# STANDARDISATION AND PURIFICATION:

## A LOOK AT LANGUAGE PLANNING IN VIETNAM

NGUYỄN ĐÌNH-HOÀ

0.  Language planning has been defined as "the organized pursuit of
solutions to language problems, typically at the national level"
(Fishman 1975:55).  In the second part of his book on *Language and
Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays*, Fishman (1975:40-85) discusses the
impact of nationalism on language and language planning by analysing
the role of language as "the link with the glorious past", as "the link
with authenticity" and as "part of the message of nationalism" (pp.44-5).
The Vietnamese people have always been conscious of the real status and
function of their language as symbol of the unity of the nation.  Under
colonial rule, although using French as the medium of instruction,
school-children were encouraged to speak unadulterated Vietnamese and
avoid the macaronic language consisting of a mixture of Vietnamese and
French (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1975:44-5).  French-trained teachers promoted
the teaching of the Vietnamese script to illiterate adults through the
Association for the Dissemination of Quốc-ngữ and the publication of
numerous books and periodicals where nearly every technical subject
could be discussed in the national language clothed in the Roman script
(Nguyễn Khắc-Kham 1976:189-90).

  Even prior to the August 1945 revolution, the Indochinese Communist
Party in its Cultural Program (Đề-cương văn-hoá Việt-nam) issued in 1943
raised the question of making the task of "struggling about language"
an urgent one, "which should aim at unifying and enriching the national
language, determining grammatical rules and improving the quoc-ngu
script" (Vương Lộc 1975:21).  Then after the August revolution, in the
midst of this anti-French hostilities, Trường Chinh called upon every-
body to "create a movement to Vietnamize both language and literature"
and "to resolutely defend our mother tongue" (T. Tr. 1948).

During the partition of the country, linguistic scholars in both
halves recognised that "to preserve the purity and clarity of the
Vietnamese language and to make it richer, more beautiful and more pre-
cise every day is the task of every citizen of Vietnam, and especially
of linguists, writers and newspapermen." (Lưu Vân Lăng et al 1961:83).

   This paper examines steps in the processes of language planning in
the reunified Vietnam.

1.   Language planning in Vietnam seems to have moved beyond the stage
of "policy formation" (Jernudd 1973:15) or "norm selection" and well
into the stages of "codification and elaboration" and "implementation"[1]
(Haugen 1966; Fishman 1972:56-7).

1.1.   It can be said that language policies were formulated officially
only in 1966 when three meetings were organised between the end of
January and the beginning of February by the Writers Association (Hội
nhà văn Việt-nam) and the Institute of Literature (Viện văn-học) to
discuss the problem of preserving the purity and clarity of the
Vietnamese language.   As reported in the organ of the latter institute,
participants included poets, writers, newsmen, research workers in
literature, linguistics and other sciences in the Institute of Social
Sciences, as well as college teachers, representatives of the press,
news agencies, radio stations and publishing houses.   At these meetings
led by Social Sciences Committee Chairman Nguyễn Khánh Toàn, Minister
of Education Nguyễn Văn Huyên and Vice Minister of Education Lê Liêm,
there was a lively exchange of ideas and opinions.   Premier Phạm Văn
Đồng attended all three meetings, and his remarks given at the last
meeting were later published in *Tạp-chí Văn-học* 75 (March 1966:1-5,
93-5), then reproduced in the theoretical journal of the Lao-động
(Workers) Party *Học-tập* 123 (April 1966:7-13).

   The follow-up was reported in *Tạp-chí Văn-học* 80 (August 1966:106):
nearly 60 linguistic workers held their own meeting on June 3, 1966 to
discuss the preservation of the purity and clarity of Vietnamese.   These
scholars from the Institute of Social Sciences, the University of Hanoi,
Hanoi Teachers College, Vinh Teachers College met under the chairmanship
of Professor Đặng Thai Mai, President of the Institute of Literature,
Professor Hoàng Xuân Nhị, Dean of Letters at the University of Hanoi,
with other staff members of the Educational Sciences Institute, the
School of Foreign Languages, etc.

1.2.  More recently books and articles have been devoted to the same
problem, which was set forth officially for the first time in 1966 with
the participation of the Premier himself.

Speaking as a writer of great sensitivity, Premier Phạm Văn Đồng
pointed out that the Vietnamese language being rich and beautiful, its
speakers must be "deeply conscious of its richness and beauty and of
its unlimited capabilities" (Phạm Văn Đồng 1966:3).  He said (1966:4)
that "language must reflect life and serve life, the daily life and
the revolutionary struggle of the masses, our people's present anti-U.S.
struggle for national salvation, political, cultural, literary, and
artistic life, and scientific and technological life."  The Premier
first reviewed how since 1945 Vietnamese has been used in every field
– political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, scientific and
technical – mentioning the liquidation of illiteracy within a short
time and the widespread use of Vietnamese as the medium of instruction,
even at the college level, for science and technology.  The Vietnamese
leader said that Vietnamese had been made into an excellent tool in the
cultural and ideological revolution.  Then he cited three areas where
Vietnamese must concentrate their initiative, display sensitivity and
perseverance and work firmly with planning and organisation to sustain
efforts at purism: (1) to preserve and develop the vocabulary; (2) to
respect the grammar of (spoken and written) Vietnamese; and (3) to
maintain the originality and essence of the national language in every
genre of writing.

As far as vocabulary is concerned, he warned against a "communicable
disease" which the late President Hồ Chí Minh used to criticise – the
tendency or phenomenon that consists in using too many foreign loanwords,
especially from Chinese:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| xạ kích | instead of  bắn súng | *'to shoot, fire'* |
| cự-ly | khoảng cách | *'distance'* |
| tiến-hành | làm | *'to do'* |
| sử-dụng | dùng | *'to use'* |
| phát-biểu | nói | *'to speak'* |

In his important speech, the Premier touched on the elaboration of
scientific terminology.  Technical terms have to be introduced system-
atically, he said, in all disciplines.  However, who is going to be
responsible for terminology work and how the new jargon can be worked
out are important issues according to him.

It is significant that the Premier used the native words vốn chữ
instead of từ-vựng for *'vocabulary, lexicon'* and phép tắc instead of
ngữ-pháp for *'grammar'*.

Grammar is a very important subject, the Viegnamese leader explained, "because we teachers need it, our students need it, and foreigners who want to learn Vietnamese also need it." (1966:93). Here his major contribution was a warning against using the grammar of a foreign tongue to write a grammar of Vietnamese. He advised grammarians to start from "the realities of Vietnamese itself" just as "the natural conditions of our country and the revolutionary and social realities of our people" should help solve "such problems in our present life as growing rice, building a home, making a dress, cooking a meal, etc." (1966:93)

Thirdly, in making Vietnamese even richer and more beautiful and helping the language "keep up with the revolution and our people's rich life", people should try to use new expressions, new phraseology - for instance, nominalisation - yet at the same time ensuring that the language will be developed firmly on the foundation of the old lexicon and retain its style, its originality, its quintessence."

Language planning usually involves a "body of experts specifically delegated the task of preparing a plan" and who "ideally estimate existing resources and forecast." (Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971:196)

In his conclusion Premier Phạm Văn Đồng turned to his "body of experts" in the audience; he urged a division of labour, first with the Linguistics Section of the Institute of Literature - it has since grown into an Institute of Linguistics independent of, but working closely with, the latter institute - compiling a general dictionary and different glossaries of technical terms, in consultation with specialists in various branches of learning, then secondly the linguists also writing a grammar of Vietnamese, with the active participation of writers, and finally intensified efforts on the part of writers and journalists through the Writers' Association (Phạm Văn Đồng 1966:94).

1.3. The Premier noted the presence of educational leaders Nguyễn Văn Huyền and Lê Liêm at the 1966 sessions: since the school shoulders a heavy responsibility, he asserted that "the young generation must speak and write better than we do." (p.95)

The official language policy was thus clearly enunciated: "This is a long-range undertaking. We must be patient, look far ahead and have a broad view of the problem, proceed step by step with all our sense of responsibility, with a pride in our national language, with enthusiasm and confidence in our contribution to a task that is both important and extremely beautiful." (Phạm Văn Đồng 1966:95)

Dr Nguyễn Văn Huyền, then Minister of Education, analysed the weaknesses of the language arts program. First graders had not been taught

(1966) "carefully, minutely and fully how to read, write and speak" their mother tongue, and in Level II and Level III schools, more emphasis had been given to Vietnamese literature than to Vietnamese language, with the textbooks not serving (p.7) as "models in every respect".

Effective use of the language, Minister Nguyễn Văn Huyên said, cannot be attained (1966:8) "through prohibitions and orders, but through persistent training and time-consuming education." He also stressed prevention instead of cure, and he explained that children learn not only in their classrooms, but also from "the speech of the people, from proverbs and sayings, folk songs, pieces of classical prose and poetry, and model works by our writers and poets." (Nguyễn Văn Huyên 1966:95)

1.4. It is significant that in the same issue of the literary review, there are articles on the same topic written by such literary figures as Xuân Diệu (9-20, 27), Nguyễn Tuân (21-7), and Chế Lan Viên (28-32). The use of "good" Vietnamese in the press (Quang Đạm 1966:60-71, 91-8), on the stage (Nguyễn Băng Hồ 72-5) and in movies (Vũ Bá Hùng 75-80) was also discussed at length in that issue.

2. The prescriptivist or normative tendencies in the codification stage are evident in book titles - *Rèn luyện về ngôn-ngữ* 'Linguistic training' (Nguyễn Kim Thản 1966), *Nói và viết đúng tiếng Việt* 'Speak and write Vietnamese correctly' (Nguyễn Kim Thản et al 1967) - and in writings on the specific topic of standardisation (for instance, Nguyễn Hàm Dương 1974 and 1975).

A standard language has been defined as "a codified form of language, accepted by and serving as a model to, a larger speech community." (Garvin 1973:25). To the same definition Garvin added that "a given language situation can be described as meeting the criteria for a standard language to a given degree, rather than absolutely." (Garvin 1973: 25). Elsewhere Garvin and Mathiot (1956:788) point out that the functions of a standard language (unifying and separatist functions, prestige function and frame-of-reference function) occasion a set of cultural attitudes such as language loyalty, pride and awareness of the norm.

In the case of Vietnam the search for what constitutes the standard to follow has been carried out seriously and diligently revolving around the problem of evaluating competing forms. The first volume of a work entitled 'Studies in Linguistics' (*Nghiên-cứu ngôn-ngữ-học*) and published in 1968 was devoted to this subject. Issued under the auspices of the Linguistics Section of the Committee on Social Sciences, it contains articles dealing with the theme of linguistic purity and clarity, as

shown in the subtitle, thus touching on standardisation, spelling reforms, abbreviations, semantic change, abuse of Chinese loanwords and dialect lexicon.

As the debate was launched in earnest in 1966, one writer said that it is not easy "to distinguish what is correct and what is incorrect, what makes Vietnamese richer and more beautiful and what 'corrupts' it." (Quang Đạm 1966:60). The poet Chế Lan Viên points out that there are indeed "many different concepts of purity and clarity, hence many different evaluations." (Chế Lan Viên 1966:29). A famous essayist aware of the consequences of *laissez-faire* asks the question how to conceive the problem so as not to prevent "each writer from having his own style, his own features?" (Nguyễn Tuân 1966:26). Another relevant question has also been asked: How to avoid "the situation wherein one relies only on one's impressions?" (Hoàng Tuệ 1961:55).

In answer to all these questions, Hoàng Phê, presently Associate Editor of the review *Ngôn-ngữ* 'Language' - organ of the Institute of Linguistics - quotes Hall (1950), Bloomfield (1933) and Martinet (1961) and says "it is wrong to oppose subjectivism and fall into naturalism." (Hoàng Phê 1968:7-8). He claims that "linguistic phenomena are evaluated" and that "their evaluation leads to a choice of expression, to creativity in speech and to different attitudes toward new phenomena in language" (Hoàng Phê 1968:8). Claiming that you cannot "leave your language alone" and that the crux of the matter is not whether to evaluate, but how to evaluate (1968:9), Hoàng Phê underlines that "standardisation is the central concept in the problem of preserving the purity and clarity of language" (1968:16), and he points out the obligatory (p.17) and stable (p.22) character of standards as well as their relativity (Hoàng Phê 1968:26).

"New standards are taking shape and have to be built up. Educated Vietnamese is moving toward a new purity and clarity, a higher purity and clarity, a purity and a clarity that stress not only form but also content, that not only follow the old crease, but is also creative, that is not monotonous, but rich, not affected, but simple, not rigid, but developing." (Hoàng Phê 1968:34). Likewise, both Lê Xuân Thại and Hồng Dân discuss standard and development in terms of individual creativity (Lê Xuân Thại 1968:42-52) and of "the sum of rules governing the use of a language in a given period" as constituting the standard of that language (Hồng Dân 1968:53).

Standardisation in Vietnam thus consists basically of two steps: first a model for imitation is created, then that model is promoted over rival models (Ray 1963:70). In two articles devoted to standardisation

specifically, Nguyễn Hàm Dương notes the importance of vigilance and caution needed to forge the model language as the tool of communication and social action:

"To preserve the purity and clarity of Vietnamese is not only to polish one's style, to weigh each word or to be careful in speaking and writing. These are necessary, but not sufficient conditions. To preserve the purity and clarity of Vietnamese is to struggle for the concision, sharpness, richness, examplariness and the strong expressiveness of Vietnamese, raise the effectiveness of its use in every field of endeavor in society, fully expand its potentialities, make it really an important weapon of the socialist culture, and a means of communication and thinking of tens of millions of Vietnamese." (Nguyễn Hàm Dương 1975:26-7).

It is interesting to note that the same linguist, in an earlier article (Nguyễn Hàm Dương 1974), uses tiêu-chuẩn-hoá for *standardisation* but later switches to the shorter form chuẩn-hoá (Nguyễn Hàm Dương 1975). The very term for *linguistics* preferred in pre-1975 technical discussions in South Vietnam was ngữ-học, but now the longer form ngôn-ngữ-học has gained currency.

After saying that "the content of the problem of preserving the purity and clarity of Vietnamese is closely linked to the task of standardisation in this present revolutionary period", the two concepts being interrelated (1975:27), Nguyễn Hàm Dương enumerated the practical tasks as follows: (1) to conduct a linguistic survey covering both the spoken and the written languages (p.31); (2) to establish a language policy built on the interaction between social elements and the internal structure of language, since such a policy is essential to the selection and evaluation processes (p.32); (3) to study the language of the late President Hồ Chí Minh (p.32); and (4) to study model writings by representative writers and poets (p.32).

Implementation tasks do not neglect such effective means as language teaching in the schools, where there is the conscious intervention of society in the development of language, and the mass media (press, radio, television, theatre, movies, etc.) (p.33).

The production of such tools as dictionaries and standard grammars (Nguyễn Hàm Dương 1975:34) is the responsibility of linguistic scholars, since "now more than ever the central task of linguistics is still the preservation of the purity and clarity of the Vietnamese language" as Social Sciences Committee Chairman Nguyễn Khánh Toàn urged in a message on the "great turning point and linguistics (1973:1-4).

As implementation shifted into high gear, meetings and seminars were
organised.  A full conference on standardisation was convened by the
Linguistics Department of the University of Hanoi on February 27 and 28,
1975.  On April 4, 1975 the Institute of Linguistics (Viện Ngôn-ngữ-học)
itself held a meeting to hear eleven reports on the efforts.


3.  Since the planners are keenly aware of the respective roles of
speech and writing, the function of the latter as the medium of communi-
cation "between speakers separated in time and space" and "its permanence
and importance for the community" "permit and require a different kind
of treatment from that which is accorded natural speech." (Haugen 1966:
53).  This explains why script improvement and spelling reforms have
received a great deal of attention in the process of language planning.
     The Cultural Program issued by the Party in 1943 already mentioned
the need for spelling reforms based on recommendations found in publi-
cations (Khoa-học, Tri-tân, Thanh-nghị, etc.) launched by French-trained
Vietnamese professors.
     The Second Cultural Congress convened in 1943 further pursued the
idea of orthographic improvement.  Then, six years after the partition
was decided at the Geneva Conference, 67 participants held discussions
on the improvement of quốc-ngữ.  The proceedings of this conference were
published the following year (Hội-nghị cải-tiến quốc-ngữ 1961), and the
underlying principles of reforms proposed in the major conference papers
were as follows:

     (A) Spelling reforms must be "based on the presently used Roman
         script" and "implemented step by step."

     (B) The reforms must be bold, but cautious and firm at the same
         time;

     (C) Each step should prepare for the next step;

     (D) The reforms must aim at making the quốc-ngữ script more rational
         and at the same time more simple and more adequate.  (p.113)

     One paper stressed that the Conference "must confirm the standard
pronunciation of Vietnamese before studying spelling reforms and ortho-
graphic uniformization." (p.120).  Another participant added that efforts
should be made to "avoid unnecessary upheavals." (Bùi Công Trừng 1961:
383).
     Professor Nguyễn Kim Thản of the Institute of Linguistics summed up
by pointing out (1961:212ff) that the Conference should make "the
writing system follow the development of the Vietnamese language more

closely, and at the same time pay attention to the characteristics of our national language." Thus, in the draft program inserted as an appendix of the Proceedings volume (*Hội-nghị cải-tiến quốc-ngữ* 1961: 1141-95), it is clear that although the reforms recommended were based on the Hanoi dialect, regional differences reflected in variant spellings ch : tr, x : s, d : gi : r were respected. There were also recommendations regarding the dropping of h in the transcription of initial velars, presently gh- and ngh-, before front vowels. Consistent use of initial k- was also recommended. The letters f- and d- should replace the present graphemes ph- and đ- (the so-called "barred d") respectively. Alien clusters such as br-, cl-, etc. would be used in technical and scientific terms.

The Conference designated a Committee of Seven to recommend spelling reforms. Professors Đặng Thai Mai and Phạm Huy-Thông served as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively. The other members were Ngụy Như Kontum, Nguyễn Quang Hướng, Nguyễn Kim Thản, Hoàng Tuệ and Hoàng Phê (Secretary of the Committee). In February 1961, upon his return from a trip abroad Professor Nguyễn Tài Cẩn was also invited to join the group, but in a letter dated October 20, 1960, on behalf of the Committee, Chairman Đặng Thai Mai invited teachers and linguists in South Vietnam to lend their co-operation (*Hội-nghị cải-tiến quốc-ngữ* 1961:389-92).

A second Conference on the quốc-ngữ script was convened in 1962 with 51 participants discussing the draft program recommended by the original Committee of Seven. On May 5, 1962, in a second open letter to his colleagues in the south Đặng Thai Mai wrote that he hoped "northern and southern intellectuals will be able to meet in a national conference to discuss the problem of language and writing as well as all other cultural problems of our country."

Let us note that in South Vietnam, the Cultural Institute (Viện Văn-hoá), established on July 8, 1966, had in addition to other functions the charge of compiling dictionaries of the Vietnamese language, encyclopedic dictionaries, and of preparing a grammar of Vietnamese (Decree No.125-LS/VHXH). A Committee on the Codification of Language and Writing (Uỷ-ban điển-chế văn-tự) set up earlier had the main thrust of promoting the production of technical glossaries in the natural and physical sciences. Hand in hand with "considerable instruction in linguistics" at institutions of higher learning in South Vietnam, research projects were carried out by a number of specialists, whose activities are mentioned in a rather complete survey (Thompson and Thomas 1967:815-46) of the field of Vietnamese linguistics as of 1964.

Judging from technical discussions often reproduced or at least summarised in journal articles, the spelling reforms would (a) improve the transcription of some vowel, consonant and semivowel phonemes; (b) create new syllables needed in both transliteration and translation; (c) run together two or more syllables in compound words and thus eliminate the often erratic use of hyphens.

The efforts of the widely respected scholar Lê Ngọc Trụ in compiling an orthographic dictionary, *Việt-ngữ chính-tả tự-điển*, which was reprinted in 1973, were emulated in North Vietnam, where teamwork seems to be the rule and not the exception in and around the Institute of Linguistics, which held a conference, June 9-10, 1971, just to discuss punctuations and capitalisation. The draft proposal on capitalisation (Dự-thảo qui-tắc viết hoa) and two articles discussing it (Dương Lan Hải 1972:53-60 and Phan Thiều 1972:61-6) were published in No.11 (March 1972) of the journal *Ngôn-ngữ*, pages 49-66, to help dissemination.

4.  Preoccupation with the treatment of foreign loanwords has been constant. Vietnamese has borrowed less from French and English than from Chinese (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1975:36-59, Nguyễn Đăng Liêm 1975:15-35).

The late multilingual President Hồ Chí Minh used to admonish government employees and acadres for excessively borrowing from the Chinese language. He warned writers and reporters alike against borrowing to the point of not being understood by the masses; he prescribed the use of native Vietnamese words instead of Sino-Vietnamese terms, thus

| ba tháng      | instead of | tam-cá-nguyệt | *'quarter(ly)'*    |
|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| xem xét       |            | quan-sát      | *'to observe'*     |
| đánh vào sâu  |            | tung-thâm     | *'strike in depth'*|
| xe lửa        |            | hoả-xa        | *'train'*          |
| máy bay       |            | phi-cơ        | *'aeroplane'*      |
| giúp đỡ       |            | hỗ-trợ        | *'to assist, help'*|

Such terms as vùng trời *'air space'*, preferred to không-phận, chữ thập đỏ *'Red Cross'*, preferred to Hồng-thập-tự (Nguyễn Đình Hoà 1975: 50) were first suggested by the late President, who called immoderate borrowing "a disease" and even made fun of the new literates who incorrectly used Chinese-borrowed lexemes, being ignorant of their etymology.

While encouraging the use of completely Vietnamised elements, President Hồ cautioned writers that they should borrow scientific terms only when necessary.

Incidentally, the Organising Committee of the conference on spelling reforms, knowing that President Hồ had always been concerned over that problem too, sent him a copy of the report. He later received the conference leaders and gave them some of his own ideas about the objectives and methods of spelling reforms as well as his attitude toward the Vietnamese language in general. His comments were published ten years later on the first anniversary of his death in the journal *Ngôn-ngữ*:

> Let me remind you to treasure our language. We have to borrow words which we cannot translate from languages of other countries. But we should borrow only when absolutely necessary, and whenever we borrow we must borrow appropriately.
> Why do we often borrow unnecessarily and inappropriately? Because (1) we don't treasure our national language and have an inferiority complex, and (2) we have not studied it well and thoroughly.
> Borrowing is necessary, but we must fight abuse and laziness. We need a campaign against the overuse of foreign words, the overuse of Chinese loanwords. There are innumerable cases where we can find a Vietnamese word but do not make an effort to find it.
> In this respect we must also try to follow the self-help principle in the main, treasure our language, rely on its originality to develop it and use loanwords only as a second resort. We must study our own ways of coining words, we must study more carefully in order to invent our ways of coining new words.          (Hồ Chí Minh 1970)

5.    The "coining of new words" has been essential in the elaboration of a scientific terminology, which was started even prior to 1945 (Nguyễn Đình-Hoà 1975:47-8). Lê Khả Kế (1968:109-31) gives an account of deliberate steps in terminology work since that date, detailing the use of transliteration, Chinese loanwords and native elements.

An official conference on scientific terminology was convened in Hanoi on December 28 and 29, 1964 by the State Scientific Commission. After a report 'On The Problem of Using Foreign Scientific Terms' by Lưu Vân Lăng and over 20 papers presented by scientists from various sectors, the Conference appointed a committee to continue the study. On May 14 and 21, 1965 the Committee presented its draft proposal of 'Principles of Transliteration of Indo-European Scientific Terms into Vietnamese'. The draft proposal was approved on October 15, 1965 by the Council on Scientific Terminology and Lexicography. In June 1966, the Institute of Social Sciences, nowadays the Social Sciences Commission, recommended that the principles of transliteration be adopted in all social and natural sciences on an *ad hoc* basis. In the brochure devoted to the transliteration of foreign scientific terms into Vietnamese (Uỷ-ban Khoa-học xã-hội Việt-nam 1968), it is pointed out that the new

terms must be used creatively, integrated into the Vietnamese language
as the technical jargon of the people, thus contributing to the enrich-
ment of the lexical fund.  A foreign technical term must be easy to
write and to pronounce, yet not too distant from the original form.
Each symbol is to represent only one phoneme, and each phoneme is trans-
cribed with only one symbol.  The foundation of this consistency is
still the speech of the capital city of Hanoi, supplemented by positive
elements from other dialects.

Next to transliteration, the source of new scientific and technical
terms remains Sino-Vietnamese, that is to say, the extensive Chinese
loan-compounds pronounced in the Vietnamese way.  A more recent tendency
consists in using even Chinese-borrowed forms in the Vietnamese word
order, thus preferring a phrase to a compound noun, again if this makes
a whole construction clearer: cụm từ, not từ-tố 'phrase'.

One example will suffice.  Being involved in the late 1950s in the
same task within linguistics, this writer together with his colleagues
Lê Văn Lý, Nguyễn Khắc Kham and Lê Ngọc Trụ, at the University of Saigon
Faculty of Letters tried to coin several needed terms.  Although
Professor Chao Yuen-ren, in a personal communication, had suggested
ngôn 言 for 'morpheme', I chose ngữ-vị on the model of âm-vị 'phoneme'.[4]
But since my colleague Lê Văn Lý started using it to refer to the
European 'morphème', as opposed to ngữ-nghĩa-vị 'sémantème', I hesitated
for a while between hình-thái-vị or ngữ-thái-vị, but ended by showing
my predilection for the more traditional từ-tố.  The Russian-Vietnamese
Linguistic Glossary (Viện Ngôn-ngữ-học 1969) lists hình-vị for 'morpheme'
and từ-vị for 'lexeme' (pp.44 and 51, respectively).

6.  It is tempting to remark that language planning succeeds most through
an authoritarian approach.  The normative approach, at any rate, is
apparent in the case of Vietnam, where the legislator can be either a
prescriptive linguist or a literary practitioner.

6.1.  Nguyễn Kim Thản (1966:79) cites the 18 pieces of advice which
Trường Chinh gave to newspapermen in his book on how to strengthen news-
paper writing Tăng-cường công-tác báo-chí của chúng ta.  All eighteen
are 'don't' rules.  In order to make the language a national language,
newspapermen were told not to use a foreign word unnecessarily, not to
write a sentence according to foreign syntax, not to use literary
allusions, not to depart from the precious literary tradition of the
nation, not to look down on the literary heritage, and not to despise
the good elements in foreign literature and arts (p.78).  Secondly, in

order to keep the language **scientific**, newspaper writers were advised
not to write a sentence that does not follow Vietnamese grammar, not to
use a superfluous word, except for deliberate repetition for emphasis,
not to write a sentence which the reader may misunderstand because it
is ambiguous, not to make their writing alien to the people's speech,
not to write in a disorderly fashion, and not to use old cliches taken
either from Vietnamese or from a foreign tongue (although the use of
proverbs and sayings would be desirable).   The last six rules aimed at
making the Vietnamese language **closer and closer to the masses**.  Writers
were advised not to be afraid of using ordinary words used by the masses,
not to write a sentence which an average reader cannot understand, not
to write just for a few elitist intellectuals, not to write lengthy
sentences or quote uselessly to impress people, not to neglect the
upgrading of the masses' intellectual level just because of eargerness
to popularise, and not to use vulgarity just for the sake of making the
language accessible to the masses. (p.79).

6.2.  Elsewhere a specialist in classical literature enunciates the
five principles to be followed to guarantee clarity: (1) Use Vietnamese,
stressing the spoken language; (2) Use proverbs, adages, sayings and
maxims, which are all extremely precious elements of the literary lan-
guage of the masses; (3) Coin new words through loan translations from
Chinese, thus borrowing the idea and not the phonetic shell; (4) Use
Chinese loanwords, since a good writer while being independent does not
have to be xenophobic; and (5) Limit the use of Chinese allusions, since
the purpose is not to show off, but to make sure everybody understands.
(Trương Chính 1972:11).

6.3.  The language of President Hồ Chí Minh is among the models upheld
because his style is considered simple, concise, to the point and full
of imagery.  On his 85th birthday, for instance, the College of Pedagogy
at Vinh held a seminar May 26-27, 1975 on the late President's skills as
a writer.
  President Hồ's vocabulary was the subject of a statistical study
(Hoàng Cao Cương and Trần Đình Cơ) reporeted in the journal *Ngôn-ngữ*:
this study showed the frequency of nouns (33%), verbs (18%), adjectives
(12%), particles (15%) and other lexemes (22%) in a corpus of 58,900
words contained in President Hồ's articles, speeches, reports, appeals
and interviews between 1955 and 1959. (Nguyễn Đức Dân, Hoàng Cao Cương
and Trần Đình Cơ 1973:14-31).

The manner in which President Hồ explained various socio-political
concepts to the masses was discussed in Cù Đình Tú (1973:32-6, 62), and
his use of idiomatic expressions, sayings and proverbs was studied in
Hoàng Văn Hành (1973:10-19).

One article (Bùi Khắc Việt 1975) was devoted to *Đường Kách Mệnh* 'The
Revolutionary Path', a collection of lectures that President Hồ delivered
in Kwang-chow in youth training programs in 1926.  Although in the 1920s,
through short stories and novels by Phạm Duy Tốn, Nguyễn Trọng Thuật,
etc., the Vietnamese language had become streamlined and been moving
towards clarity and concision, Hồ Chí Minh's style in this political
pamphlet, constructed in the form of questions and answers, was very
close to the everyday speech of the people.  Carefully chosen vocabulary
and simple grammatical structures were supplemented by the use of idioms
and vivid imagery taken from native folklore.  The book also had a good
dosage of rhymes and parallel constructions, which helped take the dry-
ness away from this piece of political discussion, which has been
considered "the first foundation of future revolutionary writings."
(Bùi Khắc Việt 1975:9).


7.  At the beginning the agency responsible for language policy imple-
mentation was the Linguistics Section of the Institute of Social
Sciences.  Not having its own publication until 1969 it utilised the
medium of *Tap-chí Văn-học*, organ of the Institute of Literature.  This
review, beginning with Issue No.91 (July 1967), carried a column titled
'Preserve the Purity and Clarity of Vietnamese' (Giữ-gìn sự trong sáng
của tiếng Việt), and it also promised to print excerpts from a *Handbook
of Usage* (Sổ tay dùng từ) in progress, whose purpose was to help people
study "the standard of modern cultural Vietnamese, i.e., literary
Vietnamese - an important and urgent linguistic task." (p.107).

When the Institute of Linguistics, a full-fledged research unit,
launched its quarterly journal *Ngôn-ngữ* in 1969, the new publication
continued this "usage corner", to which all writers and scholars were
invited to contribute.  As the organisation with authority to deal with
all problems associated with standardisation and purification, the Viện
Ngôn-ngữ-học has played an important role of co-ordinator and facili-
tator through its many activities.

During the 5-year period between 1968 and 1972, the Institute of
Linguistics accomplished the following (*Ngôn-ngữ* 15 (March 1973):69):
(1) compiling a general dictionary and a grammar of Vietnamese; (2)
compiling and publishing ten glossaries of social sciences terms and
helping with the compilation and publication of another seven volumes

of wordlists in science and technology;[5] and (3) compiling several
bilingual dictionaries, English-Vietnamese, French-Vietnamese, Spanish-
Vietnamese, Russian-Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese.

Another task no less important has been the study of a policy re-
garding the languages and writing systems of ethnic minorities in North
Vietnam and South Vietnam: it did indeed contribute to the romanisation
of Thái, to the transcription of Mường, to the improvement of the Tày-
Nùng script and of the Miao script and to the initial investigation of
some 47 minority languages of Vietnam.  Typical publications in this
vital area were a grammar of Tày-Nùng (Hoàng Văn Ma et al 1971), a
Mèo-Vietnamese dictionary, a Tày-Nùng-Vietnamese dictionary, a
Vietnamese-Mèo dictionary and a Vietnamese-Jarai dictionary.  Study of
and research on these languages spoken by various nationalities have
been steadily pursued since that 1973 report, but the latest account
(Hoàng Văn ma 1975:1-7) makes no mention of the work of the Summer
Institute of Linguistics in South Vietnam between 1957 and 1975.

In addition to training courses for in-service cadres and research
workers and writings on different topics in grammar and vocabulary, the
Institute of Linguistics in Hanoi has issued monographs, organised
lectures, seminars and short-term courses, to call people's attention
to the problem of preserving the purity and clarity of Vietnamese, and
to disseminate essential knowledge about Vietnamese.

8.  Vietnamese has assumed every function of a *langue de culture*,
serving the national community in every field of endeavour - government,
law, diplomatic relations, the press, radio and television, education,
science and technology.  The Vietnamese lexicon, not only rich but also
subtle, has expressive words as well as abstract words and thus can
"adequately express every modern idea and feeling", its development
being "both quantitative and qualitative" (Nguyễn Kim Thản 1975:6).

As pointed out in Professor Nguyễn Kim Thản's overview (1975:1-14),
the policy and guidelines of the Lao-động - now renamed Cộng-sản
*'Communist'* - Party, on one hand, and President Hồ Chí Minh's model as
well as his own contributions to the national language, on the other
hand, have shown the serious road to the conscious development and
unification of the Vietnamese language.  One of the immediate tasks in
1975 was said to be the uniformisation of scientific and technical
terminology in each discipline, among various disciplines and particu-
larly between North and South.  This problem was considered "more urgent
than that of unifying vocabulary in daily life" (p.14).  The time had

also come to define the system of phonological standards, which should
"be soon used in the schools, over the radio, in TV programs and on the
stage." (p.14).  At the same time the problem of improving the quốc-ngữ
script was said to have to be prepared for the "decisive period".

     Undoubtedly, now that the country has been reunified under one
political system, government policies regarding language planning and
enumerated in this paper will be further implemented so as to make the
Vietnamese language a "weapon of the revolution after it was liberated
by that revolution throughout three decades." (Nguyễn Kim Thản 1975:14).

     In non-dialectic terms the implementation of those well-conceived
policies is moving in a centripetal direction, that is, toward the
capital city of Hanoi.  The following quotes from the same influential
scholar are significant:

> The basic dialect must be that of the region which is the
> most developed culturally and which often is also the most
> developed politically and economically, also the region which
> has played the greatest part in the historical development
> of the nation - also the dialect enjoying the most prestige
> among the people and representing the direction in which the
> national language is moving.   (Nguyễn Kim Thản 1966:14)

> The development of literary Vietnamese through several centuries
> has proved that it is based on the language spoken in the
> very cradle of the nation and representative of the language
> of cultural Thăng-Long.  We can clearly see this through the
> poems by Nguyễn Trãi, Đoàn Thị Điểm and down to Nguyễn Du,
> and from our first works of prose down to the most famous
> prose texts in Vietnamese literature within the past few dec-
> ades.  We can also see this particularly significant phenomenon
> whereby the quốc-ngữ script, which had been first used in
> Saigon, actually did not become widely used among the nation
> until the Đông-kinh Nghĩa-thục school in Hanoi disseminated
> it as the new system of writing.  Newspapers and novels,
> also born in Saigon, did not become firmly rooted in the
> cultural and intellectual life of the nation and did not
> positively influence the national language until those
> products got published in Hanoi, that is to say, in the uni-
> fied literary language of the entire country.   (Nguyễn Kim
> Thản 1976:12)

     If language planning "as a rational and technical process informed
by actuarial data and by ongoing feedback is still a dream" (Fishman
1970:111),  then in the case of Vietnam, even if it had been a "far-
fetched" dream three decades or so ago, parts of that dream are becoming
a reality now in late 1976.

*N O T E S*

1.  Neustupny (1970) distinguishes four problems: the **code selection** problem, involving policy decisions by authorities in control of power; then the second step broken down in two parts, the solution of the problem of the stability of the selected code, requiring **codification** (by means of dictionaries, grammars, spellers, punctuations, pronunciation guides, etc.), and that of the problem of expansion requiring **elaboration** (via nomenclatures, thesauruses, etc.). Differentiation involves **cultivation** through the preparation of style manuals, and the subsidisation of literary creativity in a variety of genres for various purposes and audiences.

2.  As in giữ gìn sự trong sáng của tiếng Việt *'preserving the purity and clarity of Vietnamese'* instead of làm cho tiếng ta luôn luôn trong sáng *'make our language always pure and clear'* (p.94).

3.  Except in Hanoi all the other schools in North Vietnam in 1966 were still using traditional grammar books (Hồng Dân 1966:58-63).

4.  See for instance Nguyễn Đình-Hoà, *Bài giảng Ngữ-học Nhập-môn* (Saigon: Đại-học Văn-khoa, 1962), 169-86.

5.  The bi- and tri-lingual glossaries are listed in Đức Kỳ (1973:31-5).

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