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Preserving the Mother Tongue of Ethnic Minority Students through Experiential Activities in Primary Schools: An Exploratory Study in the Northern Mountainous Region of Vietnam

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Abstract. The mother tongue plays an important role in the cultural identity and overall development of individuals belonging to an ethnic minority group. This study examined the current status of native-language usage among ethnic minority students in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, as well as the efforts to preserve the native language and educate students in their native language through experiential activities in schools. A survey was conducted with 1210 primary school teachers. The study also employed situational exercises to assess the language proficiency of 455 ethnic minority students in grades 3, 4, and 5. This assessment was based on observations and conversations with students during experiential activities at school. The results show that while students expressed a desire to use their mother tongue for learning and communication, the rate of native-language use varied between different ethnic minority groups. Moreover, the study identified factors influencing education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students. The research outcomes serve as a foundation for proposing measures to maintain the native language and educate students in their native language, especially ethnic minority students, in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

Keywords: education for preservation; ethnic minority; experiential activities; native language

1. Introduction

The ethnic language of each ethnic group, often referred to as the mother tongue, embodies the very essence of the ethnic group, encompassing their customs, culture,

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and history, and contributing to the establishment, continuity, and advancement of the specific ethnic community. The imperative to safeguard the mother tongue through educational initiatives for students belonging to ethnic minority groups within primary schools is both vital and indispensable (UNESCO, 2022). This understanding must encompass diverse approaches with the dual purpose of upholding the cultural distinctiveness of these ethnic groups and fostering bilingual proficiency among students hailing from ethnic minority backgrounds, all within a multicultural educational environment (Nguyen & Tran, 2023; Nishanthi, 2020).

Education aimed at preserving the mother tongue through experiential activities for students entails a process wherein teachers curate a diverse array of engaging and immersive experiential endeavors, designed to foster active and enthusiastic involvement among students (Oral & Lund, 2022). This approach serves to motivate and reinforce the continuous use and development of students' mother tongue both within the educational context and in their daily lives. The preservation of the mother tongue through experiential activities for students originating from ethnic minority backgrounds requires a harmonized integration for experiential-activity components and language-preservation education. These objectives should be concurrently pursued to ensure synergy (Pun & Gurung, 2020; UNESCO, 2023). Additionally, specific contents for preserving the mother tongue need to be precisely identified and seamlessly woven into the fabric of experiential activities (Oral & Lund, 2022). Equally important is the selection of appropriate methods for the implementation of this identified content, ensuring the effective development and preservation of students' mother tongue. Furthermore, the creation of assessment tools becomes imperative to gauge the outcomes of experiential activities as well as the efficacy of language-preservation educational initiatives (Nguyen, 2021; Rogers, 2020).

In the context of Vietnam, an Asian nation composed of 54 distinct ethnic groups, the preservation of the mother tongue has played an important role within the framework of national education policies (Nguyen & Tran, 2023). This study investigated education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam through experiential activities in primary schools. Specifically, the research assessed the methods and forms of education for preserving the mother tongue, and identified factors affecting education for preserving the mother tongue. Consequently, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the methods of education for preserving the mother tongue?
2. What forms characterize the educational efforts dedicated to mother tongue preservation?
3. What are the factors affecting education for preserving the mother tongue?

2. Literature Review

UNESCO (2022) emphasized the importance of preserving and strengthening the mother tongue and indigenous languages as a means to promote sustainable, diverse, and inclusive development. It is essential to prioritize the mother tongue in educational programs. According to the United Nations (2023), at least 43% of the approximately 6000 languages used worldwide are endangered. Only a few

hundred languages have a significant presence in educational systems and public domains, and less than 100 languages are used in the digital world. Additionally, Chen and Padilla (2019) argued that the reality is that the existence of any language depends on active language use and acceptance of bilingualism as a benefit and a valuable resource.

In highly globally integrated societies, the mother tongue and ethnic languages not only pose barriers to social adaptation but also contribute significantly to achieving key educational objectives (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Lien, 2021). Therefore, educational institutions are encouraged to develop quality teaching materials in the languages of ethnic minority groups at all levels of education. Education in ethnic minority languages is an essential way to maintain and further develop those languages (An, 2022; van Dongera et al., 2017).

In Vietnam, preserving ethnic languages has become an urgent issue in the current social development trend, as the number of languages worldwide is diminishing, and Vietnam is no exception (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Nhân Dân, 2021). The use of the native language among ethnic minority students is gradually decreasing, with a significant decline across different age groups, from the elderly to the younger generation (Duong et al., 2022). The current situation among some ethnic minority groups of using the mother tongue poses risks of erosion, which highlights the necessity of language education within schools (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Educational endeavors aimed at nurturing mother tongues within primary schools across numerous of the mountainous provinces in Vietnam have been executed through diverse methodologies. Moreover, the dispositions of students hailing from ethnic minority backgrounds with regard to employing their mother tongue exhibit considerable fluctuations over distinct historical periods (Doan, 2012; Nguyen, 2022). The selection and simultaneous application of a language education model for students from ethnic minority backgrounds significantly impact the effectiveness of these activities. In addition to teaching students in Vietnamese using the standard curriculum, assistance should be provided to students in their mother tongue to facilitate their comprehension of knowledge and skills. Therefore, organizing mother tongue classes for students as a subject can be considered (Cham, 2020; Ta, 2019). In addition, besides preparing textbooks, teachers, and minimal teaching equipment for ethnic minority languages, it is necessary to create an environment where individuals who have oral and writing skills in ethnic minority languages have opportunities to apply them (Tran, 2018).

Education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in primary schools in mountainous areas can be implemented through various forms. This includes teaching the ethnic minority language as a subject, incorporating bilingual instruction (in the national language and the ethnic minority language), organizing extracurricular activities for students to practice speaking the ethnic minority language after school hours, etc. (Anh, 2022; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022). However, the approach of teaching the ethnic minority language as a subject and incorporating bilingual instruction has been adopted by selected primary schools within specific regions. Regrettably, this approach has

encountered challenges in maintaining long-term continuity, primarily stemming from an inadequacy of skilled teachers proficient in the ethnic minority language. Consequently, the organization of experiential activities, clubs, school radio programs, and similar initiatives designed to actively foster student engagement in speaking and comprehending their mother tongue assumes paramount importance (Nguyen, 2023; Ta, 2019).

3. Methods

This study employed an educational framework rooted in the experiential approach, underpinned by the theory of multilingualism within a social context. Alongside the theoretical exposition, surveys were also conducted in the study to assess the current situation using an Anket questionnaire, which consists of 10 aspects and 66 questions. Utilizing the convenience sampling method, the questionnaire was administered to 1210 teachers in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam. These teachers were actively engaged in instructing classes with a significant number of ethnic minority students in primary schools.

The study also utilized situational exercises to evaluate the language proficiency of 455 ethnic minority students spanning grades 3, 4, and 5 across Bắc Kạn, Cao Bằng, Điện Biên, Hà Giang, and Thái Nguyên provinces. Students belonged to the Tày, Nùng, Dao, Mông, Thái, Sán Dìu, and Cao Lan ethnic groups. This evaluation was founded upon observations of their engagements and surveys throughout experimental activities conducted within primary school settings. Additionally, in this research, ethical considerations were seriously considered. Before approaching the students to collect data, their teachers were asked for permission.

Furthermore, the reliability of the research tools was assessed by surveying 45 students at the pilot stage. The analysis using SPSS with a Cronbach alpha test yielded a result of 0.870. Additionally, other collected data were processed using SPSS version 20.0, analyzing Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) between survey variables.

To assess the current situation of mother tongue preservation education for ethnic minority students through experiential activities in the mountainous-region primary schools, descriptive analysis with SPSS version 20.0 was employed. Moreover, the research used a 5-level rating scale to evaluate the implementation level and effectiveness. The scale included the following levels: *very low* (1 point) – not implemented/ineffective; *low* (2 points) – irregular/ineffective; *average* (3 points) – normal; *high* (4 points) – regular/effective; and *very high* (5 points) – very regular/very effective.

4. Results

4.1 Current Status of Native-Language Use among Ethnic Minority Students in Primary Schools

Surveys conducted with the 455 primary school students belonging to ethnic minority groups yielded the following results: 71.61% of the students could speak their respective ethnic minority language, 88.35% preferred learning in their

native language, and 27.03% regularly used their native language at primary school. The analysis of the number and percentage of students classified by specific ethnic minority groups is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Number and percentage of students classified by specific ethnic minority groups who can speak their mother tongue

No.	Ethnic minority group	Number	Percentage	Students who can speak their mother tongue	
				Number	Percentage
1	Tày	38	8.35	26	42.11
2	Nùng	42	9.23	31	56.09
3	Dao	86	18.90	72	83.72
4	Mông	131	28.79	95	72.52
5	Thái	43	9.45	32	74.42
6	Sán Dìu	106	23.29	89	83.96
7	Cao Lan	9	1.98	4	44.44

Among the surveyed students, the largest number belonged to the ethnic minority groups of Mông and Sán Dìu. The Dao (83.72%) and Sán Dìu (83.96%) ethnic minority groups had the highest proportion of students who could speak their mother tongue. Most students who could speak their mother tongue came from families where all members communicated with each other in the native language and lived in communities with a high concentration of people from the same ethnic group. In some primary schools, although the proportion of ethnic minority students was significant, they constituted the majority of the student population, providing them with more opportunities to communicate with their peers in their native language.

The evaluation results of the level of native-language use among ethnic minority students in primary schools in their communication with friends, teachers, and people around them (as per teachers' assessment using a 5-level evaluation) are presented in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 indicate that among the communication relationships within the school, the students exhibited the highest frequency of using the native language when communicating with friends ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.160$), which factor also achieved the highest proficiency level ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.064$), categorized as "highly proficient". In contrast, communication with teachers demonstrated the lowest frequency and was classified as "low". Communication with others around them, including fellow students and school staff, was rated as "average". Therefore, in relationships where students felt close and comfortable and shared a native language, they were more inclined to actively use it, particularly when the common language fell short in expressing their thoughts. When interacting with friends, students naturally switched to using their native language. However, when engaging with teachers, they were generally expected to utilize the mainstream language, unless the teacher granted permission to use the native

language or encouraged its use. It is evident that the frequency of native-language usage correlated positively with the level of proficiency in the native language.

Table 2: Results related to native-language use among ethnic minority students in different communication relationships in primary schools

Content	Level of frequency			Level of competence		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Communicating with friends	4.20	1.160	1	4.39	1.064	1
Communicating with teachers	2.49	1.127	3	2.81	1.047	3
Communicating with other people	3.12	1.101	2	3.27	1.023	2

Specifically, Table 3 shows the results for the level of native-language use by ethnic minority students in activities at primary schools. These ratings are according to teacher assessment with five rating levels.

Table 3: Results related to level of native-language use in activities at primary schools

Content	Level		
	Mean	SD	Rank
During class time (when answering the teacher's questions; during practical activities, group discussions, etc.)	2.33	1.123	4
Recess	4.15	1.107	2
While taking part in experiential activities	4.69	1.059	1
In other extracurricular activities (weekly activities, club activities, library reading, etc.)	3.32	1.098	3

As seen in Table 3, the frequency of students using their mother tongue during class time was the lowest ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.123$), whereas it reached its peak during experiential activities ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.059$). In general, the utilization of the mother tongue by students from ethnic minority groups in extracurricular activities surpassed its use during class time. This trend could be attributed to the prevailing teaching mandates in schools, which prioritized the national language for knowledge acquisition.

4.2 Content of Education for Mother Tongue Preservation through Experiential Activities

The survey results concerning the preservation of the mother tongue among ethnic minority students via experiential activities in primary schools within the northern mountainous region of Vietnam were delineated across three dimensions: awareness, attitude, and language utilization. The evaluation tiers for the surveyed students were computed as follows: very high (5), high (4 - 4.99), average (3 - 3.99), low (2 - 2.99), and very low (1 - 1.99).

Table 4: Results related to content of mother tongue preservation education for students who are ethnic minorities

Content	Level of implementation			Level of effectiveness		
	M	SD	Level	M	SD	Level
Education on awareness of the role and significance of the mother tongue for ethnic minority students	3.17	0.84	Average	3.01	0.83	Average
Education on fostering appropriate and positive attitudes among students in using and preserving the mother tongue	4.20	0.85	High	4.31	0.82	High
Create an encouraging environment that promotes students' practice and proficiency in using the mother tongue	3.21	0.86	Average	4.40	0.83	High

Table 4 shows that the educational content focusing on raising awareness regarding the role and significance of the mother tongue for ethnic minority students received the lowest frequency ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.84$) and effectiveness ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.83$) ratings, placing it at an average level. Conversely, the content pertaining to cultivating appropriate and positive attitudes among students towards the use and preservation of their mother tongue garnered high ratings ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.85$; $M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.82$). Furthermore, the content dedicated to establishing an encouraging environment for students to practice and employ their mother tongue exhibited a moderately implemented frequency ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.86$) yet boasted high effectiveness ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.83$). It is imperative to prioritize the simultaneous implementation of these content areas during experiential activities to ensure the sustainable preservation of the mother tongue.

4.3 Methods of Education for Preserving the Mother Tongue

To educate and preserve the mother tongue among students from ethnic minority groups through experiential activities in primary schools within mountainous areas, it is imperative that a combination of organizing methods be employed to ensure efficacy. The results pertinent to this aspect are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Results related to methods for preserving and educating the mother tongue of students who are ethnic minorities

Content	Level of implementation			Level of effectiveness		
	M	SD	Level	M	SD	Level
Conversation	4.13	0.898	High	4.17	0.865	High
Visual	3.11	0.864	Average	3.12	0.850	Average
Presentation (combined with explanation,	3.09	0.905	Average	3.14	0.857	Average

answering questions, and illustration)						
Role-playing	3.06	0.892	Average	3.11	0.848	Average
Game-based	4.14	0.913	High	4.17	0.887	High
Group discussion	4.18	0.917	High	4.15	0.871	High
Role-modeling	3.10	0.922	Average	3.13	0.863	Average
Encouragement and motivation	3.18	0.923	Average	3.20	0.861	Average

To facilitate ethnic minority students' proficient and sustainable use of their mother tongue in their daily activities, educational methods have to offer ample opportunities for students to engage in conversation using their native language. They should be motivated and encouraged to utilize their mother tongue for both receiving information and expressing their thoughts, in conjunction with the national language. Consequently, among the commonly employed methods, conversations ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.898$; $M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.865$), group discussions ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.917$; $M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.871$), and games ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.913$; $M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.887$) were the most frequently employed techniques. These techniques showcased the highest effectiveness in educational activities aimed at preserving the mother tongue for ethnic minority students in primary schools through experiential learning. Throughout the experiential learning process, students explored their familiar surroundings and engaged directly with teachers and peers in a comfortable setting. Consequently, during activities such as play, conversation, and discussions, students naturally employed their mother tongue to articulate their knowledge and thoughts without reservation stemming from language disparities. Furthermore, teachers could offer hints or provide answers in their mother tongue, thereby facilitating their expression.

The results of the correlation analysis between the implementation level and the effectiveness of the mother tongue preservation educational method for ethnic minority students, as assessed by teachers through the Pearson correlation coefficient (r), showed a significance level below 5%. This implies a robust correlation among the evaluation criteria examined in the study. The correlation coefficient (r) value is above 0, underscoring that consistent high-level implementation of the content corresponds to heightened effectiveness in the implementation itself.

4.4 Forms of Education for Preserving the Mother Tongue

The current research surveyed the respondents about the forms of education for preserving the mother tongue among ethnic minority students in primary schools. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Results related to forms of education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students

Content	Level of implementation			Level of effectiveness		
	M	SD	Level	M	SD	Level
Club activities	2.98	0.888	Low	3.01	0.856	Average
Game-based activities	4.54	0.887	High	4.16	0.866	High
Forum	2.98	0.893	Low	3.03	0.857	Average
Interactive stage	4.02	0.891	High	3.00	0.858	Average
Field trips, outdoor activities	2.94	0.886	Low	3.01	0.879	Average
Contests/competitions	4.18	0.895	High	3.05	0.867	Average
Humanitarian activities	2.97	0.865	Low	3.02	0.851	Average

The forms of education for the preservation of the mother tongue among ethnic minority students in primary schools through experiential activities were manifold. However, their occurrence rate was not notably high, leading to an average level of efficacy. In primary schools where a considerable number of students hailed from the same ethnic minority group, the preferred method of nurturing the mother tongue was organizing competitions and contests centered around the usage of their specific ethnic minority language (M = 4.18, SD = 0.895; M = 3.05, SD = 0.867), or interactive stage performances (M = 4.02, SD = 0.891; M = 3.00, SD = 0.858). Nonetheless, in primary schools featuring a diverse range of ethnic minority groups, these methods lacked notable effectiveness due to students' limited understanding and use of different ethnic minority languages. Employing games within experiential activities emerged as an educational approach that facilitates a more frequent and natural utilization of the mother tongue (M = 4.54, SD = 0.887; M = 4.16, SD = 0.886), as assessed by the teachers. This pertains to both the frequency and effectiveness aspects within primary schools.

4.5 Factors Affecting Education for Preserving the Mother Tongue

The effectiveness of organizing education to preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority students depended on various subjective and objective factors. When employing experiential activities for organization, assessing the influences impacting the effectiveness of these activities aids schools and teachers in recognizing strengths, challenges, and necessary adaptations. Table 7 presents a list of factors and its related results from analysis.

Table 7: Results related to factors influencing education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students

Factor	Mean	SD	Level
The language policy for ethnic minorities by the Party and the State	3.91	0.756	High
Education programs and textbooks for elementary school students in ethnic minority areas	2.95	0.956	Low

Team of teachers proficient in ethnic minority languages	4.99	0.471	High
Collaboration between school, family, and community	3.04	0.962	Average
Characteristics of ethnic minority students	4.02	0.969	High
Natural and social conditions of the ethnic minority region	3.03	0.964	Average
Guidelines for preserving and educating in the mother tongue of ethnic minority students	4.05	0.652	High

To preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority primary school students through experiential activities, the proficiency of teachers in the ethnic minority language plays a pivotal role and holds significant sway over the effectiveness of such endeavors. Consequently, it was assessed as the most influential factor ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 0.471$), securing the top position. Following suit, the availability of educational guidelines for the preservation of the ethnic language among ethnic minority students ranked as the subsequent factor ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.652$). At present, numerous primary school teachers have encountered uncertainty when implementing preservation education activities due to the lack of instructional guidance geared towards conserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students. Consequently, this factor also held considerable influence and ranked as the second highest determinant of activity effectiveness.

Ranking third was the factor of psychological characteristics of ethnic minority students ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.969$). The participating ethnic minority primary school students situated in the mountainous areas of northern Vietnam commonly exhibited shyness and hesitancy in communication. When the mainstream language (Vietnamese) proved inadequate for articulating their thoughts, they typically refrained from actively utilizing their mother tongue for communication unless prompted by a teacher or peers. Furthermore, additional factors also exerted an influence on education for preserving the mother tongue for ethnic minority students in primary schools. These factors include the language policies of the Party and the State concerning ethnic languages; the design of educational programs and textbooks for ethnic minority primary school students; the synergy between school, family, and community; as well as the natural and social circumstances of the ethnic minority region. This influence was particularly pronounced within experiential activities tied to nature and the community.

5. Discussion

The research results show that ethnic minority students at the primary level in Vietnam prefer learning in their mother tongue. The main reason is that they need to use their native language to communicate with their friends and other people in their community (Ha & Huynh, 2020). For ethnic minority students, learning in their mother tongue allows them to feel a sense of belonging within their community and helps reinforce their cultural identity. It provides them with a strong foundation rooted in their heritage, which can contribute to their overall well-being and self-esteem (Lien, 2021; Oral & Lund, 2022). However, the results of the current research reveal that only a small number of Vietnamese ethnic minority primary school students regularly use their mother tongue in their

classroom. This finding seems to oppose that of Idris (2018), who examined mother tongue education in the Turkish context, where the mother tongue of ethnic minority groups was integrated into the classroom. Moreover, the observation made by Nguyen et al. (2023) in Vietnam shows that children of ethnic minority groups regard it important to learn in their mother tongue in school.

In school, ethnic minority children use their mother tongue the most to communicate with their friends during recess or experiential activities, while they use it the least during class time, particularly to answer the teacher's questions. This means that the mother tongue is not the teaching and learning language in many classrooms and schools, even though it is significantly important at the primary level to avoid knowledge gaps and improve learning and understanding speed (Cham, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). The associated literature shows that education in the native language is essential for inclusivity and high-quality learning, and it also enhances academic achievement and learning outcomes (Nguyen, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Moreover, speaking their native language at school helps children by promoting freedom of speech, self-assurance, and critical thinking. Children of ethnic minority groups have the right to learn in their mother tongue because it is an essential component of their culture (An, 2022; Ozfidan, 2017). In Vietnam, Tran (2018) pointed out that teaching Vietnamese as a second language to ethnic minority students is considered an appropriate educational approach.

The current research identified the content of mother tongue preservation education for ethnic minority students. This includes education on awareness of the role and significance of the mother tongue, education on fostering appropriate and positive attitudes among students in using and preserving the mother tongue, and creating an encouraging environment that promotes students' practice and proficiency in using the mother tongue. This finding is consistent with those of several previous studies. For example, in Thailand, the government intends to increase the proportion of educational institutions that utilize a local language in addition to Thai as a medium of teaching and to encourage the use of local languages in education (Darr & Person, 2022). In Nepal, multilingual education is provided to children from the pre-primary level. Along with the contextualized multilingual education textbooks, local resources are gathered and utilized in teaching and learning activities. Children are more interested in the teaching and learning process, since such items are known to them (Shintan & Cozens, 2018). In Europe, van Dongera et al. (2017) suggested that governments should invest in the creation of high-quality minority-language teaching materials for all educational levels.

In this study, several methods for preserving and educating in the mother tongue were rated as having a high level of implementation and effectiveness. These are conversation, game-based methods, and group discussion. This finding echoes that of Khunakene et al. (2022), who suggested integrating the mother tongue into the regular curriculum across different subjects. Specifically, the government should develop teaching materials and resources that incorporate the mother

tongue (e.g., bilingual textbooks or supplementary materials) to help students learn various subjects while using their native language. The current research also identified methods rated as having a moderate level of implementation and effectiveness. These include presentation, role-playing, role-modeling, encouragement, and motivation. As noted by Anh (2022) and Vi (2019), encouraging and motivating ethnic minority students to use their mother tongue can significantly contribute to their language preservation and overall well-being.

Related to forms of education to preserve the mother tongue of ethnic minority students, in this research, three forms were rated as having high levels of implementation and effectiveness. These are game-based activities, interactive stages, and contests or competitions. According to Oral and Lund (2022), establishing language clubs or doing extracurricular activities can help promote the use of the mother tongue among ethnic minority students. These activities can include language-focused games, debates, storytelling sessions, or language-based projects. Creating a supportive and engaging environment helps students practice their language skills and builds their confidence in using their mother tongue. However, the current study identified several forms that had low levels of implementation and effectiveness. These are club activities, forums, field trips and outdoor activities, and humanitarian activities. In fact, participation in language-related activities, or accomplishments in language competitions, can motivate ethnic minority students to learn their mother tongue (Cham, 2020; Liu, 2023).

Furthermore, the current study identified four factors affecting education for preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority students in Vietnam. These include the language policy for ethnic minority groups, teams of teachers proficient in ethnic minority languages, characteristics of ethnic minority students, and guidelines for preserving and educating in the mother tongue. In Vietnam, the government has consistently regarded ethnic languages as an important component of national cultural identity. As a result, preserving and safeguarding ethnic languages will be critical in maintaining and furthering the cultural identities of the country's ethnic minority communities (Nhân Dân, 2021). Among the various factors, the policy for preserving ethnic minority languages plays the most important role. A specific policy pointed out by Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) in this regard is the language policy for ethnic minority languages in Vietnam from 1975 to the present. Several core policies include preserving and promoting the languages and scripts of ethnic minorities, and using ethnic minority languages in the media, the legal field, and cultural and artistic activities.

6. Conclusion

Preserving the mother tongue of ethnic minority groups is a pressing concern in contemporary Vietnam, given the dual challenge of teaching and learning the national language while simultaneously safeguarding and enhancing minority languages. This effort contributes to the sustainable development of these languages within a diverse multicultural environment. The preservation of mother tongues through education, beginning at the primary school level, bears significant importance as it fosters the use of these languages within both school

and daily-life contexts. The research has presented an overview of the prevailing situation regarding the preservation of mother tongues for ethnic minority students through experiential activities within primary schools situated in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam. This overview encompassed aspects such as content, forms, implementation methods, and factors influencing the effectiveness of these activities for students.

The research findings also indicate that the effectiveness of preserving the mother tongue among ethnic minority students in primary schools is currently suboptimal. In light of this, we propose several measures to enhance the quality of mother tongue preservation through experiential activities for ethnic minority students in primary schools. First, schools should formulate comprehensive plans and execute them for the implementation of mother tongue preservation education through experiential activities for ethnic minority students in primary schools. Second, a diverse array of methods for preserving the mother tongue within experiential activities should be organized by schools. Third, a consistent process of evaluating the efficacy of mother tongue preservation education through experiential activities at the primary school level should be established. Fourth, schools ought to collaborate closely with local ethnic committees and authorities to formulate a comprehensive set of guidelines to aid teachers in conducting mother tongue preservation education through experiential activities in primary schools. Finally, training and professional development opportunities should be extended to primary school educators in ethnic minority regions, enhancing their proficiency in the respective local ethnic minority language.

The current study had limitations related to its research design, the primary limitation being that it relied on quantitative data. The survey involved 1210 teachers and 455 primary school students through closed-ended questions. It is recommended that future research adopt a mixed methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data, to facilitate data triangulation. Alternatively, forthcoming studies could employ a qualitative methodology to delve more deeply into the viewpoints of teachers, students, and educators concerning the preservation of the mother tongue among ethnic minority students.

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