

Factors Affecting Vietnamese Language Learning of Ethnic Minority Primary School Students (A Case Study of the Central Highlands Region in Vietnam)

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates factors affecting Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority primary school students in Vietnam's Central Highlands from teachers' perspectives. Grounded in ecological and sociocultural frameworks, four groups of influencing factors were examined: student-related, teacher-related, school-related, and family-community factors. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 436 primary school teachers through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that student-related factors, particularly attention span, motivation, and self-discipline, were rated most highly. Teacher-related factors play a key mediating role, while school conditions and family-community support provide foundational contextual support. The study underscores the need for holistic, coordinated educational policies to enhance Vietnamese language proficiency and promote equity for ethnic minority primary students.

Keywords: Influencing factors, Vietnamese language learning, second language acquisition, ethnic minority students, primary education.

1. Introduction

Language is a crucial tool for cognitive development, academic achievement, and social integration, particularly in multilingual and multicultural educational contexts. In Vietnam, Vietnamese serves as the official language of instruction at all levels of general education. However, for many ethnic minority students, especially those living in mountainous and remote regions, Vietnamese is not their first language but a second language acquired primarily through formal schooling. This

linguistic situation creates significant challenges for ethnic minority primary school students in accessing the curriculum, developing literacy skills, and participating effectively in classroom learning [1, 2].

The Central Highlands region of Vietnam is home to a diverse range of ethnic minority groups, including the Ede, Gia Rai, Ba Na, M'ng, and Xo Dang. Children from these communities often grow up in linguistic environments where their mother tongue dominates daily communication within the family

and the community, while exposure to Vietnamese before school entry is limited. Many ethnic minority students begin primary education with insufficient Vietnamese proficiency, which negatively affects their comprehension of instructional content and overall academic performance. Language barriers are a major contributor to educational inequality, lower learning outcomes, and higher dropout rates among ethnic minority students compared to Kinh (majority) students [3, 4].

From a theoretical perspective, language learning is deeply embedded in social, cultural, and educational contexts. Sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction, mediation, and cultural tools in language development [5, 6]. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory highlights that children's development is influenced by multiple interacting systems, including family, school, and community environments [7, 8]. Cummins' theory of linguistic interdependence further suggests that second language development is closely related to learners' first language proficiency and the quality of linguistic input they receive [1].

In the context of ethnic minority education in Vietnam, Vietnamese language learning outcomes are shaped by complex interactions among multiple factors. Empirical research has pointed to the influence of students' personal and linguistic characteristics, teachers' pedagogical competence, school conditions, and family-community support on language acquisition [9, 10]. Teachers play a central mediating role in the process of teaching Vietnamese as a second language, as their instructional methods, cultural understanding, and ability to differentiate instruction directly affect students' learning opportunities [3]. Supportive school environments and positive parental attitudes toward Vietnamese learning can help expand students' language use beyond the classroom [11].

Despite the growing body of literature on ethnic minority education in Vietnam, studies that systematically examine the relative influence of different factor groups on Vietnamese language learning, especially from the perspective of

primary school teachers in the Central Highlands region, remain limited. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to identify and analyze the key factors affecting the Vietnamese language learning of ethnic minority primary school students. Based on an ecological and sociocultural framework, the study focuses on four main groups of factors: (i) student-related personal and linguistic characteristics, (ii) teacher-related competence and pedagogical practices, (iii) school-related conditions and learning environment, and (iv) family and community context. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence to support educational policy-making, teacher professional development, and instructional strategies aimed at improving Vietnamese language proficiency and promoting educational equity for ethnic minority primary students.

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

Vietnamese as a Second Language for Ethnic Minority Primary Students

Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority students has long been recognized as a critical issue in Vietnam's education system. For most ethnic minority children, Vietnamese functions as a second language, while their mother tongue is used predominantly in family and community contexts. According to Cummins' (1979, 2000) linguistic interdependence framework, limited proficiency in the language of instruction can hinder not only communication but also the development of academic language skills, thereby affecting overall learning outcomes [1, 2]. This challenge is particularly evident at the primary level, where language plays a foundational role in literacy development and knowledge acquisition.

Empirical studies in Vietnam have consistently reported that ethnic minority primary students often begin schooling with inadequate Vietnamese proficiency, which negatively impacts reading comprehension, writing skills, and classroom participation [9, 10, 12]. Language practices imposed through formal schooling may

conflict with students' home language practices, creating tensions that influence learning motivation and identity formation [13]. These findings highlight the need to view Vietnamese language learning as a complex and context-dependent process rather than a purely linguistic issue.

Student-Related Factors in Second Language Acquisition

Student-related factors are widely acknowledged as central determinants of second language learning outcomes. Research in second language acquisition emphasizes the importance of learners' cognitive abilities, language aptitude, attention span, motivation, and learning strategies [14, 15]. For ethnic minority students, prior exposure to Vietnamese before school entry and the linguistic distance between the mother tongue and Vietnamese play a particularly important role [9].

Several Vietnamese studies indicate that students' motivation, interest, and active participation in learning significantly influence Vietnamese language proficiency [9, 12]. Gardner (1985) distinguished between integrative motivation, which reflects a desire to connect with the target language community, and instrumental motivation, which concerns practical benefits such as academic success [15]. Both forms of motivation are relevant to ethnic minority students learning Vietnamese. In addition, cultural identity and the maintenance of the mother tongue can both support and challenge second language development, depending on how these elements are recognized and integrated into classroom practices [16]. Student-related factors must therefore be considered within their cultural and linguistic contexts rather than as isolated individual characteristics.

The Role of Teachers in Mediating Language Learning

Teachers play a pivotal mediating role in the Vietnamese language acquisition of ethnic minority students. From a sociocultural perspective, teachers act as key agents who scaffold learning, mediate meaning, and create

opportunities for interaction in the target language [5, 6]. Ellis (2008) notes that the quality of teacher-student interaction and the extent to which teachers provide comprehensible input are critical determinants of second language development [17]. Teachers' awareness of the importance of Vietnamese language development, their pedagogical competence, and their ability to adapt instruction to students' diverse linguistic backgrounds are therefore crucial.

Studies in Vietnam have shown that teachers' beliefs and instructional practices strongly influence ethnic minority students' learning experiences [3, 18]. Teachers who understand students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are better positioned to design appropriate teaching strategies, differentiate instruction, and foster inclusive learning environments. However, challenges such as limited professional training in second language pedagogy and high teacher turnover in ethnic minority areas continue to affect instructional quality [19, 20].

School-Related Factors and Learning Conditions

School conditions constitute an important organizational context for language learning. Factors such as curriculum content, class size, availability of teaching materials, and administrative support have been found to influence the effectiveness of Vietnamese language instruction [19]. Large class sizes and multi-ethnic classrooms can pose challenges for individualized instruction, particularly for students with limited Vietnamese proficiency [20].

In ethnic minority regions, inadequate facilities and limited access to teaching resources further constrain teachers' ability to implement interactive and student-centered approaches [4]. Conversely, schools that provide supportive learning environments, adequate teaching equipment, and institutional encouragement for teachers are more likely to foster positive language learning outcomes [19].

Family and Community Influences on Language Learning

Beyond the school context, family and community environments play a significant role in shaping students' language use and learning opportunities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory emphasizes that children's development is influenced by interactions across multiple systems, including the family, school, and community [7, 8]. For ethnic minority students, the language used at home and in the community directly affects exposure to Vietnamese and opportunities for practice outside the classroom.

Research indicates that parental awareness, encouragement, and attitudes toward Vietnamese learning significantly support students' language development [4, 11]. However, socio-economic constraints and limited Vietnamese proficiency among parents may reduce their ability to support children's learning at home. Recent studies stress the importance of respecting and preserving students' mother tongues, arguing that additive bilingual approaches can enhance both linguistic and academic development [13, 21].

Research Gaps and Conceptual Framework

Although previous studies have examined various aspects of Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority students, most research has focused on individual factors or specific regions. There remains a lack of comprehensive empirical studies that systematically analyze the relative influence of multiple factor groups, within a unified ecological framework, from the perspective of primary school teachers in the Central Highlands region. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts an ecological and sociocultural approach drawing on Bronfenbrenner [7, 8], Vygotsky [5], and Van Lier [22] to examine the key factors affecting Vietnamese language learning. The study conceptualizes language learning as embedded within multiple interconnected systems, ranging from individual learner characteristics to broader social and institutional contexts.

Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design. A structured survey questionnaire with 28 Likert-scale items was used to measure teachers' perspectives on factors affecting Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority primary school students. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). The study was approved by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam and Tay Nguyen University.

Participants

The research sample consisted of 436 primary school teachers currently teaching in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam, an area with a high population of ethnic minority students. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. Among the 436 teachers, 89 were ethnic minority teachers and 347 were Kinh teachers. Female teachers accounted for 87.39% ($n = 381$) and male teachers for 12.61% ($n = 55$), reflecting the gender distribution of the primary teaching workforce in Vietnam. Teachers were selected as survey subjects because of their central role in Vietnamese language instruction and their capacity to observe and evaluate students' language competence, learning attitudes, and classroom conditions. All participants were voluntary, provided informed consent, and were guaranteed anonymity.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 32 initial items, later reduced to 28 items following reliability analysis. Items were divided into four factor groups: (1) student-related factors (11 items), (2) teacher-related factors (6 items), (3) school-related factors (6 items), and (4) family-community factors (5 items). The instrument was developed through a systematic process grounded in relevant literature, drawing on established frameworks for second language acquisition [14, 17] and ecological approaches to language learning [7, 22], as well as Vietnamese-specific studies [9, 23]. Each item was rated on a

5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not influential) to 5 (very influential).

In Phase 1, a preliminary questionnaire was piloted with 50 volunteer teachers from five Central Highlands provinces to ensure item relevance and clarity. In Phase 2, in-depth interviews with five teachers in Dak Lak Province were conducted to verify that scale items reflected real classroom conditions. The final questionnaire was validated for reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80 for all subscales) and content validity before the main data collection.

Research Procedure

The study adhered to ethical principles and obtained permission from the participating schools and local education authorities. Paper-based questionnaires were distributed in person to teachers during school hours, and written

consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Data were collected during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics v.27 was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), were computed for each item and each factor group. Items were ranked within each factor group according to their mean scores to identify the most influential factors as perceived by teachers.

3. Results

The Central Role of Student-Related Factors

Table 1 presents teachers' perceptions of the influence of student-related factors on improving Vietnamese language proficiency among ethnic minority primary students.

Table 1. Influence of the Student Factor Group on improving Vietnamese language proficiency of ethnic minority primary students.

No.	Factors	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
1	Ethnic minority students' Vietnamese proficiency prior to schooling	4.22	0.81	3
2	Characteristics of ethnic minority students' mother tongue	4.13	0.80	5
3	Students' memorization ability	4.23	0.74	2
4	Students' language aptitude	4.13	0.80	5
5	Students' intelligence	4.03	0.83	6
6	Students' attention span in learning	4.26	0.74	1
7	Students' learning methods	4.14	0.77	4
8	Ethnic minority students' living environment	4.22	0.78	3
9	Ethnic minority students' motivation and interest in learning Vietnamese	4.23	0.72	2
10	Students' activeness and self-discipline in learning	4.26	0.80	1
11	Students' ethnic cultural identity	4.03	0.84	6

The Mediating Role of Teacher-Related Factors

Table 2 presents teachers' perceptions of the influence of teacher-related factors on the development of Vietnamese language proficiency.

Table 2. Influence of the Teacher Factor Group on the development of Vietnamese proficiency of ethnic minority primary students.

No.	Factors	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
1	Teachers' awareness of the role of developing Vietnamese proficiency for ethnic minority students	4.18	0.84	1
2	Teachers' methods of teaching Vietnamese to ethnic minority students	4.13	0.87	2
3	Ability to apply information technology in teaching (multimedia resources)	3.95	0.84	5
4	Teachers' understanding of the culture, customs, and language of ethnic minorities	4.04	0.81	3
5	Ability to differentiate instruction according to the Vietnamese proficiency of each student group	4.03	0.81	4
6	Stability in teachers' work at schools with many ethnic minority students	4.04	0.82	3

School-Related Factors as Organizational Conditions

Table 3 presents teachers' perceptions of the influence of school-related factors on the development of Vietnamese language proficiency.

Table 3. Influence of School-Related Factors on the Development of Vietnamese Language Proficiency of Ethnic Minority Primary Students.

No.	Factors	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
1	Content and curriculum of Vietnamese subject at primary level	4.00	0.90	3
2	Number of students in a class (Class size)	4.11	0.82	1
3	Multi-ethnic composition in a class	3.99	0.88	4
4	Concern and attention of school administrators	3.89	0.89	5
5	School facilities and teaching equipment	4.08	0.88	2
6	Allowance (funding) policy for teachers teaching extra Vietnamese periods	3.81	0.96	6

Family and Community Factors as Expanded Language Environments

Table 4 presents teachers' perceptions of the influence of family and community factors on the development of Vietnamese language proficiency.

Table 4. Influence of the Family and Community Factor Group on the development of Vietnamese proficiency of ethnic minority primary students.

No.	Factors	Mean (M)	SD	Rank
1	Parents' and community's awareness of their children's Vietnamese learning	4.24	0.81	2
2	Parents' and community's concern and encouragement regarding their children's Vietnamese learning	4.30	0.80	1
3	Socio-economic status of the community	4.06	0.79	5
4	Language used by the student's family and community in daily communication	4.22	0.84	3
5	The Vietnamese proficiency of students' parents	4.18	0.83	4

4. Discussion

As shown in Table 1, all student-related factors received relatively high mean scores ($M > 4.0$), indicating that teachers perceive student characteristics as having a strong influence on Vietnamese language learning outcomes. This underscores the central role of the learner in the process of acquiring Vietnamese as a second language.

Among the listed factors, students' attention span in learning ($M = 4.26$) and students' activeness and self-discipline in learning ($M = 4.26$) ranked highest. Teachers consider learners' behavioral engagement and self-regulation to be the most critical determinants of Vietnamese language development. From a sociocultural perspective, active participation and sustained attention enable learners to engage more effectively in mediated classroom interactions, which are essential for second language acquisition [5, 6]. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that ethnic minority students who demonstrate higher levels of learning engagement

tend to achieve better Vietnamese language outcomes [9].

Closely following these factors, students' memorization ability ($M = 4.23$) and students' motivation and interest in learning Vietnamese ($M = 4.23$) were also ranked highly. Memorization plays a particularly important role at the primary level, where vocabulary acquisition and basic language structures form the foundation of language proficiency. Gardner (1985) established that both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are key predictors of second language success, especially in contexts where learners have limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom [15]. Krashen (1982) similarly noted that affective factors, including motivation, directly influence the degree to which learners can take advantage of language input [14].

In addition, students' Vietnamese proficiency prior to schooling ($M = 4.22$) and students' living environment ($M = 4.22$) both ranked third. This highlights the importance of early language exposure and the broader linguistic environment

in shaping students' readiness for formal Vietnamese instruction. Many ethnic minority children enter primary school with minimal exposure to Vietnamese, placing them at a disadvantage compared to Kinh students [3]. These results support Cummins' (1979) theory of linguistic interdependence, which emphasizes the role of prior language experiences in second language development [1].

By contrast, students' intelligence ($M = 4.03$) and students' ethnic cultural identity ($M = 4.03$) received the lowest rankings, though mean scores remained above the neutral level. The relatively lower ranking of cultural identity may reflect a tendency among teachers to view language learning primarily through a pedagogical and cognitive lens. However, previous research has emphasized that cultural identity and mother tongue maintenance can play a supportive role in second language learning when appropriately integrated into instructional practices [13, 16]. The findings in Table 1 align with sociocultural and ecological perspectives, which view learners as active agents whose engagement interacts with instructional and environmental conditions to shape language development [7, 8].

As shown in Table 2, all teacher-related factors received high mean scores ($M > 3.95$), confirming that teachers perceive their professional roles and instructional practices as having a substantial impact on students' Vietnamese language learning. This reinforces the view that teachers act as key mediators in second language acquisition [5, 6].

Teachers' awareness of the role of developing Vietnamese proficiency for ethnic minority students ranked highest ($M = 4.18$). When teachers recognize the importance of language development, they are more likely to adopt appropriate pedagogical strategies, allocate instructional time effectively, and provide targeted support for learners with limited Vietnamese proficiency. This finding aligns with previous studies showing that teachers' beliefs significantly shape classroom practices and learning opportunities for ethnic minority students [3, 18].

Teachers' methods of teaching Vietnamese to ethnic minority students ranked second ($M = 4.13$). Effective methods, including scaffolded instruction, contextualized language use, and interactive activities, enable students to engage meaningfully with Vietnamese as a second language. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) established that scaffolding, through which more competent others support learners in completing tasks just beyond their current ability, is fundamental to language development [25]. This result is consistent with sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of guided interaction and instructional mediation in language development [6].

Teachers' understanding of ethnic minority culture, customs, and language and teachers' stability in working at schools with many ethnic minority students both ranked third ($M = 4.04$). Teachers who are familiar with students' cultural backgrounds are better able to create inclusive learning environments and bridge the gap between students' home languages and Vietnamese [18]. Teacher stability is also important, as it allows accumulated contextual knowledge and refined instructional practices, particularly in disadvantaged and remote areas [4].

The ability to differentiate instruction ($M = 4.03$) and the ability to apply information technology in teaching ($M = 3.95$) received slightly lower rankings. These lower scores may reflect practical constraints such as large class sizes, limited teaching resources, and insufficient professional training in differentiated instruction and educational technology in ethnic minority regions [19, 20]. Professional development programs should therefore focus not only on improving teaching methods but also on enhancing teachers' awareness of second language pedagogy, cultural competence, and long-term engagement in ethnic minority educational contexts. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) demonstrate that effective teacher professional development is characterized by content focus, active learning, collaboration, sustained duration, and coherence with school goals [26].

As shown in Table 3, the mean scores of school-related factors ranged from 3.81 to 4.11, indicating a moderate to high level of perceived influence. Compared with student- and teacher-related factors, school factors were viewed as playing a more indirect but still essential role by providing organizational and institutional conditions for effective language instruction.

Class size received the highest mean score ($M = 4.11$), ranking first. Smaller class sizes allow teachers to provide more individualized attention, closely monitor students' language development, and implement differentiated instruction more effectively. Blatchford, Bassett, and Brown (2011) demonstrated that class size significantly affects teacher-pupil interaction and student engagement, with smaller classes being especially beneficial for students who face additional learning challenges [27]. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that large class sizes pose significant challenges for second language teaching, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms with ethnic minority students [19].

School facilities and teaching equipment ranked second ($M = 4.08$), highlighting the importance of adequate physical resources in supporting language learning. Access to teaching aids, visual materials, and appropriate learning spaces enables teachers to create more interactive and engaging lessons, which are particularly beneficial for students learning Vietnamese as a second language. In many ethnic minority regions, limited infrastructure and teaching resources continue to constrain instructional quality [4].

The content and curriculum of the Vietnamese subject at the primary level ranked third ($M = 4.00$). While the national curriculum is perceived as generally influential, its effectiveness depends on how well it is adapted to the linguistic needs and learning pace of ethnic minority students. May (2014) argues that multilingual education policies must allow for curriculum flexibility to accommodate the diverse language backgrounds of minority learners [28]. A standardized curriculum may not fully address these needs

unless accompanied by flexible implementation and localized adaptations [19].

Multi-ethnic composition in a class ($M = 3.99$) and the concern and attention of school administrators ($M = 3.89$) received lower rankings. The relatively lower score for multi-ethnic classroom composition may reflect mixed perceptions: while linguistic diversity can promote peer interaction and exposure to Vietnamese, it can also increase instructional complexity. The lower ranking of administrative attention suggests that teachers may experience limited institutional support in addressing the specific challenges of Vietnamese language teaching in ethnic minority contexts.

Finally, the allowance and funding policy for teachers teaching extra Vietnamese periods received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.81$). Inadequate funding and limited compensation may indirectly affect teachers' motivation and willingness to provide additional language support, especially in disadvantaged and remote areas. The findings from Table 3 indicate that school-related factors function primarily as enabling conditions. From an ecological perspective, schools constitute a critical mesosystem that mediates interactions between teachers, students, and instructional resources [7, 8, 31].

As shown in Table 4, all family and community factors received high mean scores ($M > 4.0$), indicating that teachers perceive the family and community context as playing a significant role in shaping students' opportunities to use and practice Vietnamese beyond the classroom. Vietnamese language learning is not confined to school settings but is embedded within broader social and ecological environments.

Parents' and community members' concern and encouragement regarding their children's Vietnamese learning ranked highest ($M = 4.30$). When parents value Vietnamese proficiency and actively encourage their children to learn, students are more likely to develop positive learning attitudes and sustained motivation. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) established

that parental involvement in education is driven by parents' beliefs about their role, their sense of efficacy for helping, and the invitations extended by teachers and schools [29]. This finding is consistent with ecological and sociocultural perspectives, which highlight the role of family involvement in children's language and academic development [7, 8].

Parents' and community's awareness of the importance of Vietnamese learning ranked second ($M = 4.24$). In ethnic minority communities, limited understanding of the role of Vietnamese in formal education may reduce parental engagement in children's learning processes. Previous studies have shown that when parents recognize the instrumental value of Vietnamese for academic success and social mobility, they are more likely to support children's language learning, even when their own Vietnamese proficiency is limited [4, 11].

The language used by the family and community in daily communication ranked third ($M = 4.22$), highlighting the importance of the linguistic environment for language exposure and practice. In many ethnic minority areas, the dominant use of the mother tongue in daily communication limits students' exposure to Vietnamese outside school hours, which can slow second language development. Cummins (2001) argues that additive bilingual approaches, where the mother tongue is maintained and supported while the second language is developed, promote both academic achievement and cultural identity [30]. Recent Vietnamese studies support this perspective, showing that mother tongue-based bilingual education can enhance both linguistic and academic development for ethnic minority students [13, 23].

The Vietnamese proficiency of students' parents ($M = 4.18$) and the socio-economic status of the community ($M = 4.06$) received lower rankings. Although socio-economic conditions are often associated with educational outcomes [35], teachers in this study appear to perceive attitudinal and behavioral factors as more directly influential than economic conditions alone. Positive parental attitudes and community

engagement may partially compensate for material disadvantages in the context of language learning. The findings in Table 4 demonstrate that family and community factors play a crucial role in expanding the Vietnamese language use environment for ethnic minority primary students [7, 8].

The results from Tables 1-4 reveal that Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority primary students is shaped by a dynamic and interrelated system of factors rather than by isolated influences. It should be noted that the following discussion is based on descriptive statistics and represents conceptual interpretations informed by the ecological and sociocultural frameworks rather than inferential statistical conclusions. Although student-related factors received the highest overall mean ratings, these factors are closely intertwined with teacher-, school-, and family-community-related conditions.

At the individual level, student-related factors such as attention span, motivation, and learning behaviors emerged as the highest-rated factors in teachers' perceptions. However, these learner characteristics do not develop independently. Teachers' pedagogical practices and professional awareness play a mediating role by directly shaping students' engagement and learning opportunities. For example, teachers' instructional methods, cultural understanding, and ability to scaffold learning can enhance students' motivation and active participation, thereby strengthening the impact of student-related factors. This relationship aligns with sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the mediating role of teachers in facilitating learners' cognitive and linguistic development through guided interaction [5, 6, 25].

School-related factors function as organizational and institutional conditions that either enable or constrain the effectiveness of teacher-student interactions. Factors such as class size, facilities, and curriculum content influence teachers' capacity to implement differentiated instruction and provide individualized language support [27, 28]. Large class sizes and limited resources,

commonly found in ethnic minority regions, may reduce the effectiveness of even well-designed teaching strategies. From an ecological perspective, schools operate at the mesosystem level, shaping interactions between learners and teachers and connecting classroom practices with broader educational policies [7, 8, 31].

Family and community factors further extend the language learning environment beyond the school context. Parental awareness, encouragement, and the language used in daily communication directly affect students' exposure to Vietnamese and their attitudes toward language learning. These factors interact with school-based instruction by reinforcing or weakening the language input students receive. When families value Vietnamese learning and provide emotional support, students are more likely to sustain motivation and transfer classroom learning into real-life communication [29]. Conversely, limited exposure to Vietnamese in the community may constrain opportunities for practice, regardless of school efforts [4, 11].

Taken together, the findings suggest a conceptually layered and interactive relationship among the four factor groups, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which conceptualizes child development as the result of interactions across multiple interconnected systems [7, 8, 31]. Student-related factors appear as the most proximally perceived influences on language learning outcomes, while teacher-related factors mediate the learning process, and school and family-community factors provide the broader structural and environmental context. These interpretations are exploratory given the descriptive nature of the analysis. Improving Vietnamese language proficiency among ethnic minority primary students requires a holistic and coordinated approach that simultaneously addresses all four levels of influence.

At the policy level, integrated language education policies are needed that address not only curriculum and assessment but also teacher professional development, class size management, and resource allocation in ethnic

minority regions [35]. Targeted investment in school infrastructure and teaching materials can create more favorable conditions for Vietnamese language instruction. At the school and teacher level, professional development programs should enhance teachers' second language pedagogy, cultural competence, and skills in differentiated instruction, while supporting teacher retention in ethnic minority schools [20, 26]. At the family and community level, programs raising parental awareness of the importance of Vietnamese language learning are crucial, alongside community-based bilingual education initiatives that respect and preserve students' mother tongues [23, 30].

This study has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling and reliance on teachers' perceptions may limit the generalizability of the findings.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the factors affecting Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority primary school students in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam from the perspective of primary school teachers. Drawing on an ecological and sociocultural framework, the study identified four major groups of influencing factors: student-related factors, teacher-related factors, school-related conditions, and family-community contexts.

Student-related factors, particularly attention span, learning motivation, activeness, and self-discipline, were perceived as the highest-rated factor group based on mean scores from the descriptive analysis. These results underscore the importance of learners' engagement and self-regulation in second language acquisition at the primary level [14, 15]. Teacher-related factors, including teachers' professional awareness, pedagogical methods, and cultural understanding, play an important mediating role in shaping students' learning experiences [18]. School-related factors function as enabling conditions, with class size, facilities, and curriculum content being particularly influential [19, 27]. Family and community factors significantly expand the

language use environment beyond school, with parental encouragement and daily language practices strongly affecting students' opportunities to practice Vietnamese [29, 30].

The findings suggest that Vietnamese language learning among ethnic minority primary students is the outcome of a complex and interrelated system of influences, consistent with ecological perspectives on child development and language learning [7, 8, 22, 31]. Improving Vietnamese language proficiency therefore requires a holistic, multi-level approach that simultaneously addresses learners, teachers, schools, and families, with coordinated strategies across all levels [32, 33, 34].

Suggest recommendations and future research directions

At the policy level, integrated language education policies are needed that address not only curriculum and assessment but also teacher professional development, class size management, and resource allocation in ethnic minority regions [35].

Targeted investment in school infrastructure and teaching materials can create more favorable conditions for Vietnamese language instruction.

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At the family and community level, programs raising parental awareness of the importance of Vietnamese language learning are crucial, alongside community-based bilingual education initiatives that respect and preserve students' mother tongues [23, 30].

Future research should incorporate students' and parents' perspectives, employ longitudinal designs, use inferential statistical analyses to establish relationships between factors, and examine the effectiveness of specific instructional interventions.

Studies in other ethnic minority regions of Vietnam would help validate and extend the findings.

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8. Author Declaration

The authors declare that this manuscript is original and has not been published previously nor submitted elsewhere for publication. The authors state that there is no conflict of interest regarding this study.