

**EDUCATING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES THROUGH TAY’S NOM
POETRY FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN VIET BAC AREA OF VIETNAM**

Ngo Thi Thu Trang

(Faculty of Philology - University of Education - Thai Nguyen University - Vietnam)

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2022.0384>

ABSTRACT

Tay’s Nom poetry is a valuable cultural heritage of Vietnam’s ethnic minorities. Researching the current situation and proposing solutions to educate traditional cultural values through Tay’s Nom poetry for ethnic minority students in Viet Bac area is a very important and meaningful task. To serve our research problem, we use a number of research methods, such as interdisciplinary approach, survey, statistics, interview, objective observation, document research... From the survey results on the current situation of traditional culture value education through Tay’s Nom poetry for ethnic minority students in Viet Bac area, we found that there are still many shortcomings such as few sources of documents for the students and teachers. Besides, the cultural space to help preserve and disseminate Tay’s Nom poetry has been narrowed, educational forms in schools are not really effective... From the survey results, we propose a number of measures to improve the effectiveness of traditional culture value education through Tay’s Nom poetry for students of ethnic minorities in Viet Bac area of Vietnam.

Key Words: Tay’s Nom poetry, ethnic minorities, education, traditional culture, students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Viet Bac area (Vietnam) includes 6 mountainous provinces of Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen. This area has many ethnic minorities living together and Tay ethnic group accounts for the largest number. Each ethnic group has its own cultural characteristics, contributing to a rich and diverse cultural area. In the book *Literature of Vietnam’s Ethnic Minorities before the August Revolution, 1945*, Phan Dang Nhat affirmed that “*the literature of ethnic minorities in our country is very rich and diverse... closely together to develop harmoniously and create a unified and diverse multi-ethnic literature*” [1; p.4]. The six northern mountainous provinces of Viet Bac area have a treasure of folklore of great quantity and value. In particular, Tay’s Nom poetry is considered a valuable cultural and spiritual heritage in the life of the people of Viet Bac area.

Tay’s Nom poetry has a special place in the cultural life of the ethnic minority community in Vietnam. It is an important and unique part that makes up the cultural value of Tay ethnic group - an ethnic minority group with the largest population among the ethnic minorities in Vietnam. Tay’s Nom poetry crystallizes spiritual cultural values, practical experiences, behavioral experiences, customs and practices, etc. of Tay people over many generations. Educating traditional cultural values for ethnic minority students in Viet Bac area needs to help students gain knowledge and appreciate their own culture, thereby contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural values.

Tran Van Giau said: *“Talking about value means the desire to affirm the positive side, the front side. It includes the view that value is associated with the right thing, the good thing. It refers to what is capable of motivating people to act and reach out”* [2, p.50]. Thus, talking about traditional cultural values means talking about good things with positive meanings that have been maintained in a long historical process and are worthy of respect, preservation and promotion. Through Tay’s Nom poetry, it is possible to educate ethnic minority students in Viet Bac area with cultural values, such as patriotism, respect for the community; the spirit of upholding family cultural values; the spirit of upholding justice; studiousness; the spirit of respecting people and the beliefs and customs of their community...

Nguyen Thi Hue also pointed out the trends of cultural change of the ethnic groups in the North of Vietnam as follows: *“The culture of the ethnic groups in the North includes sustainable values and quintessence of the ethnic communities. It is the crystallization of the knowledge and understanding of the people of different ethnic groups accumulated over thousands of years of building and defending the country”* [3, p.561]. The traditional cultural values of Tay’s Nom poetry have been studied through a number of works. Hoang Trieu An, a Tay researcher, has collected and introduced the achievements of *“Han Nom Literature of Tay ethnic group”*. He affirmed that this literary section *“will contribute to enriching the multi-ethnic literature of Vietnam”* [4, p.640]. Hoang Phuong Mai - an officer of the Vietnam Institute of Han-Nom Studies - has surveyed the written Tay’s Nom poetry currently kept at the Institute of Han-Nom Studies and also said that *“it is also a proof of the creative efforts of the Vietnamese people and the sense of preserving and passing on the good values left for the future generations of the predecessors”* [5, p.9]. In Tay Poetry - Origin, development and genre, Vu Anh Tuan evaluated the value of Tay’s Nom poetry as *“a great legacy among the total number of poetic works in the mountainous areas”* [6, p.33]. Luc Van Pao said: *“Tay-Nung’s poetry is a mirror that reflects the real life and aspirations of the community...”* [7, p.293]. In the research works on Tay’s Nom poetry, the authors agree that this literature represents many valuable traditional cultural values of Tay people in particular and of the ethnic minorities in particular. Some articles have mentioned the value of Tay’s Nom poetry as well as ethnic minority literature such as: *“Preserving and promoting the values of traditional ethnic minority literature - Some lessons from India”* (Tran Thi Ngoc Anh, Ngo Thi Thu Trang) [8]; *“Characteristics of female characters in some Tay’s Nom poems”* (Ngo Thi Thu Trang, Nguyen Thi Hong Hao) [9]; *“Learning about family behavior through some Tay’s Nom poems”* (Hoang Thi Mai, Ngo Thi Thu Trang) [10], *“A few features about male characters in some Tay’s Nom poems”* (Ngo Thi Thu Trang) [11], *“Learning about traditional cultural values through some Tay’s Nom poems”* (Ngo Thi Thu Trang, Dinh Thi Ha) [12]... Through published research works, it can be seen that the issue of traditional cultural values of Tay’s Nom poetry has been studied. However, the issue of educating those traditional cultural values for ethnic minority students has not been focused on at present and it is still an issue that needs further research. In this article, we will refer to the current situation and some solutions to educate traditional cultural values through Tay’s Nom poetry for ethnic minority students in 6 mountainous provinces in Viet Bac area of Viet Nam.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

To perform the tasks and achieve the research purposes, we used the following methods: survey method, statistics method, interview method, objective observation method; methods of document research, analysis and synthesis... The methods of survey, statistics, interview and

objective observation are used to collect opinions of students and teachers. We gathered the responses to these surveys and interviews to understand the current situation and serve as a basis for proposing appropriate solutions. On the basis of studying relevant documents and collecting survey and statistical results, we analyzed, synthesized and evaluated the data to make comments and assessments which serve our research purposes.

We designed questionnaires and survey forms, and conducted surveys and interviews with teachers and students in 6 provinces of Viet Bac area, namely Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen. We combined forms such as answering questionnaires and face-to-face interviews; sending forms by post to teachers and students of schools; gathering opinions by email, phone; using Google Form... We have collected opinions from 300 teachers of Philology and 600 students in schools in 6 mountainous provinces of Viet Bac area. The schools we surveyed and interviewed had over 90% of students from ethnic minorities (of which Tay ethnic group was the most).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The results of the survey with teachers

We conducted a survey and interviewed 300 teachers of Philology at secondary schools in 6 mountainous provinces of Viet Bac area (including Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen). These teachers have worked in mountainous provinces for many years and have extensive experience in educating ethnic minority students.

We have surveyed and interviewed teachers for their opinions through the following questionnaire:

Table 1: Teacher's opinion form

No.	Questions
1	Please evaluate the goal, role and importance of the education of traditional cultural values for ethnic minority students at the school where you work.
2	In your opinion, what traditional cultural values can be taught through Tay's Nom poetry to students?
3	Please evaluate the current situation of integrating traditional culture value education activities into the subjects of the program.
4	Please evaluate the effectiveness of solutions in educating students about traditional cultural values through Tay's Nom poetry.
5	In the following groups of solutions, what do you think are important groups of solutions that need to be prioritized to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of Tay's Nom poetry? (Group of educational solutions; Group of language and culture preservation solutions; Group of communication solutions; Group of solutions to preserve the environment that nurtures the cultural values of ethnic minorities)
6	What has your school done to teach traditional cultural values through Tay's Nom poetry to ethnic minority students?
7	What works of Tay's Nom poetry in the locality where you live do you know?
8	Where do you know the works of Tay's Nom poetry (through books, local performances...)?

9	In your opinion, what are the values of Tay’s Nom poetry of Tay ethnic group?
10	In your opinion, should Tay’s Nom poetry be included in the local literature program at your school? Why?
11	What do you think about the role of education in preserving and promoting the values of Tay’s Nom poetry?
12	In your opinion, what should the school do to attract students’ interest in the works of Tay’s Nom poetry?

- Teachers believe that the goal and role of educating traditional cultural values for ethnic minority students are to provide knowledge about the beautiful traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities; form in students a positive attitude to preserve and promote the traditional cultural values of the community; form in students the behavior of preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of their community; contribute to building an advanced school culture imbued with national identity; contribute to the comprehensive development of the student’s personality; form in students habits and behaviors in accordance with social standards; help students prevent and avoid the risk of social evils and school violence. Thus, teachers are very clear and specific about the goals and roles as well as affirm the importance of the education of traditional cultural values for ethnic minority students in the places where they work.

- Teachers believe that Tay’s Nom poetry can help educate students in traditional cultural values such as patriotism, national resilience, love of peace, solidarity, sense of community, kindness, tolerance, respect, affection, studiousness, industriousness, creative virtues in labor, sophistication in behavior, simplicity in lifestyle, family love, friendship...

- When assessing the current situation of integrating traditional culture value education activities into the subjects in the program (program content, teaching methods, form of teaching organization, interaction between teachers and students, assessment of teaching results), 64% of teachers rated at an average level; 20% of teachers rated weak/poor; 16% of teachers rated good. Thus, at present, the education of traditional cultural values in the subjects in the program has not been really interested and has not brought high efficiency.

- 100% of teachers assessed that the following forms of education, if implemented, would be effective in educating traditional cultural values through Tay’s Nom poetry for high school students of ethnic minorities: teaching Tay’s Nom poetry in the form of thematic activities, organizing for students to watch films and other art performances about the works of Tay’s Nom poetry; organizing reading sessions (printed books of Tay’s Nom poetry) extracurricular activities; contests; inviting local artists to sing/tell Tay’s Nom poems; organizing activities of collecting and recording Tay’s Nom poetry; organizing activities to experience, visit, survey and learn about reality in villages; organizing clubs...

- Evaluation of the importance of solution groups in preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of Tay’s Nom poetry: Group of educational solutions (100% of teachers rated it as very important); Group of solutions to preserve the environment that nurtures the cultural values of ethnic minorities (80% of teachers rated it as very important; 20% of teachers rated it as important); Group of language and culture preservation solutions (77% of teachers rated it as very important, 23% of teachers rated it as important); Group of communication solutions (62% of

teachers rated it as very important, 38% of teachers rated it as important). Thus, among the solution groups, the group of educational solutions is still considered the most important and necessary.

- Results of answering the question “What has your school done to teach traditional cultural values through Tay’s Nom poetry to ethnic minority students?”: Teaching Tay’s Nom poetry in the form thematic activities (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 10%; Never: 90%); Organizing for students to watch movies and other art performances about Tay’s Nom poetry (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 55%; Never: 45%); Organizing reading sessions of published books of Tay’s Nom poetry (Frequent: 0%; Sometimes: 34%; Never: 66%); Through extracurricular activities (Frequent: 0%; Sometimes: 47%; Never: 53%); Through the organization of contests (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 28%; Never: 72%); Inviting local artists to sing/tell Tay’s Nom poems to students (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 18%; Never: 82%); Teaching through cultural heritage (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 36%; Never: 64%); Through organizing activities to collect and record Tay’s Nom poetry (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 0%; Never: 100%); Organizing activities to experience, visit, and learn in villages (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 24%; Never: 76%); Through the club organization (Frequently: 0%; Sometimes: 0%; Never: 100%). Thus, it can be seen that the current schools have not paid attention to the education of traditional cultural values for students through Tay’s Nom poetry and Tay’s Nom poetry has not yet been considered an object that students need to learn.

- Most of the teachers know about Tay’s Nom poetry, but they only know the name and outline of the content. They do not have a rich source of material to learn. They also said that the performance of folklore works of Tay people has now been greatly reduced.

- Teachers all found that Tay’s Nom poetry has cognitive value, educational value, aesthetic value, historical value, religious and philosophical value, cultural value... and they all had a theme. It is recommended that Tay’s Nom poetry be included in the local literature program in local schools.

- Teachers also highly appreciated the role of ethnic minority students in preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of their community.

- 100% of teachers believe that education plays a very important role in preserving and promoting the values of Tay’s Nom poetry. According to teachers, in order to attract students’ interest in Tay’s Nom poetry, schools need to have appropriate teaching methods, innovate teaching methods, organize extracurricular activities, select good and meaningful works of Tay’s Nom poetry to teach, strengthen propaganda work, organize clubs to learn about Tay’s Nom poetry, link learning with local practical activities...

3.2. *The results of the survey with students*

We conducted a survey for secondary school students in schools of Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang and Thai Nguyen provinces (these schools all have over 90 % of students are ethnic minorities, in which Tay students account for the largest number). The number of students participating in the survey was 600 students. We used the following questionnaire to collect students’ opinions.

Table 2: Student's opinion form

No.	Questions
1	Can you speak your mother tongue (Tay language)?
2	Do you like to participate in activities and festivals... of Tay people?
3	Do you want to learn about the culture and literature of your community?
4	Do you enjoy reading the old stories of your community?
5	Do you want to have a subject at your school that helps you understand the culture of your community?
6	Have you ever listened to your grandfather/grandmother/father/mother... telling old stories and singing folk songs of your community?
7	Do you know the old stories of Tay people?
8	Have you ever heard of the phrase "Tay's Nom poetry"?
9	Have you ever listened to your grandfather/grandmother/father/mother... telling a story of Tay's Nom poetry?
10	Do you know any Tay's Nom poems?
11	Do you like reading Tay's Nom poems?
12	Do you want to include Tay's Nom poetry in the curriculum at your school?
13	Would you like to introduce Tay's Nom poetry to your friends?
14	What are your aspirations and suggestions to preserve the cultural identity of your community?

The number of students who can speak Tay language accounts for 70%. This is an advantage for teaching Tay's Nom poetry and students can access Tay's Nom poetry from the cultural life of their families and communities where they are living. Ethnic minority students love, pride and want to understand and learn about their culture and literature in general and Tay's Nom poetry in particular (82% of students want to participate in activities and festivals... of their community; 82% of students want to learn about their culture and literature; 89% of students want to have subjects in school that help them understand about their culture; 80% of students like to read the old stories of their community; 80% of students want to include Tay's Nom poetry in the school curriculum and introduce Tay's Nom poetry to other students). This is also a favorable condition for the introduction of Tay's Nom poetry into the curriculum because it comes from students' aspirations. However, their knowledge of ethnic minority literature in general and Tay's Nom poetry in particular is still limited (34% of the students have listened to their grandfather/grandparents/father/mother... telling old stories and singing folk songs of their community; 34% of students know the old stories of their community; 31% of students have heard of the phrase "Tay's Nom poetry"; 31% of students have listened to their grandparents/father/mother... telling a story of Tay's Nom poetry. Among the students who had heard Tay's Nom poems, most of them only know 1 or 2 works. They also express their concern about the gradual loss of language and culture of ethnic minorities in modern society. Students have the desire to learn Tay's Nom poetry in the school program so that they can contribute to preserving and preserving the language and traditional culture of their own people in particular and of ethnic minorities in the country in general.

3.3. Some measures

The most important thing is to educate students so that students can realize the meaning of preserving and promoting traditional cultural values of their community, from which they can

actively participate in activities. Philology teachers in ethnic minority areas mostly do not understand the language of that local ethnic group (maybe they are from other places come to work or they are also Tay people but can no longer speak Tay language). Therefore, it is necessary to foster language and knowledge so that teachers can access Tay's Nom poetry from the original Tay language and can impart knowledge and inspiration to students in helping them preserve and develop the values of Tay's Nom poetry. The works of Tay's Nom poetry are all handed down from a long time, so they are foreign to the thought of students. Therefore, in order to help students enjoy and actively receive, thereby love and want to preserve this treasure of the cultural heritage of their ancestors, the school needs to organize for ethnic minority students to access Tay's Nom poetry in many forms. To do that, teachers need to be enthusiastic, dynamic and creative. In this article, we suggest some teaching methods that Philology teachers can implement.

Project-based teaching: Teachers plan and organize for students to carry out activities, guide and evaluate students' projects... Students study documents about Tay's Nom poetry on their own, actively work in groups, self-explore, collect and process documents. Students develop their own group's activity plan. The groups carry out their own project and then report on the project output (reports, notes, articles, videos, audio tapes, brochures, journals, etc.). Products of the groups will be evaluated and commented on publicly. This form of teaching will help students learn a lot of knowledge and skills from real life and create excitement for students.

Teaching in the form of thematic activities: Teachers select and identify specific topics; develop specific activities that need to be implemented. Students will have to study the lesson under the guidance of teachers. Students can present and discuss in front of the class about content that the teacher orients. They can act and transform into characters to experience, from which to draw meaningful, concrete and practical lessons.

Organizing art performances: For some Tay's Nom poetry that has been made into plays, movies, etc., teachers can organize for students to watch those movies or plays. Then, teachers need to organize for students to discuss, comment, evaluate, write reports ... to help students focus on the content they need to learn, not just entertain.

Organize activities to strengthen students' reading culture: Teachers need to mobilize resources (published books of Tay's Nom poetry). Teachers can also orient students about resources (students can go to the local library, the library of colleges and universities in the area or borrow books from the indigenous intellectuals...). Reading activities also need to have specific orientations and requirements to bring about practical effectiveness (there must be evaluation, debate, drawing necessary lessons...).

Teaching Tay's Nom poetry as a compulsory content in the local educational program: At secondary and high schools, local educational content has a duration of 35 periods a year. The new general education program stipulates that local authorities and schools should take the initiative in selecting and supplementing some educational content and implementing educational plans suitable to the target audience and local conditions. It is reasonable and necessary to choose Tay's Nom poetry to be included in the local educational program in the mountainous provinces of Viet Bac area, to help ethnic minority students have knowledge and a sense of preserving as well as promoting traditional cultural values of their community.

4. CONCLUSION

Preserving and promoting the cultural values of ethnic minorities is a very important job. Especially in the current context of integration and development, many traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities are in danger of disappearance. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to orient

education to learn, preserve and protect traditional cultural capital through Tay's Nom poetry for students of ethnic minorities.

Through Tay's Nom poetry, it is possible to educate students with traditional cultural values such as patriotism, compassion, gratitude, honesty, solidarity, studiousness, etc. In the educational process, Philology teachers can be based on the audience, duration and requirements of the teaching program to flexibly choose and apply a number of measures, such as organizing a collection of works, storytelling contests, discussions, extracurricular activities, picnics...

In the 2018 general education program, the Ministry of Education and Training advocates for the Departments of Education and Training to actively develop local educational content. The local educational program in the new general education program will be implemented in a number of subjects, such as Literature, History, Geography, Music, Art, Technology... For secondary and high schools, the educational content of the locality has a duration of 35 periods/school year. From this time frame, localities will base on their actual needs to choose appropriate educational content for their locality. Currently, provinces/cities are gradually implementing the compilation of local programs. During the compilation process, the programmers will have to consider the appropriate time for each specific field. For 6 mountainous provinces of Viet Bac area, the introduction of Tay's Nom poetry into the school curriculum as a compulsory learning content will also actively contribute to helping ethnic minority students gain knowledge about culture and a sense of respecting, preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities.

Acknowledgment

The article is part of the project "Educating traditional cultural values through Tay's Nom poems for students of ethnic minorities in the Northern mountainous area", project code CS.2021.10 (Dr. Ngo Thi Thu Trang is the principal investigator; Host organization: University of Education – Thai Nguyen University)

REFERENCES

- [1]. Phan Dang Nhat, *Literature of Vietnam's Ethnic Minorities before the August Revolution, 1945*, Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, 1981.
- [2]. Tran Van Giau, *Traditional spiritual values of the Vietnamese nation*, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 1986.
- [3]. Nguyen Thi Hue, *Cultural change trends of ethnic minorities in the North of Vietnam*, Writers' Association Publishing House, Hanoi, 2019.
- [4]. Hoang Trieu An, *Han Nom Literature of Tay ethnic group*, National Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008.
- [5]. Hoang Phuong Mai, *Survey of Tay's nom poems currently kept at the Institute of Han Nom Studies*, Social Science Publishing House, Hanoi, 2019.
- [6]. Vu Anh Tuan, *Tay Poetry - Origin, development and genre*, Hanoi National University Publishing House, Hanoi, 2004.
- [7]. Luc Van Pao, *Luong Coi*, National Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, 1994.
- [8]. Tran Thi Ngoc Anh, Ngo Thi Thu Trang, "The Preservation and promotion of traditional literary values of ethnic minorities – Lessons from India", *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, No. 12/3, vol. 188, pp. 141-146, 2018.

[9]. Ngo Thi Thu Trang, Nguyen Thi Hong Hao, “Characteristics of female characters in certain narrative poems by Tay ethnic minority”, (in Vietnamese), *Journal of Literature Studies*, Vol. 4 (566), April 2019, pp. 19-28, 2019.

[10]. Hoang Thi Mai, Ngo Thi Thu Trang, “Learning about family behavior through some Tay’s Nom poems”, *TNU Journal of Science and Technology*, No. 12/3, Vol. 188, pp. 141-146, 2018.

[11]. Ngo Thi Thu Trang, “A few features about male characters in some Tay’s Nom poems”, *Journal of Literary Research*, No. 5 (579), pp.73-78, 2020.

[12]. Ngo Thi Thu Trang, Dinh Thi Ha, “Learning about traditional cultural values through some Tay’s Nom poems”, *Journal of Literary and Art Criticism*, No. 4/2021, pp. 39-45, 2021.