

High School Education in Vietnam

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Introduction

In this report, I will introduce high school school education in Vietnam in two aspects: time schedule and language instruction. When I had an international exchange with local high school students, I was surprised at how fluently students spoke English and Japanese and thus became interested in language instruction in Vietnam. As I continued my research, I discovered many unique differences between Vietnam and Japan in terms of education. This is why I chose high school education as my report topic.

Methodology

I interviewed three students majoring in English at Quoc Hoc High School. There are mainly three types of schools in Vietnam: private schools, which are usually low level, public schools, and gifted schools. Quoc High School is a gifted school in Hue, Vietnam. One of its famous graduates is Ho Chi Min, the founder of Vietnam.

Findings

1. Time schedule: Usually, in Vietnam, school starts at 7:00 and ends in 16:30. However, some schools are too small and do not have enough classrooms for all students. So students come to school, either only in the morning or only in the evening. For example, grades 1, 2, and 3 come to school in the

morning, and after they go home, grades 4 and 5 come for the evening.

2. Language instruction: Students select two languages among English, Japanese, and French. They mainly study grammar in classes and have a lot of writing tests, while there are few opportunities to speak. Also, instead of native English teachers, Vietnam instructors teach the English classes. Vietnamese language instruction is similar to that of Japan in this way. The difference in English instruction lies outside of school. Vietnamese children have more opportunities for exposure to English than Japanese children. For example, many Vietnamese children watch the Disney channel, a popular TV channel in the United States. Vietnam is unique in that the channel is not translated into Vietnamese but is broadcast in English. So children can study English while watching TV. There are also English centers where students can meet English people and communicate in English. One of the Quoc Hoc High School students said that her English skills improved greatly by going to the center when she was in elementary school. There are English language schools, but the tuition is expensive, so students practice English with each other. On top of that, there are many exchange programs for students and teachers as well as homestays in Vietnam. Two of the students I interviewed went to Singapore and Thailand as exchange students. They usually go to other Asian countries but not European countries because it is too expensive.

Table 1. Comparison of education in Vietnam and Japan

	Vietnam	Japan
School Hours	7:00～16:30 At small schools, students go from morning, some students come from the afternoon	8:30～18:00 (including club activities)
Language Education	Grammar based education students learn English outside school ex. go to English center, teach English with friends, watch English TV	Grammar based education students learn English at cram schools, English language schools
Language Selection	students choose two languages out of English, Japanese and French	High school students only learn English

Discussion

I was surprised by two things. First, there were small differences in language instruction at school between Japan and Vietnam. I thought students were fluent in English because they were doing something special at school. However, it turned out that students are actually improving their English skills by themselves. I thought if Japanese children did the same thing, their English might improve too. Second, there is a great gap in education. Even if students go to the same gifted school, those who major in English and those who do not have great differences in English skills. It is difficult to communicate in English with some students. Even if they do speak English, sometimes the accent is too strong to understand. I thought Vietnam aims to teach advanced English to only a small percentage of the people.

Conclusion

Two points were made clear through this report. First, there are few differences in English instruction at school between Japan and Vietnam. However, students in Vietnam actively study English outside the classroom by going to English centers and practicing English with their friends. Second, there is a great educational gap between students who go to gifted schools and those who do not. Small schools do not have enough classrooms so students can go to school only in the morning or in the afternoon. This leads to a difference in the amount of education a child receives.