

Research Article

A Vietnamese Language Teaching Program for Foreigners via Vietnamese Traditional Music

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Abstract

Traditional music has an important function in the process of second language teaching. In the case of Vietnamese, traditional Vietnamese music and language share an intrinsic relationship. Traditional Vietnamese music has developed over millennia, becoming inseparably intertwined with the evolution of the spoken language. In simpler terms, the entire corpus of Vietnamese folk songs, proverbs, and musical compositions is crafted and practiced using Vietnamese phonetics. The creation of folk songs and the development of musical expressions occur in tandem, fostering richness and cohesion within the diverse tapestry of Vietnamese voices and musical culture.

The history of teaching Vietnamese to foreigners in Vietnam dates back centuries. Notably, since the establishment of the Vietnamese Department at Hanoi University in 1968, incorporating cultural and artistic aspects into the curriculum has been imperative. This aligns with global educational practices in foreign language instruction, where traditional arts are integrated to introduce culture and enrich vocabulary.

The objective of this study is to design a Vietnamese language teaching program for foreigners through lectures on traditional Vietnamese music, based on the Vietnamese language competency framework issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2015. The

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program shall focus on levels 5 and 6, with the following specific objectives: i) to identify content, vocabulary systems, and supplementary exercises on traditional music in the Vietnamese curriculum; ii) to develop Vietnamese language skills through listening and writing activities; and iii) to provide practical knowledge and supplementary exercises to enable students to explore traditional music performance venues in Hanoi and its surrounding areas.

Drawing on experience in teaching Vietnamese to foreigners and studying Vietnamese folk and traditional music, this research designs the essential components that should be included in building core content and vocabulary in a Vietnamese curriculum for foreign learners, aiming to enhance proficiency in the Vietnamese language and promote the dissemination of Vietnamese culture among learners.

This study uses Stephen Krashen's "Monitor Theory" of adult second language acquisition. Monitor Theory hypothesizes that adults have two independent systems for developing second language ability: subconscious language acquisition and conscious language learning. These systems are interrelated in a definite way, with subconscious acquisition being far more important.

Additionally, drawing on the 6-level competency framework issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, this research incorporates the Vietnamese teaching expertise of the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies and Vietnamese Language at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Within this six-level competency framework, this study will apply traditional music content to teaching at levels 5 and 6.

The aim is to identify the most essential and representative vocabulary system rooted in Vietnamese musical culture to enhance learners' proficiency in the Vietnamese language. We also incorporate traditional language teaching methods, including lessons on the four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. This study introduces a method for selecting vocabulary directly related to the field of ethnomusicology. This includes field research in various locales to provide comprehensive information – such as names, spatial context, and performance environments – for each genre of Vietnamese folk music. This approach helps learners gain a more profound understanding of both the Vietnamese language and the Vietnamese music performing arts culture.

The research results and findings will be analyzed through detailed content designed to achieve optimal results when designing traditional music content in teaching Vietnamese to foreigners. This study specifically focuses on three key aspects: i) clarifying the theoretical framework and context of Vietnamese traditional music; ii) selecting a representative vocabulary system of Vietnamese traditional music to incorporate into teaching materials, encompassing the names of folk song genres, traditional musical instruments, singing techniques, and performance forms of Vietnamese traditional music; and iii) integrating knowledge of Vietnamese traditional music into the process of teaching Vietnamese to foreign learners.

Instructors responsible for teaching Vietnamese to foreigners must possess a comprehensive knowledge base of traditional Vietnamese culture, including folk music. Throughout the teaching process—whether working with beginners or advanced students—the interrelationship between the Vietnamese language and traditional Vietnamese art and culture must not be ignored.

Traditional music serves as a fundamental identifier of a particular culture. Intricately woven into the cultural fabric of every individual, traditional folk music accompanies people from birth until they depart this world. It plays pivotal roles in religious ceremonies and traditional beliefs in Vietnam. Therefore, teaching Vietnamese to foreigners through the lens of traditional Vietnamese music performance not only equips learners with essential vocabulary and terminology related to Vietnamese musical culture but also serves the important purpose of introducing and promoting Vietnamese culture to a global audience.

Keywords: Traditional Music / Vietnamese Language / Second Language / Foreigner

Traditional music is indigenous music created, practiced, maintained, and developed by the Vietnamese community for thousands of years. It includes folk songs, traditional musical instruments, and various forms and genres of traditional music that serve the spiritual life of the Vietnamese people (who make up 85 percent of the population), as well as some typical folk music genres of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, all of which are passed down from generation to

generation. Vietnamese traditional music is an integral part of every Vietnamese person's life, deeply reflecting the soul, human personality, and unique characteristics of Vietnamese culture. Each musical melody-from folk songs to the resonant tones of gongs and various musical instrument systems like flutes-clearly conveys the essence of the Vietnamese people across different ethnic groups and cultural regions. Consequently, traditional music holds a significant position within the cultural, economic, and political life of the nation. UNESCO has recognized various traditional musical heritages, including the royal music of the Nguyen Dynasty (a form of traditional professional music used in the royal court during the Nguyen Dynasty); Central Highlands Gongs Cultural Space (a kind of folk music used in the cultural and religious life of some ethnic communities in the Central Highlands of Vietnam); Quan họ folk songs (a unique genre of love and reciprocal singing of Vietnamese people in Bac Ninh province and some localities of Bac Giang province of Vietnam); Ca trù singing (a genre of traditional Vietnamese chamber music, mainly in the Northern Delta region of Vietnam) by Vietnamese people; Xoan singing in Phu Tho (a folk song genre of beliefs and customs of Vietnamese people in Phu Tho province of Vietnam); Đờn ca tài tử in the South (a genre of folk but semi-professional music in the South of Vietnam); Chầu văn singing (a genre of folk music in the Hầu Đồng beliefs, belong to Three Palaces-Four Palaces beliefs of Vietnamese people in Northern Vietnam); The singing of the Tay-Nung-Thai people (a genre of folk music in the beliefs of the Tay-Nung-Thai people), and many others. These heritage sites have been proposed for inclusion in the urgent protection and maintenance list within the contemporary social and cultural life of the Vietnamese people. They serve as living proof that traditional music is one of the cornerstone elements of Vietnamese culture.

In the process of creating and preserving the heritage of folk and traditional music throughout history, Vietnamese traditional music can generally be divided into three systems: i) Music associated with the life cycle includes lullabies (for infants), nursery rhymes (for children), love-matching songs (common among Vietnamese people), and funeral music; ii) Music linked to labor includes labor chants, field chants, and coastal fishermen's chants, among others; and iii) Music intertwined with religious rituals and beliefs includes Buddhist music, music performed during Vietnamese village god sacrifices, and musics in the Four Palaces belief, etc.

Vietnam boasts a cultural tradition that spans thousands of years of formation and development. Despite various events, including wars and foreign invasions, Vietnamese

traditional music, in general, and ethnic groups in Vietnam, in particular, have managed to maintain and preserve their unique identities, according to To and Thuy.^{1,2} Numerous scholarly works have explored the position and role of music within a culture. Music and culture theory forges new connections between music and cultural studies, demonstrating how each field can mutually inform and enrich the other.³ And, according to Folkestad, Revill, and Roy, traditional music clearly shows the cultural identity of each community and ethnic group.^{4,5,6}

Traditional music, language, and cultural identity are intricately intertwined, making it crucial to incorporate this content into the Vietnamese language instruction program for foreigners. In essence, teaching traditional music within the Vietnamese language curriculum enables learners to gain a deeper understanding of Vietnamese culture and language.

This research was developed based on the Vietnamese language teaching experience of an ethnomusicologist, the first author of the paper, and was subsequently proposed for further research and experimentation by several language and cultural experts at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities. A review of relevant literature on teaching Vietnamese, as well as many other languages worldwide, reveals that no research has focused on identifying the content that conveys traditional music knowledge in second language teaching for foreign learners. Therefore, this finding holds significant scientific and practical implications, not only for Vietnamese learners but also as an important suggestion for research

¹ Thanh Ngoc To, *Notes on Culture and Music* (Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007), 636-645.

² Thuy Loan Nguyen, "Thinking About Vietnamese Vitality through Musical History," *Journal of Art Research* 5, 25 (1980): 25.

³ Alfred Fisher, "Music and Cultural Theory, by John Shepherd and Peter Wicke," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, 1 (1999): 141-145. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3341481>.

⁴ Göran Folkestad, "National Identity and Music," In *Musical Identities*, ed. Raymond MacDonald, David J. Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 151-162.

⁵ George Revill, "Cultural Geographies in Practice: Performing French Folk Music: Dance, Authenticity and Nonrepresentational Theory," *Cultural Geographies* 11, 2 (2004): 199-209, <https://doi.org/10.1191/14744744004eu302xx>.

⁶ William G. Roy, "Aesthetic Identity, Race, and American Folk Music," *Qualitative Sociology* 25, 3 (2002): 459-469, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016094232372>.

on teaching programs for other languages, since the nature of language is rooted in speech and the system of indigenous cultural knowledge. Through knowledge of traditional music, other cultural and artistic knowledge systems are introduced, helping learners gain a deeper understanding of the language and customs of the indigenous people. To ensure learners truly master the skills of a specific language, it is essential to incorporate and develop content on traditional music within second language teaching programs. Notably, with direct relevance to the issue of second language teaching, these systems are interrelated in a distinct way, with subconscious acquisition appearing to be far more important.

The 6-level Vietnamese proficiency framework, based on the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), is an essential tool for standardizing and improving the quality of teaching and learning Vietnamese for foreigners. It not only helps learners orient their learning process but also assists educational institutions in developing teaching programs, testing, and evaluation.

Specifically, two levels were used in this study, level 5 (C1): “Learners should be able to recognize and understand the implications of lengthy texts with a wide range of content. They should be able to express ideas fluently and spontaneously, without difficulty finding the right words; use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes; and write clearly, concisely, and in detail on complex topics, demonstrating the ability to organize text and effectively use transitional words and linking devices.” Level 6 (C2): “Learners should be able to easily understand almost all spoken and written texts. They should be capable of summarizing spoken or written information, reorganizing and presenting it logically, and expressing ideas very fluently and accurately, distinguishing subtle differences in meaning in complex situations.”⁷

According to the general standards of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities Hanoi includes content related to musical art, including traditional music, at various proficiency levels within its Vietnamese language instruction program for foreigners.

⁷ Ministry of Education and Training, *Circular No. 17/2015/TT-BGDDT Dated September 1, 2015* (Hanoi: The Minister of Education and Training, Vietnam, 2015), 1-8.

Methodology

Our research methodology is primarily based on pedagogical experimentation. We selected 30 students to teach in five short-term courses over a period of one year, following training programs based on agreements signed between Vietnam and Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea. The experiment period spanned from 2022 to 2025.

The data analyzed from this process, combined with presentation methods, question-and-answer sessions, and direct classroom discussions between teachers and students, were fully utilized. Simultaneously, homework assignments were given to learners to confirm findings regarding the potential of traditional music in promoting Vietnamese language proficiency and developing second-language vocabulary.

In the research and teaching process, traditional music content is interwoven with linguistic knowledge. Learners will participate in discussions and interviews in class to find ways to improve the quality of lessons on each specific topic. Simultaneously, this study employs an interdisciplinary approach, combining art research with methods of teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language, based on the experience and tradition of teaching Vietnamese to foreigners accumulated over decades at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Notably, the collaboration between a music ethnologist and a linguistics expert, both full-time lecturers at this university, facilitated and convinced the research process, evaluation, and problem identification.

Research Findings

1. Building Reading Materials: This is important content in teaching Vietnamese to foreigners because the required background knowledge is especially significant. According to Krashen, all of this knowledge constitutes contextual understanding, which-although challenging-is highly beneficial for second language learners. Indeed, comprehension may be at the heart of the language acquisition process: we may acquire language by understanding input that is "a little beyond" our current level of competence. This is made possible with the help of extra-linguistic context or our knowledge of the world.⁸

⁸ Stephen Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1981), 100-116.

The teaching process, combined with specific audio and visual illustrations, is an important source of knowledge that helps learners better visualize the relationship between Vietnamese tones and traditional Vietnamese folk songs, as well as the connection between folk songs and the melodies of musical pieces performed on traditional instruments. Here, we introduce basic knowledge about the typical folk song genres of the Kinh people, who make up 85 percent of Vietnam's population.

Traditional Vietnamese folk songs, as performed during leisure activities and work, will be presented and taught to students. Our teaching experience has shown that this content not only helps students focus on deepening their understanding of traditional music culture but, more importantly, enables them to grasp the relationship between musical melody and lyrics in folk songs, as well as the connection between spoken language and the language embedded in each folk song genre across Vietnam's distinct cultural regions.

Music related to religious rituals and beliefs is a particularly important part of Vietnamese traditional and folk music culture. As mentioned earlier, this category includes notable genres such as Buddhist music, music connected to the Four Palaces belief, and music associated with village tutelary god ceremonies. Regarding Buddhist music, its primary function is to convey Buddha's teachings and scriptures through various singing and recitation styles. Music in the Four Palaces religion is most notably represented by *Cầu vãn* singing in the Red River Delta.

The professional music genre reflects the creative thinking and development in Vietnamese music. Representative forms include *Ca trù* singing, *Xẩm* singing, *Đờn ca tài tử*, and various stage music genres such as *Tuồng*, *Chèo*, and *Cải lương* (Nguyen 2008, 2009). Among these, *Ca trù* singing has a long history (documented since the 15th century) and holds the highest artistic value. It is often associated with intellectuals and the feudal nobility. *Chèo* and *Tuồng* originate from village performances and were influenced by Western theater in the early 20th century, evolving into the rich and modern theatrical forms known today. *Cải lương* officially emerged and developed into a modern and culturally rich theater in the early 20th century. Additionally, we will introduce the characteristic folk song genres of other minority ethnic groups among the 54 recognized ethnic groups that have lived in Vietnam for centuries.

In the curriculum, it is important to convey to learners that, in many ethnic minority communities, love songs play a prominent role in weddings, especially in mountainous regions. According to the traditions of many ethnic groups, when the families of the bride and groom meet on their wedding day, they communicate through love and response songs. These songs not only convey moral lessons to the newlyweds about their roles as daughters-in-law or sons-in-law but also serve as a way for married women to express their experiences and emotions, sharing stories of love and hardship. In moments of personal reflection, these women may sit and sing, using this medium to confess their hearts, express their feelings, and confide in close friends.

Thus, these contents will be used to design reading, writing, listening, and speaking exercises for all three levels—levels 5 and 6. Accordingly, lessons at level 5 will feature simpler content, more common vocabulary, and easier language than level 6, helping learners gradually increase their knowledge of traditional Vietnamese music performance art. During the teaching sessions, we observed that students from Russia, Japan, and South Korea were particularly interested in these topics. They discussed and compared traditional folk songs from their respective countries, and the exploration of traditional music during these discussions captured the learners' attention, sharpened their focus, and enhanced the development of their Vietnamese language skills.

It is worth noting that, in folk songs, aside from expressing emotions among young people during the stages of love and response, these melodies are also used by older generations to instill values of patriotism, love for labor, appreciation of nature, and praise for exemplary individuals and good deeds. They foster positive relationships among family members, friends, and neighbors, especially in ethnic minority areas.

An essential component of folk music knowledge in teaching is the understanding that, in addition to music associated with the life cycle, there are also forms of music linked to labor and to religious rituals and beliefs. Music associated with labor holds a significant position.

These are the fundamental components of traditional Vietnamese music. However, accompanying and playing crucial roles in most of the aforementioned genres is the traditional musical instrument system. Traditional Vietnamese musical instruments can be classified into four families—string, wind, vibrating membrane, and self-resonant—based on the Hornbostel

and Sachs classification system.⁹ The names of traditional Vietnamese musical instruments, as well as those of some ethnic minority groups, will also be introduced as important cultural knowledge. This aims to develop learners' practical Vietnamese language skills and deepen their understanding of Vietnam's local culture.

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In fact, from 2022 to 2024, in teaching Vietnamese to Korean, Japanese, and Russian students, we received positive feedback when introducing knowledge about Vietnamese folk music into language instruction. The students' desire to listen to these music genres through CDs and VCDs, and to visit the regions where these folk music traditions originate, demonstrates that this teaching content is effective and has significant appeal for learners.

Also, according to Krashen, simple "free conversation" often fails to serve as optimal input because it is frequently not understood. The failure of free conversation to qualify as intake implies that second language teaching involves more than simply talking to students about topics of interest-something the profession has recognized since its inception.¹⁰

Overall, each folk song and traditional instrument, when taught, not only helps learners experience the relationship between musical pitch, melody, and speech but also enables them to better understand the knowledge and vocabulary related to traditional music and the folk music ecosystem in this region.

2. Building a Vocabulary System: When developing teaching materials, we can categorize them into a vocabulary system, enabling learners to gain a deeper understanding of Vietnam's traditional music genres. This scientific article will retain the original vocabulary in Vietnamese-the native language of this country's folk music genres-while also italicizing these words.

⁹ Thanh Ngoc To, *Introduction to Some Vietnamese Ethnic Minority Musical Instruments* (Ho Chi Minh: Publishing House of Arts and Ethnic Cultural Center of Ho Chi Minh City, 1995), 14-16.

¹⁰ Stephen Krashen, 100-102.

Table 1 Names of Typical Vietnamese Folk Song Genres

Vietnamese Name	English (Meaning)	Forms / Types
<i>Hát Ru con</i>	A type of lullaby found among most ethnic groups in Vietnam.	Solo
<i>Hát Ví Bắc bộ</i>	A type of call-and-response love song, popular among young people in Northern Vietnam.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Ca trù</i>	A genre of Vietnamese music featuring poetic lyrics and unique vocal techniques.	
<i>Hát Ví Giặm</i>	A unique call-and-response singing style originating from the Vietnamese people in North-Central Vietnam. This style has been recognized by UNESCO as a representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It can also be performed solo.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Đúm</i>	Types of Vietnamese folk songs including call-and-response and love songs, which are popular in the Red River Delta region.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Trống quân</i>		
<i>Hát Xoan</i>	A genre of ritual folk songs associated with the ancestor worship customs of the Vietnamese people in Phú Thọ province.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hò Đi cấy</i>	Folk songs and chants used in Vietnamese labor, popular in Central and Southern Vietnam.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hò khoan</i>		
<i>Hò Giã gạo</i>		
<i>Hát Quan họ</i>	A style of folk singing involving a call-and-response format, originating from Bắc Ninh province.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Chèo</i>	A unique traditional Vietnamese musical theater genre popular in Northern Vietnam.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Tuồng</i>	Traditional Vietnamese opera, known for its elaborate costumes and storytelling.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Nghệ thuật Cải lương</i>	A traditional Vietnamese musical drama genre. Popular in Southern Vietnam and based on the music of Đờn ca tài tử – a form of folk music recognized by UNESCO as a representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.	Solo or reciprocal
<i>Hát Chầu văn</i>	A unique genre of folk music associated with the Four Palaces worship tradition in Northern and Central Vietnam.	Solo or reciprocal

When learning Vietnamese, these are fundamental for assessing a learner's overall proficiency and their understanding of Vietnamese culture.

Table 2 Some Typical Musical Instruments of Vietnamese People

Vietnamese Name	English (Meaning)	Forms/Types
<i>Đàn Nhị, Hố</i>	A unique string erhu instrument, classified as a chordophone. It is used for solo performances, orchestral ensembles, and as accompaniment for traditional folk singing.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Đàn Bầu</i>	A unique monochord (one-stringed zither) known for its ethereal sound and classified as a chordophone. It is often used in solo performances, ensembles, and sometimes as accompaniment for folk songs.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Đàn Tranh</i>	A 12 or 15-string instrument classified as a chordophone. It is used for solo performances, in traditional Vietnamese orchestras, and sometimes as accompaniment for folk singing and poetry.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Đàn Tam thập lục</i>	A 36-string instrument Classified as a chordophone. It is primarily used in Vietnamese traditional orchestras and sometimes performed as a solo instrument or to accompany folk songs.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Đàn Đáy</i>	A traditional indigenous Vietnamese stringed instrument classified as a chordophone. It is a unique, defining characteristic of Ca trù singing. This instrument has three strings.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Đàn Nguyệt</i>	A two-stringed instrument classified as a chordophone. It is a defining feature of the Châu văn singing art in the Tứ Phủ (Four Realms) belief system. It is also performed solo and in ensembles within traditional Vietnamese orchestras.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Sáo Trúc</i>	A side-blown bamboo flute famous for its clear, soulful tones. It is classified as an aerophone and used as a solo instrument, in traditional orchestras, and as accompaniment for singing. It is typically 40–55 cm long with an oval blowing hole and 6–10 finger holes.	Solo, instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Trống Đẽ</i>	A double-sided small drum made of animal hide. It is classified as a membranophone and used primarily in traditional Vietnamese Chèo theater.	Instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble
<i>Thanh La</i>	A type of resonant instrument classified as an idiophone. It is similar to a small gong and used in traditional orchestras and some folk religious ceremonies in Vietnam.	Instrumental accompaniment, or orchestral ensemble

These instruments—though not an exhaustive list—are typical of the traditional music of the Vietnamese people and are regularly featured in Vietnamese cultural spaces. Another important aspect of vocabulary instruction for learners is the study of specific singing techniques.

Table 3 Names of Typical Singing Techniques in Vietnamese Traditional Music

Vietnamese Technical Name	English (Meaning)	Art of Use
Kỹ thuật <i>Đổ hột con kiến</i>	A unique singing technique used specifically in the art of Ca trù singing.	Ca trù singing
Kỹ thuật <i>Ếm hơn, nhả chữ</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng óc</i>	Unique singing techniques found in the Vietnamese Tuồng/Bội theatrical art.	Tuồng/Bội singing art
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng mé</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng hầu</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng ngực</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng ruột, gan</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Vang, rền, nền, nảy</i>	Unique singing techniques characteristic of the Quan họ folk singing art of the Vietnamese people in Bắc Ninh.	Quan họ singing
Kỹ thuật <i>Hát luồn, hát dẫn</i>		
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng thỏ</i>	Unique vocal techniques used for expressing high pitch in traditional Vietnamese folk songs.	Chèo singing art and other folk songs
Kỹ thuật <i>Giọng kim</i>		Chèo singing art and other folk songs

Over thousands of years, the Vietnamese people have created and practiced these singing techniques through various folk music genres. These condensed singing methods have become essential characteristic techniques that contribute to and enrich the theory of traditional Vietnamese music.

Table 4 Some Typical Songs of Ethnic Minorities in the Mountainous Regions of Vietnam

Vietnamese Name	English (Meaning)	Forms/Types	Ethnicity
<i>Khắp</i>	A unique genre of Thai folk songs found specifically among the Thai ethnic group in Vietnam.	Solo or chorus	Thai people
<i>Hát Then</i>	A genre of folk songs, primarily associated with the religious rituals of the Tay, Nung, and Thai people in Vietnam. This genre has been recognized by UNESCO as a representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.	Solo or chorus	Tay, Nung, Thai people
<i>Hát Cha chap</i>	Unique folk song genres reflecting the cultural identity of these specific ethnic groups in Vietnam.	Solo or duet	Ka Tu people
<i>Hát Xiêng</i>		Solo	Ka Tu people
<i>Hát Cơ lơi</i>		Solo or duet	Ka Tu people
<i>Hát Tơm</i>		Solo or chorus	Khơ mú people
<i>Hát Lù tấu</i>		Solo or duet	H'mông people
<i>Hát Cự xía</i>		Solo or duet	Hmong people

For most Vietnamese people, discussing the traditional arts of mountain-dwelling ethnic minorities must include their folk music genres. These genres form the cultural identity of the communities in this region. Although this list is not exhaustive, it reflects the typical cultural and artistic elements of these groups.

These are typical musical instruments, indispensable to the cultural and spiritual life of ethnic minorities in the mountainous regions of Vietnam.

Table 5 Vocabulary of Some Typical Representative Musical Instruments of Ethnic Minorities in the Mountainous Areas of Vietnam

Vietnamese Name	English (Meaning) Name	Forms/Types	Ethnicity
<i>Cồng chiêng</i>	Bronze musical instruments classified as idiophones. These are popular among ethnic minorities in Central and Western Vietnam and have been recognized by UNESCO as a representative Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.	Solo, duet or ensemble	Some ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands
<i>Khèn bè</i>	A polyphonic musical instrument classified as an aerophone and made from bamboo. It is popular among the Thai, Hmong, and several other ethnic minorities in Vietnam.	Solo, duet or ensemble	Thai and Hmong
<i>Trống hai mặt da</i>	A type of drum classified as a membranophone. It is used in the culture, entertainment, and religious rituals of most ethnic groups in Vietnam.	Solo, duet or ensemble	Most ethnic groups in Vietnam.

Developing Vietnamese Language Skills Through Listening and Writing Content

As partially described above, proficiency in Vietnamese requires a dual focus on both listening and writing skills, particularly on topics related to the lessons. We will design all of this knowledge for students to listen, speak, read, and write about at levels 5 and 6, as mentioned above, helping learners understand and develop the skills to use high-quality Vietnamese.

In terms of listening skills, the program will offer lessons that include introductions to each musical instrument, folk music genre, and performance technique.

Thus, with the approach of supervision theory and some direct experience in teaching second languages to foreigners, it becomes evident that supplementary activities involving cultural diversity, including traditional music, play an important role. According to Krashen's assessment: "Although I can certainly study grammar on my own, I would elect to attend a second language class if I were again abroad for some period of time in a country where I did not know the language; my intention would be to gain intake, from the teacher, the classroom exercises, and from my fellow students."¹¹

Moreover, during the listening instruction process, the program will seamlessly incorporate writing components. Students will be assigned essay-style homework to complete independently at home, which will subsequently be submitted to the instructor for review and feedback. This approach ensures that all content covered in Vietnamese listening exercises transitions into writing exercises, contributing to the development of students' Vietnamese writing skills, with a specific focus on traditional Vietnamese music culture. Each essay will be expected to be between 200 and 350 words in length. Importantly, the required writing structure will consist of an introduction, analysis, and conclusion, mirroring the structure of a literature study section or an essay section commonly found in language programs worldwide. We found that, by writing about traditional music content, learners demonstrated better focus and interest. Short essays and comparative studies of Vietnamese folk music and indigenous music from the learner's home country significantly contributed to fostering grammatical thinking and effective expression in Vietnamese writing skills.

Practical Knowledge and Supplementary Exercises: To Enable Students to Explore Traditional Music Performance Venues in Hanoi and Its Surrounding Areas

From the perspective of "Monitor Theory," along with the teaching experience of generations of Vietnamese educators, we believe that bringing second language learners to experience local areas is especially important. This not only promotes imagination and a desire

¹¹ Stephen Krashen, 116.

to explore but also helps learners more clearly identify elements of traditional Vietnamese music and the language associated with these art forms. In other words, enhancing practical language, visual, and audio experience activities will be crucial for the effective teaching of Vietnamese and other second languages to foreigners.

One practical and immersive approach that can yield positive results when incorporating traditional Vietnamese music into the curriculum for foreigners is to provide opportunities for learners to experience real-world performances at traditional Vietnamese music venues. This hands-on approach allows students to apply the vocabulary and musical cultural terms they have acquired in real-life contexts. It is a crucial aspect of this study, as students will have the opportunity to witness a wide array of traditional musical instruments, hear artists' explanations and performances of various folk music genres, and gain insight into the naming conventions and techniques associated with these musical forms. Additionally, students will directly immerse themselves in the attire and performance settings unique to each genre of folk music culture. The artisans and locations chosen for this study are expected to represent the rich and diverse folk music culture of the Vietnamese people, particularly in the North and the Northern Delta region, focusing on ancient villages near Hanoi.

Currently, in the realm of *Ca trù* singing, a traditional Vietnamese art form, there are approximately 769 individuals who possess the knowledge of the singing and dancing associated with *Ca trù*. Among these, 513 are recognized as *Đào nương* (female artisans), while 256 are proficient in playing the dual lutes and drumming. Of the 99 styles and compositions (melodies) of *Ca trù* recorded in ancient bibliographies, about 42 songs and seven dances are still practiced and preserved within the “living heritage warehouse” maintained by these artisans. Additionally, 99 relics linked to *Ca trù* are still conserved.¹² And there are hundreds of similar traditional musical art forms in most localities of Vietnam. It is noteworthy that, most of these traditional music genres can be experienced firsthand in Hanoi through institutions like the Institute of Music, the Cultural Village of Vietnamese Ethnic Groups, various art groups, clubs, and more.

¹² Vietnamese Institute for Musicology, *Report on Ca trù Singing Inventory Results in 2008* (Hanoi: Library of Vietnamese Institute for Musicology, 2008), 2-15.

This constitutes a rich and unique source of factual material. These cultural heritages can be considered “specialties,” many of which have become the embodiment and standard of culture within each ethnic group and region. This foundation can serve as the basis for conducting specialized and focused tours. In practice, visiting, traveling, and experiencing Vietnamese traditional music is a specialized and immersive endeavor that enables students to gain a deeper understanding of Vietnamese cultural identity, traditional music, and the associated vocabulary system.

Such experiences ignite excitement and curiosity among learners and enhance the quality of lessons by providing opportunities to directly listen to and witness traditional Vietnamese music being performed live-and even to interact with the artists. This practical exposure enriches learners’ knowledge of traditional national music culture, helping them develop a more in-depth understanding of related genres and vocabulary.

The artisans and locations chosen for this study are expected to represent the rich and diverse folk music culture of the Vietnamese people, particularly in the North and the Northern Delta region, focusing on ancient villages near Hanoi.

Conclusion and Discussion

Firstly, traditional music holds a significant place in the culture of any country or ethnic group, as emphasized by notable scholars.

This is a significant discovery by an ethnomusicologist made during the process of teaching Vietnamese to foreigners. Based on this, the research was conducted among experts in linguistics and culture to initiate an interesting study at a university.

To design teaching content for a specific area of Vietnamese culture—in this case, traditional indigenous music—we had to carefully consider our approach and the content to be taught. Based on the six-level Vietnamese language proficiency framework issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, we designed a program integrating traditional Vietnamese music into the teaching of Vietnamese to foreigners. From our teaching and research experience, we affirm that knowledge of musical arts makes a particularly important contribution to language development and enhances the understanding of Vietnamese among second-language learners. The basis for designing traditional art content also stems from

learners' interests; many students are eager to explore this subject and look forward to Vietnamese lessons related to traditional musical arts. After more than four years of research and practical teaching, we recognize that this area of knowledge is essential and should be widely taught to those seeking to learn the Vietnamese language and culture.

Secondly, in teaching Vietnamese alongside traditional music content, the relationship between the musical pitch and melody of folk songs and the spoken Vietnamese language plays a crucial role in effective pronunciation and language practice. Within a curriculum focused on the language of a particular country or ethnic group, learners aiming for true proficiency in the target language—that is, the language they are studying—should explore the culture and music associated with it. As previously noted, language and culture are not isolated; they are deeply interconnected. Indigenous languages serve as the foundation for crafting indigenous folk music, while folk and traditional music enrich the native language, making it more vibrant and compelling. For those aspiring to master Vietnamese, dedicating time to the study of folklore and traditions, including music, is essential. Vietnamese folk music, and by extension the music of its many ethnic communities, plays a role in nearly all cultural aspects of these communities. Music is present from birth until death, during folk festivals, and throughout the labor activities of indigenous peoples. It serves as a vital bridge connecting individuals with the sacred, and strengthening interpersonal bonds—including those between humans and deities—according to the spiritual beliefs of each ethnic group. Furthermore, in each of these cultural contexts, music exhibits distinct features tied to spatial, genre-specific, and artistic language. The richness and diversity of cultural genres and spaces offer a valuable source of vocabulary that enhances learners' proficiency in the target language. This vocabulary system must not be overlooked in the development and refinement of their language abilities.

Thirdly, the combination of visuals and sounds in Vietnamese folk songs, along with traditional musical instruments, plays a crucial role in promoting awareness of the Vietnamese language, culture, and art. This approach expands understanding and significantly improves learners' Vietnamese language skills. It is essential to further explore this topic, as Vietnamese folk music is exceptionally rich and unique, attracting many foreigners to study it in Vietnam. Some focus on learning specific traditional instruments, while others concentrate on mastering

folk melodies or singing genres within traditional Vietnamese theatrical arts. In some cases, they undertake comprehensive learning journeys. Each year, the Vietnam National Academy of Music sees a substantial number of foreign students enrolling in traditional music programs—ranging from undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral levels to shorter-term music training courses, typically lasting from six months to two years, offered by the Academy’s Music Teaching Center. However, from my perspective, even when students immerse themselves in Vietnamese traditional music, without at least a basic understanding of the Vietnamese language, their ability to interpret and perform these artistic works will remain limited. Vietnamese musical compositions, including the genres they study, are inherently rooted in the Vietnamese language. The tonal characteristics of Vietnamese—especially the complex system of scales and modes in traditional music—closely adhere to the phonological principles of the language. Therefore, success in mastering Vietnamese traditional music inevitably requires concurrent learning and exploration of both the language and the traditional culture of the ethnic group.

Finally, instructors responsible for teaching Vietnamese to foreigners must possess a comprehensive knowledge base of traditional Vietnamese culture, including folk music. Throughout the teaching process—whether working with beginners or advanced students—the interrelationship between the Vietnamese language and traditional Vietnamese art and culture must not be ignored. It is crucial to emphasize that language and culture are profoundly intertwined, particularly the connection between language and music. Consequently, a proficient teacher of Vietnamese should be equipped with a solid foundation not only in linguistics but also in local culture and the arts.

Above all, it should be emphasized that we respect the application of Stephen Krashen’s “Monitor Theory” in designing this research content. However, for teaching content related to musical arts, we place greater emphasis on our experience in Vietnamese research and teaching, building upon the legacy of generations of Vietnamese scholars and experts in teaching the Vietnamese language over the past decades. In particular, this research highlights the interdisciplinary collaboration between experts in folk music and experts in Vietnamese language instruction. This collaboration will introduce new approaches to a teaching content

area that we believe should be integrated into Vietnamese language education for foreigners on a nationwide scale.

We believe that while second language acquisition theory is vital, in practice, each culture has its own distinctive characteristics. With this argument, it is evident that this study serves not only learners and researchers of the Vietnamese language but also educators responsible for teaching Vietnamese language and culture to foreigners.

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Declaration of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Writing Process

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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