and which “are sites of social justice as well as creativity, competence, and joy” (McCarty, 2003, p. 199). As one student shared:

I do not think English teaching in our school is too boring, but the quality is limited. Only some students are able to understand the topics taught in each 45-minute lesson. Many other students have still not understood by the end of the lesson. On a day-to-day basis, therefore, these students fail to acquire any English. I think that in order to ensure effective teaching, we need to address students’ abilities and needs.

At the end of our conversation, another student, Thinh, made the following frank remarks:

I realized that learning English is absolutely impractical for me. In addition, evaluation should be diversified and appropriate; teachers should not simply distribute predetermined standardized tests, as students learn nothing this way.

Most of the students agreed that English teaching in their schools is ineffective, primarily because it is “highly repetitive, unrealistic, and theory-oriented.” Our dialogue inspired these young people to express their desire for more “diversified teaching methods” inclusive of more culturally and linguistically responsive activities, games and techniques. One student, Mai, provided recommendations for improvements to the current teaching situation:

I would like to change our curriculum and pedagogical approach. Why is the English curriculum limited to the classroom? We could instead develop extra-

curricular learning or create real situations in which students can practice their English. Teaching should be suitable for the students; teachers should not depend solely on what the textbooks say. The teachers should also be enthusiastic about teaching their minority students.

In the interest of empowering these students' sense of agency, I also asked them the following question: "What would be your highest priorities if you were a policy maker?" The students described a wide range of changes they would like to implement. Nam offered a logical and critical response:

Since English has become a core or compulsory subject at school, students are forced to learn it, even though mountain students like us do not have a real environment in which to use the language. Thus, English has become a useless subject. But if people at the top levels still want to promote English, they must make it interesting and realistic. Every lesson must engage everyone rather than only a few students who tend to know more English.

He added:

It would also be useful to open small-scale discussions between students and teachers so that we can collectively exchange our views, understand our own psychologies, and nurture our interest in learning the subject. If teachers ask students to do the same exercises in the textbook again and again, the students will simply copy each other's answers. Thus, this approach is also useless. Instead, teachers should allow students to be creative and write about a range of topics, such as their own lives and families, literature, and arts, using the skills

they have been taught. All of these approaches will be much more effective in fostering students' English learning.

Nam's response signaled minority students' awareness of the language policy truth, which was in their words "useless" or "impractical", while overtly challenged the official policies by proposing their genuine opinion: "...but if people at the top levels still want to promote English, they must make it interesting and realistic." His suggestions for changes show minority youth's serious, competent, and legitimate ways to get away from ineffectual language policies and create ample spaces for intellectual democracy and creativity. Clearly, therefore, our collaborative dialogue created an equal and favorable forum in which both the researcher and the minority youth were able to investigate, challenge, and voice their opinions democratically about the process and outcomes of the official English policies. Such dedicated engagement empowered minority youth's agency as activists and arbiters of their own learning, while raising their awareness of linguistic human rights, justice, and educational inequality in their current educational setting. Such students' extraordinary awareness, critical interrogations, suggestions of curriculum and teaching pedagogies, and professional behaviors profoundly set a solid foundation for my various dialogue with the teachers in the following chapter (Chapter 5).

Conclusions of Chapter 4

My account of engaging youth above portrays an ongoing political commitment and social action approach that creates a forum for the full and democratic participation (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007) of diverse minority student backgrounds in deconstructing ideologies, questioning the realistic roles of English, unveiling

consequences, and creating possibilities for the national language policies. Minority youth showed themselves as politically active (Freire, 1972), enthusiastic, and competent policy makers (Menken & García, 2010) through our series of engaging dialogue. Yet, the dialogue provided them with a critical and egalitarian space in which to collectively analyze and voice their genuine and reflective stances on the realities of their education, needs, and the socio-linguistic challenges arising from the state's language policies. Through the processes of defining, interrogating, and appropriating these language policies, minority youth became highly conscious about the ineffectiveness of the English language mandate. In particular, we can see that a series of issues including the students' expressions of their challenging socio-economic situations, their attitudes toward English, resistance to learning the language, diverse ways of using English, and limited Standard Vietnamese proficiency provided strong evidence that the state's uncritical acceptance of a neoliberal English language mandate has had serious negative consequences on students' access to social, educational, and economic resources (Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012) in the dominant Vietnamese society. Yet, analyzing the national language policies in light of Bourdieu's (1991) theory of social reproduction, it can be concluded that the minority youth in this setting seem to possess neither English linguistic excellence nor any other forms of cultural capital. Therefore, how can they utilize English language as a means to access social, economical, and educational betterment, social status, and dispositions that will allow them to participate confidently and effectively in mainstream society? This alarming concern is answered straightforwardly by most minority students that "learning English is absolutely [or largely] useless" to them. This finding is also greatly echoed in various studies on the diffusion of English edited by Tsui and Tollefson

(2007) across a number of Asian countries (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Cambodia, Nepal, and Bangladesh): that “English is a language of the educated elite [or people in power] and is not commonly used in daily interaction” (p. 4) and “has deepened not only the social class divide but also the ethnic divide” (p. 7) especially with the populations still suffering from extreme poverty and high illiteracy rates. Aligning such language policy dilemma in this study with Lipman’s (2002) view of educational reform, in this case English language reform, we can see that it “meshes with social and economic policies that generate despair, dislocation, and marginalization alongside unparalleled wealth and opportunity” (p. 411) for the already economically, educationally, and socially disadvantaged minority populations.

Furthermore, the dialogue provided an intellectually active environment to raise minority youth’s awareness of effective multilingual practices. Minority youth’s expressions signaled their strong cognizance of effective multilingual educational practices that incorporate their ethnic identities and their native languages alongside Vietnamese in the processes of teaching and learning. Moreover, the students’ accounts of their limited proficiency in Vietnamese and their urgent need to learn standard Vietnamese demand policy makers to take students’ actual linguistic needs—especially the necessity of effective Vietnamese teaching—into serious consideration and before promoting English above all. Since linguistic capital directly determines students’ social space and circulates other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991), quality academic Vietnamese language education will stimulate the students’ concrete Vietnamese language development, which helps them obtain habitus, field, and capital in society. The results of the dialogue and survey also further confirmed that minority youth do not

simply allow themselves to be assimilated into the global culture (May & Aikman, 2003) or the mainstream Vietnamese society. Instead, they displayed critical consciousness of their native languages, and their thoughtful and responsible agency as cultural defenders in the process of shaping creative interventions to promote their own languages in schools, both for academic development and out of respect for their heritage languages (McCarty, 2003). In this way, the students have the potential to nurture ethnic hopes and pride, and fashion a suitable foundation for their learning, enabling them to access mainstream Vietnamese society and participate with confidence in global changes (Romero-Little, 2012).

We also learn from engaging minority youth that they are on the cusp of struggling, negotiating, claiming, and appropriating multiple social, educational, political, and linguistic terrains, and forms of academic competence in all settings, including home, community, school, and society at large (Lee, 2009; Morita, 2004). The students' responses indicated that their linguistic practices, trajectories, ideologies, and activism are far more complicated than often supposed, and entwined with political, social, and economic realities in both their local settings and Vietnam more broadly. Such a complex background requires serious and comprehensive understanding from policy makers and teachers at all levels. Yet the students' descriptions of their diverse forms of resistance to the current English language policies (e.g., using their own languages in classroom and sleeping) exemplify their great awareness of the opacity, irresponsibility, and ambivalence of the official policies in failing to address a wide range of the linguistic, socio-economic, psychological, and cultural needs of minority youth in this remote mountainous area.

Engaging minority youth in critical dialogue not only fosters their ideological transformation of the ambivalent language policies, but also creates a space for minority youth to fully stimulate responsible action within the language policy reality (Freire, 1970) of the language policies. Youth enthusiastically and actively exercise their agency to propose responsible, comprehensive, and relevant solutions for the current language policies. Their suggestions on improving the curriculum, evaluation strategies, teachers' behavior, and teaching approaches are extremely vital for national policy makers, teachers, and associated agencies. If all these suggestions and consideration are addressed—students' educational priorities and needs, ethnic diversity, and the complex socio-political and linguistic challenges they face—it is more likely that minority students will be provided with a democratic learning environment in which they can obtain quality education while safeguarding their cultural and linguistic wealth and identity. Therefore, this engaged ethnographic account has promising implications for equitable education, multilingual and multicultural academic practice, and diversity.

Furthermore, the engaging youth approach here promisingly plants seeds for a dialogic movement of social, political, and educational engagement for celebrating diversity and approaches to genuine democracy, beginning from minority/disfranchised communities and evolving from there. Thus, such respectful and co-constructive dialogue with young people from minority backgrounds promisingly encourages minority youth and other actors in other settings to actively and continuously negotiate and deconstruct educational policies, power relations, linguistic inequities, and socio-political struggles, and strive to protect and promote their diversity, distinctive desires, and rights in the face of neoliberal attempts to homogenize education (McCarty, 2003).

Building on the work done to engage and empower minority youth, the next chapter (Chapter 5) describes equivalent dialogue with teachers in the interests of defining, resisting, and transforming the current language policies. Especially, my respectful and critical dialogue with the teachers sheds light on the reality of Vietnam's language policies while positioning them as creative agents of democratic education and multilingualism. It further documents their ideological shift toward understanding students as highly capable, creative, and responsible learners throughout the process of language policy making and practice.

Chapter 5. Engaging Teachers

My dialogic engagement with the teachers of minority student youth was conducted in the summer of 2011. They were held in places in which we all felt comfortable, and which were both convenient and appropriate, such as private rooms in the teachers' schools and homes. I also discovered that in some cases, walking with the teachers through the students' villages in the afternoon helped to stimulate critical and informative dialogue. With regard to the teachers' agency as language policy makers (Menken & García, 2010; Warren & Mapp, 2011), we engaged in constructive dialogue to interpret and interrogate key issues relating to English language education in the mountainous area under study. These issues included the teachers' experience of teaching English, the roles of English, teacher education, minority students' English language performance, language requirements, the curriculum, and culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to teaching. I sought to seriously take into account the socio-economic needs, complex linguistic performance, critical capacities, agentive potential and socio-linguistic strengths (Messing, 2009) of the minority youth expressed in the youth's engaging dialogue in order to foster the teachers' support for this goal. I also aimed to bring about ideological and pedagogical transformation during discussion of the students' voices. In doing so, I drew on insights from anthropological educators of indigenous youth, such as McCarty and Wyman (2009), who observed that although minority youth may deploy their agency as cultural and political actors for language policy equality and socio-economic stability, they "cannot be expected to act alone" (p. 287) against the myriad pressures on their language practices. Instead, "they need support from more powerful language policy authorizing agents" (p. 304), such as the teachers in

this study. My dialogue with these teachers had especially positive outcomes when we proactively exchanged ideas on how to promote responsive teaching and equitable evaluation methods that acknowledge and activate the skills, multiple identities, and cultural and linguistic capital of minority youth. The following sections describe salient themes arising from our engaged ethnographic dialogue, with particular reference to the research objectives and questions presented in the first chapter of this study.

What Does Teaching English and Working with Minority Students in this Mountainous Area Mean to the Teachers?

Our dynamic dialogue increasingly acknowledged the central government's efforts to introduce a series of new curricula and to hand over power to teachers, thereby fostering pedagogical creativity and flexibility. However, my classroom observations and engagement with teachers indicated that the process of language policy development and implementation has at every stage caused considerable ambivalence, stress, dissatisfaction, and conflict. As a result, most of the participants viewed teaching as an onerous responsibility, and were immensely skeptical about the capacity of English language teaching to transform the region's minority youth into employable, mobile, and linguistically competent citizens. The skepticism, ambivalence, confusion, and conflict caused by these policies seemed chiefly to relate to unresponsive linguistic requirements, the mismatched curriculum, the impractical use of English, inflexible assessment, and ineffective teacher education. Our discussions amply illustrated the teachers' critical awareness of and resistance to the unresponsive new English language policies. In the following section, I consider some of the key characteristics of Vietnam's new official English language policies, and what these policies mean in practice to teachers of minority students in the area under study.

The role of English in meeting socio-economic and educational needs: The missing link. In Chapter 4, I showed how an in-depth understanding of minority students' uses of English offers a direct means of decoding the essentialism of English language teaching. It appears that minority students' complex English practices do not improve their socio-economic and educational prospects. Indeed, they are in serious danger of losing real opportunities in life as a result of Vietnam's standardized and monolingual educational policies, including the unresponsive, compulsory English curriculum. Their rich cultural resources continue to be threatened by the neoliberal commodification of English and the state's consistent and enthusiastic promotion of English language teaching and learning. The students' own accounts, and their responses to the survey, provided me with a wealth of information on the usefulness of English for minority student youth. I shared this information with their teachers, all of whom agreed that their students use English primarily to listen to music (70-80%), and secondarily to fulfill the language policy mandates. As Duc, a male teacher, observed, "[p]op music is very popular and spreading very quickly. The young students here like to listen to English songs." Lan, a teacher with sixteen years' experience, made a similar observation:

I conducted my own research with my minority students on the utilization of English. In a class of 30 minority students, a large number [20-30 students] stated that they use English primarily to listen to music; only one student showed interest in learning English to find a better job. The remaining students need English to graduate from high school. In general, therefore, I think that English is used mainly for the purposes of entertainment and passing exams.

The teachers' accounts of their minority students' typical uses of English—for entertainment purposes and to fulfill requirements—show clear parallels with the responses of the minority students involved in the study, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is worth noting that according to the teachers, their minority students barely understand English song lyrics. They listen to English music simply because it sounds exotic and interesting. During further discussion, another teacher, Luong, recalled that “[w]hen I asked the students whether they understand the meaning of English songs, they answered that they do not, but that they enjoy listening to the songs for their pleasurable melodies and rhythms.”

This topic led into our critical explanation of the benefits of the English language for minority students. All of the teachers involved in the study were highly skeptical about the usefulness of the language. Reflecting on this subject, Lien expressed concern to me during a visit I made to her house:

Although English is promoted as an instrument for nation-building, global integration, and individuals' educational, economic, and social advancement, it is mainly used for personal entertaining activities such as listening to music and playing video games in this area. Therefore, I am afraid that these uses of English are not beneficial to the students' academic development. Their extremely limited English skills prevent them from performing more informative or meaningful activities such as reading articles or researching educational opportunities in English.

During a meeting with a group of teachers in their staff room, a male teacher, Ha, made a similar comment:

I do not think that our minority students use English effectively and meaningfully. They are unable to communicate or write in English [...]. In general, minority students here do not understand the reasons for learning English. The responses made by the other teachers in our critical dialogue consistently confirmed the observation that minority students do not understand why they are being asked to study English. Another teacher, Loan, agreed with Ha, but added that minority students see no value in learning the language. She later elaborated on her doubts as to the effectiveness of the English policies, and questioned the state's holistic depiction of an English education:

After seven years of studying English, students are still unable to write something as simple as their date of birth in English. Why, then, do we have to teach the language so intensively? Why are the students required to study so hard? We are forced to ask what students are gaining from these policies. Many minority students have asked me why they have to learn English.

All these teachers' candid opinions and the students' linguistic behaviors reveal a significant missing link between the state's English policies and its support of minority students' economic, social, and educational rights. When we closed this topic by interrogating the role of English in improving minority students' academic and professional prospects, another teacher, Thi, offered a frank explanation of the unresponsiveness of the English language policies to the needs of minority students:

In my opinion, learning English does not support minority students in activities such as applying for a job or a scholarship, or developing a local business. In order to apply for a foreign scholarship, for example, minority students are

required to pass at least one phase of the interview process in English. In reality, however, very few teachers would be able to participate confidently in the scholarship interviews, not to mention their students [...]. Learning English causes minority students tremendous economic and linguistic difficulties. They are very far, therefore, from being able to use English to obtain their educational and socio-economic desires.

These clear observations echo the students' own expressions of their English language utilization, as outlined in Chapter 4. It further confirms that under the state's recently initiated language policies, English occupies a merely symbolic role. It improves the prospects of a tiny proportion of students, but closes doors for the remainder of the country's minority youth (Coleman, 2011; Hayton, 2011). The dialogic engagement carried out in this study further opened a space for the teachers for in-depth, critical reflection not only on the state's English language policies, but on the connections between global phenomena (e.g., the spread of English, social welfare, and inequality) and local discourses and struggles (e.g., limited national language proficiency, low socio-economic status, and limited advanced educational opportunities). In the latter respect, the teachers' frank accounts of their experiences again revealed their feelings of ambivalence, uncertainty and insecurity regarding the endorsement of English for minority students. They were aware of and candid about their anxiety that the official language policies will have disastrous consequences, causing suffering and marginalization for minority students who usually need the most help in society (Lipman, 2011; Pan, 2011).

Not everybody should have to learn English. As is clear from the above, minority students are prevented from gaining access to English and consequently high-quality education by their existing social and economic difficulties, exacerbated by an unresponsive English curriculum. However, Vietnam's monolingual language policy is also a major hindrance to minority students' English comprehension. All of the teachers involved in this study asked how their minority students are expected to understand English lessons when their Vietnamese is limited. In short, many of the teachers I engaged with fundamentally disagreed with Vietnam's state-mandated English policies. During a discussion at her home, Phong, who teaches minority students, described the problems caused by limited proficiency in Vietnamese:

Learning English is very difficult for my students, as most live in remote communities. When they come to school, they have to speak Vietnamese and learn all of their subjects in Vietnamese. However, even tenth- and eleventh-grade students have only limited Vietnamese, which makes learning English through Vietnamese especially demanding.

Furthermore, most minority students were not even able to visualize the unfamiliar concepts included in the curriculum. A teacher named Sao described using three languages to explain certain words to her students:

My students don't know the meaning of, for example, the word 'park' in Vietnamese so I first have to explain such words carefully in Vietnamese, and then teach the students to translate them into their Thai language, and finally English. The students feel that it [English] is the strangest language they have ever learned.

These excerpts indicate the difficulties that arise when teachers' first language (L1) is Vietnamese and they are not proficient in the students' native languages, while the students attempting to learn English are not proficient in Vietnamese. It seems clear that learning English through Vietnamese—a language in which most minority students are still not advanced—deprives minority students of access to mainstream education and equal social and political participation (McCarty, 2009). As a result, while all the teachers in this study agreed in theory that English may be necessary to their students in the future, many felt that not every student in the mountainous area under study should have to learn English. Noticeably, the teachers' opinions on this topic greatly resembled the students'. Ngoc made the following candid statement:

I agree that we should not impose English on everyone in this poor and geographically challenging province. As most of the students here belong to various minority groups and have their own languages, learning Vietnamese at school is already burdensome to them, let alone learning a foreign language such as English. Therefore, we should make English an elective subject or replace it with a more practical alternative for minority students.

The other teachers had similar views on the impracticality of English for this population of students. They demonstrated their capacity for responsible decision-making by suggesting a solution to the problems with the state's education mandates. Ha, who has worked as a teacher in the province for 18 years, described the common predicament:

In my opinion, not all students should have to learn English. My experience of teaching in a high school in which 85% of the students come from a minority background has made me aware that minority students face tremendous

challenges when learning English. As a result, they are very reluctant to continue studying English, especially when they do not have a good command of Standard Vietnamese. Moreover, minority students in this area do not even have the option of using English to achieve their goals, such as finding a job using English, communicating with foreigners, and so forth. I can thus say that minority students do not think that English is necessary.

The students' opinions on the compulsory teaching of English, and their descriptions of how they use English, clearly resonate with the teachers' responses to the same questions. Together, they provide persuasive evidence of the ineffectiveness of Vietnam's official language policies, as well as the connections between these policies and the neoliberal spread of English. The state English language policy mandate seems highly unrealistic for minority students who are already facing difficulties due to their low socio-economic status. Rather than helping minority students to build rich linguistic connections between three languages—their native languages, Vietnamese, and English—the requirement that teaching and learning take place in Vietnamese and English alone deprives these students of the opportunity to engage in rich cultural and linguistic epistemologies that preserve their distinct identities in society at large. In sum, the responses of the students and the teachers together cast light on the conspicuous and inflexible dichotomy between the rule of the majority and the rights and needs of the minority.

What does English as a compulsory subject mean to minority students from the teachers' perspectives? Having discovered that the state's English language mandates are met with significant ambivalence among both minority students and their teachers, I invited the teachers to deconstruct the attitudes of their minority students to learning

English. Specifically, I raised the topic of the students' "don't care, don't like" approach to learning English. Without exception, the teachers agreed that a large number of their minority students (between 70% and 90%) neither like English nor understand why they are required to learn the language. As a result, they learn in a "rebellious manner," in the words of one student, with the intention simply of meeting the requirements. As Lam, another teacher, observed:

Minority students learn English to pass their exams. They rarely obtain useful English skills, even after studying it for seven years. It seems, therefore, as though students are simply trained to perform in English tests [...]. I suspect that about 80% of my students do not want to learn the language.

The other teachers expressed overwhelming agreement, indicating that their students perceive the language as difficult and impractical. They reported that only a small number of students in the town center are interested in learning the language. Another teacher, Lanh, agreed with Lam:

According to the results of our frequent surveys on the need for English in our school, almost none of our students understand the purpose of learning English, but do not have any other choice.

She added:

At the moment, the English exams are all multiple-choice questions so many students do not bother to learn the language. They simply try their luck by randomly choosing one of the four options for each question, or copy their friends' answers. Their main purpose is to reach the minimum required level. They do not care about obtaining a high score in these language exams.

Again, the teachers' responses to my questions on English language performance significantly paralleled the students'. Xuan described some of the difficulties and impracticalities involved in learning English as mandated by the state:

When I ask students what their most difficult subject is, they name English. While students may be interested at first in learning English, because the early part of the curriculum is less demanding, they are not interested in taking the subject any further. Students consider English an extra subject. After graduating, they just go back to their communities, farm and get married, so there is no point in their learning more English.

Dung, a male teacher, added:

The students find English difficult, so they are very hesitant and do not want to stand up to speak in class. They tend to think in their native languages. In brief, the students overcome many difficulties at home to go to school, but at school they meet even more challenges. The learning programs are too remote and impractical for them.

We can interpret that the teachers' reports uncover another failure of the official English language policies: the state's overriding objective to spread the use of English. It seems that this agenda has remained largely concealed, as many of the minority students involved in this study were unaware of the aim to standardize English usage. The government's actions have prioritized the interests and agendas of the insensitive and dominant majority over the needs of the minority, leading to confusion, conflict, and educational and socio-political marginalization (Pan, 2011; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). English is not used to promote educational opportunities and enhance socio-economic

equality; rather, its power is symbolic, and it has become a site of struggle (Bourdieu, 1991) for minority students. Minority youth are in danger of being trapped in a convoluted educational system in which their limited Vietnamese and unfamiliarity with standardized educational discourses make them passive and incapable participants.

Curriculum and limited learning outcomes. In Chapter 4, I provided a detailed summary of the views expressed by the young people involved in this study on Vietnam's inflexible, ambiguous, and exclusionary English language curriculum. In parallel with the students' persuasive evidence of the ambiguity, impracticality, and difficulty of the current English curriculum, the teachers described the insularity of the state's educational mandates. Our dialogue fostered the teachers' recognition of the unsystematic process of curriculum development, and enabled them to express their opinions freely. Ironically, as Lan, an English group leader, explained:

The curriculum was designed after the textbooks, and was unable to resolve the teachers' confusion about the content of the textbooks and the new teaching methods described, especially for use by children from different socio-cultural and geographical backgrounds. When the teachers' confusion reached a peak, they [the writers of the curriculum and state's policy makers] 'cooled them down' by issuing a series of teaching manuals entitled *Teaching English via Guided Standards and Skills*, which essentially instructed teachers on which parts of the textbooks were mandatory and how to teach the lesson.

Nonetheless, most of the teachers continued to feel that the curriculum was both boring and oppressively remote. They echoed the students' criticism of Westernized themes such as economic reform, higher education, deserts, water sports, spacecraft, and the aquatic

world. My analysis of the curriculum corroborated the teachers' complaints. The textbooks feature a range of topics of broad socio-cultural relevance that have little or no connections with the minority students' lives and traditions. Despite this breadth, however, the content of the textbooks is shallow, preventing minority students from engaging with or even imagining the topics under study, and providing them with irrelevant and superficial knowledge. As another teacher, Hang, recalled:

Some of the lessons at the end of the curriculum address entertainment and hobbies [belonging to modern, comfortable lifestyles incompatible with the difficulties faced by minority students]. The students' response was 'Do we have to talk about these things again?' The students feel that the curriculum is overwhelming.

Other teachers agreed that the English-speaking culture taught in the classroom is too distant from the students' experience, which makes many minority students, in a male teacher's words, "unable to swallow" the subject. In short, the textbooks' content fails to engage the students, while also barring them from making connections with their own languages and cultural heritages.

During our interactive discussion, the problems with the curriculum were described by a vice-principal, Thien, who was also one of the English teachers involved in our group dialogue. I noticed that Thien's account of the reality of the curriculum closely highlighted Bourdieu's theories of social reproduction. The English language policies, implemented in the form of a mismatched curriculum, work to differentiate those who benefit from access to authority and legitimacy from those who do not. Vietnam's ambiguous and inconclusive curriculum fails to respond to the agendas and

worldviews of minority students. As Thien remarked with some irony, “Due to the many difficulties the nationwide curriculum causes for minority students, they have just two options: accepting what is taught or dropping out of school.” Another teacher, Ngoc, compared the current curriculum with the old one, which cast even more light on the inapplicability of the new curriculum. She remarked:

The curriculum is too difficult for the students, so they feel discouraged and hate learning English. They thus learn nothing from the new curriculum. I think students would learn at least a bit more than nothing if we returned to the old curriculum.

These observations reflect the teachers’ critical awareness of the problems with the English curriculum, and their sympathy for the students’ educational predicament. Clearly, the standardized curriculum has not only ignored students’ differences but has de facto punished them for their inability to conform to mainstream educational requirements. The critical dialogue undertaken in this study enabled the teachers involved to exercise their agency in calling for more suitable curriculum decisions.

Besides providing a democratic space for the teachers to express the reality of the curriculum, our dialogic exchanges further showed their deep concerns for the implications of the state’s irrational linguistic mandates for the educational equity of minority youth, and their dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the policies so far. All of the teachers admitted that their students have performed poorly in response to the new curriculum. A group leader, Thien, stated that “At the high-school level, minority students’ English proficiency is still like a blank sheet! [They are entirely lacking in their knowledge of English]. How can they catch up with these language policies?” Thanh, a

female teacher, revealed a remarkably unfortunate truth about what English means to this mountainous area, and specifically to minority students:

The English curriculum and policies may only be suitable for students in big cities. They do not work in a province in which 85% of the student population is from a minority background. The students find English difficult and impractical, so they do not want to learn it. We felt that our students were at least able to learn something when using the old curriculum. Now, they learn nothing. The amount of knowledge required is overwhelming. There is never enough time to explain things to them carefully. Some students are able to grasp 25-30% of what we teach, while the rest learn nothing.

Thanh also reported on the students' performance in examinations:

In the piloted English graduation exam, only 15 of 245 students obtained scores of 5 [out of 10]. This tells us that learning English is too difficult for the students here, who find it immensely stressful. As teachers, we are also very stressed [...] you [Bui] are well aware of our [limited] English proficiency.

Phong was similarly skeptical when I asked her about the potential of the current language policies:

I would like to say that with these policies and this curriculum, good students are able to obtain maybe 20% of the English knowledge provided. But the rest grasp only 10% or even 5%. The students do not want to learn English.

From these accounts, we can infer that the state's education policies—designating Vietnamese as the medium of instruction, making English compulsory, and establishing standardized curricula—serve to indicate which cultures, which languages, and which

forms of knowledge are considered legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991; McCarty, 2011). Certainly to a great extent, the minority students involved in this ethnographic study seem neither to have achieved English language competency nor gained the other forms of cultural capital (e.g., academic knowledge, habitus, competence in Vietnamese) necessary to protect their diversity within society. The dismally ineffective outcomes of the students' English language learning reflect the large-scale failure of the state's ambiguous and taken-for-granted policies. These policies have also caused teachers and students tremendous psychological stress, and disregarded their distinct socio-cultural needs. In the following, I discuss the nature of the current teacher education, which serves as another channel to interpret the meaning of the standardized English language policies to the teachers involved in this ethnographic study.

Teacher education. Teacher training is at the heart of any language policy reform that aims to support students' achievements (Nieto, 2006). My conversations with the teachers heightened their existing awareness of the limitations and inflexibility of the country's teacher training. Many were candid about their own lack of proficiency in English, but also described the hasty and unsystematic nature of teacher education in the region. The top-down structure of teacher training makes it unresponsive to contextual differences: it ignores local resources, and underestimates teachers' capacity as policy makers (Butler & Schnettert, 2012). During our discussions, the teachers identified many areas in need of improvement. For example, "The listening lessons are too difficult. If the teacher cannot understand what the tape says, how are the students expected to understand?" As one teacher, Thu, pointed out during a group discussion, "Sometimes we feel like we're just pretending to teach our students, because we are not the owners of the

knowledge in the English textbooks [do not know enough about all of the topics in the curriculum].” Seven of the other teachers participating in this dialogue agreed with Thu.

We can see that such genuine opinions illuminate the critical inquiry of who has the power to decide what counts as “standard knowledge” for both teachers and minority students (Gee, 1996; Street, 2012). In this context, standard knowledge means predetermined knowledge and is enforced by people in power for the sake of fulfilling their desire and worldview of what is and is not legitimate in the curriculum.

Furthermore, the teachers’ critical and candid responses clearly reflect the state’s consistent embracing of the neoliberal agenda: to standardize English usage as a means of securing benefits and power for a small population in the nation (Lipman, 2011; Phillipson, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). As a result, not only does this agenda attack minority students’ educational and social equity, it deprives teachers in this region of professional competence and agency, and consequently devalues while privatizing the role of public education for the masses. However, the teachers’ predicament is by no means unique in the worldwide neoliberal empire. With reference to education in America, for instance, Baltodino (2012) describes the damage done by standardization to teachers’ professional agency. She uncovers the connection between neoliberalism and the demise of public education:

More than in any other period of American history, teachers have been stripped of their most precious role: the duty to educate a generation of fully informed democratic citizens. Neoliberalism has taken away the joy of learning, the creativity of teaching, and the formation of strong public intellectuals. Public

education is gradually fading and is being replaced by new privatized forms of schooling. (p. 489)

Despite the unfortunate truth of the state's inadequate teacher education, however, my in-depth and respectful dialogue with teachers in the area under study revealed their "hunger" for and dedication to effective and responsible teacher training as a means of improving the quality of education. They further revealed teachers' vast array of difficulties caused by the state's overwhelming policy mandates. Some reported that they "find it very difficult to be creative," and others asked how speaking and listening should be taught, explaining that they "feel very unconfident teaching these skills." Other questions included "How can I make English more relevant to reality?" and "How should I teach English to minority students who are not yet fluent in Vietnamese?" These sincere inquiries reflect the anger, frustration and confusion caused by the curriculum's demands on teachers, and the worsening quality of their professional training. Moreover, to promote a spirit of "discursive reform" (McCargo, 2004) in teaching, teachers are provided with an opportunity for *tự chọn* ("self-determination"); that is, a chance to decide what they would like to teach for one period (45 minutes) during each unit. However, most of the teachers expressed great ambivalence as to how to most effectively utilize this time. One argued that "We need to be trained in how to use this self-determination period," and another asked "How should I use this period? I do not know." The in-depth discussion with the teachers increased their desire for more legitimate professional training in how to work effectively and responsibly with minority students. Their questions about communicative language teaching (CLT) and working with students of diverse socio-economic backgrounds usually go unanswered by teacher

trainers, which reduce teachers' capacity to effect critical language policy changes. This is clear evidence of the poor preparation and ambiguity of the professional support provided for teachers. Aligning the teachers' confusion and questions with the theories of multilingual literacy and learning presented earlier in this study, it can be inferred that Vietnam's standardized language policies have largely prevented teachers from identifying suitable teaching models and language resources for the literacy teaching. The policies should instead have empowered teachers to make English teaching "more real" and "more creative" (in the teachers' words), which would in turn have enabled them to avoid frustration and build a positive relationship with their minority students. Teachers should be trained to cultivate and scaffold minority students' abundant resources, such as the cultural practices, artifacts and traditional knowledge that students bring from home to school (Helot & Ó Laoire, 2011; Moll et al., 1992). As shown in a later section of this chapter, our dialogic engagement was designed to redress some of the teachers' alarm and confusion by opening a space for them to reconceptualize and transform their teaching practices.

Teachers' ideologies, attitudes, and professional experiences play a crucial role in shaping their view of their students (Apple, 2000). Vietnam's English-curriculum reform is purportedly committed to CLT and student-based learning, but how can these approaches create meaningful outcomes when students' identities and abilities are not respected and valued? During my classroom observations, I often witnessed teachers humiliating students in front of the class as punishment for wrong answers, or asking other students to comment on a wrong answer rather than addressing the problem in a more co-constructive manner. My long conversations with the teachers in question helped

me to understand that this unprofessional behavior was for the most part due to the lack of comprehensive teacher training. I believe that some teachers may unintentionally persist in inappropriate behavior due to the power they wield over their students. Although they do not realize that they are treating their students unprofessionally, such treatment may have damaging repercussions for the professional and academic advancement of both teachers and students. In addition, teachers tend to discourage their students from thinking critically and questioning and challenging teachers freely; I noticed during my classroom observations that many minority students were silenced by their teachers' unprofessional behavior. However, this type of silence has multiple meanings: it may signify the students' agency and desire in the form of covert resistance to the teachers or to the state's new language policies, as I explained with reference to the students' responses in the previous chapter. However, looking in a broader sense at the power relations between teachers and students, I feel that teachers who mistakenly and unconsciously believe themselves to have power over their students are also victims of the state's rigid educational system. This myth of power can further intimidate students, making them stressed and uninterested in learning, and a situation the students involved in this study described vividly (see Chapter 4).

The dialogue uncovered the numerous layers of difficulty faced by teachers in this region, and the mistrust, anger and stress caused by the inadequacies of teacher training and development. For instance, several locally situated professional disputes erupted during my discussion with the teachers, especially with regard to nepotism in the selection of trainers. Such individuals do not provide adequate training for teachers in working with minority students. One important area of conflict, therefore, is professional

mistrust between teachers and trainers, which exacerbates the existing difficulties with language implementation. The teachers objected to local and university trainers' lack of understanding of multiculturalism, multiple learning styles, and the socio-economic situations of minority students. They felt that this lack of understanding contributed to the failure of the teacher-training workshops. "They impose their model of CLT on all types of students," said Phong, a teacher. Another teacher, Phu, agreed, adding that "A two-week workshop every summer did not improve our teaching at all."

These excerpts cast light on the highly complex problems caused by the current English language policies. The teachers' comments addressed the damage done to teachers' professional practices and identities, and the tension between internal beliefs and commitment and the requirement to conform to unsuitable and inadequate criteria. Although teachers are at the heart of language policy reform, they seem to have become detached from the policy-making process and their inner commitment and belief in teaching has been damaged, making teaching ineffective, joyless, and a source of ambivalence (Barrett, 2009).

However, this study further shows that the critical conversations with teachers nurture their professional agency as well as enabling them to take a critical stance as language policy makers. The teachers involved in our dialogic discussions voiced their resistance fully, collaboratively, and sincerely to the inequality of the state-mandated education policies, and expressed their concerns about a covert political agenda, low-quality teacher education, and the lack of professional human resources to move the policies forward. Our critical dialogue with the teachers enabled them to look deeply and broadly at the reality of the language policies.

It is now important to ask again what it means to teach English and work with minority students in this mountainous area. A comprehensive answer to this question would include the region's unsupportive linguistic landscape, the state's mismatched, complex (and perhaps questionable) language policies, students' strong resistance to learning English, the provision of teacher education that is fundamentally inadequate, and the meager learning outcomes presented above. Moreover, when I asked the teachers to reflect on teaching English in this area, they all answered in a similar fashion. As one teacher said, "teaching English in this province with minority students is really difficult [...]. It is really difficult now." "Difficult" can contain multiple meanings in this context. It describes a wide spectrum of implicit and explicit ambivalence, tensions, contradictions and skepticism, all of which vitiate the teachers' passion for teaching, sense of responsibility, efficacy, and professional agency. Furthermore, in addressing the one-size-fits-all language policies, this study gathers weighty and sincere evidence from teachers and students to show that the state's English language policies applied in this area are "gung-ho" rather than realistic, especially for the minority student population, who face a formidable struggle merely to survive, let alone to resist marginalization. Rather than benefiting from the national language policies, minority students are in fact losing out and their other forms of linguistic capital (their native languages and Vietnamese) are too fragile to help them build a solid linguistic repertoire. Thus, it is largely impossible for them to transform such meager linguistic capital into social and economic capital, which only increases the inequality and conflict encountered by this minority population. In general, the standardized language policies are detrimental to teachers' and students' professional identities, agencies, desires and needs, and are likely

to prevent them from preserving their multilingual and multicultural heritages over the long term.

Dialogic Engagement: From Ideological to Theoretical and Agentive Transformation

Although my dialogue with minority students and their teachers passed through a wide range of emotions, including anger, frustration, and stress, the core principle of engaged LPP is the researcher's full participation with the subjects of research (here, students and teachers) to advance the goal of the study (in this case, to promote more equitable approaches to language policy, multilingualism, and diversity). Furthermore, drawing on the recent trend of language policy research that emphasizes the salient agency of local actors (e.g., Hornberger & McCarty, 2012; Messing, 2009) in (re)defining and working toward educational efficacy and a just society, I sought to empower teachers as highly capable policy makers by working closely with them to promote positive pedagogical and ideological transformation (Warren & Mapp, 2011). As we have seen, minority students are significantly hampered in their pursuit of linguistic and educational excellence: the state's current education policies prevent them from participating with confidence in mainstream society and achieving equal economic and welfare opportunities. The individual, intrinsic wealth of their languages and cultures (Bourdieu, 1991) is often undervalued, overlooked, and misunderstood (Romero-Little, 2012) by the state's language policies and in the process of their implementation in schools. Moreover, my critical dialogic discussions with the teachers in this region show that they too are caught in a vicious circle of ambivalence and confusion as a result of inadequate teacher training, coercive and inflexible language policy mandates, and an irrelevant curriculum. All of these issues, as well as the lack of relevant pedagogical

approaches to working with multicultural and multilingual students, and teachers' desire to restore their professional agency as effective teachers, encouraged me to work directly with these individuals. After observing their classes, I gained more insights into the teachers' possible pedagogical limitations as well as discussed ways in which to improve their teaching practices. From the outset, our dialogue showed striking similarities with Nieto's (2006) reconceptualization of teaching as a mission and teachers as missionaries who exhibit empathy for minority students, the courage to appropriate mainstream language policies, and a passion for social justice. My dialogic discussions with the teachers opened up opportunities for transformation, including the provision of empirical, ideological, and practical insights into ways of improving LPP in minority contexts.

Rather than relying on the limited number of teacher-training workshops (whose quality is, to a great extent, questionable) provided by the state, we actively interrogated the teachers' greatest challenge: how to most effectively work with this multicultural and multilingual population of minority students. In doing this, I sought to foster the teachers' appreciation of the ancestral wealth of knowledge possessed by minority youth (Moll et al., 1992), and to create opportunities for improving the multilingual practices and academic achievement of minority students. My dialogue with the teachers were further supported by the scholarship of Menken and García (2010) and Pease-Alvarez, Samway, and Cifka-Herrera (2010), who actively emphasized the role of teachers as the epicenters and arbiters of language policy implementation. Collaborating with teachers to cultivate and enhance their agency, these scholars argue that teachers who retain a passion for social justice can play a powerful role in changing and redefining policies. My critical dialogue with the teachers in this study, during which I directly addressed the needs of

their students and the political, social, and geographical characteristics of the province, served as a foundation for the creation of healthy, respectful, and effective teaching practices. Moreover, the teachers' responses suggest that the constructive feedback and desires articulated by minority youth are capable of transforming teachers' biased and unresponsive teaching practices into more professional, efficacious strategies that enhance the agency of minority students and celebrate their distinct epistemologies and identities. In the course of my engaged dialogue with teachers of minority youth, I noticed that many teachers began to interrogate, transition, and negotiate their roles and practices in everyday teaching situations, whether implicitly or explicitly. The following themes manifest significant ideological and implementational shifts that have the potential to improve teachers' provision of education to minority/segregated students.

Teachers as compassionate and comprehensive language policy makers. After gathering the teachers' opinions on the national language policies, our dialogue empowered them, first and foremost, as policy makers responsible for their own teaching practices, professional ambitions, and expectations (Barrett, 2009). We began with the following question: "If you were responsible for creating a language policy for minority student youth, what would be your greatest priorities?" This question seemed to dispel some of the negativity created by our discussion of the failure of the state's language policies, giving the teachers a newfound sense of empowerment, hope, and respect. It actively motivated the teachers to assume leadership roles (Nieto, 2006) and freely voice their ideas for change. This in turn enhanced their self-directed professionalism and vocal agency, moving from what Tovakoli and Sadegi (2011) observe as a "deficit training model' in which the teacher is viewed as a passive robot, pre-programmed to perform

pre-planned skills, to a model in which they actively bring about changes through reflective inquiry” (p. 363). The teachers’ numerous suggestions evinced their potential to become accountable and creative educational analysts and policy makers. They repeatedly emphasized the need to ensure that minority students are proficient in Vietnamese before beginning to learn English. Echoing the minority students’ own perspectives on the need for high-quality Vietnamese-language education, the teachers argued that minority students need Standard Vietnamese to negotiate their own positions within society, and for a wide range of other educational and social purposes. Yet, our dialogue revealed the urgent need to train teachers in legitimate ways of working with minority students from diverse backgrounds in this multilingual and multicultural province. A male teacher, Hoang, who has been teaching minority students for seven years, called for responsible training and collective action to support minority students’ academic advancement:

Teaching English in our province is very difficult, especially as I teach in a school in which 100% of the students are from minority backgrounds. Many of them are unable to speak Vietnamese fluently. Therefore, learning English is their biggest challenge. We need to provide our students with a good Vietnamese education. As teachers, we need legitimate training and collaboration with other institutions to find ways to work effectively with minority students and improve their learning outcomes.

Similarly, Huong’s suggestions reveal her concern for professionalism and quality, and her empathy for her minority students:

If I were able to change our current teaching practices, the first thing I would like to do is reduce the content and increase the time available for teaching to help minority students to learn all of the material presented in a class thoroughly.

Furthermore, if we want to improve minority students' lives and education, I think we will need tremendous collective effort from people and policy makers at all levels.

Remarkably, all of the teachers felt that altering the method of evaluation would be the best means of improving the current teaching situation. They recommended relaxing the rigid standardization of testing to enhance creativity, efficacy, and intellectual freedom.

Huong, a teacher, described her own vision of an alternative education system:

If I were given the chance to change the teaching of English, my priority would be to improve the evaluation method. This is not an *ad hoc* response; rather, it is based on my experience of administering high-stake tests. I believe that we should create a natural, caring, and genuine environment in which minority students can learn English. Please do not impose on them too-advanced topics and rules.

Moreover, they do not need to be tested extensively, because we are aware of their English ability simply from working with them every day. Testing creates tremendous stress for students at all levels, and it is not effective.

She added:

I am very concerned about the targeting of communicative English learning by our Ministry of Education, especially as no changes have been made to the evaluation method. What can I do, as just one teacher? When I, along with many other teachers, questioned the evaluation method in our national training

workshop, our trainers told us not to blame our Ministry of Education, because they are trying to make changes. But I am forced to ask myself when these changes will happen.

Binh made the following suggestion in response to the same question:

If I had the opportunity to change things, I would like to make it clear that learning is not all about testing. I would like us [teachers] to teach in a non-threatening and relaxed environment to foster minority students' love of learning and improve their learning outcomes.

The teachers' statements clearly reveal the neoliberal framework that structures the national policies: teaching is driven by standardized tests and performance outcomes while minority youth and their teachers are held accountable for academic failure (Apple, 2001; Lipman, 2011). The teachers are keenly aware of the impracticality of standardized testing, arguing that they are able to assess minority students' learning outcomes on a daily basis. Indeed, the national standardized testing and exam-driven teaching requirements promote neoliberal privatization and advance a capitalist agenda that damages the creativity and educational performance of teachers and students alike (Apple, 2001). Our dialogue provided the teachers with a meaningful space in which to exercise their agency as comprehensive policy makers for minority students. Although tension and anger were expressed, dialogue with the teachers also gave them a renewed sense of responsibility and a clear mission and vision, and rekindled their passion for equitable language education that accommodates the particular backgrounds and contexts of their minority students.

My dialogue with young people and their teachers repeatedly confirmed that the national curriculum fundamentally marginalizes and even denies minority cultures, traditions, and languages. Teachers who belong to the dominant Kinh (Vietnamese) group often struggle to teach students from different backgrounds due to their limited training in multicultural and multilingual education, and in some cases their socio-cultural bias. Nonetheless, my work with this community indicates that teachers gradually became keenly aware of and seriously concerned about the unresponsive national policies in the local context. One teacher, Thu, made the following observation:

Due to the policies' incompatibility, teachers of English tend to work out of duty, with limited care and enthusiasm. As a result, students are provided with a large amount of insignificant and vague knowledge. I am very sad to say that I sometimes find myself in this situation. After teaching, I feel like I want to stitch my lips together. I feel ashamed and distressed.

The teachers' emotional and candid descriptions of their experiences clearly indicate that both their psychological state and their desire to enact the language policies responsibly and effectively have been hampered by the state's ambiguous language policies. Instead of seeing teachers as a national treasure, such standardized educational discourses "question professionalism, stifle their [teachers'] creativity, and dampen their joy" (Nieto, 2006, p. 461). In short, despite undergoing significant psychological struggle as a result of the policies, the teachers' responses conveyed their continuing desire to be provided with the pedagogical and professional freedom to improve their current teaching practices and regain their identities as effective and caring teachers.

Furthermore, teachers in our critical dialogue started to exercise their role as a language policy maker by criticizing the ambiguity of the taken-for-granted official language policies. For instance, a leader of fellow teachers described the limited English language capital gained by his students, and was outspoken in his call for teachers, who have the greatest understanding of students' daily struggles, to become policy makers. In this way, the critical dialogue inspired him to reclaim his and other teachers' agency as comprehensive language policy makers and implementers relevant to their local situations. During a group discussion with other teachers in his school, he ironically observed:

The policy makers and curriculum writers think that if students are at grade 10, they must have obtained the requisite amount of English knowledge in the textbook; but in my experience, these students still have no English knowledge at all. Thus, I think language policy makers should be the ones who directly teach students [or have direct experience of teaching classes].

Promoting collaboration between youth and teachers also enabled the teachers involved in the study to gain a comprehensive understanding of their students' personal and socio-political worldviews, academic potential, ideologies and challenges. I employed Van der Aa's and Blommaert's (2011) notion of ethnographic monitoring to ensure that I was supporting the teachers timely, reflectively, and respectfully. Employing the ethnographic monitoring practice, I worked collaboratively with them to explore their minority students' experiences, their own ideas for linguistically and culturally responsive teaching pedagogies and curricula, the need for identity recognition, and various other methods to acknowledge their capabilities, desires and needs. Furthermore, building on

the responses made by the minority youth, I engaged the teachers in further discussion of the language policies, including suggestions for improvement. It is important to note that the youth's perspectives on policy making, when shared with the teachers, informed and gradually transformed the teachers' opinions on the policies, and increased their willingness to intervene to preserve their students' distinct linguistic and cultural identities. The teachers simultaneously supported and responded to their students' voices by applying and appropriating more linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches, and became more accepting and appreciative of the difficulties faced by minority youth. They worked actively to identify and support their students' learning potential and rich, diverse cultural resources. In the following, I depict some major agentive transformation effected through my collaborative and respectful engagement with the teachers.

The dialogue showed that the teachers gained an increased sense of the need to celebrate and diversify teaching through linguistically and culturally responsive approaches. As we analyzed and interpreted the students' needs, foregrounding theories of multilingual literacy and language learning, I was thrilled to witness the teachers' becoming increasingly interested in incorporating culturally and linguistically appropriate practices into their own teaching. For instance, students might be asked to write poems, news items and postcards as means of playing to their diverse strengths and ensuring a fair evaluation rather than relying solely on standardized tests. Furthermore, our dialogue created an opportunity for the teachers to re-evaluate their teaching philosophies and pedagogies, reclaim their identity, modify their teaching praxis, and gain a renewed sense of empathy for minority students (Tovakoli & Sedegi, 2011). The teachers also found that

the process of critically reinterpreting and appropriating educational policies suggested new ways of teaching (Helot & Ó Laoire, 2011). Rather than retaining the common belief that minority students' linguistic and cultural diversity is an obstacle to teaching, the teachers gradually gained an increased understanding of the value of incorporating students' particular cultures and traditions into their learning (García & Sylvan, 2011). I was immensely gratified by a comment made by Hoa, a Thai minority teacher, during a walk after carrying out fieldwork in the students' villages:

I am a Thai minority teacher myself, but I had not realized that it could be encouraging and effective to incorporate minority students' cultural traditions into teaching. Now I have more ideas for diversifying my lessons. I feel wiser when talking to you.

Hoa's realization reflects her resourceful re-interpretation of other teachers' traditional and linear conceptualization of literacy and language learning, which is fundamentally shaped by the national ideologies of literacy learning/teaching. These ideologies often convince teachers that teaching resources and strategies (here, for teaching English) may only be drawn from Vietnamese and English sources. Furthermore, Hoa's comment also helps us to recall and indirectly provide answers to one of the inquiries asked in the conceptual framework: who has the power to define and name language-learning and teaching resources? It can be understood that the authoritative people largely possess the power and decision on what language learning means. Language learning means acquiring the dominant languages (Vietnamese and English). Consequently, teaching and learning resources are stated as things bounded by these languages, not much about the minority students' centrality of epistemological traditions and practices. However, Hoa's

reference to “diversifying [her] lessons” promisingly acknowledges her recognition of the multilingual classroom ecology of which she and her minority students are members, and the educational value of her minority students’ rich cultural and linguistic resources (García, 2010; Blommaert & Lähteenmäki, 2010).

Similarly, Huong, who was originally from the Delta and has taught minority students for 10 years, offered a productive and sincere response to our detailed discussion of possibilities for incorporating minority students’ linguistic and cultural heritages into her teaching:

I realize now that it is very important to acknowledge minority students’ languages and cultures when teaching English. If I find it difficult in the future to explain English vocabulary in Vietnamese to my minority students, I will now ‘translanguage’ the [English vocabulary] into my students’ languages to help them understand. This method will be especially useful to me as I am interested in learning my minority students’ languages.

From this response, which departs from the predetermined, inflexible, and spoon-fed top-down policy mandates, Huong is sympathetic to her minority students’ backgrounds and aware of the importance of scaffolding her teaching with their rich cultures and languages. Her genuine assessment of the areas of her teaching in need of improvement indicates great potential for both perceptual and pedagogical transformation. It also sheds light on Huong’s understanding of languaging as an effective and dynamic practice enabling her students to move democratically and flexibly between languages, and increasing their access to higher-learning outcomes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; García, 2007)

Together with Huong, another teacher, Binh, reflected on the cultivation of minority students' home resources—including their cultures and languages—in the process of teaching:

I have realized that this is a very important approach. If we create connections between our lessons and minority students' linguistic and cultural worlds, they will understand the content of the lessons more fully and more quickly. This approach may also help students to develop their creative thinking and comparative skills, and apply their learning in real-life contexts.

This statement directly responds to the core values of multilingualism and the previously discussed theories of literacy and learning. It signals a pedagogical transformation that will benefit Binh's multilingual students by helping them to reclaim their distinct cultural and linguistic identities through meta-linguistic and meta-cognitive techniques (Canagarajah, 2009; Cenoz, 2009).

With the minority students' appeal for "multiple ways to evaluate our learning" echoed in the teachers' desire for alternative assessment methods, my in-depth dialogue with teachers debunked the common assumption that teachers are merely passive implementers of educational reform. On the contrary, our dialogue identified them as highly capable of negotiating, resisting, and critically adapting the state-mandated policies to protect their students from the damaging effects of an unresponsive curriculum. The idea of incorporating culturally and linguistically responsive assessment methods (asking students to write poems, news items and postcards, for example, and to carry out group projects) (McLean et al., 2009; Verplaetse, 2008) rather than assessing their students via one-size-fits-all "templated" tests (Nieto, 2006), made them feel more

empowered and optimistic about their teaching. In discussions of possible alterations to the classroom environment to foster students' linguistic and cultural sense of belonging, I suggested to the teachers that they could decorate classrooms with students' cultural artifacts, drawings and posters to promote understanding of and pride in minority cultures (Moll et al., 1992). One teacher, Vinh, responded as follows:

Thank you for your ideas. My students are indeed creative. I will also implement your suggestion of organizing English clubs and extra learning activities. Why didn't I think of these ideas before? I am sure that they will be very useful for my students.

Instead of accepting policies that ignore the value of minority knowledge in teaching and learning (Tsui, 2005) and relying on standardized testing, the teachers in our collaborative dialogue further interrogated the potential of inquiry-based learning for more effective English education. They would like their teaching and their students' learning to be meaningful and applicable to the region's social and political contexts (Larson, 2010; Street, 2012). As the time available for classes is extremely limited, the teachers also inquired into how best to prepare lessons for the students. We then moved on to discuss teaching students at home, or giving them more time to produce creative work. The teachers also recognized that the students' work should not always be graded, but assessed by various means to encourage students' hard work and creativity. Regardless of their manifold difficulties, therefore, the teachers revealed their intrinsic potential and professional agency as responsible language policy makers working to create a space for their students to exercise their freedom. They exhibited the desire to connect with their students as compassionate, creative, and caring educators. Due to the

very limited instruction on grammatical structures in the textbooks provided, some teachers had already begun to find other books and create worksheets to improve their students' learning. This again signals their willingness to intervene to improve their students' learning and fulfill their needs.

Teachers' expressions throughout our engagement clearly signaled their valuable and progressive ideological and implementational transformation. For instance, after I discovered that the teachers needed help with carrying out group work, we discussed effective group-work techniques (Verplaetse, 2008). Thoa genuinely shared the limitations of her earlier teaching style, as well as her new understanding of the techniques involved in group work and its benefits:

My discussion with you [Bui] has made me realize that I do not apply this method [organizing group work/cooperative learning] in my lessons in a comprehensive manner. I simply assign tasks for my students to do. Therefore, I have not promoted the kinds of creativity and activity involved in doing group work. I understand that students should be encouraged to work with a variety of individuals in their classes to help them gain new knowledge, create diverse connections, and foster a love of learning and a culture of sharing in the classroom.

Yet, the teachers' expressions on this topic showed me that they sometimes departed from the rigid English language policies to create a space for students to discuss social behavior and practice their Vietnamese. Huong, a veteran teacher, reported:

I asked my students to discuss the topic of littering in Vietnam. Sensing that this topic was too complicated for my minority students to express in English due to

their limited English proficiency, I told them that they did not need to talk in English: they could do so in Vietnamese instead. I think that this topic is very important in the context of Vietnam, and we need to discuss it rather than being too concerned about whether students can do so in English. They need to know Vietnamese before they learn English [...]. I think, therefore, that I was teaching them life skills. I also spoke to them directly in Vietnamese during our class discussion on this topic [littering].

This excerpt indicates Huong's understanding of the vital role of the national language to minority students and her concern on one of the prevalent social matters in the developing society. Thus, her topic and decision of using Vietnamese rather than English address her in-depth recognition of the priorities [good Vietnamese proficiency and good social behavior] that the minority students should be equipped with. Moreover, her intervention in this dialogue further indicates her silent resistance to the state-mandated policies. However, it should be viewed that in this setting resistance is an act of commitment rather than a psychological deficit or a conservative act (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2009). It manifests teachers' understanding of the importance of meeting minority students' needs, democratizing teaching practices, providing high-quality and practical teaching, and fostering students' awareness of both educational and social concerns. Achinstein and Ogawa (2009) argue that resistance is part of a repertoire of emancipatory instructional practices rooted in professional commitment and social-justice principles. In the course of our discussion, Huong realized that such practices are much more useful and meaningful than teaching students English, a language in which few of them are interested.

The ethnographic account was also designed to optimize implementational interventions. Our discussion of the need to recognize students' languages and cultures has yielded positive outcomes since my fieldwork. Creating a transnational space for the teachers to discuss their teaching techniques enabled them to inquire into and update their pedagogical practices. Crucially, the teachers were generally positive about teaching English to minority students, and supportive of their students. Many of them realized that their teaching is most effective when it departs from the curriculum to share and explore other sources of knowledge in collaboration with students. For instance, Phong described her own method of teaching vocabulary: minority students are asked to translanguage English words into their own native languages, and then into Vietnamese. Such strategies have significant implications for the teaching of English to minority youth. They indicate that the teachers, even before our discussions, were aware of the great value of students' languages and cultures as educational resources (Ruiz, 1984), and willing to move flexibly among English, Vietnamese and students' native languages to boost their academic cognition and meta-linguistic skills (Davis, 2009; Morrell, 2008). To increase their understanding further, Phong asked her students to compare and contrast English pronunciation, meanings and structures with their counterparts in Vietnamese and their native languages:

When I teach them [minority students] the word 'chopsticks' in English, I ask them first to name the word in their own [Thai & Hmong minority] language. I ask the students to say the word in three languages [their native language, Vietnamese and English]. I tell them that if they do not know the word 'chopsticks,' they can say 'Give me a pair of *dap* [chopsticks]' [Thai minority

language] to ensure that they become accustomed to speaking English while using their own languages at the same time. This way, the students are more interested in the material taught, and learn with greater enthusiasm.

Lan described her appropriation of the state's language policies in her own method of teaching minority students, which is built on the foundation of their native languages:

I think that teaching English requires teachers to understand minority students' linguistic knowledge, and to make interesting and fun comparisons between languages. By this means, I can both increase students' English understanding and preserve their traditional cultural resources. Clearly, using students' native languages in the classroom has a great influence on their ability to learn English. I am now more pleased with my methods, because they increase my students' understanding.

Many of the teachers involved in this study agreed with Lan that making use of minority students' cultures and backgrounds in English lessons is a very helpful strategy. For instance, Sao, a Kinh (Vietnamese) teacher, described implementing this approach by beginning her English music lessons in a more culturally responsive way. After our discussions, she decided to begin a class as follows: "Are you tired? I will sing a song for you, but I do not sing well, so I will not sing in Vietnamese or English but in your language." In response, the students were "so excited and happy."

Thu was enthusiastic and empathetic in her support of students' own methods of languaging (García, 2009). She understood that minority youth face severe difficulties in acquiring academic knowledge, especially as their native languages are largely banned and their Vietnamese skills are fairly limited. In her teaching, she started to provide a

space for her minority students to move between their languages. She made the following observation:

Learning English is very difficult for my students, most of whom live in remote communities. At school, they have to speak Vietnamese and learn all of their subjects in Vietnamese. However, even when students have reached the tenth or eleventh grade, their Vietnamese is still limited, so learning English through Vietnamese is very demanding [...]. English has tenses, but their native language does not, so the students find it nearly impossible to classify simple tenses: past, present and future. When students do not know the answers, they discuss them with each other in Thai. This makes many teachers uncomfortable, but I now understand why students have to use their mother tongue to explain things to their friends. I have realized that students can increase their understanding by occasionally using their native languages to explain English to each other in class.

This statement marks Thu's internal and pedagogical evolution: she now allows her students to use their own languages in the classroom when it is appropriate and for myriad academic purposes. She also takes a confident, democratic approach to working with students who speak many tongues. In their research on multilingualism, Helot & Ó Laoire (2011) held that allowing bi/multilingual children to draw on several languages helps to minimize teachers' hesitation about and/or fear of working with languages they do not know, and fosters their understanding of bi/multilingual language use among their students. All of the teachers involved in the current study exhibited bravery and flexibility in prioritizing minority students' needs, respecting their distinct cultural and linguistic identities, and acknowledging the value of their traditional wisdom. The

teachers have started to “teach outside the lines” (Nieto, 2006, p. 476) to provide adequate support for their students’ literacy development and reclamation of their native linguistic rights. Our discussion of linguistic and cultural resources played a meaningful role in showing the teachers that minority students’ languages and cultures are not merely sustainable and effective resources for learning, but are central to educational efficacy (García, 2009; May & Aikman, 2003).

The postmodern theories of literacy and language learning explored in Chapter 2 have also been used to guide teachers of minority students to create a critical third space (Bhabha, 1994) in which to deconstruct national and international educational discourses and conflict (Luke, 2008; Morrell, 2008; Street, 2012). After participating in the dialogue undertaken in this study, my fellow teachers of Vietnamese and English literature revealed that they were beginning to depart from the pre-packaged curriculum, which on the whole makes it impossible to bring about much-needed change (Nieto, 2006). I am delighted to discover that some teachers have since begun to incorporate new topics and strategies into their lessons, such as critiquing a national TV channel, discussing unethical issues in the students’ communities, and deconstructing the idea that minority culture is no longer pure. The teachers were increasingly quick to affirm that an effective curriculum must respond to the students’ own environment, traditions and everyday practices to foster interest, effective learning and pride (García, 2009). According to the teachers, their students show more interest and remember their lessons more clearly when instruction is related to local agricultural practices. In one of our group discussions, Sao reflected on this topic, and criticized the top-down approach to policy making:

Because the curriculum is too unfamiliar to minority and mountain students, they understand very little. They cannot even conceptualize the remote topics in the textbooks, and thus show little interest in learning. When I teach my students about corn, sweet potatoes or cassava, however, they are very interested. But the components of the state's curriculum on landscape are entirely different from what they know, so these lessons make no sense to the students. The vocabulary required in one lesson alone is overwhelming even for eleventh-grade students. Why are we forced to teach such impractical subjects? Why do educationists equate minority students from the mountains with urban students?

The study has moved from pedagogical to ideological transformation and back again. My ongoing engaged ethnography with teachers and students has yielded promising outcomes. I am excited to discover that the study has fostered critical awareness among young teachers, thus helping to promote equitable education and language policies that support diversity. Furthermore, it is crucially important to note that the process of critical and engaged consciousness-raising has transformed teachers' common perceptions of minority students, and challenged prejudices. I was highly impressed with Hoan's comments when we were travelling together back to the town center following my fieldwork:

I realize that it is crucial to integrate minority cultural and linguistic aspects in teaching. I used to be very impatient and think negatively about minority students. I see you (Bui) being very patient listening to them. I should be different.

Hoan's statement further showed that critical dialogue to LPP was flexible and contingent on the nature of people that the researcher engaged with as well as their layers of socio-economic and ideological circumstances. Thus, rather than exclusively discussing with the teachers about what should be different, consciousness-raising also arises from their observation and interpretation of the researcher's respectful behavior and actual work with the minority students on the ground. The aspect of seeing as believing can be seen as a type of critical engagement and worked well with sensitive topics (e.g., attempting to transition people's negative perception on poor and minority linguistic backgrounds) and certain teacher participants (e.g., those who are potentially obstinate and skeptical). Furthermore, after the study, one of my colleagues kept me informed in writing about the positive influence in her school:

During the fieldwork, I realized how serious you are about education, and I learned from you to treat minority students with respect, using their cultures as a foundation for education. Your work here has encouraged the teachers in our school to behave more kindly toward our minority students. In particular, I am aware of the need to 'cook' my lessons [adapt them and incorporate new resources] to make them more responsive to students' backgrounds, and to weave local cultural knowledge into my teaching. The Thai minority poem 'Song Chu Xon Xao' ['Farewell to My Love'] is one example. [Here the full text of the poem is provided in Vietnamese.] I asked students to obtain the original version [in Thai] and read it out in their own languages in front of the class. I then asked them to compare it with the Vietnamese version and translate it into English. I now realize that this is one of the best ways to increase students' ethnic and

cultural pride. I have gained new, positive perspectives on teaching from our discussions.

Furthermore, the study's goal of consciousness-raising through engaged ethnography has been achieved more widely than in the classroom, spreading to social media such as *Facebook*. This seems to directly respond to Paulo Freire's notion of reading both the word and the world. In this context, engaging dialogue on LPP appear as a means to address broader interdisciplinary issues. I hope that this reflects the enduring nature of our engagement, and that the teachers will continue to recognize minority students as citizens with equal rights (Baltodano, 2012), and continue to value diversity as a rich pool of teaching resources. For instance, since the study, my fellow teachers have raised the following "critical complaint" about the linguistic landscape of the region: "Why does the local hospital use the term "WC" for restroom, [rather than using some minority languages' equivalent?] How many people from minority backgrounds are likely to understand this English abbreviation?" This critique signals the teachers' newfound concern for and critical consciousness of social issues rooted in linguistic contexts. I hope that these colleagues will continue to promote this critical stance among their students and fellow teachers, and within and beyond their local communities.

Conclusions of Chapter 5

This engaged ethnographic account pursues a commitment to equitable education and language policies for minority students by working collaboratively with teachers to unravel the agendas, roles and consequences of the national language policies, and the conflict they have caused. It responds to McNeil's (2003, p. 246) view that "democratic education is not an abstract idea but the result of active struggle requiring continuous and

collective attention.” The dialogic conversations conducted in this study provided the teachers with a forum in which to not only deconstruct in detail the nature and outcomes of the language policies, but also to broaden their perspectives by linking these linguistic challenges with worldwide concerns: the socio-political and educational rights, access, and social security of minority students both nationally and internationally. In particular, the study offers teachers a more holistic vision of social justice through critical reflection on the reality of Vietnam’s education and language policies, which have severely damaged minority students’ ability to attain socio-economic and linguistic capital and fulfill their needs and desires. The research undertaken here shows that the poorly planned and ambiguous language policies, and the challenges caused by their implementation, often result in social injustice.

Critical dialogue also fosters multivocality (Tovakoli & Sandegi, 2011) among teachers, engaging harmoniously with them in empathetic and full dialogue as a means of reclaiming their stolen voices and restoring them as active critical agents of social change, capable of resisting the pre-packaged neoliberal English language policies. The teachers’ reflections on their professional identity involved interrogating and challenging the state’s policies, and proposing more useful and practical alternatives that protect minority students’ distinct cultures, languages and identities, and promote intellectual and agentive access and freedom. Thus, my dialogic conversations with the teachers further created a strong connection between the deep-seated issues of inequality, critical voice, and community empowerment in this mountainous area.

The engagement with teachers in this study also marks an important turning-point in language policy scholarship. It not only indicates the teachers’ great capacity for

awareness and understanding, but has put in motion an ongoing process of ideological, theoretical, and practical transformation. Regardless of the overriding national policies, which tend to ignore teachers' and students' abilities and transformative agency, this study provides strong evidence that teachers are caring, dedicated, and committed to providing high-quality education for minority students and supporting diversity. They not only exhibited their critical awareness of the language policies, and provided helpful suggestions for altering the status quo, but directly and actively appropriated and adapted the state's language policies (May & Aikman, 2003) to promote educational equity, access and quality for minority students (Bucholtz, 2002; Rampton, 2006). Furthermore, rather than waiting for teacher training [of dubious quality] to be distributed as a top-down process, the study's critical dialogue with teachers provided them with an alternative pedagogical model that genuinely respects and supports minority students' cultural, linguistic and intellectual capital, and challenges harmful linguistic ecologies (McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, & Zepeda, 2009; Nieto, 2006). In this way, dialogue opened up a new ideological and implementational space (Hornberger, 2002) and suggested a new direction for equitable LPP in minority contexts (McCarty, 2009). The teachers became actively engaged in promoting social justice and celebrating multilingualism, cultural and intellectual diversity, and creativity in their local communities, in and beyond the school setting.

The study's engaged dialogue with teachers indicate the possibility of furthering the cause of social justice through full and active discussion of approaches to combating social, economic and educational marginalization in the course of language policy implementation (Appadurai, 2001; Romero-Little, 2012). We hope that this pedagogy of

engagement will have a gradual “butterfly effect,” fostering authentic partnerships and critically constructive dialogue with not only the teachers and minority students but also among local schools, unions, families, community members and beyond. Such a critical dialogic approach is expected to challenge cultural and linguistic neoliberalism in the global and local contexts of education, maximize our collective imagination (McNeil, 2003) to provide democratic schooling for minority and segregated children, and eventually to change the whole system of Vietnamese society.

The final chapter (Chapter 6) will begin with a brief discussion of the research questions proposed in the first chapter. It will then provide a series of implications on the interconnectness of relationships between global neoliberal agendas, English spread, and socio-economic and educational equity, which affect minority students and their teachers in this study and beyond. The final sections of the chapter theorize the notion of engaged LPP, building from the existing theoretical scholarship and directly from this engaged account. The chapter closes with my personal reflection of my on-going engaging journey with the teachers and students.

Chapter 6. Engaged Language Policy and Planning: Discussion, Implications, Reflections, and Recommendations for Future Research

This final chapter on engaged language policy and planning with minority youth and their teachers in Vietnam explores theory and practice meanings through four major sections: discussion, implications, reflections, and recommendations for future research. The chapter begins with a discussion centered on the responses to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The second section of the chapter provides the implications for the state's language policies, as I believe that an equitable approach to LPP in any context must be built firmly upon the principles of social justice and multilingualism, with attention to the historical and ethno-cultural resources and needs of the language policy implementers (Luke, 2011; McCarty, 2011). This section will thus provide an in-depth look at: (a) the relationship between neoliberal agendas and language policy; (b) the role of agency in LPP; (c) multilingualism; and (d) the need for professional development. In the third section of this chapter, I theorize the interplay of macro, meso, and micro concerns in engaged LPP. The chapter concludes with reflections of this study centered on engaged LPP and recommendations for future research.

Engaged Language Policy and Planning: Discussion of the Research Questions

This discussion section reflects the research questions in Chapter 1 which include the following: (a) What are teachers' and students' experiences of the government-initiated English policies? (b) What are the roles of English in developing minority students' educational and socio-economic opportunities and protecting or threatening students' linguistic and cultural diversity in this province? (c) Do minority students in this province need English at all? If so, for what purposes? (d) What are minority students' and other students' views of the roles of their native languages and the national

language (Vietnamese) in comparison with English? (e) In what ways can researchers engage with teachers and students to work toward promoting more linguistically and culturally equitable language policies? Each of these questions will be addressed sequentially in the following section.

What are teachers' and students' experiences of the government-initiated English language policies? The wide range of views shared honestly and openly by the teachers and students involved in this study indicate that, contrary to the government's promises, the official language policies have caused considerable confusion, conflict, ambivalence, skepticism, and doubt among local agents on the ground, especially for minority students and their teachers. Most of the students themselves feel afraid of and do not understand why they are required to learn English. The findings indicate that in addition to their ever-present socioeconomic, linguistic struggles, the standardized English curriculum, and repressive evaluations have the potential to seriously impair minority students' educational achievement and consequently their social and economic equity.

The study also indicates that, like the minority students, teachers in the region face various challenges as a result of the language-policy reforms. They struggle with their own psychological stress, the authoritative language policy requirements, and the local society demands. Their candid responses show clearly the language policies enforced in this mountainous area have, to a great extent, diminished teachers' creativity and compassion, undermined their professional identity, and weakened their enthusiasm for providing high-quality language education. They are deeply skeptical about the efficacy of the national language policies as they relate to their teaching situations. All of

this challenges the dedication and sense of responsibility vital to their professional development. In general, most of the teachers felt frustrated and pressured by the language policy requirements.

The national language policies are strikingly mismatched with the student and teacher population addressed in this study: a situation that recalls the common Vietnamese proverb *lấy thúng úp voi* (“using a basket to hide an elephant”).¹⁷ The imaginative and ironic contrast established here between the small basket and the gigantic elephant suits the results of this study well. Just as the basket cannot disguise the much larger presence of the elephant, so the narrow language policies fail to accommodate the cultural, social, and educational complexities of the region, including students’ identities, languages, socioeconomic needs and challenges, and the roles and risks of an English language education. This study indicates the need for policy enforcers to take into serious account the entire process of language-policy decision-making, enactment, and implementation. It is important to examine, respect, and seek to understand the socio-political, linguistic, cultural, and geographical particularities of the province, as well as the agentive skills and voices of local people, rather than attempting to accommodate them within an unresponsive and uncritical agenda.

What are the roles of English in developing minority students’ educational and socio-economic opportunities and protecting or threatening their linguistic and cultural diversity? The testimonies of the teachers and minority students reveal that English has almost no capacity to provide minority students with educational and socio-

¹⁷ For many centuries, people in the rural areas of Vietnam (whose economy is predominantly agricultural) have made bamboo baskets for a variety of purposes, such as holding rice and vegetables. In this context, *thúng* usually refers to a relatively large bamboo basket commonly used to store the rice harvested each season.

economic opportunities, given that most minority students “cannot speak a simple sentence in English after seven years of learning.” (as a teacher indicated in our critical dialogue). This study also reveals that the English language policies are markedly detrimental to minority students’ linguistic and cultural diversity, as English is legitimized, standardized, and privileged over native tongues both at school and within society at large. In addition, minority students’ linguistic and cultural heritages have been undermined by the global, neoliberal spread of English language cultural products, such as computer games, videos, and music, whose influence is increasingly aggressive, even in remote areas. Their limited proficiency in Vietnamese and English and lack of use of minority languages in early grades further renders them incapable of building a rich linguistic and cultural repertoire, and thus drives them into danger of losing their ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic resources. In short, the state’s one-size-fits-all neoliberal language policies and curriculum, standardized testing, and unresponsive pedagogy are severely threatening and subsequently depreciate minority students’ capacity for meeting educational, social, and economic needs.

This engaged ethnographic account indicates that the roles of the English language are immensely complex, and increasingly contingent upon geographic, economic, social, and political differences. The English language policy is shown to come at a high price for both individual students and their communities. In essence, the current language policy is damaging the process of sustainable educational development and threatening individuals’ social and educational efficacy.

Do minority students in this province need English at all? If so, for what purposes? There is evidence to suggest that minority students do not, on the whole, need

English because it appears to possess almost no role in fostering educational, multilingual, or socio-economic advancement for this population of minority students. Due to uncritically implemented and weakly structured language policies, students' limited Vietnamese proficiency, and the lack of opportunities for English usage, minority students use English chiefly for entertainment purposes. Such linguistic behavior may prevent these and other students from becoming judicious information consumers in the overwhelmingly complex era of globalization.

While there are no current clear purposes for English language instruction, this engaged ethnographic study, however, does suggest that minority students may be able to use English to achieve computer literacy or obtain technological skills, as a significant proportion (42%) of the minority students in the critical dialogue and surveys agreed that English is supportive of computer learning. This could inform the state's policy making in terms of the type of English taught and the means by which it is taught, especially for linguistic-minority student populations. It could further guide future studies to continue unraveling the roles of English while preserving indigenous/minority languages and cultures within this population of minority students and others across time and space.

What are minority students' views of the roles of their native languages and the national language in comparison with English? Living in such a culturally diverse and multilingual area requires minority students to maintain their own languages as well as to learn Vietnamese. Their native languages are claimed by them to be repositories of emotional and intellectual wealth, community spirit, knowledge and respect, as well as the means by which cultural bonds, family traditions and identities are forged and preserved. Standard Vietnamese, on the other hand, is essential for minority students in a

variety of socio-cultural contexts. It can provide students with equal access to advanced education, employment, social integration and social mobility, and forges connections between people of different ethnicities. Using Bourdieu's (1991) terminology, Vietnamese acts as an official code with which minority students must be equipped to ensure their successful access to and negotiation within mainstream culture. In general, minority students' languages and Vietnamese function as highly essential tools to foster a wide range of societal, political, economic, and educational opportunities, and national security and unity.

In what ways can the researcher engage with teachers and students to work toward promoting more linguistically and culturally equitable language policies?

The study's critical engagement with neoliberal theories, national texts, and minority students and their teachers strongly suggest that engaged LPP appears to be an effective approach that steadfastly promotes equitable language policies. Engaged LPP is an important point of departure for language policy research, as the committed ethnographic researcher works collaboratively with his/her research participants with a clear agenda: to scrutinize language policies, promote agentive actions, and work collaboratively toward equitable LPP. An in-depth account of the theoretical and epistemological nature of engaged LPP is presented later in this chapter.

Engaged Language Policy and Planning: Implications

This section provides implications for the state's language policies, focusing on four areas: (a) the relationship between the neoliberal agendas and language policy; (b) the role of agency in LPP; (c) multilingualism; and (d) the need for professional development.

Neoliberal agendas and language policy. Overall, this study shows how neoliberal capitalism, in the form of official language policies, largely threatens social, educational and economic development, linguistic ecologies, and the linguistic rights of minority populations. Chapter 2 showed that neoliberalism, an economic movement whose chief purpose is to generate profits through consumption and free-market mechanisms, exerts an aggressive but often undetected control and influence over numerous countries worldwide through colonizing linguistic spaces, ideologies, and resources (Heller, 2012; Kontz, 2000). In education, as persuasively argued by Lipman (2011, p. 118) and Holborow (2012), neoliberalism is an ideological project that “redefin[es] the purpose of education and what it means to teach, learn, and participate in schooling.” This study shows that the processes of language shift in Vietnam are driven by the neoliberal, capitalist agenda to extend and legitimize English nationwide. More specifically, neoliberal English practices have been enforced by the state through the following initiatives: (a) the establishment of English as a compulsory subject for all students nationwide, in tandem with the Vietnamese monolingual medium of instruction; (b) the persistent support of standardized testing; (c) the policy of standardization of the curriculum; (d) the legitimization of English as a means of securing national/international employability and professional competitiveness; and (e) the dynamic spread of large-scale partnerships, corporations and transnational philanthropists that, together with an increase in foreign investment, promote the wide-ranging consumption and spread of English in the nation. Despite the intentions of a fair policy through standardization of English, this study argues that these policies are unable to navigate responsible and equitable education for diverse populations. The extensive limitations of the taken-for-

granted language policies are evidenced in the critical dialogue with the teachers and minority students described in this study.

In unraveling the global, national and local dimensions of language policy, this study further sheds light on how the neoliberal driven English language policy operates at the national and grassroots levels. It provides implications for (a) the implications of language shifts for various populations, especially the minority students in this study; (b) the role of the government's policy shift from localized labor to transnational marketing; and (c) how the state's English language policies address, or fail to address, local needs and challenges. It can be implied that English language policies have mostly failed to achieve the government's ambitious goal of promoting English nationwide as a tool for socio-economic and educational advancement, global integration, and mobility.

Furthermore, uncovering who benefits from the English language agenda revealed that the advantages are limited to the "transnational capitalist class" (Bruthiaux, 2002; Sklair, 2002, p. 1), namely the transnational corporations and ruling elites of neoliberal countries and national economic czars, along with a small number of people and individuals working in academia and service industries. The study, therefore, provides clear and thorough evidence that the shift in the official language policies from a localized form to that of transnational marketing has caused a wide range of damaging consequences: the weakening of students' linguistic repertoires, the threat of assimilation/genocide of indigenous languages and cultures, and the inability of education to improve students' social and economic equity. Furthermore, viewing the standardized English language policies in the context of the province studied here indicates that the policy, on the whole, has failed to fulfill the manifold needs of minority people in the region, including

linguistic equity, healthcare amelioration, environmental preservation, economic and educational advancement, and the provision of jobs.

The results of this study strongly corroborate the findings of recent scholarship on the English language spread in Asia (Anamala, 2013; Hashimoto, 2013; Tollefson, 2013) and a range of African countries (Coleman, 2011; Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012), which address the economic and global-integration rationales underlying the acceptance of neoliberal English language policies (e.g., Ricento, 2012). Regardless of whether the countries involved are former English colonies or not, these English language policies largely cause catastrophic damage such as the perpetuation of social inequality, the danger of social instability, and an attack on citizens' learning, well-being, advanced education and social participation (Coleman, 2011; Ramanathan, 2013; Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012). Consequently and broadly, this ethnographic account argues that the neoliberal English language policies can insidiously perpetuate and threaten the ability of self-determination, power, and resources of the nation-state when multinational corporations are increasingly monopolizing the economy under multifaceted strategies including hegemonizing and privileging English.

In brief, untangling the neoliberal doctrines and the state's economic and political ideologies that shape the state's English language policies clearly reveals that the uncritical promotion of English has created considerable conflict, multiple tensions, and catastrophic struggles for linguistic minority populations. Ultimately, due to the uncritical vision and taken-for-granted language policies, English possesses merely symbolic power; it is a myth rather than a tool to improve skills and opportunities, especially for people from linguistically, economically and socially disadvantaged minority

backgrounds. It appears that the implementation of English—for the stated purpose of increasing both personal and national economic autonomy and integration—in fact may reinforce the countries' dependence on the West, which has caused a dangerous socio-political, economic, and ideological domino effect for this and other nations.

Not only does the study unveil the global interconnectedness between neoliberal agendas and English language spread, it further emphasizes the crucial importance of local actors' agency in resisting unequal language policies and becoming aware of their own potential to bring about change. I address this essential component of the study in the following section.

The role of agency in engaged language policy and planning. This study portrays the minority students' and teachers' active agency in challenging language policies and creating educational and social transformation. Throughout critical LPP dialogue, they were given a respectful space to actively exercise their creativity and critical consciousness on topics such as power structures and inequalities, linguistic human rights, and the connection of education to social welfare, identity, and agency. The teachers' and students' critical dialogue empowered them to define and analyze these important issues both within and beyond their own communities. This study shows that the neoliberal ideologies underpinning the state's hierarchical educational mechanisms, de facto and as a whole, mute the voices of minority students and teachers who have the potential to be highly capable, responsible, and comprehensive actors of educational and social change. This potential is limited by a myriad of questionable language-policy mandates, as teachers' professional status and students' academic advancement is determined, controlled, and ultimately impaired by the hierarchical education regime.

Despite these tremendous constraints and struggles, however, dialogic conversations with the teachers and minority students in this study created a full and mutually respectful forum in which to increase awareness of a number of complex issues arising from the language policies. Critical dialogue with minority students brought about a radical transformation, as they became increasingly aware of an ineffective English education, their own linguistic and cultural marginalization, and their native languages and cultures as valuable, effective, and sustainable resources worthy of respect for their role in academic attainment. The dialogue further encouraged them to share information on their distinct forms of linguistic behavior and attitudes (including their opinions of their native languages and Vietnamese, and their uses of English). The students' accounts of their concerns and struggles demand the serious, responsible, and comprehensive attention and understanding of educators and policy makers at all levels. Minority students, moreover, not only vocalized their nuanced and critical perspectives on a variety of issues concerning current language policies, but showed themselves to be critical, resourceful, and highly responsible language policy enactors. They proposed suggestions for change including evaluation methods, the need for respect for their ancestral languages and cultures, the problems with the English curriculum, and their views on actual pedagogical needs. They reflected critically on the usefulness or otherwise of English in their remote province, and the need to establish an effective framework to ensure literacy in Vietnamese. I argue that all of these responses indicate the potential of minority students to take central roles in policy analysis and interpretation, as well as own their ability to intervene judiciously to promote multilingualism and a just education.

The minority students were provided with a respectful “third space” for them to foster their critical consciousness and work toward realizing their potential as agents of language-policy transformation. Equally, my dialogue with the teachers helped them to voice the tremendous challenges they continue to encounter in the process of implementing the state’s language policies. Teachers were provided an intellectual space to flexibly exercise their agency toward being keenly aware of the need to celebrate and capitalize on minority students’ linguistic and cultural wealth in their teaching. In other words, engaging the teachers in dialogue marked the beginning of a pedagogical and ideological transformation: they became increasingly aware and appreciative of the benefits of students’ native languages while starting to reclaim their own professional identities. It is hoped such an agentive approach to LPP is adapted and expanded to promote learners and teachers as central agents in language-policy decision-making and enactment on both a local and global scale.

Multilingualism. The theories of multilingualism presented in Chapter 2 show that identities are increasingly complex and contextually, socially, and ideologically reflected in postmodern epistemology (e.g., Lähteenmäki & Leppänen, 2011). Given this perspective, I focus here exclusively on three aspects of multilingualism which are greatly relevant to this ethnographic study: (a) the need for literacy programs in minority students’ native languages and Vietnamese; (b) the consideration of multilingual (especially minority and national languages) roles in developing educational, socio-economic, and national and ethnic security; (c) the need for an effective English language policy; and (d) the need for professional development.

The need for literacy programs in minority students' native languages and Vietnamese. The damaging outcomes of the English language standardization policy indicate that the state's promise to promote English for the purpose of increasing opportunities, resources, and success has largely been unfulfilled in this region. Consequently, the study argues that one of the core issues of this failure is a loosely monitored and uncritical vision of the interconnectedness of language/literacy education and social and economic development at both the macro and the micro levels (Williams & Cooke, 2002). Literacy specialists such as Luke (2011) and Williams and Cooke (2002) observe that issues of language, education, and development are often addressed separately rather than in connection with each other, especially in low-income countries. In concurring with these researchers, I suggest that literacy is strongly associated with key aspects of individual and societal progression, stability, and security. It is crucial, therefore, for the state to support solid literacy programs, paying great attention to the students' most familiar languages before launching national language and foreign-language agendas. Similarly, in a very recent study carried out across a number of Southeast Asian countries, Kirkpatrick (2012) makes the following observations:

In many ASEAN settings, English may well be the third or fourth language, and I argue that it is far better for the child to acquire proficiency and literacy in the local languages before being asked to learn English. I also argue that it is much better if that child is able to learn content subjects through the local languages, as this will help the acquisition of literacy and fluency in these languages. Using local languages as the languages of education also gives those languages prestige and helps to maintain them. (p. 35)

Burthiaux's (2002) study of the role of English in development in several low-income countries in Africa offered a compelling rationale for paying serious attention to students' first languages, as well as reimagining the framework of language education.

He argues:

The analysis of development [with primary reference to the English language] I present suggests that for the large majority of the poor, L1 literacy is the essential factor because they need the basic literacy skills to participate in their local economies, not the English that some argue is needed for participation in the global economy (pp. 275-276)

He further notes:

For the severely poor, the village is local, not global. In these societies, it is members of the relatively affluent urban middle class who stand to benefit most from English language education because they are already closer to the opportunities offered by increased trade and communication. Meanwhile, the poor have no lobbying power with which to redress the blatant subsidy of the better-off by the worse-off such a misallocation of resources constitutes. For the poor, the appropriate educational approach lies in facilitating the acquisition of basic literacy in a local vernacular with specific, practical, user-driven needs in mind, such as recording assets to make them available as collateral or carrying out small business transactions, thereby contributing to a greater sense of empowerment among its recipients. For these populations at least, the rhetoric of English language education as a path to economic development through participation in a globalized economy will remain irrelevant for the foreseeable future. (p. 293)

We can interpret from Bruthiaux (2002) that to successfully democratize equitable education, policy makers must both understand and respect the need to promote minority/indigenous languages in schools and as a relevant tool for sustainable social participation.

An effective literacy/language program with a great emphasis on students' first language is central to the well-being, harmony, and success of both the individual and the state. It has been shown in a large number of settings in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe (e.g., Bruthiaux, 2002; Coleman, 2011; Helot & Ó Laoire, 2011; Pinnock, 2009; Williams & Cooke, 2002) that literacy in the language in which students are most fluent (that is, their first language) makes a crucial contribution to the fulfillment of human needs, as well as forms of socio-economic and cultural advancement. These include (a) educational equity (e.g., students engage more effectively and with greater cognitive awareness in schools); (b) the provision of maternal education regarding children's nutritional requirements and mortality rates leading to decreased birth rates; (c) health protection through educating communities regarding the need for clean water and hygiene; (d) improved literacy (especially for women) to realize the above efforts; (e) environmental protection and political participation as a result of encouraging and validating the use of native languages and literacies in schools; and (g) economic advancement through bilingual/multilingual education aimed at participating in the local economy and beyond as needed and envisioned.

García and Sylvan (2011) and Helot and Ó Laoire (2011), among many other educational linguists, confirm that children learn much more effectively when they are taught in their first languages. In particular, they excel in math and science when their

first language is the language of instruction. This rigorous evidence strongly argues that, for the most part, promoting social and economic opportunities, a skilled human workforce, and international integration in severely poor areas does not begin by embracing hegemonic languages such as English, but with critical and responsible analyses of a broad spectrum of social issues and the promotion of robust literacy education in the languages with which students are most familiar. The results of the study indicate the urgent need of an effective literacy program in the national language. Together with various roles of an education in minority student's first languages as discussed above, acquiring solid proficiency in Vietnamese is a must for minority backgrounds for multifaceted purposes including advanced education, social mobility and economic equity. The study, therefore, suggests policy makers critically examine and implement bilingual/multilingual programs. For instance, in saving minority children from serious linguistic and socio-cultural disadvantage stemming from education in an unfamiliar language, scholars (e.g., Ball, 2010; Pinnock, Mackenzie, Pearce, & Young, 2011) call for mother-tongue based education as a model in which children start learning in their mother tongue in early grades with a gradual transition to second and other languages. According to Malone (2009), while challenging having the national language or the foreign language (most often English) as the medium of instruction, this approach enables indigenous and minority children to first develop a strong competence in their mother tongue (ideally for at least six to eight years). It further creates a strong transition from their mother tongue to learning a second or additional language at a higher level later on. I suggest that a similar program can tremendously support the self-sustainment and development of multilingualism and multiculturalism for minority students while

preparing them for gradually acquiring academic Vietnamese, and a third or foreign language, and socio-economic advancement.

Bilingual/multilingual programs have been reported to provide many advantages across settings. Successful bilingual/multilingual programs help mobilize and engage local resources including cultural artifacts, local languages, traditional epistemologies, and local actors in collaboratively supporting an equitable education. Successful cases of bilingual/multilingual education within and outside the U.S. (e.g., Pinnock et al., 2011) consistently report that this model of education safeguards students' linguistic rights as well as provides them with new spaces of possibility and a rich linguistic repertoire at the intersection of local epistemologies and language practices and global development. Furthermore, researchers such as Song (2011) and Williams (2011) argue that education language reforms (especially those promoting English as a form of instruction) across countries are extremely wasteful and further reproduce social and educational inequalities and tensions rather than helping segregated and/or minority children obtain substantial knowledge; such reforms instead require significant and ineffectual finances over the long-term. However, bilingual/multilingual education improves children's success, facilitates learning a second or additional language, and safeguards linguistic minorities' identity and cultural and linguist heritage (e.g., Ball, 2010; Malone, 2009). Studies by Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas (2010), and Malone (2009) further report that bilingual/multilingual education prepare students with basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency abilities in their first language before they are taught in a national or foreign language. Such programs not only foster a child's mother-tongue language skills but also enrich and transform their perspectives of

indigenous knowledge, culture, traditions, and ecology embedded in their early education. Similarly, in reviewing studies of bilingual education in five countries (Eritrea, Cameroon, the Philippines, Guatemala, and the U.S.), Walter (2005) reports that a bilingual/multilingual program with the focus on mother-tongue education programs are capable of producing proficient readers in two or three years rather than the five years reported in many second language medium programs. This research data claims that bilingual/multilingual education yields both short- and long-term outcomes because students obtain more access to higher education and advanced career opportunities. In brief, it is strongly recommended that the state focus on bilingual/multilingual education for students belonging to linguistic minorities because it greatly supports reclaiming their linguistic human rights, reforming the current education system, providing high Vietnamese proficiency, promoting agency and intellectual participation, and transforming indigenous and minority education.

The consideration of multilingual roles in developing educational, socio-economic, and national and ethnic security. In addition to developing a strong literacy program with an emphasis on students' most familiar languages in the early grades, this study further calls for reimagining multilingualism as vital to the processes of securing equitable LPP and protecting social justice and diversity from the grassroots to international scales. As I have already discussed the benefits of bilingual/multilingual education above, I concentrate the following section on the need to realize the roles of different languages. Therefore, multilingualism discussed here emphasizes the essentialness and balance of local/minority, national, and foreign languages at the local, national, and global levels.

The study suggests that the state must gain a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of the role of multilingualism in a variety of areas: for example, diversity, economic development, social and national security, and educational equity. Many researchers, including Cummins (2005), García (2009), Kirkpatrick (2012), and Williams and Cooke (2002), consistently report that multilingualism is essential to the successful promotion of local and sustainable economic development and school enrolment for extremely socially and economically disadvantaged populations in settings such as Europe, Africa, and Asia. Studies by Tan and Rubdy (2008) and Rassool (2007) advocate multilingualism to bridge the gap between language usage in local, national, and international settings. These authors argue that a language-in-education policy must be structured toward different language markets and that minority languages can be combined harmoniously with dominant languages not only to protect and nurture diverse cultural identities and traditions but also for the benefit of the local and global economy. Rassool (2007) provides the following rationale:

The importance of pursuing multilingual language-in-education policies is supported by the fact that, in practice, a mixed language economy generally prevails in the labour market, regionally, and nationally in most societies. While international business and trade would rely on multilingual [which include English] and high skilled labour, other sectors of the economy would continue to depend on skilled and unskilled labour fluent in regional and/or local languages.

(p. 251)

The findings from this study emphasize the necessity of seriously taking into account native linguistic ecologies and the roles of non-dominant languages (in this case,

students' native languages) and dominant languages (e.g., Vietnamese and English) in the entire process of formulating and implementing language policy. Mandating English language education when minority students' second language (Vietnamese) is not yet proficient merely closes off educational and thus socio-economic opportunities for these students. Ignoring and/or devaluing their native languages cuts off their access to and possession of their rich and unique linguistic, epistemological, and ontological resources. This engaged ethnographic research concurs with and contributes to a series of studies unpacking the roles of English and other languages. Specifically, it strongly suggests that language-education policies must balance and protect the local linguistic ecology, as well as empowering learners and equipping them with the skills necessary to sustainably and effectively navigate their various forms of linguistic capital. As Rubdy and Tan (2008) argue:

Language-in-education policy will need to take into account the specific needs of learner groups in diverse contexts in ways that grant them greater presentation while being mindful of the differentiated linguistic landscapes within society. In addition, it needs to be grounded in pedagogies that empower learners, providing them with skills for negotiating multiple language relationships within the global cultural economy. (p. 11)

Furthermore, it is important to envision the crucial role of multilingualism in solving and improving not only education but also highly threatening local and global issues across disciplines and space. In recent work, scholars such as Anamalai (2013), Kirkpatrick (2012), and Tollefson, (2013) call for critical engagement in addressing enormous challenges facing humanity such as growing economic inequality, environmental crisis,

ethnic and national conflict, intense international insecurity and violence, and the destruction of institutional support for the poor and working class. In accommodating these challenges, they particularly stress the salient role of multilingualism, among other factors. As suggested by Tollefson (2013):

Humanity must engage in a coordinated international effort to confront these problems and to devise solutions that address the interests of people worldwide. Of necessity, this effort must be multilingual, multiethnic, and multinational in order to accommodate the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences that are at the heart of social, political, and military conflicts worldwide. (p. 30)

Generally speaking, in advocating for reconceptualizing multilingualism, I suggest that it is particularly essential for the state's policy makers, educators, and teachers to comprehend the roles of different languages because they are inter-independent and highly complex, while possessing multifaceted roles in different settings. Respecting and mobilizing different languages in the nation's language ecology contributes to developing an effective education, a strong economy, resourceful and versatile citizens, and increasing social security and stability at the interplay of local, national, and global scales.

The need for an effective English language policy. In order to build an effective English language policy for this study's context, there are many critical factors involved. First, it is crucial that any language-policy decision be based on a cogent examination of the benefits and risks of standardizing English for economic, educational and international development, and social mobility (Appleby et al., 2002, 2010). Scholars have warned against the uncritical assumption of English language policies in a range of

countries across Asia, including Bangladesh, Indonesia and Japan (e.g., Coleman, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Kubuta, 2011; Rapatahana & Bunce, 2012; Seargeant & Erling, 2011; Widin, 2010). The results of the current study corroborate these scholars' findings, urging language-policy makers, language (especially English) distributors, and education planners to look critically, sensitively, responsibly, broadly, and morally at a range of questions, including: (a) How can language education (not only English but other languages) contribute to or disrupt the process of development and equity? (b) For whom is English intended, and for what purposes? (c) Which types of English are suitable for which types of population, and to what extent? (d) When and how is English promoted? and, (e) What are the potential risks and costs, as well as the benefits (if any) of standardizing English? Envisioning and analyzing these questions critically and responsibly is one of key factors to language policy success.

Second, based on the devastating consequences described by the minority students and their teachers, it is suggested that the state critically examine local actors' (e.g., minority students' and teachers') resistance and lack of motivation, disappointment and confusion, and the extremely low learning outcomes in the region of this study. In particular, it is crucial that policy makers understand the complexities of language policy and the need for economic, social and epistemological realities at the local level (Kennedy, 2011). The sincere testimonies of students and teachers offer an in-depth insight into the taken-for-granted and ambiguous language policies. Only when these elements are seriously and responsibly considered will the minority students in this study, and students at large, have the chance to obtain the social capital necessary to access advanced education, participate equally in the dominant society, attain economic success,

and thereby build a concrete foundation from which to become versatile world citizens.

Third, language-policy reform must not be uncritically implemented by the state; on the contrary, it must be sustainably and respectfully built on the centrality of people's historical, social, contextual and cultural identities (Davis et al., 2012). It is important to recognize and take into account the distinct purposes for which English is used in different settings. In critically poor communities, health care, environmental protection, and education (including strong literacy education) should be prioritized, and policy makers should assess the potential for English to take a subsidiary role in these contexts. I observed that foreign languages such as English show their possible roles in other disciplines (e.g., managing health care system/equipment, projected funded overseas, including forest sustainability initiatives, tourism, and scholarship assistance) in this province. Thus, English teaching can still be needed on the condition that policy makers are equipped with a full understanding of the impact of bureaucratic activities and policy implementation while aware of local realities and challenges.

Fourth, minority students need to be mentored about their goals and future development before learning a dominant language such as English. Language-policy researchers (e.g., Appleby, 2010; Kubuta, 2011; Rubdy & Tan, 2008; Song, 2011; Tollefson, 2013) have warned that English usage as a consequence of economic globalization does not create solely linguistic consequences. It is also used to regulate uneducated and/or low-wage employees without a stable framework to protect their rights. It is also the means by which cultural and linguistic violence is enacted, with other languages either disregarded and rapidly dying out, or assimilated into the global culture. Given the geographic, economic and social particularities of the remote area under study,

I would strongly recommend that minority students here be provided with mentors to explain the purposes of learning English and help the students envision possible future needs and career goals. As we recall minority students' comments on the statement that all must learn English: "it is people's future careers that decide whether they need to learn English". Mentoring minority students about the purposes for learning English can enable them to make informed decisions as to whether to focus on English or other academic areas in preparation for their future. With regard to the critical engaged dialogue, the teachers in this study also advised that English be made an elective subject rather than a compulsory one. This suggestion can open avenues for critical examination of local people's struggles, ideologies, and needs before endorsing English (Appleby et al., 2002, Appleby, 2010).

Above all, it is extremely salient that national language policy makers, transnational education providers and teachers be mindful of the need to value and respect minority and indigenous communities and their stewardship of linguistic human rights, and the capacity for self-determination before and throughout the process of language policy creation, implementation, and practice. Policies should be developed upon a robust foundation of public understanding and comprehensive, cross-boundary engagement and equitability to ensure the provision of sustainable education that accommodates the shared values and social realities of particular settings. An in-depth understanding of local history and culture (Luke, 2011), along with the more universal structures of equity, morality, and value, is also central to the development of an equitable language-education policy.

The need for professional development. The findings of this ethnographic

study reveal that the state's weak and contested teacher education programs significantly add to the failure of the language policies. Therefore, I first suggest that teacher education has to be constructed in sound pedagogical and theoretical principles informed by empirical research on bilingualism and second-language acquisition, and multilingualism in similar settings. Based on the results of this study and others, it might persuasively be argued that English education across Vietnam and Asia (e.g., Duong, 2012; Gill, 2012; Hamied, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012; Erling & Seargeant, 2013) is in crisis. It has been under a wide spectrum of debates and negotiations such as: What types of English (and whose English) should be taught? How do teachers teach English to linguistically diverse students? What are the models of teaching English as a second/third/fourth language for students? And, how can a country negotiate promoting English while sustaining local and national cultures, languages, and values? Therefore, it is extremely vital that policy makers develop an effective teacher education program to support teachers in effectively negotiating the rapid proliferation of English as well as the bilingual/multilingualism of learners in this setting and beyond.

Second, it is important to emphasize that teachers and students are the heart of any language policy reform. Language policy makers should take seriously into account their knowledge, agency, and needs. Language policy reform is meaningless if it fails to respect and accommodate the direct implementers' agency, abilities and needs. This engaged LPP account has attempted to demonstrate a model of mobilizing and respecting local actors' agency as creative, responsible, and highly capable language policy decision-makers. I argue that similar models should be explored within and outside this research setting to consistently empower and capitalize on teachers' and students' ability

and agency in working toward equitable language policy.

Third, this study calls for reimagining what literacy/learning resources mean to different populations of students, including those who shared their insights here. This calls for going beyond the rigid framework of containing literacy/learning resources, curriculum and discourse as regulated by the mainstream policy makers. In the postmodern era, literacy/learning resources include a plethora of forms ranging from media, music, students' abundant native resources, and texts of all types (e.g., online sources, games, and newspapers) (Larson, 2010; Luke, 2011; Pease-Alvarez, 2010). These have to be reinterpreted and employed as topics for learning, critiquing, contrasting, and bridging different forms of knowledge to provide students with a meaningful and critical education. The teachers involved in this study, furthermore, should be given ample and comprehensive training in using their students' own linguistic resources and behavior (such as playing computer games or listening to music in English) as part of a constructivist and critical approach to teaching and learning.

Fourth, we need to empower teachers to act as leaders in increasingly multilingual settings. Further, taking such a leadership role means that teachers should be supported to become versatile and confident actors within the fluctuating environment of global influences on the local. For instance, the teachers involved in this study, and their counterparts elsewhere, need more support on how to work effectively with multilingual and multiple- or hybrid-identity students. To reiterate the necessary changes to literacy education outlined in this study's conceptual framework (Chapter 2), policy makers and language education specialists need to work with teachers to foster their professional and intellectual expertise and connect their students' lived worlds with the world of the

classroom (Freire, 1970; Luke, 2012). This might involve asking students to examine their own communities and their own uses of technology, as well as discussing educational discourses, the functions of education, and its legitimacy. Furthermore, in an era of lingua-franca Englishes (Canagarajah, 2007), Kirkpatrick and Sussex (2012) and Kirkpatrick (2012), among many others, have argued that educators should teach children to use English confidently in multilingual settings rather than simply cloning Western teaching methods used for native speakers of English; therefore, teacher leadership also means they are supported to be successful role models for their students and broader exemplars of respectful linguistic behavior. It is also important that language teachers gain an appropriate level of intercultural and multicultural knowledge (Halagao, 2006; Reed, 2011) and to adopt relevant multilingual pedagogies. Bilingual/multilingual teachers who are able to speak their students' languages should also be strongly encouraged to work toward fostering effective English education in multilingual settings if this is so desired by the local population.

Fifth, given the tremendous dangers of a neoliberal education agenda, we should move away from a privatized and corporate education by localizing pedagogical approaches and educational discourses (Lipman 2011; Nieto, 2008). Consequently, dialogue with teachers in the current study is intended to model a shift toward the de-privatization of pedagogy (Luke, 2011) and is informed by respect for the individual and collective expertise of teachers, students, and the researcher. Testing procedures, furthermore, must be transformed to support more resourceful and democratic education that promote diversification, ethics, effectiveness, creativity, authenticity, and excellence in teaching, learning, and mentoring (Ericson, 1999).

The core purpose of this ethnographic account is to unravel the interconnectedness of the neoliberal doctrines and the state's language policies in Vietnam. They further emphasize the importance of the local actors' agency and critical dialogue in analyzing and promoting language and educational equity. This account, therefore, portrays a nuanced approach to engaged LPP research in creating an in-depth and on-going understanding of struggles, inequality, possibilities, and agency in language policy. For this reason, the following section attempts to address the question: What does this account tell us about engaged LPP at the macro, meso, and micro levels? It hopes to contribute to the theory building in engaged LPP while providing insight for future researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders in the field of LPP and across disciplines.

Engaged Language Policy and Planning

This engaged ethnographic account exemplifies an approach to equitable education and social justice through full, active, and committed engagement with minority students and teachers. The fluidity and complexity of evolving and often conflicting language policies means that engaged LPP is equally fully participant, multifaceted, multilayered, and on-going. In concurring with and building on Davis (forthcoming) and my collaborative work with other scholars (Davis et al., 2012), in the following section, I define engaged LPP according to the three levels of language-policy research: macro, meso, and micro.

Macro-level engaged LPP. Departing from the traditional and descriptive research orientation, engaged LPP at the macro level can be considered a form of political and ideological critique. It requires the researcher to obtain a broad yet deep and critical understanding of language policy that is rooted not in neutral, abstract political

discourses and texts, but amidst the complexities and particularities of economic, political, and ideological settings at both local and international levels. It addresses neoliberal strategies to maximize profits and acquire power on behalf of dominant groups and rulers. It is thus crucially important for LPP scholars to unravel the ideologies and international agendas that determine language policy making in a wide range of countries, not simply in their respective research communities. In this study, deconstructing LPP at the macro level requires a critical analysis of neoliberal doctrines and complex capitalist agendas that commodify English as a product (Johnson, 2013; Pennycook, 2000; Tollefson, 2002, 2013) and direct Vietnam's language-policy reform toward the implementation of English language policy. The researcher unravels the processes involved in the country's LPP to reveal the state's core ideologies, including consistently homogenizing the national language and hegemonizing English; more specifically, "what language(s) will be learned, by whom, and for what purposes, and with what individual, group, and societal consequences" (McCarty, 2011; Spolsky, 2004, p. 42). As this study shows, the spread of English in Vietnam reflects the state's consistent welcome of neoliberal agendas, which enforces and structures a vast array of national and individual constraints. Moreover, macro-level engaged LPP requires scholars to deeply and critically analyze international ideologies that turn language into an instrument of capitalism, particularly in terms of multilingual and multicultural assimilation and suppression. In short, engaged ethnographic LPP scholars address language in terms of attitudes, behavior, benefit, and power on an international scale to understand how language policy is shaped in context. This process serves as a foundation for analysis of the interactions between LPP and political and economic development,

democracy, and human rights in the national setting.

Meso-level engaged LPP. Meso-level engaged LPP works in tandem with macro-level engaged LPP, because the latter is the means by which the state's ideologies, nationalism, and decision-making are manifested and reproduced. For instance, the state's standardization policies have been implemented in response to the demands of globalization and neoliberalism. Engaged language policy at the macro and meso levels must be systematic because these levels interact with and influence each other. Meso-level language-policy engagement, therefore, resembles linguistic activism (Shohamy, 2006) in that researchers' historical and holistic knowledge and experience of the state's agendas, educational system, and policy enactment contribute to a comprehensive understanding of macro-level language policy. At the meso level, the engaged LPP researcher engages with the state's language-policy texts and processes, and may also critically assess the contributions of various actors, including national, institutional, and transnational groups and corporations, to the state's language-policy decision-making (Davis, forthcoming; Davis et al., 2012). Unpacking language policy at the meso level in this study revealed the state's firm commitment to the standardization of English as a compulsory subject nationwide. Meso-level LPP engagement also seeks to identify visible ideologies (e.g., nation-building, enriching and enlarging transnational relationships, increasing employability) and to unmask the hidden ideologies (nationalism, national strategies, Vietnamese monolingualism, national security, and capitalism) that underlie shifts in English language policy. Meso level LPP engagement provides a direct link to the micro level, the most immediate, critical, and authentic platform for analysis of the ways in which communities, teachers and students operate in

this era of academic capitalism and standardization. Engagement at this level also offers a means to interrogate the role of language policies in exacerbating or resolving deep-seated social, environmental, economic and educational issues, such as inclusion and marginalization. The meso level of engaged LPP further responds to the call for a paradigm shift in language-policy research addressed by a series of studies in Tollefson's (2013) edited work. In particular, he argues persuasively for the need to redefine language policies at a national level:

Language policies in education must be understood with reference to the aims and intuitions of the nation-state and associated processes of nationalism, especially the fundamental state function of allocating among social groups access to economic resources and political power. (p. 18)

Micro-level engaged LPP. Micro-level engaged LPP works to evaluate the nature and meaning of language policies and promote teachers' and students' agency toward taking action to promote social and educational equity. This further affirms an active paradigm shift in LPP research toward an emphasis on the public sphere. Tollefson (2013) observes that LPP research increasingly "emphasizes the agency of all actors in the policy making process, particularly their ability to alter what seem to be the coercive and deterministic trajectories of class-based policymaking bodies and other institutional forms and structures" (p. 28). Engaged LPP at the micro level further entails exhaustive analysis of how the language ideologies shaped by the government's neoliberal agenda are translated, taken up, resisted, and appropriated in practice, both in and out of school. The researcher must be committed to participating and listening carefully to individual and collective voices, and effecting responsible interventions. The engaged LPP scholar,

moreover, makes active connections between local, national and global contexts, and evaluates many complex interrelationships, including (a) between language policy and equity, social welfare, and socio-economic development; (b) between the agents and beneficiaries of these processes; and (c) between the risk of linguistic assimilation and the possibility of reclaiming indigenous/minority languages. Furthermore, while engagement at both the macro and the meso levels are a crucial means for engaged-LPP researchers to gain a full and comprehensive understanding of how the implementation of language policies normalize some and marginalize others, engaged LPP at the micro level represents a fresh, genuine and empirical approach to scrutinize the complexities, outcomes, failures and challenges of the implemented policies. At the micro level, engaged LPP also establishes a democratic space for empowerment and negotiation, ideological and pedagogical transformation, and the creation of alternative approaches to multilingualism and diversity appreciation for multiple actors within communities.

Employing Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed and Bhabha's (1994) notion of the third space, engaged LPP at the micro level also entails a process of consciousness-raising that both increases individuals' awareness of the national policies and awakens their commitment to pursuing equitable education while gradually liberating individuals and communities from constraints. This process is a form of activism at the grassroots level, wherein the researcher together with the local actors take a clear stance in "intervening on hegemonic practices and serv[ing] as an advocate [or advocates in this account] in exposing the material effects of marginalized locations while offering alternatives" (Fine, 1994, p. 17; Madison, 2012). In conducting micro level engaged LPP, I sought to establish high-quality, authentic dialogic relationships, and to promote

mutuality, responsibility, and understanding (Kovbasyuk, 2011) as I examined Vietnam's current language policies in collaboration with teachers and students. I aimed to empower my respondents to realize their potential as central agents in effecting change, and to take full responsibility for their own educational endeavors. Our respectful sharing and supportive dialogue ensured that the teachers and students were given meaningful opportunity to voice their experiences and individual worldviews: their emotional responses to the standardized language policies, their critical suggestions for more equitable education, and their needs and struggles. This type of micro-level engagement sheds light on the researcher's and dialoguers' shared commitment to the pursuit of social justice and social change (Aiello, 2010; Low & Merry, 2010), which manifests self-determination and the construction of a more equitable academic worldview.

Another vital aspect of engaged LPP at the micro level is the realization that actors influence each other in multiple and dynamic ways. This brings about a new form of engagement, which I refer to as inter-engaged LPP dialogue. This recalls the concept of intergroup dialogue as discussed by Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington (2006) and Wheatley, Christman, and Nicolas (2012). To promote engaged community dialogue, these scholars recommend using intergroup dialogue as "a facilitated community experience designed to provide a safe yet communal space to express anger and indignation about injustice" (Dessel et al., 2006, p. 304). Building on this foundation, Wheatley et al. (2012) hold that intergroup dialogue—the participation of one or more individuals in dialogue with one or more from a different group—helps to bring about a shift in participants' attitudes, encourage their cooperation and mutual support, coordinate their goals, and balance the power relations between them. Intergroup

dialogue is an important way of cultivating the dialoguers' social identities (e.g., in translating individual missions and goals into the group context) and their personal identities (based on, for instance, their ideologies, experiences, worldview, behavior, values, and ability to appreciate diversity). It thus facilitates social interaction, complex thinking, empathetic skills, and teaching and learning, and links educational issues with the dialoguers' broader social and economic development. Building on the notion of intergroup dialogue, I suggest that engaged LPP yields a unified form of inter-engaged dialogue. In particular, it takes account of the complex and dynamic critical space shaped by the researcher, the students and their teachers, who shared a commitment to and responsibility for unpacking and appropriating the current language policies to improve the education provided for minority students. This notion further reveals the complex ways in which various identities and different yet committed roles collaborate with, complement, and inform each other. The inter-engaged dialogue developed from our engaged LPP was fashioned directly by the shared social identities and individual identities of the students, the teachers, and the researcher. The students engaged seriously, critically, and responsibly in dialogue regarding their ongoing struggles with education and the English language. They were responsible and vocal in calling for linguistic and cultural reclamation, and made respectful suggestions for ideological and pedagogical improvements. Meanwhile, the teachers proclaimed their support for the students' rights, and engaged actively in unpacking the state's educational policies. They stressed, in particular, the need to make changes on behalf of their students. My own work with this community as a social activist and a researcher empowered the teachers and minority students to take part in critical dialogue, providing a space for both minority

students and teachers to express their desires and needs. My role, therefore, was also to communicate with them while carefully clarifying messages from them and help to relax the rigid power hierarchy between them. My duties as an engaged LPP ethnographer were to “resist domestication” (e.g., resist neoliberal language policies) (Madison, 2012, p. 6) and use my own resources, skills, and privileges to make the marginalized and remote voices of Vietnam’s teachers and students heard. In this way, we fashioned an inter-engaged LPP dialogue capable of extending language-policy concerns to the international level. Using this type of dialogue, in general, researchers contribute to the democratic process by enabling grassroots actors to take part in critically analyzing, negotiating, and solving socio-political and cultural problems at both the local and global level. The individuals who take part in the dialogue speak in their own voices, offering reflections on their own experiences and those of their communities (Boys, 1999). They influence, transform, and learn from each other as they work toward a more equitable LPP approach. The notion of inter-engaged dialogue reflects the nature of engaged LPP as a compellingly complex, interrelated, and interdependent approach that requires profound emotional and intellectual commitment, faith, humility, and clear goals from all of those who participate in the dialogue to promote social change.

At the micro level, important aspects of engaged LPP include the researcher’s positionality, their knowledge of and commitment to social equity, and their abiding respect for and understanding of people’s struggles, their rich epistemological and ontological wealth, and the centrality of place, people, and culture. These qualities echo advocacy and activism. The researcher takes the role of an engaged ethnographic citizen who is an advocate, advisor, activist, and partner within their own community. Crucially,

the researcher's shared struggles, rich working experiences and respectful relationships with multiple agents within that community (e.g., provincial authorities, principals, community activists, parents, teachers and students) enable them to enter the field with the potential for tremendous community support. These advantages, among others, contributed dynamically to the success of engaged LPP in the current study, and might usefully be taken into account in future engaged ethnographic accounts. I further realized that this approach to inter-engaged LPP at the micro level here resonates with Boys' (1999) claim that emotions and spirituality have a vital role in engaged dialogue. Boys (1999) argues:

Dialogue [in this case, engaged LPP dialogue], therefore, is not a mere method. It is a way of life, and, as such, calls for attentiveness to the emotions, virtues, and skills that nurture relationship. Emotional authenticity is requisite. Those involved in dialogue need to work at creating and maintaining bonds of mutual concern, trust, respect, appreciation, and affection. (p. 133)

Shared characteristics across macro, meso, and micro levels of engaged LPP.

Besides the differences of engaged LPP at three levels, in supporting a paradigm shift to engaged LPP and concurring with scholars' work on engaged LPP and engaged anthropology such as Low and Merry (2010), I suggest that engaged LPP at these levels share the following characteristics:

- Sharing and support: collaboratively unpacking, discussing, and interrogating the state's language policies; suggesting numerous alternative approaches founded on respect and appreciation for minority languages; and appropriating pedagogical methods that support cultural and linguistic diversity and effective schooling.

- Social critique: using critical and engaged ethnographic methods and theories (including neoliberalism, Bourdieu's account of language's symbolic power, and multilingualism) to uncover the power relations and inequalities inherent within the structure of Vietnamese education and to address the inadequacy of the state's language policies in everyday life.
- Collaboration: taking an engaged, collaborative approach to analyzing and defining the current language policies, and working to promote equitable language policy through pedagogical interventions.
- Advocacy: supporting minority people and their education; raising international awareness of minority people's struggles and linguistic rights; and helping teachers to understand the value of different languages, especially minority students' native languages, in academic and other capacities.
- Activism: positioning the researcher's and more importantly the participants' knowledge, experience, and commitment as central to the pursuit of an equitable language policy, effective and responsible education, and the protection of diversity and social justice. Activism is also manifested in the researcher's work on behalf of the academic community to broaden the collective effort to address urgent global issues, including those related to race, class, religion, education, environment, transmigration, health and poverty.

In addition, I suggest that engaged LPP has many advantages, including that: (a) it locates ethnography at the center of language-policy decision-making and research; (b) as an interdisciplinary social science, it connects language policy with social issues worldwide; (c) it advocates the sharing of knowledge and commitment, supporting

community members in their promotion of equitable language policy as a route to social justice; (d) engaged-LPP researchers fulfill multiple roles (e.g., as social activists, educators, community members and transnational scholars) in supporting and connecting local and global issues and opening up opportunities for research; and (e) it builds upon theoretical and practical foundations and empirical evidence to create new solutions that protect the rights of local people while helping them to become locally sensitive and globally critical and versatile citizens.

The greater mission of engaged ethnographic researchers is twofold: to gain an understanding of the processes by which social, economic, political and linguistic inequalities are created and reproduced, and to contribute to the development of greater freedom, equity, and diversity. In the LPP context, I suggest that engaged LPP is not restricted to the educational framework; it may also entail civic and wider engagement (McCoy & Scully, 2002). In other words, it provides real opportunities for people to make a difference by empowering them to address public concerns, establish relationships, and participate in a way that leads directly to action and change. When people are empowered not only to see themselves as actors but to take action, they are likely to exercise their agency in the field of LPP and beyond. Therefore, engaged LPP is expected to spread within other disciplines in order to enlarge people's capacity for involvement in social-justice processes even further. As McCoy and Scully (2002) note, "the movement to strengthen democracy and civic life is searching for ways to expand and deepen civic engagement" (p. 130). This study hopes that the engaged LPP model will be taken up at the local level and beyond, fostering dialogue on such deep-seated social issues as poverty, linguistic human rights, sustainable agricultural practice, and

health care, and deforestation—both in this community and elsewhere.

This study has successfully and authentically given voice to challenged minority groups on the ground, and has brought about notable ideological transformation in the teachers and students involved. However, my experience of carrying out engaged ethnographic work and collaborative scholarship (Phyak & Bui, forthcoming) also leads me to stress that engaged LPP is not a product but an ongoing process wherein researchers work in pursuit of a more equitable educational system and a more just society. This illuminates the characteristics of not only engaged LPP but also its transformation. In perceiving engaged LPP as an on-going process, this study is well aware that its engaging mission is constantly in motion. For instance, the account has not yet included various possible participants, including interdependent actors such as national policy makers, NGOs, institutions, transnational organizations, individuals belonging to interdisciplinary and intercultural contexts, and local authorities. Much more should be continued, therefore, to mobilize multiple communities' collective wisdom (Miller, 2004), enthusiasm, and commitment to providing more equitable education as part of social justice. This view of the necessary evolution of engaged LPP finds support from Kovbasyuk (2011), who argues that true engaged dialogue is always in motion, and consistently increasing the possibility of change:

A true dialogue [or engaged LPP dialogue in this account] is open-ended; interlocutors may be unaware of conclusions they reach at the end. In the process of a truly dialogic interaction, it requires courage from those engaged in a dialogue to admit the possibility of change and re-construction of one's views and perspectives. Consequently, the possible change and transformation within

self may serve as a criterion of a truly dialogic interaction. (p. 10)

Credibility in engaged LPP. Together with the foundation of epistemologies, ontologies, and methods of documenting LPP research, a comprehensive, empirical, and employable engaged LPP study should be built on multiple approaches to optimize credibility. In this study, I employed three important approaches to research credibility: triangulation, member checking, and the use of explicit comparisons. First, the study thoroughly demonstrates a reflective use of triangulation by (a) making explicit comparisons between the observation, dialogic, and survey data; (b) persistently checking the consistency of the participants' views on the English language policies through the observations, dialogues, and surveys; and (c) comparing the students' perspectives of the essentialism of the current English language policies with those of their teachers in the data chapters and conclusion. Such techniques critically help the researcher maximize the accuracy and authenticity of the participants' views (Brown, 2009). They further offer a dynamic and comparative research practice that strengthens the study's precise interpretations, validity, and reliability. Second, the success of this engaged LPP account is further and significantly supported by the cogent utilization of member checking. Building on insights that member checking is one of the most critical techniques for establishing credibility (Brown, 2004; Davis, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I actively provided reflective summaries of the participants' views during our critical dialogue and asked questions when I felt unsure about their responses. An additional critical strategy I employed was sending a summary of the themes to each participant and soliciting his/her feedback after the data was transcribed. Such activities offer a democratic turn to ongoing mutual and discursive inquiry rather than simply assuming the participants' reflections in

the dialogue are completed. They enable me to obtain genuine and comprehensive responses and greatly contribute to the rigorousness of language policy advocacy. Finally, explicit comparison techniques were also effectively taken in this engaged LPP study. Such techniques strongly support the researcher in creating a reflective relationship between their current study and those of other studies in similar contexts and beyond. They further allow the researcher to rigorously examine their study while strengthening the research results. For instance, comparing and interweaving the existing scholarship with this study enabled me to create a comprehensive, accessible, and reflective cultural critique and intervention in engaged LPP research while “keeping the data for additional [or on-going] scrutiny” (Brown, 2009, p. 215). In brief, engaged LPP is considered highly complex, multifaceted, multilayered and socio-economically, politically, and ideologically bounded and continuously evolving (Davis, forthcoming). The utilization of overarching strategies to research credibility in this study attempted to demonstrate how the researcher takes this LPP nature seriously into consideration while mobilizing research techniques flexibly and logically. A series of careful and critical considerations of the theoretical framework and the strategies of research credibility throughout the process of conceptualizing, constructing, and presenting engaged LPP research will vitally contribute to the philosophy of doing research in engaged LPP and subsequently enable the researcher to give rise to an applicable, dynamic, discursive, transformative, and theoretically and practically well-grounded study.

Engaged language policy and planning: Conclusions. In transcending the dominantly descriptive research approaches of language policy, engaged LPP portrays the theoretical framework and research epistemology that bolster scholars to unravel

ideologies and practices through the dialogic processes. It reveals the researcher's strong commitment, continuous dedication, and active participation with multiple actors to challenge authoritative ideologies and practices. It is about creating a forum and ensuring equal status, full involvement, and transparency of multiple representatives in the restructuring of their language policy, education, and egalitarian society. It respects, cultivates, and repositions individual and collective agency at the forefront of language policy activism. It is about persistent and evolving intellectual movements in promoting equitable language policy, education, and human well-being. It reflects researchers and their participants who actively work within the formal education system and in various arenas to develop the values, skills, and knowledge for their fellow citizens and deepen the transparent and transformative education. In sustaining momentum for educational equity, diversity, and well-being, engaged LPP advocates for a nationwide and worldwide community of proactive representatives—those who work in politics and the mass media, policy makers, and activists, democratic think-tanks, scholars, and policy analysts, and more—who possess shared values, expertise, and commitment to develop new forms of engagement. This collective action can create nonviolent ways for protecting linguistic human rights, strengthening judicial and legislative institutions, and empowering democratic governance at the grassroots level. Engaged LPP in this study has been proven as an increasingly necessary and feasible prospect for achieving equitable education and diversity while responding to the unprecedented global flows of people, ideas, and goods that have transformed the world. In advocating for engaged LPP, I hope that this movement will take root and

invigorate multiple approaches to equitable education, diversity, and peace for

all humanity.

Engaged Language Policy and Planning: Reflections

I accompanied the teachers and students on their journey of collective reflection, consciousness-raising, agentive empowerment, and meaningful transformation. Throughout the processes of planning, conducting, analyzing, and completing the research, I have sought to ensure that this engaged ethnographic study informs and transforms not only the dialoguers (the teachers and minority students) but my own role as an ethnographic researcher. I have continued to reflect on what I—as well as my respondents—have learned in the course of this research process. As I increasingly conduct in-depth critical and engaged ethnographic research, I am reminded of Madison's (2012, p. 7) observation that “critical ethnography must further its goals from simply politics to the politics of positionality [...]. Politics [that is, a political approach to language-policy research] alone is incomplete without self-reflection.” The following section, therefore, is devoted to reflection on my own perspectives, knowledge and goals for the future, as well as the challenges I have faced.

This engaged ethnographic account has become immensely important to my own life, having strengthened my existing commitment to social change and provided me with a number of new epistemological values that continue to shape my worldview, critical voice, and behavior. I concur with the view of the engaged anthropologists Low and Merry (2010, p. 24) that “engagement is transforming the way anthropologists do fieldwork, the work they do with other scholars and with those they study, and the way they think about public as well as scholarly audiences.” My first skill-set—my sense of

responsibility for and commitment to the provision of high-quality education and the promotion of social justice, especially for minority/segregated students—has been considerably deepened by working with colleagues during this study. My engaged dialogue with the respondents has also enabled me to participate with compassion, commitment, and a sense of responsibility in a wide range of academic and social activities. The process of engagement has encouraged me to approach my work with greater patience and care, and reminded me to appreciate fully the identities, worldviews and goals of local people as custodians of their own linguistic and cultural resources. In short, therefore, this skill-set has provided me with innumerable opportunities to enter and explore the worlds of my dialoguers with a sense of excitement and a desire to learn. Regardless, I have continued to learn to never take my respondents' participation in this study for granted.

My other skill-set relates to my international academic competency and social behavior. My desire to engage teachers and students and my socially responsible stance, together with the formative process of academic mentoring I have undergone, have provided me with access to the social capital, habitus, and field (Bourdieu, 1991) that make me part of the international academic community, both in the field and beyond. Within this community, I am able to engage, discuss, and find ways to address educational issues. In this way, my engagement with respondents constitutes an interdisciplinary academic endeavor directed toward my central concerns: the provision of political, educational and economic opportunities and the preservation of social justice and multilingualism. In this way, I have exercised my agency as the leader of my own research and a participant in educational reform and wide-ranging societal, ideological

and economic development. In cooperating responsively with my transnational, national, and local colleagues, I have sought to bridge the gap between the local and global and bring about positive change.

As well as providing me with additional valuable skills, however, this study has given me a sense of inner struggle that echoes the struggles and conflict that my participants continue to encounter. My research has uncovered immense tension, ambivalence, and irresponsibility at every level. I gave considerable thought to how much of the respondents' stories to tell and how to tell them, with the question "how should one respond to these authentic testimonies of the immense pressure placed on local students and teachers?" constantly going through my mind. I finally reconciled with myself that obtaining and reporting the respondents' stories in a constructive, rigorous, and collaborative manner was the best approach to a comprehensive understanding of their experiences of education. Moreover, I was empowered by anthropologist Heath's (2008) worldview that the critical anthropological/ethnographic researcher's clear stance (e.g., collectively promoting quality education, safeguarding indigenous knowledge and culture, critically pointing out the risks and costs of ad-hoc language policies to contribute to national stability and sustainability) will significantly reduce the researcher's bias. Building on Heath's (2008) advice, I argue that the ethnographic researcher's clear and constructive stance also protects them from the possible risks of potentially inappropriate interpretations by conservative authorities. Although this approach of engaged LPP was challenging, I believe it is also the best way of diagnosing and remedying the state's educational crisis.

Although the engaged-LPP process eventually went quite smoothly, this was not

always the case. Along with physical risks caused by the region's geography and weather conditions (including the difficulties involved in accessing my respondents in the rainy summer months), I endangered my relationship with one particular dialoguer, one of my former teachers. This was unfortunate, as this individual was one of my first and most caring English teachers. She disagreed respectfully but persuasively with the empirical evidence I provided of teachers' ability to mobilize students' languages as resources in the classroom (e.g., comparing English grammar structures in English with those in the students' languages to help them understand more deeply). She explained that it would be impossible to implement such a strategy successfully in a class of 40 students speaking three different languages. I had probably overloaded her with information while she was struggling with her own teaching situation. I regretted having gone into such detail, as I had clearly overwhelmed my respondent with empirical evidence. I hope that my future work will continue to help me refine my engagement skills; however, this example tells much about the process of engagement, which does not always work smoothly or meet with immediate success. Using the engaged LPP approach, transformation can come from the essence of the here and now, or may undergo a lengthy, complex process of collapse and regrowth before it flourishes. As engaged ethnographic researchers, therefore, we must remain both assured and patient. In this instance, my patience was rewarded. After several months, I received a caring letter from my teacher, who described the gradual positive outcomes my work had yielded in her classroom. She writes to me regularly in support of my progress through this lengthy, challenging, and yet joyful doctoral program.

Engaged Language Policy and Planning: Recommendations for Future Study

This ethnographic account is expected to contribute to a movement of LPP scholarship toward being more interrelated, interdependent, and interdisciplinary. It further emphasizes the need for politicizing the role of researcher in creating full and active participation with multiple actors for equitable LPP, multilingualism, and a just society. The local actors' agency is particularly emphasized, appreciated, and promoted as epicentral language policy makers, highly capable of scrutinizing, interrogating, and appropriating unequal language policies. Consequently, this research intends to serve as a model for promoting critical dialogue, consciousness-raising, and democratic change for disfranchised and/or minority populations in similar settings across the field of LPP and beyond. In suggesting that engaged LPP is an on-going process in the earlier part of this chapter, I believe this ethnographic account opens ample avenues for future study. First, future researchers can increase the scope of this study by engaging with multiple actors including authorities, NGOs, communities, activists, educators, youth, and parents at intersecting levels to foster the potential for ideological transformation and collaborative intervention toward linguistic, educational, and social equity. Second, focusing further on critical dialogue with minority students in and out of this study's context could be another research direction. The results from this study and the literature on education for minority students show that they continue to face tremendous socio-economic and educational dispossession, confusion, and tension (e.g., Lee, 2009; McCarty et al., 2009) in an era of technological, ideological, and capitalist crossings and integration. Responsive and respectful collaborative dialogue and agentive action with youth can significantly support them maintaining their language and culture while confidently navigating local, national, and global contexts. Finally, it can be particularly important to continue bridging

interconnections between engaged LPP and multiple disciplines such as health care, technology, science, law, and the environment. This direction illuminates a collectively intellectual revolution that may enable researchers to gather nuanced and persuasive evidence on how education (and language policy) can support or threaten minority people's educational, linguistic, human, social, and economic rights and equitable access. This approach may further provide resources and concrete initiatives for institutional and policy reform and democratic intervention within the interdisciplinary researcher's community and beyond.

Appendix A: General Questions for Engaging Teachers
(Chủ Đề Thảo Luận Cùng Giáo Viên)

1. Theo thầy/cô, việc học tiếng Anh tại tỉnh thầy cô đang giảng dạy có giúp các em học sinh dân tộc có cơ hội để xin việc làm bằng tiếng Anh, cơ hội xin học bổng đi học nước ngoài, hay dùng tiếng Anh để phát triển kinh tế xã hội (v.d. phát triển ngành dịch vụ có dùng đến tiếng Anh) ở địa phương của các em không? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

Do you think that learning English in this province supports minority students to obtain opportunities, such as applying for scholarships, developing local businesses, or pursuing advanced education? Why or why not? Please explain with a specific example.

2. Theo thầy/cô, học sinh của thầy/cô hiện tại dùng tiếng Anh để phục vụ mục đích gì là chính? (vd: học tập, chơi trò chơi, tìm hiểu thông tin về ca nhạc quốc tế, xem tin tức, vv). Các em sử dụng các tiếng Anh vào những mục đích này nhiều hay ít (%). Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

In this province, what are the minority students' main purposes for learning English? (For example, is English used for learning? playing online games? listening to music? searching for information? etc.) How much (%) do you they use English for these activities? Please explain.

3. Theo thầy/cô, nhìn chung các em có sử dụng tiếng Anh một cách có ý nghĩa không? Vì sao? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

In your opinion, do you think that minority students use English in meaningful/positive ways? Why?

4. Theo quan điểm của thầy/cô, các học sinh nói chung mà thầy/cô biết hoặc đang dạy có quan điểm thế nào về việc học tiếng Anh? (Vd: không thích, thích, không quan tâm). Vì sao? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

In your opinion, what are your students' general perceptions of learning English (e.g., like, do not like, do not care)? Why?

5. Thầy/cô đánh giá thế nào về việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh hiện nay ở trường của thầy/cô? (vd: hiệu quả, nhàm chán, vv). Vì sao? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

What is your opinion of teaching English in your school (e.g., effective, boring, etc.) Why?

6. Theo qua điểm của thầy/cô, sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh thầy/cô đã học và đang dùng ở trường THPT có đáp ứng nhu cầu thầy/cô mong muốn không (Vd: chủ đề, nội dung kiến thức, từ vựng, tính thực tế, độ thú vị, vv?) Vì sao có/không? Xin lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải

thích!

What is your opinion of the English curriculum? (e.g., Does it satisfy your and your students' needs in terms of, for example, the content, knowledge, practicality, interest?). Please explain your answer with a specific example.

7. Có ý kiến cho rằng không phải tất cả mọi học sinh đều cần học tiếng Anh. Thầy/cô có đồng ý với quan điểm này không? Vì sao có/không? Xin hãy nêu ý kiến của thầy/cô và giải thích ý kiến đó bằng các ví dụ cụ thể.

It is said that not everyone in this province needs to learn English. What is your opinion of this statement? Please explain with a specific example.

8. Thầy/cô có quan điểm thế nào về việc liên hệ truyền thống văn hóa (văn hóa của đồng bào người người Mường, người Thái, và các dân tộc khác) và ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ khi dạy tiếng Anh? (Vd: rất quan trọng/không quan trọng lắm), Xin hãy giải thích!

What is your opinion of embedding minority students' (e.g., Thai, Muong) culture and language in teaching English?

9. Theo thầy/cô có thường yêu cầu các em viết truyện ngắn, vẽ sơ đồ, sáng tác bài hát, viết tin tức, vv để đánh giá khả năng tiếng Anh của của các em không? Vì sao có/không?

Have you used different methods, such as asking students to write a story/poem/song/piece of news or to draw diagrams, to evaluate minority students' English proficiency? Why or why not?

10. Theo thầy/ cô, tiếng mẹ đẻ và tiếng Việt có vai trò thế nào với học sinh dân tộc thiểu số?

What are the roles of the minority students' languages and the national language (Vietnamese)

11. Theo quan điểm của thầy/cô, nếu thầy/cô là người được trao cho quyền tạo sự thay đổi đối với bộ môn tiếng Anh, thầy/cô sẽ muốn thay đổi những vấn đề nào trước nhất? vì sao?

What would be your highest priorities if you were a language policy maker? Why?

12. Thầy/cô cảm nghĩ gì về việc dạy tiếng Anh tại tỉnh thầy cô đang giảng dạy, hay việc trả lời các câu hỏi trên?

What significant points can you reflect on from your teaching and/or our engaged dialogue?

Appendix B: General Questions for Engaging Students and Conducting Surveys with Minority Students

(Chủ Đề Thảo Luận và Điều Tra Dành Cho Học Sinh)

Em đang học trường:..... lớp:..... dân tộc..... nam/nữ
(Khoanh tròn sự lựa chọn phù hợp với em)¹⁸

Your school Grade..... Ethnicity..... Male/Female.....

1. Học tiếng Anh tại tỉnh này có quan trọng không? Xin hãy giải thích bằng ví dụ cụ thể.

Is learning English in this province important? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

2. Theo em, tiếng Anh được dùng cho mục đích gì? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

What is English used for in this province? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

3. Hiện tại em dùng tiếng Anh để phục vụ mục đích gì? (vd: học tập, tìm hiểu thông tin về ca nhạc quốc tế, xem tin tức, vv). Tiếng Anh giúp em thực hiện các mục đích của em ở mức độ bao nhiêu (%)?

What do you use English for? (For example, do you use English for learning, searching for information, listening to music, etc.) How much (%) do you use English for these activities?

4. Theo quan điểm của em, các bạn cùng lớp hoặc cùng trang lứa nói chung mà em biết có quan điểm thế nào về việc học tiếng Anh? (Vd: không thích, thích, không quan tâm). Vì sao? Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

What are your classmate's general opinions about learning English? (e.g., like, do not like, do not care). Why? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

5. Em đánh giá thế nào về việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh hiện nay ở trường của em? (vd: hiệu quả, nhàm chán, vv). Xin hãy lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

What do you think about English being taught in your school? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

¹⁸ This information is used for the students' survey only

6. Theo qua điểm của em, sách giáo khoa tiếng Anh em đã học và đang học ở trường THPT có đáp ứng nhu cầu em mong muốn không (Vd: chủ đề, nội dung kiến thức, từ vựng, tính thực tế, độ thú vị, vv?) Vì sao có/không? Xin lấy ví dụ cụ thể và giải thích!

To what extent does the English curriculum satisfy your needs (e.g., content, knowledge, vocabulary)? Why? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

7. Theo quan điểm của em, nếu em là người được trao cho quyền tạo sự thay đổi đối với bộ môn tiếng Anh ở trường của em (vd: việc giảng dạy, học tập Tiếng Anh, chương trình học tiếng Anh, tính thực tế, giáo viên tiếng Anh, cơ sở vật chất phục vụ việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh, vv), em sẽ muốn thay đổi những vấn đề nào trước nhất? vì sao?

What would be your highest priorities if you were a language policy maker? (e.g., you can comment on teaching, curriculum, practicality, teachers, equipment etc)

8. Có ý kiến cho rằng không phải tất cả mọi học sinh đều cần học tiếng Anh. Em có đồng ý với quan điểm này không? Vì sao có/không? Xin hãy nêu ý kiến của em và giải thích ý kiến đó bằng các ví dụ cụ thể.

It is said that not every student needs to learn English. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

9. Có ý kiến cho rằng, học tiếng Anh quan trọng hơn học tiếng mẹ và tiếng Việt. Em có đồng ý với ý kiến này không? Vì sao có/không?

It is said that learning English is more important than learning a mother tongue or Vietnamese. What is your opinion of this? Please use a specific example to explain your answer.

10. Em có quan điểm thế nào về việc liên hệ truyền thống văn hóa (văn hóa của đồng bào người Kinh, người Mường, người Thái, và các dân tộc khác) và ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ khi học tiếng Anh? (Vd: rất quan trọng/không quan trọng lắm), Xin hãy giải thích!

What is your opinion of embedding your cultural and linguistic knowledge in learning English? Why?

11. Em có thường xuyên được yêu cầu viết truyện ngắn, vẽ sơ đồ, sáng tác bài hát, viết tin tức, vv để đánh giá khả năng tiếng Anh của em không? Em có muốn được kiểm tra bằng các hình thức này không? Vì sao có/không?

Have you been encouraged to write a story/piece of news or a diagram as a way to evaluate your English skills? Do you want to be evaluated using these approaches? Why or why not?

12. Em có thường có các cơ hội để giới thiệu và khám phá tập tục, truyền thống, và văn hóa của gia đình em với bạn bè cùng lớp khi học tiếng Anh không? Nếu có, xin hãy giải

thích.

How often do you have an opportunity to explore and/or introduce your ethnic culture and traditions in class when learning English? Please explain.

13. Em rút ra bài học gì cho bản thân từ việc trả lời các câu hỏi trên? Xin hãy giải thích.

What are some of your reflections from our engaged dialogue (if any?)

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