

## Some Measures to Develop Literary Competence for Secondary School Students of Ethnic Minority in the Northern Mountainous Area of Vietnam



Ngo Thi Thu Trang<sup>1</sup>, Hoang Diep<sup>2</sup>, Dao Thi Hong Hanh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

**ABSTRACT:** Developing literary competence for ethnic minority students is a necessary requirement of education today. Due to linguistic characteristics and socio-economic conditions, ethnic minority students encounter many difficulties in reading and creating texts. Therefore, Philology teachers need to be active, responsible, and dedicated in the process of organizing teaching activities. Depending on the students and physical conditions, teachers need to be flexible and creative in choosing and applying appropriate teaching methods and forms to help ethnic minority students practice and develop literary capacity with the following skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**KEYWORDS:** competence, literature, students, ethnic minorities, secondary school

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational innovation and teaching method innovation in Vietnam from a content approach to a competency approach is a major policy, marking a turning point in teaching and learning. Students not only receive knowledge but also have the ability to apply it in practice, thereby contributing to fostering qualities and competencies. To implement this innovation, teachers are also required to adapt, change, self-study, and self-improve to be able to meet the demands of the new situation.

In the General Education Program - Overall Program (issued on December 26, 2018), it was affirmed: "Language and literature education plays an important role in fostering emotions, thoughts and achieving and developing the qualities and abilities of students. Through language and artistic images, the school fosters students' key qualities, especially patriotism, compassion, honesty and a sense of responsibility; forms and develops students' general abilities and two specific abilities: language ability and literary ability" [1; p.14].

Philology is a subject studied from grade 1 to grade 12, helping students form basic competencies to be able to live and work effectively. The general education program in Philology sets out the goals of the secondary school level, which emphasizes "continuing to develop general abilities, language abilities, and literary abilities that have been formed at the elementary level with higher requirements." [2; p.6].

Developing literary competence for students in general and secondary school students in particular is a necessary requirement, contributing to the comprehensive development of students' competence. However, for ethnic minority students, this job requires teachers to be very flexible, creative, enthusiastic and have an understanding of age psychological characteristics as well as regional cultural characteristics.

### 2. RESEARCH METHODS

During the research process, we used the following methods: theoretical research methods (analysis, synthesis of theory, statistics, comparison...); practical research methods (pedagogical observations, surveys...). We collected, selected and researched existing theoretical achievements to create a theoretical basis for the research content. We compared the way of teaching to develop students' literary abilities with previous teaching methods. Besides, we observed from reality, surveyed the current situation of developing literary competence in teaching Philology in some secondary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam. From the survey results, we conducted an analysis to propose some measures to develop literary competence for secondary school students of ethnic minorities in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

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### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***3.1. Competence and literary competence***

Up to now, many domestic and foreign researchers have been interested in the concept of "competence". According to Hoang Phe in the Vietnamese Dictionary, competence is understood as "*the subjective or natural ability or condition available to perform a certain activity; psychological and physiological qualities that give people the ability to complete a certain activity with high quality*" [4; p.17]. According to the authors of the Dictionary of Education, "*competence is expressed in the ability to perform an activity, perform a task... It develops with experience or by learning appropriate to the individual's uniqueness. Competence is considered as the human ability when faced with new problems and new situations, to recall information and techniques used in previous experiments*" [5; p.18]. We can understand the concept of competence as follows: "*Competence is a personal attribute formed and developed thanks to existing qualities and the process of learning and training, allowing people to mobilize a combination of knowledge, skills and other personal attributes such as interest, belief, will... to successfully perform a certain type of activity, achieving desired results under specific conditions*" [1; p.37].

Literary competence was proposed by a group of researchers in the work *Teaching and developing competence in Secondary School Literature* as follows: "*Literary competence, an expression of aesthetic competence, is the ability to receive and create literary texts. The ability to accept literary texts is demonstrated through the application of literary knowledge and personal experience in reading, decoding, constructing meaning and evaluating literary texts. The ability to create literary texts is demonstrated through the ability to express emotions and ideas in highly aesthetic verbal forms, and to be able to create literature*" [3; p.17]. Literary ability is a characteristic ability of Philology, making an important contribution to educating students' ideology, personality, and soul.

#### ***3.2. Cognitive and psychological characteristics of secondary school students in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam***

Secondary school students are aged 11, 12 - 14, 15 years old, studying in grades 6 to 9 in secondary school. This age is also known as adolescence - an age that plays a particularly important role in the process of forming and developing human personality. This is the transition period from childhood to adulthood, so children have many changes physically and psychologically. At this age, children have strong physical and mental development. Learning activities are the main activities of students. At this stage, children's learning motivation is very diverse and rich but not sustainable. Researchers have shown that to help children have the right attitude towards learning, the materials must be concise, linked to their lives, and create inspiration for them to learn...In the activity communication, they need to expand their relationships. Relationships with friends tend to be more complex and diverse. Children crave to communicate and work together. This age also begins to form and develop self-awareness. The feelings of secondary school students are also deeper and more complex than those of previous ages. This is the age group that is strongly developing moral feelings, friendship feelings, and collective spirit.

In addition to the general characteristics of secondary school students, ethnic minority students also have unique psychological and personality characteristics. They are very natural, simple, rustic, straightforward and clear in their likes and dislikes. The positive aspects are also shown in loving work, diligence, valuing teacher-student relationships, friendship... But besides that, ethnic minority students also have limitations such as being quiet and shy, timid, afraid to interact with strangers, afraid to communicate and speak in class, rarely express personal opinions, have quite high ethnic pride, often feel inferior, not confident... A huge difficulty for ethnic minority students is the language barrier. Children often use their own ethnic language, only when they go to school do they use Vietnamese. Many children are not fluent in Vietnamese, so reading and creating documents in Vietnamese is very difficult. In addition, each individual has his or her own psychological and material characteristics and is influenced by the customs and traditions of his or her locality. Therefore, when teaching, teachers need to understand the psychological characteristics of each student and have an understanding of the language and customs where they live.

#### ***3.3. Measures to develop literary competence in teaching Philology in some secondary schools in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam***

Students' literary abilities are specifically shown as follows: recognizing what a literary text is, some typical literary genres, and the elements of a literary work. Besides, they have the ability to read and understand artistic language, perceive and analyze the unique content and artistic values of literary texts; have the ability to be moved by literary images, thereby knowing how to orient personal emotions and actions in response to life situations. Developing literary abilities for students will help students form imaginative thinking, foster positive and humane emotions, and thereby know how to think and act positively.

If we want to improve the literary competence of ethnic minority students, we first need to create an interest in learning. Teachers need guidance and create an open, friendly, gentle, and fun classroom atmosphere. Teachers should pay attention to compatibility and regional cultural characteristics, skillfully apply old knowledge to form new knowledge, etc. to not put pressure on students because if they feel discouraged or tired, they can easily lead to non-cooperation with teachers. During the teaching

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process, teachers need to patiently guide students gradually from easy to difficult, proactively streamlining knowledge... to avoid making students find lessons long and difficult, leading to boredom and fatigue. Besides, to help students become more interested, teachers also need to increase the level of interaction during class with small exercises, physical games, group activities, and rewards to motivate students.

Integrated teaching is also a suitable direction to develop students' literary abilities. Teachers do not present much but encourage students to actively express their personal opinions and views. Teachers guide students in reading and understanding specific texts in textbooks, thereby enabling them to read and understand texts outside of textbooks. Teachers enhance the ability to integrate internal subjects (reading, writing, speaking, listening), combining providing knowledge and training skills for students. Besides, teachers can also integrate interdisciplinary subjects, apply methods and content in related subjects such as History, Geography... to effectively educate and train students' skills. (For example, historical context, geographical features... related to works, literary characters...).

The appropriate use of assessment tools oriented towards developing students' competence is also extremely necessary. Teachers focus on assessing students' ability to apply learned knowledge and skills into real life. For ethnic minority students, teachers need to combine many forms of assessment (essays, multiple choice, discussion results, projects...), and regularly evaluate all student activities (students' answers in class, students' writing, students' presentations, students' self-made products...). Teachers can also encourage students to self-evaluate to increase initiative and positivity, helping students become more confident. Applying these forms of assessment ensures that students can work, practice, and reveal their individual thinking and language abilities.

Based on the requirements of the program, teachers also need to invest in designing learning tasks suitable for students, organize learning activities (warm up, form new knowledge, practice, apply, expand exploration...) to best promote students' abilities and stimulate their interest. Teachers ensure the general requirements of teaching and developing competence (such as promoting student positivity, integrated and differentiated teaching, combining many appropriate teaching methods and forms...). But during the implementation process, teachers must learn about students' difficulties (in language, cognitive ability, family material conditions, age psychology, ethnic and local concepts and practices...) to apply and implement those requirements and methods in the most effective way.

### ***4. Some measures to develop literary competence for secondary school students of ethnic minorities in the northern mountainous areas of Vietnam***

Firstly, teachers need to pay attention to assigning homework and guiding activities outside of class (before and after class). The reality is that ethnic minority students cannot afford to buy reference books and have to help their parents with many things every day that affect their self-study time at home. Therefore, teachers need specific guidance, suggestions and regular advice.

Secondly, during the classroom process, teachers need to flexibly combine many appropriate teaching methods and forms to help students absorb and best develop their abilities. Teachers should learn about the cognitive level, interests, habits, customs... of students and the locality to choose a teaching form that is sure to arouse students' interest.

Thirdly, teachers also need to invest time and effort in designing and organizing diverse and attractive learning activities to help students confidently and boldly express personal opinions and actively participate in activities.

Fourthly, teachers' enthusiasm, creativity, responsibility and friendliness play an important role in attracting students. Outside the classroom, teachers should also be close to students, and respectful of national cultural characteristics to create good relationships between teachers and students. Only when there is a good relationship and is loved and trusted by students can teachers achieve lesson goals, make lessons interesting, make students feel interested and develop students' abilities.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Teaching to develop literary competence for ethnic minority secondary school students is a necessary requirement, consistent with current trends. In addition to providing necessary knowledge, teachers also need to improve students' reading comprehension and text creation abilities. Students at this age have complex physiological and psychological changes. Ethnic minority students have additional characteristics that create many difficulties for teachers. Teachers must increase their understanding of students, their conditions, family characteristics, ethnic groups, regions, actual physical conditions... of the students and the school to choose the most effective methods and forms. Teachers must be dedicated and creative in organizing learning activities to train students' literary abilities through listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

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