



GUAVA Newsletter

Volume 04 / December 2024



About GUAVA Newsletters

GUAVA Newsletters are created to serve several goals: (a) to promote communication and collaboration among GUAVA members and other professionals in the field of Vietnamese language education; (b) to document and disseminate research and innovative practices in Vietnamese language education; and (3) to provide a social and intellectual space for professional development among GUAVA members.

Submission Guidelines

The submission can include but is not limited to the following topics or areas: General news; job announcements and career opportunities; teaching resources and practical teaching ideas and innovations; book and multimedia reviews; member highlights and achievements; student success stories etc.

We welcome contributions from all members and non-members. We look forward to receiving all news and updates from you, your colleagues or students, and are happy to work with you to create content for the newsletter.

Please send your ideas and suggestions to our editor, Huy Phung at phunghuy.edu@gmail.com & guavamerica@gmail.com.

In This Issue

President's Message	01
News and Updates	02
Member Highlights	05
Featured Articles	
• Folktale-Inspired Lessons for Vietnamese Heritage Classrooms <i>An Sakach, Arizona State University</i>	07
• Nurturing Cultural Roots: A Quest for Effective Heritage Language Instruction <i>Trang Tran, Brown University</i>	11
• Using TikTok in Vietnamese Language Classrooms <i>Jennie Tran, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa</i>	18

* This newsletter is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License

About GUAVA

GUAVA stands for Group of Universities for the Advancement of Vietnamese in America. It was established in 1993 and is currently based at Cornell University.



GUAVA Board Members

Thúy Tranviet, President
<tdt5@cornell.edu>

Chung Nguyen, Executive Manager
<cn2496@columbia.edu>

Huy Phung, Communication Manager
<phunghuy@hawaii.edu>

For more info about the board members
<https://www.guavamerica.org/board-members>



Cover Photo: by [Tri Le](#) on [Pixabay](#)

--- Acknowledgements

The layout, color scheme, and the overall outlook of this newsletter were designed by [Huy Phung](#) via [PedaDesign](#) using [Google Slides](#).



Image by MF Gallery from Pixabay

GUAVA Newsletter

President's Message

Dear GUAVA friends and colleagues,
Season's Greetings!

Wow! What an eventful year 2024 has been! This newsletter is packed with highlights, reflecting the many accomplishments of GUAVA members this year.

In September 2024, after five years of action-packed workshops, countless emails, and long Zoom sessions, the SEALC projects officially concluded. The culmination of this initiative was marked by a Symposium at Cornell University. Through this collaboration, numerous projects to improve curricular resources were successfully completed. In conjunction with the Symposium, GUAVA hosted a workshop featuring notable presentations selected from peer-reviewed abstracts. Two of these presentations have been transformed into featured articles in this newsletter.

This year, we implemented several new initiatives and revised key policies. We've introduced two membership tiers: one for U.S.-based members and another with reduced rates for international members, retired instructors, graduate students, and FLTAs.

Our annual networking event, GUAVA Connect, held its third installment in November 2024 with the theme "*Vietnamese as a Heritage Language*" (*Việt Ngữ Di Sản*). This year's guests were Thầy Nguyễn Thế Dương from Trường Yêu Tiếng Việt in Brisbane, Australia, and Cô Phạm Nguyễn Đan Thư, a Vietnamese teacher from a trilingual elementary school in Southern California.

We're also proud to announce the GUAVA Innovation Awards, which will recognize members for creative contributions to Vietnamese language teaching. If you've developed resources for your courses, why not showcase your innovations? Learn more about the awards on page 4!

Continuing our mission to foster collaboration and engagement, we opened our meetings this fall to all members, encouraging suggestions and active participation in various projects. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Trang Tran for coordinating GUAVA Connect 2024 and An Sakach for assisting with the GUAVA Innovation Awards initiative. These new working models—appointing coordinators and forming small working groups—are vital to advancing GUAVA's mission.

As 2024 draws to a close and Tết Ất Tỵ, the Year of the Snake, approaches, we reflect on this remarkable year with gratitude and excitement for what lies ahead. On behalf of the GUAVA family, I wish you and your loved ones health, joy, and happiness in all aspects of life.

Warm regards,
Thúy Tranviet, PhD
GUAVA President
December 2024



GUAVA Newsletter

News & Updates

GUAVA Members & Friends after the GUAVA 2024 Workshop at Cornell University

GUAVA Workshop & Meeting 2024

The GUAVA Workshop & Meeting 2024, held at Cornell University in conjunction with the SEALC symposium, focused on the vital theme of "Effective Methods of Teaching and Learning Vietnamese." The workshop attracted many GUAVA members and friends and offered a wealth of valuable information for language educators.

Panel: *Heritage Language Instruction and Gen Z Learners*
(Moderator: Thúy Tranviet, Cornell University)

- "Nurturing Cultural Roots: A Quest for Effective Heritage Language Instruction" by Trang Tran (Brown University)
- "Bilingual Books: Engaging Students in Active Cultural Heritage Stewardship" by An Sakach (Arizona State University)
- "Using TikTok in Vietnamese Language Classrooms" by Jennie Tran (University of Hawai'i)
- Q&A session

Roundtable: *Advancing Vietnamese Language Learning: A Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Approach through Open Educational Resources (OER)*

- Introduction to the OER Collaborative Project by An Sakach (Arizona State University)

- The Pedagogical Framework and Overview of the Materials by Huy Phung (UHM)
- Showcasing the materials: How will it be applied into classrooms? by Chung Nguyen (Columbia University)
- Showcasing the materials: Student events & student's feedback by ThuyAnh Nguyen (University of Michigan)
- Q&A session moderated by Chung Nguyen (Columbia University)

Additional Information:

- A dinner followed the workshop for further networking and discussion.
- All presentations and photos are available on the GUAVA website: <https://guavamerica.org/guava2024>

This workshop served as a valuable platform for educators to learn about innovative methods for teaching Vietnamese to Gen Z learners and explore the potential of TBLT with OER.

GUAVA Elects New Board Members at Business Meeting

At its recent business meeting, GUAVA members elected leadership for the 2024-2027 term. Congratulations to ThuyViet Tran, Chung Nguyen, and Huy Phung on being elected to the GUAVA Board! Their dedication and commitment to our organization will be invaluable as we continue to move forward.



GUAVA Board Members 2024-2027 Photo: Diep Le

GUAVA Connect 2024 on Vietnamese Heritage

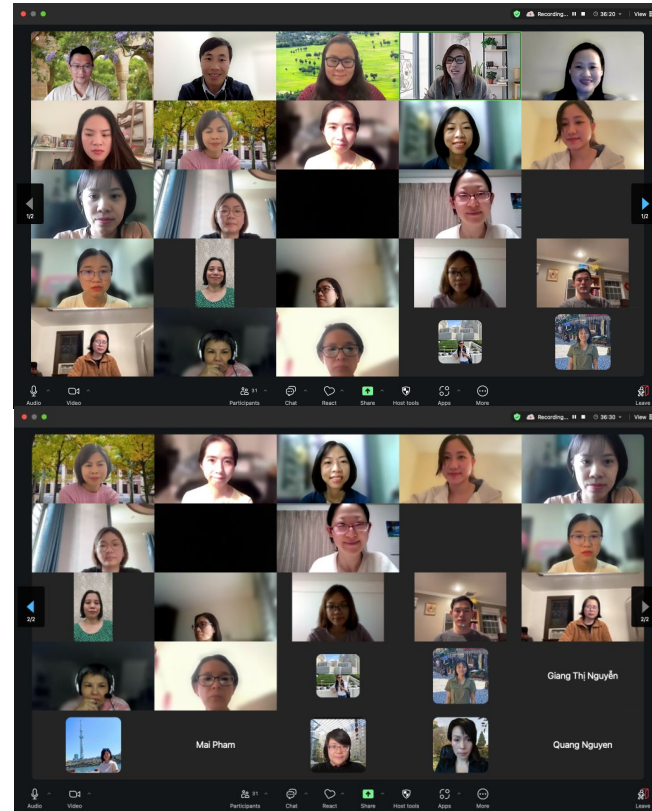
GUAVA Connect 2024 was a resounding success, bringing together 30 passionate individuals dedicated to promoting the Vietnamese language. The event featured insightful presentations from two guest speakers, fostering valuable discussions and collaborations.

Key Highlights

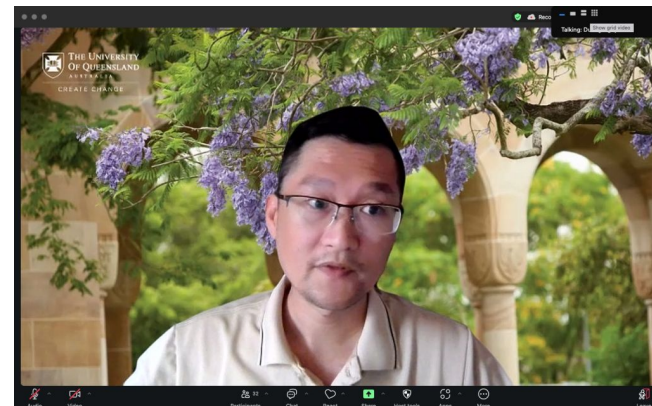
- Dr. Duong shared his inspiring journey and the mission of Trường Yêu Tiếng Việt. His presentation, “Giảng dạy tiếng Việt cội nguồn trong bối cảnh toàn cầu hóa: Câu chuyện của Yêu Tiếng Việt,” delved into the importance of preserving the Vietnamese language in the globalized world and the innovative approaches employed by Trường Yêu Tiếng Việt to engage young learners worldwide.
- Ms. DanThu Pham, a dedicated Vietnamese language teacher, provided valuable insights into the challenges and rewards of teaching Vietnamese in a trilingual program. Her presentation, “Navigating Trilingual Education- Insights from Teaching Vietnamese in the Trilingual Program as within Southern California’s K-12 Community,” highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices, curriculum adaptation, and family involvement in fostering language proficiency and cultural understanding.



GUAVA Connect 2024 Poster



Participants of GUAVA Connect 2024



Dr. Duong joined the event from Australia

GUAVA Innovation Awards Now Open!

Call for Submission AY 2024–2025

Introduction

These awards, offered by GUAVA, recognize outstanding, innovative, and transformative teaching of Vietnamese Language Education. Three prizes ranging between \$150 and \$300 will be awarded this year. The award winners will be featured on our blog/website.

GUAVA is pleased to announce the “GUAVA Innovation Awards” to recognize outstanding, innovative, and transformative teaching of Vietnamese language education. Three prizes, ranging between \$150 and \$300, will be awarded for AY 2024–2025. The award winners will be featured on our website.

Eligibility

We invite proposals showcasing innovative teaching and learning methods, including the use of technology in the classroom. Eligible innovations must have been implemented in courses offered between Summer 2022 and Fall 2024. Proposals of online, blended, or face-to-face (F2F) courses will all be considered. Only GUAVA Members are eligible to apply.

Awards Categories

We welcome submissions in the following categories:

- **Instructional Innovation:** *This category recognizes creative teaching strategies, methods or learning activities that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Submissions may include unique approaches, interdisciplinary projects, or creative use of classroom resources.*
- **Education Technology:** *This category celebrates the development and implementation of innovative educational technology tools, apps, or platforms that improve teaching and learning. Submissions may highlight new tech solutions or effective technology integration in classrooms.*
- **Community Engagement:** *This category recognizes initiatives that strengthen ties between schools, families, and communities. Submissions may include programs showcasing involvement, cross-cultural understanding, or resource sharing.*
- **Professional Development:** *This category recognizes innovative approaches to educator professional growth. Submissions may include creation of peer learning communities or resources that support teachers’ ongoing professional development.*

Evaluation Criteria:

Each submission will be evaluated based on three key criteria. The most innovative, impactful, and scalable proposals in each category will be chosen as the award recipients.

- **Level of Innovation:** *The degree to which the submission presents novel, creative, and pioneering ideas, tools, or practices.*
- **Impact on Student Learning:** *The demonstrated or potential impact of the innovation on improving academic performance, skill development, and overall student growth.*
- **Potential for Broader Application:** *The potential for the innovation to be scaled and implemented effectively across Vietnamese classrooms.*

The committee will evaluate each submission holistically based on these three key criteria. The most innovative, impactful, and scalable proposals within each category will be selected as the award recipients. Award winners will give a presentation at GUAVA Awards Submit.

Timeline and Procedure

Application Deadline: **March 31, 2025**

Winner Announcement: **May 1, 2025**

Awards Presentation and Ceremony **May 20, 2025**

How to apply

To apply, please submit the following by March 31, 2025:

- Completed application form
- 500-word executive summary describing the innovation
- Each applicant submit only one innovation (individual or group)
- Supporting materials (e.g. photos, videos, sample resources)

Submissions should be sent to guavamerica@gmail.com with the subject line "AY 2024–2025 GUAVA Innovation Awards Application"

Member Highlights

Photo: Courtesy of Google Images via Google Slides

- **An Sakach, Chung Nguyen, Huy Phung, and ThuyAnh Nguyen** successfully completed [the open task-based textbook project](#) with Michigan State University's Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership.
- **Chung Nguyen and An Sakach** presented at the ACTFL Annual Convention in November on "Lessons Learned from Applying Task-Based Language Teaching in Vietnamese."
- **GUAVA Members** completed SEALC-funded collaborative projects, with all project materials available under Creative Commons licenses.
➔ More info at [SEALC Vietnamese Projects](#).
- **Hanh Nguyen** was invited to speak at the University of Pennsylvania's Asian American Studies event commemorating the 50th anniversary of Vietnamese America.
- **Hoa Le** joined the Editorial Board of the newly launched [Indo-Pacific Transdisciplinary Review](#), an open-access journal from the Department of Indo-Pacific Languages & Literatures at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
- **Hoan Nguyen** published an open-access article, "[Facilitative Use of Classifiers in Heritage Vietnamese](#)", in *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*.
- **Jennie Tran** is serving as Chair of the IPIC 2026 Ad Hoc Conference Committee. The Indo-Pacific International Conference on Indo-Pacific Studies, including Vietnamese, will be held November 18-21, 2026, at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
- **Thuy Tranviet** served as a panelist at the AAS-in-Asia Conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and presented on integrating local knowledge and environmental issues into language education at the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies at Cornell University.



GUAVA Newsletter

Featured Articles

Hoi An, Image by Tri Le from Pixabay

Editor's Notes

As we reflect on the journey of the **GUAVA Newsletter** since its inception in December 2021, we are proud to look back at a rich and diverse range of topics explored over the past issues. From teaching vocabulary and extensive reading to discussions on teaching listening, language teaching principles, Vietnamese language programs, and innovative tools like GenAI and H5P, our newsletter has been a vibrant space for professional development and scholarly exchange. Notably, more than half of the articles have been written in Vietnamese, underscoring our ongoing commitment to multilingualism and the diverse linguistic needs of our community.

This issue marks the fifth edition of the **GUAVA Newsletter**, and it also ushers in an exciting theme: **heritage**. This theme continues to resonate deeply with educators and learners, offering rich opportunities to engage with the cultural and linguistic backgrounds that shape our learning experiences. We are thrilled to feature three insightful articles that explore different facets of heritage language learning, each offering fresh perspectives and practical approaches for today's educators.

In the first article, **An Sakach** presents innovative communicative tasks based on Vietnamese fairy tales, illustrating how these cultural narratives can be used to strengthen learners' heritage language connections. Her practical suggestions provide concrete examples of how to integrate folklore into the classroom, fostering deeper engagement in heritage language education.

Next, **Trang Tran** offers an in-depth examination of the unique characteristics of heritage language learners, exploring their varied backgrounds, motivations, and learning needs. She also highlights several creative projects from Brown University, showcasing strategies that can help better support these learners and adapt instruction to meet their specific needs in a variety of contexts.

Lastly, **Jennie Tran** delves into the relationship between Gen Z students and social media, focusing on how platforms like TikTok can be harnessed as an educational tool. Her article offers creative and innovative strategies for engaging Gen Z learners in meaningful, language-rich interactions through social media.

These articles, along with many others, will soon be available on our website for continued reading and sharing: [GUAVA Featured Articles](#). This marks a pivotal shift in our publication's format as we transition from a special PDF edition to an ongoing online platform, offering more dynamic and accessible content for our community.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to continuing this journey with you.

Huy Phung
GUAVA Newsletter Editor

Folktale-Inspired Lessons for Vietnamese Heritage Classrooms

Folktales have long been a vital part of Vietnamese cultural heritage, passed down through generations and serving as a bridge between language, history, and tradition. For Vietnamese heritage speakers, these stories offer a powerful connection to their roots and a means of preserving their cultural identity. In this article, I will share some task ideas to teach Vietnamese folktales to heritage language learners, providing engaging activities and strategies to immerse them in the rich tapestry of their ancestral stories.

When working with Vietnamese heritage speakers, it is crucial to employ culturally responsive teaching methods that align with their unique linguistic and cultural needs (Nguyen et al., 2006). An effective strategy is to implement group learning techniques. By creating collaborative learning environments, heritage speakers can connect with folktales in a manner that aligns with their cultural preferences and learning styles.

Task 1: Retell a Legend [Intermediate Mid | Interpretive and Presentational Mode]

Step 1: Assemble the Story

- Each student will be assigned a section of either the Vietnamese text or its translation and will need to find their corresponding partner.
- Together, students will collaborate to arrange the pieces of the story in the correct sequence.

This step will not only help them grasp the narrative flow but also foster teamwork.

Step 2: Analyze the Text

- Students will revisit the Vietnamese text and formulate questions for their classmates. These questions may focus on comprehension or any aspects of the text that remain unclear to them.
- The instructor will facilitate a class discussion where students can explore language points, concepts, and various layers of meaning within the text.

This step enhances comprehension, critical thinking, language skills, and cultural awareness while fostering collaboration and confidence through class discussions and peer engagement.

Step 3: Retell the Story

- Students will be organized into Vietnamese and English teams to retell the story in their own words and create a recording of their retelling.

The outcome of this step is that students will collaboratively practice bilingual storytelling, enhancing their oral proficiency, creativity, and cultural connection.

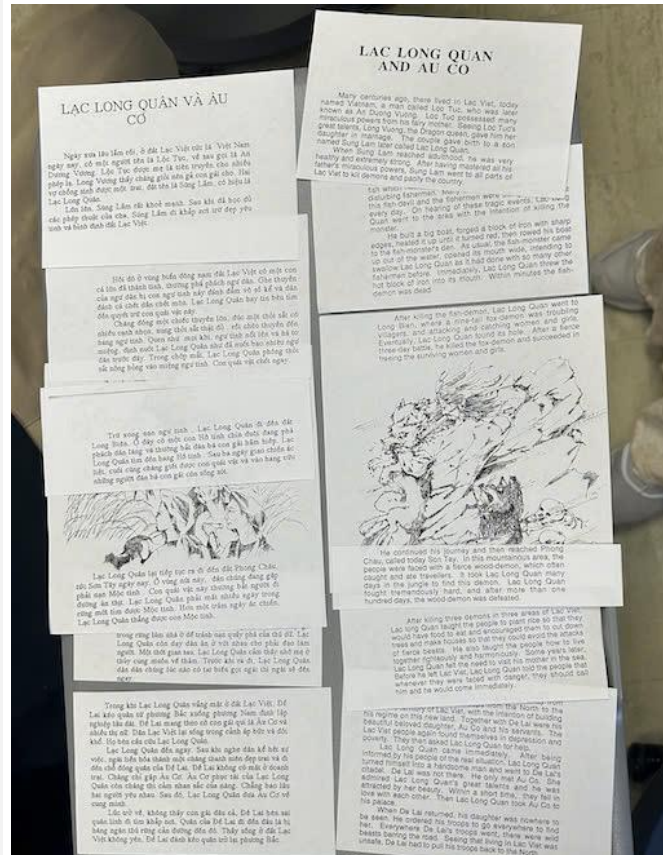


Figure 1: Demonstration of Step 1.

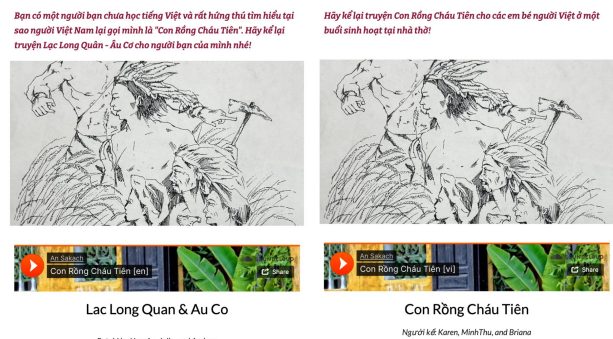


Figure 2. “Con rồng cháu tiên” was retold in Vietnamese and English responding to two prompts. The final products were recordings for a podcast.

The task prompt places students in real-world scenarios that align with their personal and cultural identities, thereby increasing both engagement and relevance.

In Prompt 1, students imagine explaining the Vietnamese origin myth to a non-Vietnamese friend curious about the phrase "Con Rồng Cháu Tiên," aligning the task with intercultural communication and storytelling. This scenario taps into their bilingual skills, requiring them to translate cultural concepts into accessible language while retaining the story's integrity.

In Prompt 2, students are tasked with sharing the same story with younger Vietnamese children during a church gathering, focusing on conveying cultural heritage in an age-appropriate and engaging manner. This scenario emphasizes the importance of preserving traditions while developing storytelling techniques suited to specific audiences.

This step of the task aims to deepen students' understanding of the legend while providing opportunities to practice skills like summarization, translation, and audience adaptation, supporting the development of bilingual proficiency and a sense of cultural pride.

Besides the interpretive mode of communication, folktales can also serve as authentic materials that encourage students to engage in tasks promoting both interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. Another group task could involve creating illustrations for the story. Students can collaborate on generating and selecting AI-based or hand-drawn illustrations to complement their folktale, sparking discussions about culturally relevant imagery. This approach encourages exploration of cultural representation and fosters interpersonal communication among students.

Task 2: Discuss to Select Illustrations for The Folktale [Intermediate Mid | Presentational and Interpersonal Mode]

Step 1: Create illustrations for the story

- Each student will be assigned a section of the story and prepare the illustrations for it. Illustrations can be AI-generated or drawn by the students

This step can be done before a face-to-face session. In this step students will demonstrate their comprehension of the folktale by creating culturally appropriate and narratively accurate illustrations for their assigned section, whether through AI-generation or hand-drawing.

Step 2: Discuss among class and vote for the best illustrations

- Students show their illustrations to the class, explaining their artistic choices and how they represent key elements of their assigned story section
- Class members engage in guided discussion about each illustration, using specific criteria such as:
 - How well does it capture the story's key moments?
 - Does it represent cultural elements accurately?
 - Is it visually engaging for the target audience?
 - Does it maintain consistency with the story's tone?
- Students vote for the best version and make suggestions to change the illustrations or the prompt to make AI-generated images.

Through the collaborative process of presenting, discussing, and voting on illustrations using specific cultural and narrative criteria, students develop critical evaluation skills while ensuring the final illustrated folktale effectively represents the story's cultural elements and engages its intended audience.

For example, in my Vietnamese for Heritage Speakers course, during a class discussion on illustrations for the myth *Mặt Trăng Mặt Trời*, we analyzed various images and co-created prompts to refine and correct AI-generated visuals. As the students showed their AI-generated images, the class noticed and debated depictions of gods wearing attire resembling Greek deities and questioned the attire, as well as the sun and moon symbols that may not accurately reflect Vietnamese culture. Such discussions not only deepen students' understanding of cultural nuances but also promote critical thinking about the role of visual elements in storytelling. By integrating visual and verbal expression, this project enhances

NGÀY XƯA NGÀY XƯA

VTN 2024 FALL 2024

Ngày xưa, có hai anh em. Sau khi cha mẹ mất, người anh chiếm hết tài sản, chỉ để lại cho người em một cây khế. Người em chấp nhận và chăm sóc cây. Đến mùa, cây ra nhiều quả. Một hôm, chim đại bàng đến ăn khế, người em buồn than. Chim hứa: “Ăn một quả, trả cục vàng, may túi ba gang, mang đi mà đựng.” Người em làm theo, được chim chở ra đảo, lấy vàng và trở nên giàu có, thường giúp đỡ người nghèo. Sao khi người anh biết chuyện, anh hỏi đòi gia tài lấy cây khế. Khi chim đến, anh cũng đòi vàng, nhưng tham lam may túi lớn và lấy quá nhiều. Chim bay không nổi, giữa đường rơi xuống biển cùng túi vàng.

Once upon a time, there were two brothers. After their parents passed away, the elder brother took all the inheritance, leaving the younger brother with only a starfruit tree. The younger brother accepted it and took care of the tree. When the season came, the tree bore many fruits. One day, an eagle came to eat the starfruits, and the younger brother sadly complained. The eagle promised, “For every fruit I eat, I’ll repay with gold. Sew a three-handspan bag to carry it.” The younger brother followed the instructions, and the eagle carried him to an island filled with gold. He returned home wealthy and often helped the poor. The elder brother learned of this and exchanged his wealth for the starfruit tree. When the eagle came, he also asked for gold but greedily sewed a much larger bag and took too much. The eagle couldn’t handle the weight and, midway, dropped the elder brother and the bag of gold into the sea.



Figure 3. A collaborative bilingual e-book project by Vietnamese for Heritage class.

students' ability to engage in meaningful dialogue while strengthening their cultural and linguistic awareness.

Group tasks like this can also be integrated into a group project that involves a semester-long collaborative effort where the class creates a bilingual folktale eBook. Students would choose from different subgenres, such as myths, legends, fairy tales, or fables, and retell these stories in both Vietnamese and their L1. This eBook project would not only promote creativity and cross-cultural engagement but also enhance students' writing skills as they translate and adapt the stories. In parallel, a class podcast could be introduced to further develop students' speaking abilities. The podcast would allow students to narrate their stories, giving them an opportunity to practice pronunciation, fluency, and storytelling techniques in both languages.

Beyond group work, teachers can also consider deepening student's personal engagement with the folktale through creative tasks that encourage individual interpretation, such as having students write an alternative ending based on their cultural perspectives, compare similar themes between this Vietnamese folktale and one from their native culture, or create a reflective journal entry exploring how the story's messages relate to their own experiences.

Folk stories with multiple versions in Vietnamese or similar narrative patterns found across different cultures are excellent materials for this type of task. For instance, using *Tấm Cám* as the material, the task design presented in Task 3 could unfold as follows.

Task 3: Create an ending for the story and compare yours with the original ending [Advanced Low/Mid | Presentational Mode]

Step 1: Draft Alternative Endings

- Students write their own ending (150–200 words) that:
 - Resolves the main conflict
 - Maintains character consistency
 - Incorporates cultural elements
 - Reflects understanding of Vietnamese folktale conventions

Through individual creative writing, students demonstrate their comprehension of narrative structure and cultural elements while expressing their personal interpretation of the story's themes.

Step 2: Peer review

- Students work in pairs to review each other's endings using a structured feedback checklist.

Feedback Categories

- Plot resolution and logic
- Character consistency
- Cultural element integration
- Language use and style

- Students revise their ending incorporating peer feedback.

The expected outcome of this step is to help students develop both analytical skills and the ability to give constructive feedback while improving their own writing based on peer suggestions.

Step 3: Cross-cultural Story Comparison

- Students identify a folktale from their own culture that shares similar themes or elements
- Students write a comparative analysis (200–250 words) addressing:
 - Plot similarities and differences
 - Character role comparisons
 - Cultural values reflected in both stories
 - What they learned about Vietnamese language and culture through this comparison

Through comparative analysis, students develop deeper cultural awareness by identifying universal themes while recognizing distinctive cultural elements, leading to enhanced understanding of both Vietnamese culture and their own cultural perspective.

In Step 1, before reading the original ending of *Tấm Cám*, students respond to the prompt: *Trước khi đọc cái kết của nguyên gốc truyện Tấm Cám, bạn đã nghĩ đến một cái kết như thế nào?* ("Before reading the original ending of *Tấm Cám*, what kind of ending did you imagine?").

In Step 3, after completing their own version and read the original ending version of *Tấm Cám*, students analyze and compare it to other tales they know, responding to the prompt: *Truyện dân gian Việt Nam này có giống truyện cổ nào bạn đã từng đọc không? Giống và khác ở chỗ nào? Truyện dân gian này giúp bạn hiểu thêm điều gì về tiếng Việt và văn hoá Việt Nam?* ("Does this Vietnamese folktale resemble any other stories you have read? How is it similar or different? What does this folktale help you understand about the Vietnamese language and culture?").

In conclusion, folktales can offer rich opportunities for developing both linguistic and intercultural competence in Vietnamese language classrooms. The tasks presented here ranging from group discussions and collaborative illustration selection to individual creative writing and cultural comparisons – demonstrate how folk stories can engage students across all three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. While these tasks have been piloted primarily with heritage learners, they can be readily adapted for non-heritage classrooms by adjusting the language level and cultural scaffolding.

I hope these task designs can serve as a starting point for teachers to create their own engaging activities that help students connect with Vietnamese language and culture through the timeless medium of folktales.

References

Nguyen, P., Terlouw, C., & Pilot, A. (2006). Culturally appropriate pedagogy: the case of group learning in a Confucian Heritage Culture context. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980500502172>

About the Author

An Sakach is an Assistant Teaching Professor of Vietnamese at Arizona State University with expertise in Applied Linguistics. Her research focuses on language maintenance and language revitalization, drawing on her background in computer-assisted language learning, curriculum design, and material development.

Nurturing Cultural Roots: A Quest for Effective Heritage Language Instruction*

Introduction

Language serves as a vital bridge to culture, identity, and community. For Heritage Language Learners (HLLs)—"individuals who have familial or ancestral ties to a particular language that is not English" (Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 27)—this bridge often carries profound personal and familial significance. These learners possess unique linguistic and cultural assets and challenges, blending native fluency with gaps in academic language skills.

This article delves into heritage language instruction, unpacking key topics that shape this educational domain. I begin by defining and understanding who heritage language learners are, highlighting their diverse backgrounds and motivations. From there, I explore educators' challenges in meeting their needs, including varying proficiency levels and cultural dynamics.

To address these challenges, I outline effective strategies that empower educators to foster meaningful language development while respecting the learner's cultural identity. Lastly, I discuss techniques and examples from the Vietnamese program at Brown University that have effectively promoted heritage language teaching. This exploration aims to illuminate the transformative potential of nurturing heritage languages for individuals and sustaining cultural richness in an increasingly interconnected world.

Who are "heritage learners"?

The term "heritage learner" refers to individuals with a personal or familial connection to a language that is not typically the dominant language of their society. Two standard definitions of heritage learners, often broad and narrow, provide nuanced perspectives on their experiences and characteristics.

The Broad Definition

From a broad perspective (Fishman, 2001; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003), heritage learners grow up in homes where a specific language, distinct from the dominant societal language, holds significant cultural influence. The proficiency of these learners can vary widely and is often

immeasurable due to the informal nature of family interactions. This definition emphasizes the cultural connection to the language rather than linguistic competence. Learners under this framework may identify with the language and its culture but do not necessarily speak or understand it fluently.

The Narrow Definition

In contrast, the narrow definition (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007) describes heritage learners as individuals who were exposed to a heritage language during childhood but did not fully acquire it to the same proficiency level as their dominant language. These learners often possess varying understanding and speaking abilities but typically have incomplete or "uneven" proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing. Unlike the broad perspective, this view focuses on measurable linguistic skills, highlighting heritage learners' gaps in achieving complete fluency.

Key Characteristics of Heritage Learners (Narrow Definition)

According to the narrow definition of HL, the following key characteristics highlight heritage learners' diverse experiences, emphasizing their linguistic and cultural ties to the heritage language.

Early childhood often introduces heritage learners to their language, primarily in the home environment. This early exposure gives them a foundational understanding of the language, even if it still needs to be fully developed. The language often serves as a medium for family communication, fostering a cultural connection and a sense of identity from a young age.

As heritage learners grow up, the dominant societal language usually becomes their primary means of communication. This shift in language dominance often occurs due to schooling,

socialization, and the broader linguistic environment. Over time, the dominant language may replace the heritage language in daily use, resulting in varying levels of attrition or incomplete acquisition of the latter.

Despite their early exposure, heritage learners typically exhibit partial proficiency in their heritage language. While they may retain the ability to understand and speak it somewhat, their skills often need to be more consistent. For example, they might have more assertive listening and speaking abilities but need help reading, writing, or mastering complex grammatical structures. These gaps reflect the informal and limited contexts in which they learned the language.

Nevertheless, heritage learners maintain a strong cultural connection to their language and community. Even if their linguistic abilities are not fully developed, they often value the heritage language as a critical part of their identity. This cultural attachment motivates many heritage learners to learn further to strengthen their ties to their heritage and improve their proficiency.

Understanding Linguistic Identities: Native Speakers, Heritage Learners, and L2 Learners

Recognizing the distinctions between native speakers, heritage learners, and L2 (second language) learners is essential for tailoring effective language instruction and understanding the unique needs of each group (Montrul, 2011). These differences provide valuable insights into linguistic identities and how individuals engage with a language.

A *native speaker* acquires a language from birth as their primary means of communication. Their proficiency is typically comprehensive, encompassing grammar, vocabulary, cultural nuances, and contextual fluency. Native speakers intuitively grasp the language's subtleties, enabling them to navigate seamlessly across different social and professional contexts.

In contrast, a *heritage learner* has a personal or familial connection to a language but often experiences incomplete language acquisition. Broadly defined, heritage learners grow up in a culture where the language holds significance, even if their proficiency remains limited (Fishman, 2001; Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003). The narrower definition (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007) characterizes heritage learners as individuals exposed to the language in childhood but who did not fully acquire it due to the dominance of another

language. These learners often demonstrate uneven proficiency, such as strong listening and speaking skills and weaker reading and writing abilities.

An *L2 learner*, on the other hand, acquires a language later in life, beyond the critical period of natural language development. L2 learners typically engage with the language through formal education, self-directed study, or immersion in a linguistic environment. Unlike native speakers or heritage learners, L2 learners' connection to the language arises from deliberate efforts rather than early exposure. Their proficiency levels vary widely, depending on factors like the intensity of instruction, motivation, and opportunities for practice.

Understanding these distinctions underscores the importance of personalized approaches in language education. HL educators must design strategies that respect the unique strengths and challenges that native speakers, heritage learners, and L2 learners each bring.

Challenges in Heritage Language Instruction

Teaching heritage learners presents unique challenges due to their diverse backgrounds, varying proficiency levels, and distinct learning needs. These challenges require educators to adopt flexible, culturally sensitive, innovative approaches to ensure effective instruction.

Varied Proficiency Levels

Heritage learners often exhibit uneven proficiency in their heritage language. While some may have strong listening and speaking skills, others may struggle with reading, writing, or grammatical accuracy. This variation poses a challenge in designing a suitable curriculum for all learners. Teachers must address the gaps in each learner's skills while building on their strengths,

requiring differentiated instruction and individualized support.

Linguistic Fossilization

Many heritage learners have developed fossilized errors—habitual mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, or syntax—due to limited formal exposure to the language. Correcting these errors can be difficult because students may not notice them. Overcoming fossilization requires explicit instruction and targeted feedback, which can be time-consuming and resource-intensive.

Identity and Motivation

Heritage learners often have a strong cultural connection to their language, but their self-identification as speakers of that language can vary. Some may feel insecure about their linguistic abilities or experience anxiety about not being "authentic" speakers. Others might find it challenging to understand the significance of learning their heritage language, mainly if they do not use it frequently in their daily lives. Building learners' confidence and motivation is essential but requires culturally responsive teaching and an emphasis on the value of bilingualism.

Limited Resources and Materials

Heritage language instruction often needs tailored textbooks, digital tools, and assessment frameworks that address the unique needs of heritage learners. Existing materials for second-language learners may not align with heritage learners' strengths and weaknesses, while native-level materials can be too advanced. Educators must often create or adapt resources to bridge this gap, which can be a significant challenge.

Balancing Cultural and Linguistic Goals

Heritage language education often aims to preserve cultural identity alongside improving language proficiency. Balancing these dual goals can be challenging, especially in classrooms with diverse learners. Teachers must incorporate culturally relevant materials and activities while ensuring the systematic development of linguistic skills.

Classroom Dynamics

Managing classroom dynamics can be complex in mixed classrooms where heritage learners coexist with second-language learners. Heritage learners may feel self-conscious about their mistakes compared to L2 learners or inadvertently dominate discussions due to their advanced speaking abilities. These dynamics can create disparities in participation and learning opportunities.

By recognizing and addressing these challenges, educators can create more inclusive and effective heritage language programs that empower learners to reconnect with their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Five Key Strategies for Effective Heritage Language Instruction

1. Keep Identity at the Core of Learning

For heritage learners (HLs), language learning is deeply tied to identity. Instruction should prioritize activities that help students explore and affirm their cultural and linguistic heritage. According to Beaudrie and Sara (2023, p.1), "The main goal of heritage language (HL) education is to empower learners to explore and develop their cultural and linguistic heritage." They articulate that HL education encompasses more than the mere instruction of linguistic skills. HL education aims to enable learners to connect profoundly with their cultural and linguistic heritage, promoting a sense of identity and belonging.

This approach recognizes that language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a vessel for culture, history, and individual identity. Heritage language education facilitates the enhancement of language proficiency among heritage learners, thereby allowing them to reestablish connections with their families, communities, and cultural traditions. Additionally, it tackles the distinct challenges heritage learners face, including varying levels of language proficiency and identity uncertainties, by fostering a supportive and culturally responsive educational setting.

The primary objective of HL education is transformative; it enables learners to maintain their heritage and utilize it as a basis for success in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

This empowerment enhances the individual learner and aids in preserving and celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity on a larger scale. Incorporating resources like the [National Heritage Language Resource Center's \(NHLRC\)](#) sample activities can effectively weave identity into the learning process. Identity-focused instruction fosters personal growth, builds confidence, and strengthens connections between heritage languages and cultures.



2. Connect to the Community

Building connections between the classroom and the broader community enriches the learning experience. This includes fostering a supportive classroom environment and linking the target language to real-world contexts through local cultural events, family interactions, or community projects. These connections help students see the relevance of the heritage language in their daily lives and maintain engagement.



3. Include Critical Language Awareness

Heritage learners often navigate complex linguistic and cultural dynamics. Introducing critical language theory allows students to analyze how language shapes power structures and societal norms. Teachers should value language variations, address biases, and engage students in discussions about the prestige associated with specific language varieties. Validation of students' experiences, particularly those related to bilingualism or stigmatization, ensures a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

4. Connect with Students as Individuals

Understanding students' unique experiences and motivations is essential. Early surveys can help identify their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, goals, and personal connections to the language. Activities should reflect these insights, honoring students' experiences with bilingualism and encouraging exploration of identity through meaningful assignments like sharing personal objects or family traditions. Celebrating individual stories fosters an inclusive and motivating classroom atmosphere.

5. Plan for Individual Learners

Instruction should account for the diverse needs of HLs and second-language learners (L2s). Teachers should differentiate activities, group students flexibly, and design programming that suits mixed or HL-specific classes. Recognizing HLs' strengths in speaking and listening and their potential need for help with registers or literacy skills ensures balanced development. Tailoring instruction to these differences maximizes every student's potential.

These strategies collectively create a learning environment that respects heritage learners' unique identities, fosters a sense of belonging, and supports holistic language development.

Projects for Heritage Language Instruction used at Brown University.

The Vietnamese Program at Brown University, established in 2021, offers a dynamic and supportive environment for students to learn the Vietnamese language and culture. The program offers two courses each semester: Beginners and Intermediate. While there are no separate tracks for heritage learners, heritage and non-heritage learners study together in the same classes. The program caters primarily to heritage learners—students with familial or cultural connections to the language—helping them strengthen their linguistic skills while deepening their ties to their heritage. The program fosters language proficiency and cultural understanding through engaging coursework, cultural activities, and personalized instruction, creating a vibrant space for students to explore and celebrate Vietnamese identity. Heritage language instruction at Brown thrives on innovative and engaging activities that connect students to their cultural roots while enhancing their linguistic abilities. The following projects exemplify how educators can blend creativity, self-reflection, and collaboration to foster a deeper appreciation of heritage languages.

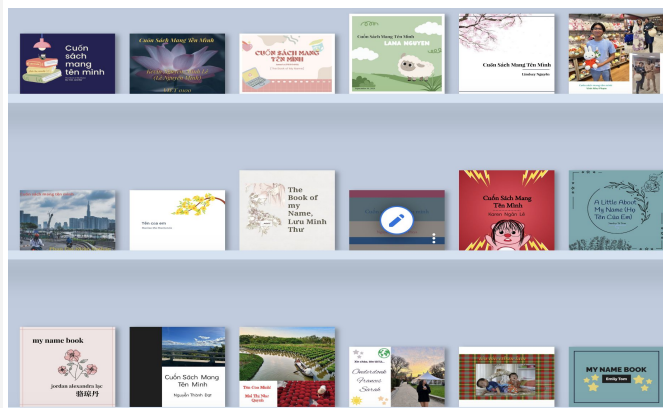
Hexagon Hangout

The hexagon hangout project encourages students to reflect on their cultural identity through creative self-expression. Participants select six items or symbols representing their identity, such as language, heritage, traditions, values, or personal experiences. These are illustrated or described on a hexagon template. Students connect their hexagons in groups to promote collaboration, visually demonstrating how their unique identities interlink. This activity culminates in reflective presentations, where students explain their choices. This sparks meaningful discussions about cultural heritage and fosters a sense of community.



“The Book of My Name” Project

This project integrates personal exploration with language development. Students research their names' origins, meanings, and cultural significance and compile their findings into a digital book using tools like Book Creator. This project enhances research, storytelling, and language skills while allowing students to deepen their connection to their heritage. The final product is a tangible narrative that celebrates their identity and promotes pride in their cultural roots.



Mandatory Office Hours

Mandatory office hours offer an essential platform for individualized support and stronger teacher-student relationships.

BROWN
East Asian Studies

TIẾNG VIỆT@BROWN

CÔ TRANG'S

OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY - FRIDAY
2 PM - 3 PM
625 SCILL

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

TRANG_TRAN@BROWN.EDU

In these sessions, students discuss course materials, share progress, and address concerns directly with their instructor. While attendance is required, flexibility in scheduling, including virtual options, ensures accessibility for all learners. This personalized guidance fosters academic success and strengthens student engagement and confidence in their language journey.

Vietnamese Vocabulary Video Contest

The Vietnamese Vocabulary Video Contest combines creativity with practical language application. Students create 30-second videos explaining a Vietnamese word in both English and Vietnamese. Each video must include pronunciation, part of speech, definition, and an engaging presentation, such as animations, acting, or music. Submissions are judged on originality, clarity, creativity, production quality, and adherence to guidelines. Winning entries receive prizes and are featured on social media, showcasing students' work to a broader audience. Resources below, such as examples from influencers like Phúc Mập's "Vietnamese Word of the Day" or Chris Tran's videos, inspire participants to excel.

Holtermann, C. (2021, August 23). Learn 60 new vocabulary words with these imaginative student videos. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/23/learning/learn-60-new-vocabulary-words-with-these-imaginative-student-videos.html>

The Learning Network. (2024, May 20). Wonderful words: The winners of our 11th annual 15-second vocabulary video challenge. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/20/learning/wonderful-words-the-winners-of-our-11th-annual-15-second-vocabulary-video-challenge.html>

Phúc Mập Vlog (Director). (2023, April 13). *Bạn hết lúa rồi...* #phucmap #learnvietnamese #hoctienganh [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzsob9qchNo>

Chris Tran. (2024, March 1). Were you also a cục? <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1571863970231432>

These projects demonstrate how creative and well-structured activities can enrich heritage language instruction. They develop linguistic skills and deepen cultural connections, fostering pride and engagement in students' heritage language journeys.

Conclusion

Heritage language instruction stands at the intersection of language, culture, and identity, offering an invaluable opportunity to preserve linguistic diversity while empowering learners to embrace their unique heritage. For HLLs, reconnecting with their ancestral language is a means of personal growth and sustaining familial and cultural connections in an ever-globalizing world.

Through this article, we have explored the diverse backgrounds and motivations of HLLs, shedding light on their distinct challenges and the strategies educators can adopt to meet their needs. Educators can foster a supportive environment that enhances language skills while affirming the learner's cultural identity by addressing these complexities, ranging from proficiency gaps to cultural dynamics.

The experiences and approaches explored in the Vietnamese Program at Brown University offer valuable insights into heritage language education. While these efforts are still evolving, we provide inspiration and potential pathways for others to consider when designing initiatives to support heritage language learners. By sharing these practices, we hope to contribute to a broader dialogue on preserving and nurturing heritage languages, ensuring they remain a meaningful part of our shared cultural heritage for future generations. Investing in heritage language instruction enriches individual learners and the global cultural tapestry, underscoring the enduring value of linguistic and cultural diversity in our interconnected world.

Some inspirations from student's vocabulary videos

1. Madeline "trông"
2. Brian "thương"
3. Asia "ngôi sao"



References

- Beaudrie, S. (2023). Developing critical language awareness in the heritage language classroom: Implementation and assessment in diverse educational contexts. *Languages*, 8(1), 81. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8010081>
- Fishman, J. (2001). 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. In J. K. Peyton, DA Ranard, & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 81–98). Center for Applied Linguistics/Delta Systems.
- Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C. (2008). Who are our heritage language learners? Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States. In D. Brinton, O. Kagan, & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language: A new field emerging* (pp. 3–37). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Montrul, S. (2011). Introduction: The linguistic competence of heritage speakers. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 33(2), 155–161. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263110000719>
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368–395. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2007.00022.x>
- Van Deusen-Scholl, N. (2003). Toward a definition of heritage language: Sociopolitical and pedagogical considerations. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 2(3), 211–230. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327701JLIE0203_4

About the Author

Trang Tran has been a Visiting Lecturer of Vietnamese at Brown since 2021. She holds a Master of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Master's in English Language Teaching from Can Tho University, Vietnam. Trang also has a B.A. with honors from An Giang University, Vietnam.

Before joining Brown's East Asian Studies, Trang taught Vietnamese at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her journey from Vietnam to the United States began in 2016 as a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Award recipient. This experience allowed her to immerse herself in the American education system, develop innovative teaching methods, and deepen her connection with the Vietnamese diaspora.

Her research focuses on foreign language pedagogy for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in the US and teaching Vietnamese as a foreign/heritage language. Proficient in Northern and Southern dialects, Trang enjoys guiding students from the basics to advanced levels of Vietnamese, including language, literature, and culture. At Brown, she teaches VIET100, VIET200, VIET300, and VIET400. When not teaching Vietnamese, you can find her whipping up tasty Vietnamese dishes, playing volleyball and badminton with her family, or soaking up the sun on Rhode Island's stunning beaches.



Nurturing Cultural Roots: A Quest for Effective Heritage Language Instruction

Trang Tran (Brown University)

GUAVA 2024 Workshop

* This article is based on [the presentation](#) given at [GUAVA 2024 Workshop and Meeting](#) in Cornell University on September 22, 2024.

Using TikTok in Vietnamese Language Classrooms*

In this current generation, it is quite challenging for teachers of the millennial or X generation to adjust to the rapid advancement of technology and the blossoming of social media platform scenes. When I was teaching German as a graduate student two decades ago, everytime I walked into the classroom, students were talking and interacting with each other. Nowadays, when I walk into the classroom, everyone is glued to the phone.

I was never interested in TikTok and my view towards it has been negative and I would be the last person to integrate social media into the classroom, until one day when some of my Vietnamese learning students suggested to me to bring TikTok into the classroom. This really moved me and I decided to learn more about TikTok and became inspired to explore possibilities of incorporating social media use into the classroom and to discover the educational value of it.

1. Why is TikTok so popular among Gen-Z?

What makes TikTok platforms so appealing is its instantaneous and mobile nature. The majority of Gen-Z already as from the age of 13 or 14 have had a phone and TikTok is one of the most popular platforms they interact with on their phones.

I conducted a survey with my students and found the following results. From a pool of 60 students, 40 students use TikTok on a daily basis. When asked if they like informative and educational TikTok clips to be used in the Vietnamese language or culture classroom, 37 replied with yes, 10 no, and 13 were undecided. Upon the question how many hours per week they use TikTok, their answers vary from at least 3 hours to 48 hours per week. When asked what they like about TikTok, students provided various reasons which are summarized below:

Entertainment: This was the most prominent theme. Students emphasized TikTok as a primary source of entertainment, a way to pass time, and a means to escape boredom or stress.

- "It helps me get my mind off things and fun to watch random videos."

- "I think TikTok is entertaining and a way to pass the time."
- "Fast videos that are entertaining that pass the time"

Ease of Use and Accessibility: Students highlighted the platform's user-friendly interface, the quick and easy consumption of content, and the effortless access to a wide range of information.

- "How easy it is to access"
- "I like how much content I can consume in a small amount of time."
- "There is a wide variety of content that does not take a lot of time to watch. I can easily jump from one topic to another and learn something new in a minute."

Content Diversity and Variety. Students appreciated the vast array of content available on TikTok, covering various topics and catering to diverse interests.

- "I like the wide variety of content and how short the videos are"
- "Diverse app with lots of topics"
- "There is a wide variety of content that does not take a lot of time to watch. I can easily jump from one topic to another and learn something new in a minute."

Creativity and Community. While less prominent than the other themes, some students recognized TikTok's potential for fostering creativity and connecting individuals through shared interests.

- "I like how it allows people to use their creativity on putting out content for the audience to watch."
- "I guess I appreciate that it can foster niche communities... And at the end of the day, it does provide entertainment"

As we can see, Gen-Z language learners are used to consuming information via TikTok and do not mind seeing TikTok in pedagogical spaces.

2. Literature Review: TikTok in research

Not much has been done in research on TikTok and language teaching as it is a fairly new platform first launched in 2016. Previous studies have assessed how learners use it in a pedagogical context, but it is not always focused on language. Two studies that focused on language are worth mentioning here.

Lee (2022) explores how Instagram and TikTok, primarily known as entertainment platforms, are being creatively repurposed for language learning. These platforms provide multimodal experiences and options by integrating text, images, audio, and video, making the content more engaging and interactive for learners. In addition to these features, Instagram and TikTok offer innovative tools such as filters, stickers, and hashtags, which can be effectively used for educational purposes. For example, Instagram's hashtags allow learners to discover content and connect with their specific language learning communities. The study highlights key aspects that make these platforms effective towards language development. Mobility is one of these features, allowing users to create, share, and access content anytime and anywhere, offering a flexible learning environment. Another significant aspect is "instantaneous participation," where actions such as liking, sharing, and commenting promotes active, real-time engagement and interaction. TikTok further enhances interactivity with features like the 'Duet/Stitch' function, which allows users to create collaborative content by responding to or building on existing videos. This function allows users to creatively learn, build, and grow together, making language practice more dynamic. Instagram and TikTok provide learners another access to environments that encourage informal and creative language acquisition. The study concludes that these platforms, though not explicitly made for education, offer unique opportunities for collaborative and interactive learning experiences.

Vazquez-Calvo, Shafirova & Zhang (2022) explores TikTok's role as an informal language learning platform, focusing on content with hashtags like *#learnchinese*, *#learnitalian*, and *#learnrussian*. Language learning can be more effectively promoted by using TikTok's multi modal tools, such as captions, visuals, and gestures. Creators are able to teach vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, while also using

humor, stereotypes, and personal experiences to engage learners. However, short video formats limit the depth and accuracy of content, making TikTok best suited for casual learners. Content creators such as cultural intermediaries (L1), use their language and cultural expertise to teach and entertain. Native speakers, cultural experts (L2), second-language learners, share relatable challenges, and bilingual individuals navigate complex identities. Strategies like humor, cultural stereotypes, and traditional attire enhance collective and self-identity while promoting engagement. TikTok fosters dynamic, translingual practices, and humor, along with shared struggles, provides emotional support that reduces learners' anxiety and creates a collaborative learning environment. This is relevant to the concept of lowering the affective filter of L2 learning (Krashen, 1982). The article highlights TikTok's strengths in promoting multimodal literacy and intercultural dialogue, while acknowledging limitations such as the lack of depth and potential inaccuracies. It suggests future research into TikTok's educational potential, particularly in exploring linguistic complexity, folk ideologies, and multimodal integration.

3. Popular topics, subgenres or toks

Popular topics on TikTok are food, fashion/clothes/weekly shopping, cosmetics, home, family, hobbies, travel, professional, school, culture, learn language, pronunciation challenges etc. From the survey I conducted, other topics that students like to watch on TikTok are the following: gaming, jokes, politics, skits, funny videos, ASMR, GRWM, political videos, world news, global news, history lessons, pop culture news, music and music memes, movies/tv shows, singing & dancing, cars, car accident, comedy shorts, sports, product review, tutorials, memes, daily life, people talking

about their lives, education videos about animals, funny cat & dog videos, animation shorts from small artists, decorating videos, educational videos, art, culture, Skibidi, whatever is on the For you Page.

Besides these, TikTok is also known for its subgenres or 'toks', as listed below:

GRWM = Get Ready With Me

Getting ready with the person in real time is usually somebody dressing up, getting ready to go somewhere such as a special event. The person shows you how to style your clothes, what makeup and skincare to put on.

OOTD = Outfit Of The Day

The person explains their outfit for the day, shows off what s/he is wearing. Both GRWM and OOTD are useful toks from the pedagogical standpoint for the novice level, especially when a chapter or units on clothing and accessories is covered. It is also useful in a culture class when traditional clothing such as áo dài is introduced.

Haul = Spoils from a shopping trip

People went shopping, came home with a bunch of bags and boxes, dumps everything out and walks the audience through all of the things they bought. These toks can be valuable in a language like Vietnamese that has numeral classifier phrases (e.g. 'I bought two pants').

Restock = Filling up the fridge/pantry/closet

People show how they organize things they bought from Amazon or Costco, etc. into cabinets, dressers, pantry, fridge or closet. These toks are good to use for the chapters on houses, rooms and furniture in the house, location words and placement verbs.

Reset = Cleaning up

People show how they clean up their house such as doing laundry, changing sheets, vacuuming, scrubbing the bathtub, etc. in a sequential order. These kinds of toks come in handy when we want students to practice narration.

POV = Point of View

These short clips show short moments of what it is like to experience something and are very specific from the point of view of the person in that moment. These are good toks to use at an advanced level when students are asked to express their own point of view on a certain topic.

ASMR = Autonomous sensory meridian response

These are clips that have a very pleasing sound component, whispering, or very soft voices. They are extremely popular as they are known for stress relief, relaxation and bringing a sense of tingling from the head throughout the body. These can be used in the classroom to practice listening comprehension to a pleasant voice, or listening to relax after an exam or having learned lots of material.

Vlog = short video blog

These are good to assign students to create as a final project on topics such as travel, hotel, food.

Trending challenge = Community-driven challenges getting lots of attention at the moment

These are clips about some new feat people are encouraging one another across the globe to participate in, e.g. performing a specific challenging dance move. These can be used in a culture class to show certain dance moves, or any other activities related to the material taught.

Using the various genres or toks presented above, Vietnamese teachers can anticipate targeting new vocabulary and grammar structures based on what people are presenting in the clip.

4. Why is TikTok good for language teachers to use?

- TikTok clips are very short snippets, only 1-2 minutes and repeat themselves. They are easy to search. Some clips have captions and there is also adjustable playback speed, all of which is good for teachers to use for the beginning level. These are good for listening comprehension practices, vocab practices, spelling/writing practices.

- The authenticity of TikToks material is beyond discussion. There is a plethora of cultural, personal, and intimate material that can be found in TikTok, such as people showing things and activities in realistic ways, helping the learner to see what it is like to just do their daily life in other places. This may help the learner to develop a sense of intercultural identity.
- Quite a lot of material on social media uses humor. One way to step out of the seriousness of language drills and traditional language teaching style is to take a break and let students have fun but at the same time learn the language in a unique way.
- GenZ language learners can indubitably relate to the TikTok content and its presenters who are mostly of the same age range, as opposed to language textbooks and worksheets that often have materials students cannot relate to. As mentioned in the literature review above, using TikTok has the tendency to reduce learners' anxiety thus lowering the affective filter for learning the target language. The familiarity with the platform and its content puts the language learner in a stressless and low-stakes situation. If teachers periodically give students opportunities to do things that are not too formal or cognitively demanding, they may accord students an open invitation to use the target language in a new way. Learners may then be induced quite easily into using their target language in these settings.

5. Basic steps for language teachers

The focus here is to offer some practical uses of TikTok clips in a Vietnamese language classroom. As students are largely familiar and have interaction with this type of social media, adding TikTok to the instructional material may get them to do the things they do in daily life in the target language. Students do not just watch TikTok clips but also work with them and create. Teachers use TikTok to enhance the lesson and to help students enjoy the process of learning Vietnamese in the classroom.

We can use TikTok clips to do listening comprehension, vocabulary enrichment, role play, writing etc. Find TikToks that might be usable for the classroom. Like it. Archive it. Make an activity around these clips such as 1) an activity where students watch it and then there is a comprehension check, 2) an activity where students create something similar to the TikTok clip. Also look for what the comments are like and whether there are captions.

6. Examples for using Tiktok in Vietnamese language classes

Apartment/House Tour

There are a myriad of TikToks where people advertise their properties for rent or for sale. These clips are real ads where a person gives a tour of the apartment/house for rent or sale, showing the layout of the house, the rooms, furniture, etc. These clips are useful for us teachers to apply in class for students to learn vocabulary for houses & furniture, prepositions, location words etc., and practice all 4 skills:

Beginning level activities:

- 1) Speaking: Have students give a narration for each room in the video.
- 2) Reading: Make use of captions, have students read the captions and learn the vocab.
- 3) Listening: Have students listen to both Northern and Southern dialects for rent ads.
- 4) Writing: stop the video several times to give students time to write.

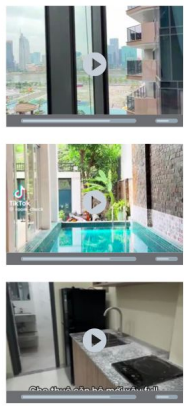
Advanced level activities:

We can use Tiktok as an inspiring model. Have students make a video touring their house and provide voice over similar to the ones made on TikTok. Further video ideas are to make a tour video of their campus, with the purpose of showing the campus to pre-freshmen, or make a video for street walks, market walks, malls walk. Role play: Have students role-play renting or selling an apartment or a house. We can use the spoken interface of TikTok to focus on writing TikToks in language. Have students write the captions for any TikTok rental ad that they find or their own video. Doing so, students are given agency in the target language and the opportunity to plan the language.

For a sample activity, see Slide 7 below.

Sample Activity

- **Target:** VIET 102, Novice High, working on the textbook chapters on Houses and Furniture
- **Preparation:**
 - Watch the video and write down a list of adjectives and nouns describing the house. List all the furniture, appliances, and other objects.
 - Write a short paragraph comparing the two apartments, similarities & differences, which one would you rent?
 - Write questions you have about the apartments
- **Role-play:**
 - Characters:
 - a. Person who needs a place to stay while working in the city.
 - b. Person showing the apartment.
 - Setting: They meet at the apartment. Person a asks person b all questions about their apartment, then decides if want to stay there.



[Apartment Tour Link](#)
[House Tour Link](#)
[Apartment Link](#)

Food demos

There are tons and tons of food demos TikToks where people demonstrate food preparation and food making steps based on their recipes, where people show what they are eating at street vendors or in the restaurant. We can use these TikToks in class to help students learn food names, eating and utensils vocabulary. For example, for mid to high novice level, have students list the ingredients and cooking utensils while the clip is repeatedly running. Prepare some questions for students to answer after listening. Remind students that they do not have to understand everything in the video, just enough to be able to answer the questions. For the advanced level, have students make a short cooking demo video and provide their own voiceover and add captions as their final project.

For a sample activity, see Slide 10 below

Making use of Comments

Comment sections in social media often challenge stereotypes, encouraging critical thinking (Vazquez-Calvo, Shafirova & Zhang, 2022). In the context of using TikTok for language learning, comments are very helpful at providing additional context for learners. There is rich information in this social media space, both culturally and linguistically. Colloquial and slang vernacular can be learned from comments that all kinds of people from all walks of life post. Teachers can create activities around these comments, even if they seem insubstantial or are merely emojis.

For a sample activity making use of comments, see Slides 11-12 below

Making use of comments

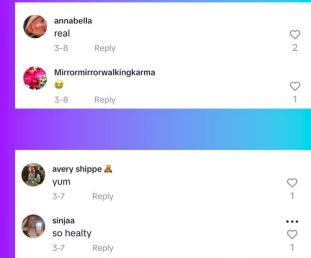
- **Example:** POV of American public school lunch trays
- **Warm-up:**
 - Do you eat at the cafeteria?
 - Do you bring a lunch bag?
 - How was your lunch yesterday?
 - can use poll or survey
- **Vocab practice:**
 - Watch TikTok clip about the lunch trays. List each food item with "I see..." (speaking & writing)
 - Compare in a group any potential vocab variation



Video Link

Interpretation of comments: Are these comments positive or negative? Ironic?

- Write at least a full sentence to translate the feeling/reaction of one comment
- Discuss in a group what kind of food you like to eat during lunchtime on campus



Produce

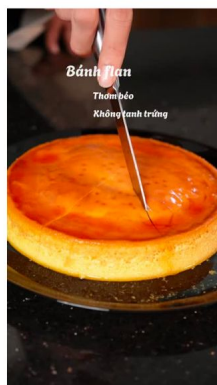
Film for less than 15 secs your lunch at the cafeteria: Prepare your voiceover to describe your meal and your reaction/appreciation/critique of the meal.

Cooking Demonstration with Written Steps

Sample Activity

Target: VIET 102, Novice High, working on the textbook chapters on food and recipes

1. Vocab: List the ingredients
2. Listening Comprehension Activity: Students fill in a worksheet with cooking steps with some phrases and words missing.
3. Discussion in pairs: Students are given 3 questions to prompt a short chat about their impressions of the dish, whether it seems appetizing, similarities to other sweet dishes they like or in their own culture.



Link

Simulation/ Role-Play

Target: Advanced Level

Imagine La Lechera, part of the Nestle brand has approached the TikToker to promote their condensed and evaporated milk products. One student plays the role of company rep and another pretends to be the TikToker. The TikToker needs to convince Nestle rep to hire him and both parties will negotiate payment and conditions of the business arrangement.

Travel Tips

For a sample activity, see Slide 8. (video of a travel blogger who gives tips for visiting cloud hunting place in Dalat)

Travel tips

(video of a travel blogger who gives tips for visiting cloud hunting place in Dalat)

- **Pre-view Activity:** (In pairs or small groups)
 - Have you ever been above the clouds? Where? Which one?
 - Did you experience any problem?
 - Which is the most annoying problem when you go on a tour?
 - Which tips do you expect from this TikToker?
- **During the View:**
 - Watch the video two times and list all the tips you can hear
- **Post-View:**
 - Exchange your infos with your classmates
 - Change group and exchange infos with other classmates



Video Link

- **Vocab:** List 10 words from the video that are new to you.

Advanced Activities:

- Make a list of tips to a friend before visiting a tourist attraction in the city where you live. What is different in your suggestions? Why? Are there similar tips?
- **Discussion:**
 - In your opinion, is this TikToker well done? Is it effective?
- **Homework:**
 - Create a video similar to one on Tik Tok and give at least 5 tips before visiting a tourist attraction

7. Suggestions

To integrate social media into the Vietnamese language classroom, I suggest that we get our students involved because the majority of Gen-Z language learners are 'experts' at navigating in this digital space. We ask students to research certain topics on social media that resonate with them. The topics or clips that teachers select might not be interesting or relevant to students. Therefore it may be better to use their materials. We can then reselect the TikTok materials that students have curated and put them on the database. I suggest that a social media database or a TikTok database be made for Vietnamese teachers in the form of a Google spreadsheet. The first step is to collect multiple TikToks that have many linguistic and cultural values.

The next step is to categorize, organize them and make the database into OER and make it available to Vietnamese instructors. Anyone who wants to use TikTok could go to this page and use this database in their Vietnamese curriculum. The following step is to create activities for these TikTok materials such as considering the kinds of questions, the kinds of tasks we have students do with the TikTok clip, and to design activities that focus on different skills. This database should be accessible to any Vietnamese teacher registered with GUAVA and open to further ongoing contribution. Any Vietnamese teachers who have a TikTok clip they used successfully in the classroom are welcome to put in their links and activities into the Spreadsheet.

As stated in the introduction, I have never thought about integrating social media like TikTok into my class. I was cautious about TikTok at the beginning, but now after using it a few times I am more comfortable with it. I hope you will be too. TikTok is a great tool to connect educators with students. This is how we overcome the generation gap!

References

- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford Pergamon Press.
- Lee, Y. J. (2022). Language learning affordances of Instagram and TikTok. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 17(2), 408–423, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2022.2051517>
- Vazquez-Calvo, B., Zhang, L.-T., & Shafirova, L. (2022). Language Learning Hashtags on TikTok in Chinese, Italian, and Russian. In L. Klimanova (Ed.), *Identity, Multilingualism and CALL: Responding to New Global Realities* (pp. 104–134). Equinox Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1558/equinox.43411>

* This article is based on [the presentation](#) given at [GUAVA 2024 Workshop and Meeting](#) in Cornell University on September 22, 2024.



BY JENNIE TRAN

How to count in Vietnamese

Using TikTok in Vietnamese Language Classroom

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA

https://guavamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/GUAVA2024WS_Jennie-Tran_Tikok_Presentation.pdf

About the Author

Jennie Tran is Instructor and Vietnamese Language and Literature Program Coordinator at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She has been teaching Vietnamese there since 2022. Before that, she taught German at the University of Hawaii for many years, since she was a graduate student. Her research interest lies in first language acquisition. She is known for her pioneering dissertation '[The Acquisition of Vietnamese Classifiers](#)'.

20 *Chúc Mừng*



Photo by Pete Walls on Unsplash

Năm Mới

25