



GUAVA Newsletter

Volume 05 / December 2025

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@unc.edu & guavamerica@gmail.com.

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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.



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Acknowledgements

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



GUAVA Newsletter

President's Message

Continuing the Legacy: A Message from the GUAVA President

“Chúng ta không bao giờ bắt đầu hoàn toàn mới, mà chỉ tiếp nối những gì đã có.” — Thiền sư Thích Nhất Hạnh

Thirty-two years ago, GUAVA was founded on a simple yet powerful vision: to connect, support, and advance the teaching of Vietnamese in higher education across the United States and around the world.

Today, as I write this message as the new President of GUAVA, I recognize that our history is not a collection of isolated milestones, but a continuous flow of commitment, collaboration, and shared purpose carried forward across generations.

In its early years, GUAVA began as the Group of Universities for the Advancement of Vietnamese Abroad (GUAVA Abroad), closely associated with the Vietnamese Advanced Summer Institute (VASI) funded by Fulbright-Hays. As Vietnamese language education grew across the U.S., GUAVA transitioned into GUAVA America, reflecting its strengthened focus on supporting Vietnamese language instruction within American higher education.

During this important transition, Former President Dr. Thúy Tranviet played a pivotal role in maintaining the organization's connection and continuity. Her leadership ensured that GUAVA remained strong through times of change and continued moving confidently toward new directions.

Under the leadership of Dr. Thúy Tranviet and the Executive Board of 2021–2023, GUAVA launched a new website in 2021, a milestone that consolidated the organization's history, leadership records, information about Vietnamese language programs across the U.S., and valuable teaching and learning resources. This website has been redesigned and upgraded and since become both a living archive and a central hub for connecting generations of Vietnamese language educators.

During this same period, GUAVA began holding its biennial GUAVA Workshops, providing professional platforms for instructors to share experiences, present research findings, and exchange innovative teaching practices.

The last several years have shown how GUAVA's initiatives work together to advance our long-term missions. Each activity forms part of a coherent ecosystem of professional development, collaboration, and innovation, interconnected expressions of the same enduring commitment.

One of the most impactful initiatives has been [GUAVA Connect](#), launched in 2022 to strengthen global collaboration and knowledge sharing. This year, GUAVA Connect continued with the theme *Digitizing Vietnam*, focusing on digital preservation, the development of humanities-based digital tools, and resources that support both research and Vietnamese language teaching. This reflects GUAVA's recognition of how technology and digital humanities are reshaping the future of Vietnamese studies.

Spring 2025 also marked the success of the [GUAVA Innovation Awards](#), enthusiastically embraced by members. Three educators—Hoan Nguyen, An Sakach, and Trang Tran—were recognized for their contributions and pedagogical innovations. Their work inspired further community engagement and set the stage for GUAVA's next professional initiative: [Member Highlights](#). This ongoing series creates a welcoming space for Vietnamese language instructors to exchange classroom practices, learn from one another's experiences, and strengthen shared pedagogical knowledge.

This year also offered a meaningful moment of intergenerational connection when GUAVA members met Professor Steven O'Harrow, one of GUAVA's founders in 1993, at the SEALC Fall Symposium hosted at the University of Hawai'i. The gathering offered an opportunity to reflect on GUAVA's origins while envisioning its future through community dialogue and academic exchange.

Beyond GUAVA's official activities, members have demonstrated continued dedication to collaborative professional development. [The VietTBLT group](#), founded and led by An Sakach, Chung Nguyen, and Huy Phung, has expanded training opportunities through workshops and shared task-based teaching resources. Likewise, [the annual Venice–Tempe Vietnamese Language Teaching Symposium](#), co-organized by An Sakach and Trang Phan, continues to cultivate global dialogue in the field.

Complementing these developments is the expansion of GUAVA's digital resource ecosystem. Communication Manager Huy Phung has curated a rich collection of open-access textbooks, teaching materials, publications, recorded talks, and especially the Annual Newsletter, now in its fifth edition. These efforts, supported by Dr. Thúy Tranviet and many dedicated members, have positioned

GUAVA as a central repository for high-quality, accessible resources for Vietnamese language educators.

In addition to growing professional activities, GUAVA has made significant progress in strengthening its structural foundation. A major milestone this year was the unanimous approval of the GUAVA Bylaws on August 20, 2025, the culmination of years of groundwork laid by Former President Dr. Thúy Tranviet. The bylaws formalize governance structures, clarify leadership roles, and position GUAVA for sustainable growth in the years ahead.

With the transition on August 31, 2025, GUAVA honors Dr. Thúy Tranviet's long standing service while embracing a new chapter of leadership. Beginning September 1, 2025, [the Executive Board](#) including Chung Nguyen (*President*), Huy Phung (*Communication Manager*), and Trang Tran (*Executive Secretary*) assume the responsibility of carrying forward GUAVA's legacy until the 2027 election.

As GUAVA enters its 33rd year, our commitment remains unwavering: to continue building the professional community envisioned by our founders, to strengthen Vietnamese language education at all levels, and to ensure that GUAVA remains a pioneering organization in the field.

What GUAVA has done, is doing, and will continue to do represents an unbroken chain of dedication, a continuation of the values, mission, and aspirations shaped by generations of Vietnamese language educators. The 2025–2027 Board is honored to carry this torch forward, and together with our members, we remain committed to building an inspiring, sustainable, and innovative future for Vietnamese language teaching.

New York, December 20, 2025
Chung Nguyen
President, GUAVA



GUAVA Newsletter

News & Updates

Thê Húc Bridge, Image by Thomas G. from Pixabay

Inaugural GUAVA Innovations Awards 2025

GUAVA successfully launched its Inaugural GUAVA Innovations Awards for 2025, celebrating three educators for their commitment to creating open-access, impactful teaching resources. Established by the 2024 GUAVA Board, the awards aim to recognize projects that significantly advance student learning, professional development, and accessibility in Vietnamese language education.

From five submissions, a selection committee comprising Thúy Tranviet, Chung Nguyen, and Van Phu Quang chose the following **three winners with their innovative projects**:

Hoan Nguyen (UC San Diego) / Interactive Vietnamese
An Sakach (Arizona State University) / Connected Vietnamese
Trang Tran (Brown University) / Vocabulary Video Contest

The award recipients presented their innovative work at the **virtual GUAVA Innovation Award Showcase on May 18**. Their projects were lauded for their creative approach to technology, cross-institutional collaboration, and student-driven engagement.

All project recordings and accompanying instructional materials are **available on the GUAVA website**, reinforcing the organization's mission to foster a collaborative and open professional learning community.

GUAVA INNOVATION AWARDS 2025 / SHOWCASE

Join us to celebrate and learn

This year GUAVA is proud to honor **three outstanding projects** that showcase diverse and impactful approaches to teaching and learning Vietnamese. Join us for this special event to celebrate their creativity, dedication, and contributions to community building and to **learn from their inspiring work**.



AN SAKACH
Arizona State University



HOAN NGUYEN
UC San Diego



TRANG TRAN
Brown University

REGISTER NOW
<https://tinyurl.com/guava25>



18 MAY 2025
starting 10:00 am EST

<https://guavamerica.org>

Learn more the awards and projects at
<https://guavamerica.org/grants-awards>

GUAVA Approves Bylaws and Welcomes New Leadership

On August 20, 2025, the GUAVA membership achieved a key organizational milestone with the unanimous approval of the updated GUAVA Bylaws. This comprehensive document strengthens the organization's governance framework, clarifies internal roles and responsibilities, and formally reflects the growth and maturity of the professional learning community. This approval is the culmination of extensive collaborative effort from the membership, demonstrating GUAVA's commitment to transparent and robust governance. Members interested in reviewing the full document can access the Bylaws on the GUAVA website at guavamerica.org/by-laws

The structural achievement was closely followed by a significant change in leadership. On August 31, 2025, President Thúy Tranviet stepped down from her position after many dedicated years of service. Tranviet's tenure was critical to the organization's success. She was instrumental in maintaining GUAVA's momentum, securing vital funding, and diligently drafting the foundational organizational documents, including the recently approved Bylaws. Her long-standing efforts have provided GUAVA with a stable platform for future growth.



Photo: Farewell to President Thúy Tranviet and Transition to a New Executive Board

Starting September 1, 2025, a new Executive Board took office to carry out the remainder of the term until the 2027 election. The new board is tasked with guiding the organization through this transitional period, building upon the foundational work laid by their predecessors. The community extends its deepest gratitude to Thúy Tranviet for her invaluable service and looks forward to supporting the new leadership as GUAVA continues its mission to advance Vietnamese language education.

Read [the farewell message](#) ✉ from Dr. Thúy Tranviet and [the By-laws](#) on the GUAVA website: <https://guavamerica.org>

GUAVA Members Convened at the SEALC Symposium at UH Mānoa

GUAVA members recently reaffirmed their professional development commitment in the field of Southeast Asian languages by delivering a robust series of presentations at the [SEALC Fall 2025 Hybrid Symposium](#) (September 26-27, 2025) hosted by UH Mānoa. The event not only showcased the academic rigor of Vietnamese language programs but also provided a meaningful social gathering that bridged generations of educators.

The symposium featured [a wide array of presentations](#) from GUAVA members, demonstrating the community's expertise and dedication to advancing Vietnamese and Southeast Asian language education.

- Prescriptions or Supplements? Teaching Grammar in the Proficiency-Based Instruction Era – *Hanh Nguyen* (University of Pennsylvania)
- Engaging Heritage Language Learners through Project-Based Language Learning: Empirical Insights on Language and Cultural Engagement – *Diep Le*
- Integrating Authentic Materials in Elementary Vietnamese: Pedagogical Practices and Learning Outcomes – *Trang Phan* (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), *Nghia Ha* (University of Finance – Marketing), *An Sakach* (Arizona State University)
- Humanizing Proficiency-Based Reading Materials for Vietnamese Heritage Learners – *Hoan Nguyen* (UC San Diego) & *Huy Phung* (UNC Chapel Hill)
- Transforming Language Curriculum through Performance-Based Assessment – *An Sakach* (Arizona State University)
- Enhancing Placement Testing in a Vietnamese Language Program – *Hoa Le* (Harvard University)
- Lessons Learned after Piloting SEALC Listening Assessment Tests on Vietnamese-learning Students – *Jennie Tran* (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)

- Enhancing Advanced Vietnamese Language Instruction: Bridging Reading Material Design and Classroom Application – *Chung Nguyen* (Columbia University)
- Designing Post-Reading Tasks to Help Students Engage with Authentic Intermediate and Advanced Vietnamese Readings – *Thúy Tranviet* (Cornell University) & *Trang Tran* (Brown University)
- Piloting Proficiency Reading and Listening Tests at Vietnamese Intensive Program – *Hong Dinh* (UW-Madison)
- Applying Task-Based Teaching (TBLT) Approach In Listening Teaching For Chinese Students *Ha Vo* (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, Vietnam) & *An Sakach* (Arizona State University)



GUAVA Members Presenting at the SEALC Fall Symposium



GUAVA Members Gathering at Lunch During the Symposium / Photo: Trang Tran

Crucially, the symposium was complemented by a **Social Gathering** with [professor Stephen O'Harrow](#) (Thầy Steve), an event that perfectly captured the spirit of connection and continuation within the GUAVA community.



The presence of esteemed senior figures like Thầy Steve and other pioneers of the field provided a vital platform for mentorship, allowing newer educators to connect with established scholars. This intergenerational dialogue reinforced the idea that the future of Vietnamese language education is built on the shared legacy and collective expertise of those who have paved the way.

By actively participating in high-level forums like the SEALC Symposium, GUAVA members demonstrate their professional commitment and ensure the continuation of scholarly discourse necessary for the growth and evolution of the Vietnamese education landscape.



GUAVA Social Gathering with Thầy Steve at Talk Kaimuki, Honolulu

GUAVA Launches ‘Member Highlights’ Series

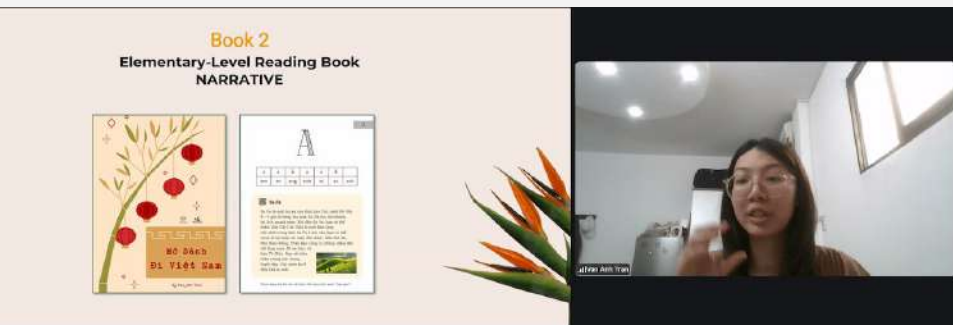
[This report is contributed by Trang Tran]

On Friday, October 17, 2025, the GUAVA community proved that geographic distance is no barrier to professional collaboration. The official launch of the [GUAVA Member Highlights series](#) brought together 19 educators from the United States and Vietnam for a vibrant virtual exchange of pedagogical strategies and creative resources.

This inaugural session spotlighted three projects that exemplify the diversity of modern Vietnamese instruction, ranging from technical linguistic analysis to sensory-based cultural immersion.

Innovative Graded Practice: The Reading Booklet Project

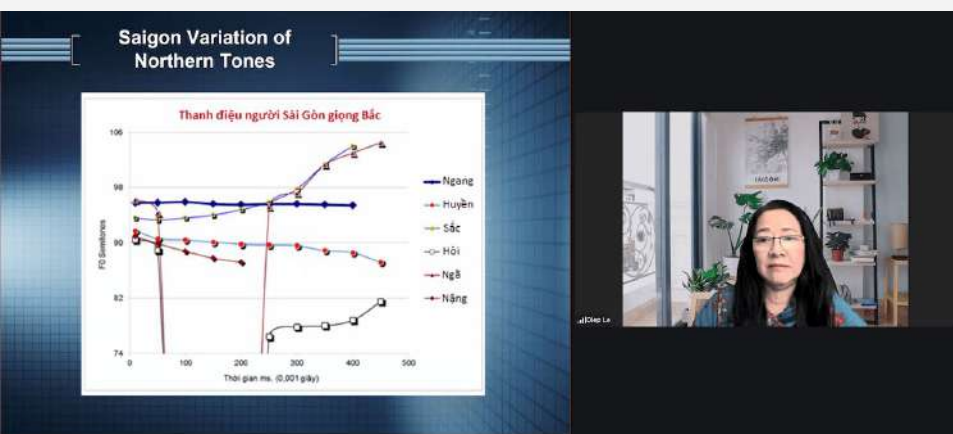
Van-Anh Tran (Tiếng Việt Ở – Vietnamese Lessons) opened the series by introducing an ongoing project tailored for the self-guided learner: a Pronunciation-Based Vietnamese Reading Booklet.



Addressing a common void in available materials, Van-Anh’s booklet uses culturally themed readings to help students navigate the complexities of Vietnamese tones and sounds. A standout feature of the project is its inclusivity; using QR codes, learners can access audio recordings in Northern, Central, and Southern dialects, ensuring a well-rounded and authentic listening experience.

Linguistic Precision: Mastering the Syllable

Transitioning from resources to methodology, Diệp Lê presented a deep dive into Teaching Vietnamese Syllables to Adult Learners.



Her session focused on the structural differences between Vietnamese as a monosyllabic, tonal language and the linguistic patterns of English speakers. Diệp shared a toolkit of classroom-tested strategies, including:

- **Contrastive Analysis:** Highlighting specific phonetic friction points for English learners.
- **Tone Training:** Systematic exercises to build tonal accuracy.
- **Syllable-Building:** Practical drills to strengthen the foundational building blocks of communication.

Vietnamese on the Menu

Bringing a taste of the culture into the curriculum, Quang-Nhan Nguyen showcased his project, “Vietnamese on the Menu.” Nhan’s initiative uses culinary workshops as a vehicle for language and culture learning. By engaging students in the preparation of *bánh mì*, *cà phê sữa đá* (milk coffee), and the traditional *bữa cơm nhà* (home-cooked meal), the project moves language practice beyond the four walls of the classroom. These workshops foster a “living language” environment where community connections are built over shared meals and cultural traditions.

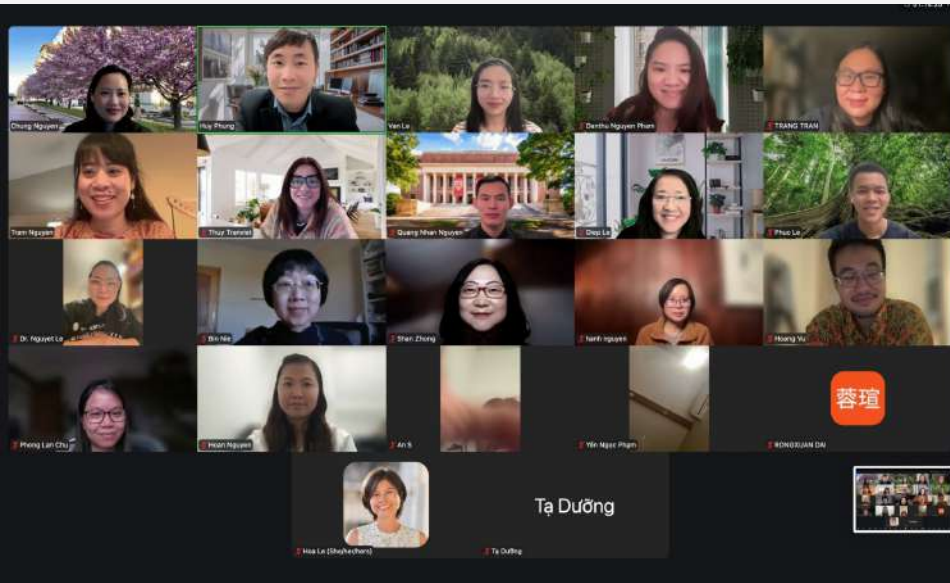


The launch of the Member Highlights series marks a significant step in GUAVA’s mission to provide a platform for educators to learn from one another. By highlighting these diverse approaches, the series ensures that the most effective and creative tools in Vietnamese education are shared across the global community.

Read [the recap](#) from GUAVA in Blog or view recordings from the website.

GUAVA Connect 2025: Breathing New Life into Vietnamese Heritage through Technology

The Group of Universities for the Advancement of Vietnamese in America (GUAVA) recently hosted GUAVA Connect 2025, a workshop that highlighted the intersection of digital technology, heritage preservation, and language education. The event featured a comprehensive presentation by the “Digitizing Vietnam” (Di Sản Số Việt Nam) project team, sparking lively discussions among educators and researchers globally.



GUAVA Members & Friends at GUAVA Connect 2025 with Digitizing Vietnam Team

The session opened with an introduction by Chung Nguyen, welcoming the “Digitizing Vietnam” team. The keynote presentation was led by Tram Nguyen, who outlined the project’s origins—a partnership between Fulbright University Vietnam and Columbia University, established in the summer of 2022 with support from the Henry Luce Foundation.

The project’s mission goes beyond simple storage; it aims to “breathe new life” into archives. By combining preservation with interaction, the project seeks to transform static archives into living resources for teaching and research, facilitating a dialogue between the past and the present.

“We want to turn the archive into a living resource... creating a dialogue between the past and the present.” — Dr. Tram Nguyen

Tram Nguyen introduced the project’s 19 collections, which are divided into pre-modern Han-Nom materials and modern Vietnamese studies.

Van Le presented on the application of digital tools in education, describing the project as a “creative playground” rather than just a warehouse.

She demonstrated several innovative tools designed to engage students:

- *Bói Kiều* (Tale of Kieu Divination): An app that allows users to interact with the 3,200 verses of The Tale of Kieu through the traditional custom of divination, making the classic text more personal and accessible.
- *Nghe Chuông Nữ Giới* (Listening to the Women’s Bell): A tool based on the 1918 newspaper *Nữ Giới Chung*. It uses AI to answer user queries using the specific voice and ideology of early 20th-century feminist writers.

Phuc Le detailed the technical tools developed to support researchers, emphasizing open access and user experience.

- *Han-Nom Dictionary*: A comprehensive digital dictionary integrating five different Han-Nom dictionaries, inherited from the Nom Preservation Foundation.
- *OCR & Input Tools*: The team is collaborating with the University of Science (VNU-HCM) to develop Optical Character Recognition (OCR) for Han-Nom and an input method that supports typing via Quoc Ngu, handwriting, or radical lookup.

The team outlined a future roadmap heavily integrating Artificial Intelligence. Plans include using AI as a “mentor” to chat with documents and building a network connecting digitized collections from various universities into a single accessible portal.

The event concluded with breakout rooms for deeper collaboration, reaffirming GUAVA’s commitment to connecting the global community of Vietnamese language educators.



Image by Xuan Duong from Pixabay

GUAVA Newsletter

Featured Articles

Editor's Notes

There is a saying that “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” This edition marks the fifth year of the GUAVA Newsletter with six issues, and I am delighted to introduce four featured articles from GUAVA members and friends.

I still remember how excited I was when envisioning a professional, low-pressure space for Vietnamese educators to share their voices, reflect honestly on their work, and document our collective expertise. Over the years, the featured articles section has grown into a steady forum for exchanging ideas, classroom-tested experiences, and evolving perspectives on Vietnamese language teaching. Each issue represents another step in that ongoing journey.

In this spirit, **Hạnh Nguyễn** opens with a reflection on teaching grammar within proficiency-based frameworks, urging us to see grammatical knowledge not as an obstacle, but as a meaningful resource when woven with communicative practice. Her article invites us to think carefully about how structure, meaning, and cultural context can be balanced to support learners’ communicative development.

Quang-Nhân Nguyễn then invites us into the kitchen, literally and pedagogically, to explore how culinary workshops become rich sites for language learning, cultural engagement, and community building. He shares a narrative of designing culinary workshops as sites of language and cultural practice, showing how task-based

activities grounded in food can foster engagement, interaction, and a strong sense of community.

With *Digitizing Việt Nam*, **Trâm Nguyễn, Vân Lê, and Phúc Lê** introduce a digital initiative that connects linguistic archives, cultural collections, and emerging AI tools with Vietnamese language teaching, and show how these archives, collections, and tools can be harnessed to create accessible, culturally grounded materials for learners and teachers.

Finally, the **VietTBLT Team** document the first year of the VietTBLT Professional Learning Community, highlighting how sustained collaboration and materials development can support teacher learning beyond one-off professional development, particularly in the domain of Task-Based Language Teaching.

I hope the GUAVA Newsletter continues to be shaped by the generosity, curiosity, and commitment of its contributors and readers. I am grateful to everyone who has shared their work and walked alongside us, helping this space grow, one thoughtful step at a time.

Huy Phung, Ph.D.
GUAVA Newsletter Editor

Prescriptions or Supplements? Teaching Vietnamese Grammar in the Proficiency-Based Instruction Era: Balancing Structure, Meaning, and Proficiency

Introduction

As Vietnamese language programs expand in U.S. universities, instructors face the challenge of designing grammar instruction that is both pedagogically sound and aligned with current standards in world-language teaching. While the communicative approach prioritizes meaning-making and cultural engagement, grammar remains an essential structural component that allows learners to communicate with clarity, precision, and nuance. However, teaching grammar, such as how and when to teach or emphasize, or how much, remains a debated topic in second-language pedagogy.

Vietnamese presents a unique grammatical profile that at first appears simple to English-speaking learners. Its lack of conjugation, plural markers, and articles seems to promise quick early progress. However, beneath this surface simplicity lies a sophisticated system of function words, aspect markers, classifiers, particles, and pragmatic devices essential to authentic communication. To teach Vietnamese effectively at the college level, instructors must use a principled combination of communicative practice, explicit explanation, input-based learning, and task-based pedagogies.

We are going to examine the role of grammar in college-level Vietnamese instruction by situating the discussion within communicative language teaching (CLT), ACTFL standards, and theories of language as skill learning. We can also explore the particular challenges and opportunities presented by Vietnamese grammar and look for a balanced approach that integrates deductive and inductive methods, meaningful application, content-based instruction, and task-based learning. Finally, we need to consider the question of how much grammar instruction is appropriate and how teachers may over- or under-teach grammar based on student expectations, institutional pressures, or inherited teaching traditions.

1. Theoretical and Pedagogical Background

1.1 Language as Skill

Recent scholarship conceptualizes language acquisition not as the accumulation of discrete knowledge but as the development of a procedural skill. Chater and Christiansen (2018) argue that language learning “*can thus be seen as a type of skill acquisition*” mirroring cognitive processes involved in other skill domains. This view aligns with a long tradition of applied linguistics research suggesting that grammar rules, once learned, must be internalized through repeated exposure and meaningful use before they become available for fluent communication. Mackay (2023) similarly positions language learning as a “life skill” essential for global citizenship, intercultural understanding, and intellectual flexibility. From this perspective, grammar instruction is not an end in itself but part of a broader effort to

equip students with communicative competence across multiple contexts.

1.2 ACTFL Standards and the 5Cs

Vietnamese programs in the United States generally follow the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards, emphasizing the 5Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities). Central to these standards are the three modes of communication:

- **Interpersonal:** real-time negotiation of meaning
- **Interpretive:** comprehension of written and spoken texts
- **Presentational:** structured, audience-facing production

Grammar supports all three modes by enhancing accuracy, interpretability, and stylistic appropriateness. For instance, mastering particles such as **đã**, **đang**, or **rồi** helps students express temporal relationships in narratives, an essential skill in both interpretive comprehension and presentational writing.

1.3 Proficiency Guidelines and Vietnamese OPG

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines describe linguistic ability in terms of global tasks, accuracy, functions, and breadth of discourse. The Vietnamese Oral Proficiency Guidelines (OPG), developed specifically for Vietnamese, refine these descriptors by highlighting structural and pragmatic features characteristic of the language (Tranviet et al., 2021). For example, Viet OPG emphasizes control of function words, classifier systems, kinship-based pronouns, and particles. The misuse of these systems can cause misunderstandings or social

inappropriateness. These guidelines underscore the importance of grammar as part of broader communicative proficiency.

2. Vietnamese Grammar: Simplicity and Complexity

2.1 Surface Simplicity

Beginning Vietnamese learners are often delighted to discover the language's apparent simplicity:

- Fixed SVO word order
- Absence of verb conjugations
- No distinction between definite and indefinite articles
- No plural suffixes
- Adjectives placed after nouns
- Adjectives used without the verb “to be”

These features allow students to compose meaningful sentences early in their studies, which enhances motivation and creates a sense of accessible progress.

2.2 Deep Complexity Beneath the Surface

Yet Vietnamese grammar's seeming simplicity obscures a rich and complex system of function words, modal markers, modality, and pragmatic particles. For example, **được**, **bị**, **mà**, **thì**, **nhé**, **hả**, **chứ**, or **cơ** carry a wide range of interpretive and social meanings. For example, **được** may express permission, capability, advantage, or passive constructions depending on context. The particle **mà** can signal contrast, emphasis, complaint, or justification. Such features require explicit instruction, contextualized input, and extensive communicative practice for learners to master.

In our program's recent survey about applying grammar in real life, we got responses that show a split between learners who find grammar broadly challenging (due to complexity, vocabulary gaps, or multiple contexts) and those who struggle with specific areas (like passive voice, classifiers, tones, or sentence structure), only a small group reported no major difficulties, suggesting varied levels of confidence and experience among learners.

2.3 Grammar as Culture

Grammar and culture are inseparable in Vietnamese. Pronouns operate through kinship terms; politeness and hierarchy are expressed through particles and lexical choices; attitudes and interpersonal alignment are encoded in final particles. Students cannot simply "apply rules", they, in fact, must interpret and produce grammar in ways that reflect Vietnamese cultural values, social roles, and interactional norms. Effective instruction therefore integrates grammar and culture holistically.

3. Approaches to Teaching Vietnamese Grammar

3.1 Combining Deductive and Inductive Methods

In the CARLA workshop "[Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary Through Multimodal LCTL Texts: A Prism of Language, Conventions, and Cultural Content](#)" in December, 2024, it is noted that effective grammar instruction often blends deductive explanations with opportunities for inductive discovery. Vietnamese instruction also benefits from this hybrid approach:

- **Deductive instruction** provides clarity for structures with multiple functions or subtle pragmatic uses.
- **Inductive learning** promotes deeper pattern recognition and long-term retention through exposure and noticing.

For examples, teachers may present explicit rules about the uses of *được/bị*, then provide examples in authentic dialogues or texts for students to analyze. The combination strengthens both accuracy and intuition.

3.2 Structured Drills and Meaningful Application

In Viet classes at Penn, students still ask for textbook-styled drills. They find those fill-in-the-blank, substitution, transformation, etc. valuable for developing accuracy and confidence. These drills, on the one hand, can reduce cognitive load by controlling variables, allowing students to focus on form rather than content creation. Assigning these drills outside class preserves instructional time for richer activities.

Students, on the other hand, need meaningful communication that requires flexible application. They must be able to produce original content that integrates new grammar structures. For instance, after learning several modal markers, students might be asked to:

- Write a paragraph using at least five of the eight target structures
- Record a video explaining a past experience using *đã*, *rồi*, and *từng*
- Debate a topic using required discourse connectors

Such tasks shift grammar from passive recognition to active use.

3.3 Students as Content Creators

A content-creation approach begins with interpretive understanding. Students read or listen to authentic Vietnamese materials, for example short articles, Youtube videos, or podcast dialogues, and demonstration comprehension, often in English. This ensures they understand key content and vocabulary.

They then engage in presentational or interpersonal communication in Vietnamese:

- Summarizing the text
- Discussing its cultural or social implications
- Debating issues raised in the material

During these tasks, students must employ target grammar structures, tying form to meaning. This aligns with ACTFL's emphasis on interpretive → presentational progression and encourages deeper cognitive engagement.

3.4 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

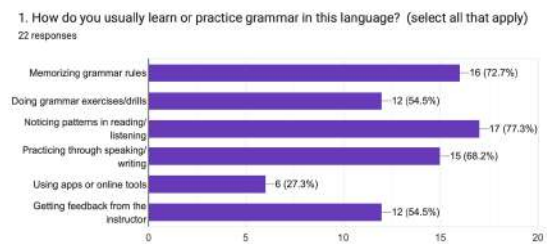
Nassaji and Fotos (2011) emphasize the structured grammar-focused task as an effective grammar instruction. TBLT positions grammar as a tool used to complete communicative goals. Tasks might include:

- Planning a class event
- Solving a problem using clues
- Negotiating a group decision
- Conducting interviews
- Presenting advice or instructions

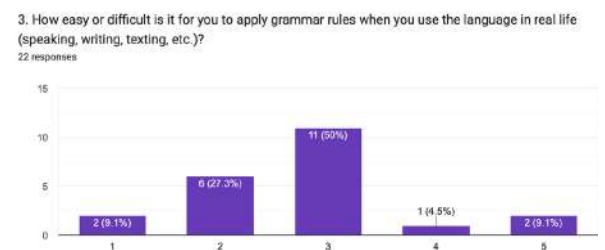
Throughout the task, grammar emerges naturally as a resource. Post-task reflection allows teachers to highlight areas of effective grammar use or address recurring errors. This approach reinforces fluency, problem-solving, and real-world communicative competence.

3.5 Students' reaction to grammar teaching and learning

In the same grammar survey mentioned earlier, we can see that students engaged in a full range of grammar learning and practice, drawing on a combination of different teaching approaches.

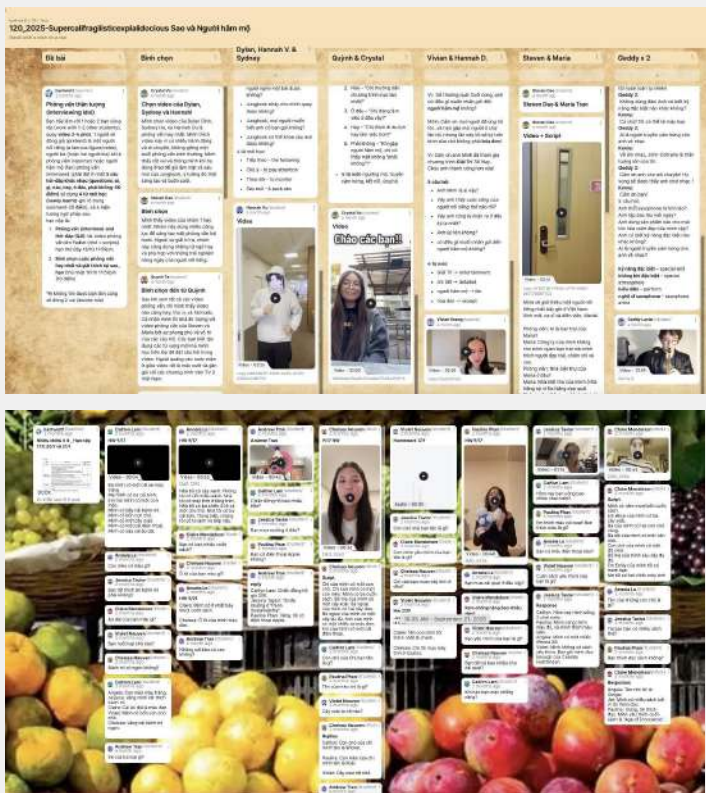


And half of the students find grammar instruction effective, while a smaller but equal number rate it as either very difficult or very easy (with 1 meaning very difficult and 5 meaning very easy). This outcome is consistent with the nature of mixed classes that include both heritage and non-heritage learners, which is typical in heritage programs. However, it also suggests the need for thorough reflection on teaching practice



4. Example Activities

Example 1: variety of questions



Example 2: structures with assigned meaning

300_2025_Nhạc của tui

Phần	Nội dung	Hạn nộp	Điểm
1. Video	Nhạc sĩ/ca sĩ/dòng nhạc yêu thích của bạn là gì? Bạn hãy chia sẻ sở thích âm nhạc của mình trong 1-3 phút video trong đó sử dụng 4 hiện tượng ngữ pháp với ý nghĩa chỉ định trong danh sách sau: già/gia như/gia mà (một gia đình cho 1 việc đã không xảy ra) thử (to try) cũng biết ngay là (only a little bit of smt can reveal it right away, can't be at the start of the sentence) chứ không/chứ chưa (but not as you/we thought) cứ (frequency, repetition) chẳng hạn như (for example) phải nói thật là (to be honest)	12.11	40
2. Bình luận / Câu hỏi	- Sau đó, bạn sẽ xem video của các bạn mình (only read the script as needed). - Bình luận hoặc đặt câu hỏi cho ít nhất 4 bạn, sử dụng ít nhất 1 hiện tượng ngữ pháp trong danh sách ở trên ở mỗi câu, tổng cộng 4 hiện tượng khác nhau. *Nhớ copy phần bình luận/câu hỏi của mình vào CANVAS	19.11	40
3. Trả lời	- Cuối cùng, bạn sẽ trả lời các bình luận hoặc câu hỏi đối với mình.	20.11	20

☞ Tổng điểm: 100 điểm
☞ Bạn nhớ nói tự nhiên, và gửi kèm phần lời (scripts) vào bình luận.



Example 3: inductive instruction (Phung et al. 2024)

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Grammar Notes

★ Để vs. cho (for purpose):

Số sánh/Compare:

- Ngày lễ Tạ Ơn đầu tiên được cho là diễn ra vào năm 1623 để cảm ơn con mua đã kết thúc đợt hạn hán.
- Vào ngày thứ Sáu Đen, tôi sẽ mua rất nhiều quần áo ấm cho mùa đông.

Luyện tập/Practice:

Hoàn tất câu

- ★ Tôi học tiếng Việt ____
- ★ Bạn mua gạo nếp ____

★ Được for passive voice:

Số sánh/Compare:

- Lễ Tạ ơn thường được (chúng tôi) tổ chức bằng một buổi tiệc tối cùng với gia đình và bạn bè.
- Chúng tôi thường tổ chức lễ Tạ ơn bằng một buổi tiệc tối cùng với gia đình và bạn bè.

Luyện tập/Practice:

a) cái gì/nhà được

★ Không chỉ...mà còn (not only...but also...)

Số sánh/Compare:

Lễ Tạ ơn không chỉ vui mà còn rất "ngon"!
Bằng cách "chẩn bị sẵn" danh sách này, bạn không chỉ mua sắm có "hệ thống" hơn mà còn quản lý tài chính một cách "thông minh".

Luyện tập/Practice:

không chỉ...mà còn...

5. Conclusion: How Much Grammar Should We Teach?

While grammar instruction is essential, an important pedagogical tension remains: *How much grammar is enough?* Teachers may be tempted to “give too much of a good thing,” assuming that additional rules inherently benefit students. This tendency mirrors cultural attitudes, particularly among Asian families, that more practice or more information is always better.

At the same time, students, especially those are ambitious, focused, and grade-conscious, often request more grammar. They recognize that grammar gives them expressive power and helps them understand more complex input.

The challenge for instructors is not whether to teach grammar but **how to balance it**:

- Align grammar instruction with communicative and proficiency goals
- Integrate grammar with culture and meaning
- Avoid overwhelming students with unnecessary structures
- Prioritize what supports interpretive and interpersonal success
- Adapt textbook content thoughtfully rather than uncritically
- Be responsive to learner interests without sacrificing curricular coherence

Ultimately, grammar should not burden students but empower them. It should help them express who they are in Vietnamese, engage meaningfully with Vietnamese-speaking communities, and develop lifelong language skills.

A balanced, student-centered, proficiency-aligned approach enables grammar to serve its true purpose: supporting clear communication, cultural understanding, and confident participation in the Vietnamese language.

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About the Author

Hanh Nguyen teaches Vietnamese language at the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania. She holds an MA degree in Chinese Studies and BA degrees in Chinese, English, and International Relations. Hanh believes that learning a language helps learners recognize traditions and customs, appreciate diverse cultures, and ultimately understand one another. This is why she is passionate about languages and cultures and strives to inspire that same passion in her students. Besides teaching, Hanh actively participates in various projects to create instructional materials. She also works with the state government on standardizing language used to communicate with Viet communities.

Designing Culinary Workshops as Sites of Language and Cultural Practice: A Narrative

Introduction

When I first began teaching Vietnamese, I found myself returning to a simple but enduring pedagogical insight: food is often the first and most powerful point of cultural entry, particularly for Vietnamese language learners. A sip of strong *cà phê phin*, the crackle of a freshly baked *bánh mì* with harmonious combination of fillings, or the warmth of a home-style bowl of *canh chua* (sour soup) served with jasmine white rice carries with it layers of memory, identity, and shared tradition. I began to wonder what might happen if these cultural narratives – embedded in taste, aroma, and embodied practice – were brought directly into the language classroom. This question ultimately led to “*Vietnamese on the Menu – Designing Culinary Workshops as Sites of Language and Cultural Practice*”, a project that reconceived the culinary workshops as a dynamic site of linguistic development, cultural inquiry, and community formation.

Recognizing the Cultural and Linguistic Potential of Culinary Tasks

My initial motivation came from observing how both heritage and non-heritage learners sought deeper cultural grounding in their Vietnamese language studies. Heritage learners often recalled dishes connected to childhood or family gatherings but lacked the vocabulary to

name ingredients or processes or even struggled to express their food review in Vietnamese. Non-heritage learners, captivated by Vietnamese cuisine, wished to engage with the rhythms and social practices surrounding food. It became clear that culinary work could serve as a bridge across these diverse learner experiences. Food, after all, carries language within it: its invitations, its instructions, its sensory associations, even restaurant recommendations, all of which make linguistic forms more memorable and meaningful.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provided the pedagogical framework to turn this intuition into structured practice. If authentic, goal-directed tasks serve as the foundation of meaningful communication, as Ellis (2003) and others propose, then culinary activities are especially well suited for language acquisition. Preparing a *bánh mì*, making *cà phê sữa đá* or cooking a home meal requires sustained interaction, negotiation of meaning, and contextually grounded vocabulary. The culinary workshops thus emerged not merely as a practical setting but as a fully realized “task environment” in which linguistic practice, cultural expression, and collaboration converge.

Pedagogical Scaffolding for Workshop-Based Language Instruction

Prior to each culinary workshop, instructional time was intentionally dedicated to targeted pre-task scaffolding designed to equip learners with the linguistic and cultural resources necessary for successful task participation. In the language classroom, this preparation was integrated into the regular curriculum so that, by the day of the workshop, students

had already engaged with relevant vocabulary, action verbs, culturally embedded cooking expressions, and procedural language aligned with the upcoming activity. Scaffolding included the introduction of essential terminology, teacher modeling through gestures or brief demonstrations, and exposure to authentic Vietnamese materials such as cookbooks, ingredient packaging, recipes, and instructional videos. These preparatory steps ensured that learners entered the workshop with a solid foundation of both linguistic competence and cultural background knowledge.

When the workshop was conducted in the context of a Vietnamese Language Table, where a bigger group of participants represented a range of proficiency levels, scaffolding occurred at the start of the event. In this setting, instructors provided condensed support tailored to a mixed-level audience, enabling all learners, regardless of prior experience, to engage meaningfully in the collaborative culinary task.

Selected Workshops in Harvard's Vietnamese Language Program This Fall 2025 Semester

1. Bánh Mì: Entering a Cultural Narrative

The *bánh mì* workshop emerged as a central component of the project, not only for its linguistic value but also for the way it invited students to enter a broader cultural narrative. Prior to assembling their sandwiches, students examined the historical development of *bánh mì* from its origins during the French colonial period in the nineteenth century, to its recognition in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2011, and its ongoing global

reinterpretations in contemporary culinary culture. Instructional activities introduced learners to common ingredients, major *bánh mì* varieties, and the dish's prominence within modern Vietnamese society. Students also viewed short Vietnamese video clips showcasing regional variations and emphasizing *bánh mì* as a form of everyday soul food deeply embedded in Vietnamese lifestyle.

As students layered ingredients and assembled their own sandwiches, they were engaged in far more than a procedural task. They were participating in a living tradition and positioning themselves within the historical and cultural continuum that *bánh mì* represents.



2. Đi cà phê học bài: Experiencing Language in a Social Space

A second workshop re-created the cultural practice of *đi cà phê học bài* (go to a cafe for studying) – the common habit of studying or socializing in a café in Vietnam. Students learned to prepare popular

beverages typically found in Vietnamese coffee houses, including *cà phê phin*, *cà phê sữa đá*, and *trà đào* (peach tea). These preparations served as linguistic prompts for discussing café etiquette, personal preferences, and the social significance of cafés in contemporary Vietnamese life.

The workshop began outdoors, where I demonstrated the steps involved in making each drink. Students then worked in teams to replicate the preparations and collaboratively articulate the procedures in Vietnamese. This task served a dual pedagogical purpose: first, it provided structured practice in sequencing language and describing processes; second, it immersed learners in a culturally familiar context, allowing them to experience a new learning environment while exploring the vibrant café culture so characteristic of Vietnam. In Vietnamese society, cafés function as versatile communal spaces – used for studying, teamwork, business meetings, family gatherings, and casual social interactions. By engaging in this practice, students not only developed linguistic competence but also gained insight into the social rhythms that shape everyday life in Vietnam.

By the end of each workshop, the classroom had transformed into an immersive linguistic environment resembling a café, complete with layered cultural interactions.



3. Bữa Cơm Nhà (A Home-Style Meal): Learning Through the Heart of the Home

The *bữa cơm nhà* workshop – centered on the traditional home-style meal – brought the project to its most comprehensive and culturally resonant expression. Students prepared dishes commonly associated with Vietnamese domestic life, including *nấm xào đậu Hà Lan*, *đậu khuôn kho sả ớt*, *canh hẹ đậu khuôn* (stir-fried mushrooms with snow peas, braised tofu with lemongrass and chili, chive and tofu soup)

This workshop was designed for advanced students, and therefore the pre-task scaffolding was both thorough and carefully structured. Students were divided into groups of three and assigned a recipe. Each group examined its recipe, discussed the procedure, negotiated task assignments, and identified unfamiliar vocabulary or expressions. They consulted the instructor when needed and took notes in preparation for their individual responsibilities within the cooking process.

On the day of the workshop, students were given their ingredients and worked collaboratively in a kitchen space generously offered by an upper-class student. The instructor acted primarily as a facilitator, observing interactions and answering questions only when solicited. As students chopped, sautéed, stirred, and coordinated timing, they engaged in authentic, spontaneous communication driven by the urgency and unpredictability of the cooking environment. This context encouraged natural, real-time linguistic negotiation and deepened students' communicative competence as they worked together to complete each dish.

After the dishes were finished, each group presented its dish to the class, explaining the preparation process so that peers, who had not seen the recipe, could understand the procedural steps. The workshop concluded with a communal meal in which students and the instructor enjoyed the dishes while continuing to converse in Vietnamese. The atmosphere was warm and intimate, and many students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share Vietnamese food, practice the language in a meaningful context, and experience a sense of home and community.

For the post-task assignment, each student selected a dish they had not prepared and wrote out the procedural steps based on their peers' in-class presentations. This activity reinforced listening comprehension, procedural vocabulary, and cultural knowledge, completing the learning cycle initiated by the workshop.



Reflection as an Extension of Cultural and Linguistic Learning

Each workshop concluded with structured post-task reflection. Students wrote journal entries, or participated in discussion, all conducted in Vietnamese. These reflections encouraged learners to analyze their linguistic choices, observe cultural practices, and articulate challenges and insights. Students frequently identified vocabulary that had become newly memorable or cultural practices that became clearer when experienced rather than described.

What Culinary Tasks Revealed About Language Acquisition

As *Vietnamese on the Menu* expanded, it became increasingly evident that culinary tasks do more than facilitate vocabulary acquisition. They activate sensory experience: taste, smell, see, touch, allowing students to anchor linguistic forms in embodied memory. They provide culturally rich contexts that make pragmatics, register, and sociocultural norms more accessible. And perhaps most importantly, they cultivate community. Students entered the kitchen as classmates but left it as collaborators who had created something meaningful together – linguistically, culturally, and socially.

From my observation, integrating TBLT with culinary practice has reshaped the way my students engage with Vietnamese. Through these collaborative culinary workshops, language learners experience Vietnamese as a lived language embedded in social practice. They develop more communicative competence, deepen cultural understanding, and strengthen their identity as members of an interconnected learning community.

The workshops have become a vibrant, generative site for language education – one that illuminates the profound interdependence of language, culture, and embodied experience. With each workshop, it becomes increasingly clear that food is not merely nourishment; it is a cultural archive, a communicative practice, and a powerful bridge between learners and the worlds they seek to enter.

Tips to prepare these sections to make the lessons meaningful and effective

I conclude this narrative by offering several practical tips for preparing these sections so that the lessons become both meaningful and effective:

1. Scaffold Instructions with Visual and Linguistic Support

Prepare students with step-by-step directions using Vietnamese, incorporating visual aids (images, videos, demonstrations) and pre-teaching essential vocabulary and phrases for the workshop.

2. Foster Exclusive Use of Vietnamese Through Structured Tasks

Set clear expectations for using only Vietnamese—organizing students into collaborative groups with specific roles and responsibilities that require communication in Vietnamese.

3. Integrate Cultural Context and Authentic Materials

Enrich the experience by sharing stories, histories, and customs related to each dish, and incorporate real-life Vietnamese materials such as cookbooks, packaging, or

instructional videos to expose students to authentic language and culture.

4. Encourage Reflection, Sharing, and Community Building

Have students reflect on and share their experiences (through discussion, journaling, or short videos in Vietnamese), present their dishes, and celebrate together, fostering a sense of classroom community and connecting learning to their personal and family memories.

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About the Author

Quang-Nhan Nguyen is a language instructor in Vietnamese at Harvard University. He enjoys incorporating Vietnamese culture like festivals, cuisine, religion, literature, tourism, popular media,.. into curriculum design and materials development. His teaching focuses on fostering communicative competence, cultural understanding, and a true appreciation for the Vietnamese language. His favorite question is "đi cà phê không?"

Sustaining Teacher Development in TBLT through a Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has long been recognized as a principled and research-supported approach to language instruction (Ellis et al, 2019; Long, 2015). By organizing instruction around meaningful tasks that reflect real-world language use, TBLT is claimed to promote learner engagement, communicative competence, and the integration of form and meaning. Across contexts and languages, research has consistently shown that well-designed tasks can create rich opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning, and language development (Mackey, 2020).

Despite this strong research base, implementing TBLT in everyday classrooms remains challenging (Kim, 2025). Teachers frequently report uncertainty about what constitutes a task, how to adapt existing materials, how to sequence tasks within a curriculum, and how to evaluate whether tasks are effective for their learners. These challenges are not simply technical; they reflect deeper issues related to teachers' pedagogical beliefs, institutional constraints, and access to sustained professional support (East, 2025).

Teacher education is therefore central to successful and sustainable TBLT implementation (East, 2023, 2025). However, much professional development in TBLT has relied on one-off workshops or top-down, expert-driven models. While such formats can be inspiring and informative, they often

struggle to produce lasting changes in classroom practice. Teachers may leave workshops with new ideas but limited opportunities to revisit, apply, and refine those ideas in their own teaching contexts.

Recent work in TBLT teacher education suggests that sustained, collaborative, and practice-oriented professional learning is essential (East, 2023). In particular, engaging teachers in materials development such as selecting, designing, adapting, and evaluating tasks has been identified as a powerful way to bridge the gap between research and practice (Yang et al., 2024). Through this “*learning by doing*” approach, teachers make abstract TBLT principles concrete, negotiate meaning with peers, and develop professional agency over their instructional decisions.

It was from this understanding that the VietTBLT (viettblt.com) and the VietTBLT Professional Learning Community (PLC) 2025 were born. We founded VietTBLT to provide a collaborative and innovative space for language instructors so that they can learn, apply, and refine TBLT while connecting with researchers, experts, and fellow educators in a meaningful and sustainable way. As such, VietTBLT focuses on advancing TBLT for Vietnamese language education through three interconnected pillars: research, pedagogy, and community while the PLC was designed not as a training program, but as a community of practice where Vietnamese language educators could work together over time to explore TBLT through their own materials and classrooms. Rather than positioning researchers or experts as the sole source of knowledge, the PLC treated teachers' experiences, questions, and contexts as central resources for learning.

The inaugural VietTBLT PLC 2025 intentionally focused on task-based materials development as the organizing site for professional growth

through bridging theory, research, and practice in TBLT. Materials development offered a concrete, shared activity through which teachers could examine TBLT principles, experiment with pedagogical choices, and reflect on student learning. By working with materials collectively, participants were able to connect theory to practice in ways that felt immediately relevant and sustainable.

Key Activities of the VietTBLT PLC 2025

The VietTBLT PLC 2025 was designed as a sustained, practice-oriented professional learning experience, unfolding across three interconnected cycles aligned with the academic year. Each cycle foregrounded a different aspect of working with task-based materials, while maintaining continuity through monthly meetings, collaborative discussion, and shared reflection. Together, these cycles were designed to support teachers in moving from reflection on current practice toward more confident and intentional implementation of TBLT.

Cycle 1: Using existing materials productively (Spring 2025)

The Spring cycle focused on helping participants work more intentionally with existing instructional materials: *Intermediate Vietnamese: A Task-based Journey*. Rather than taking the taskbook and using it passively, the PLC emphasized reflective use: when and how materials could be adapted to function as tasks within specific teaching contexts.

During monthly meetings, teachers shared examples from their classrooms and reflected collectively on what worked, what did not, and why. Discussions centered on questions such as how students actually engaged with activities, what kinds of interaction emerged, and what constraints shaped instructional choices. These conversations helped surface tacit pedagogical

beliefs and highlighted the contextual nature of TBLT implementation.

A key outcome of this cycle was the identification of curricular needs. Through reflection and discussion, participants articulated gaps in their current materials and began to specify the kinds of tasks they wished they had for their learners. This shared diagnosis laid the groundwork for the next phase of the PLC.

Cycle 2: Developing task-based materials (Summer 2025)

The Summer cycle shifted the focus from usage and reflection to collaborative materials development. Supported by a funded public workshop series, participants explored principles of task design, including alignment with course goals, task sequencing, and working with texts as task input. Expert webinars provided conceptual grounding, while PLC meetings emphasized application and peer exchange.

Teachers developed new task-based materials using a common framework inspired by our existing open educational resources, adapting the framework to fit their instructional settings. Draft tasks were shared during PLC meetings and received multiple rounds of feedback from peers. These discussions often centered on feasibility, clarity of task outcomes, learner engagement, and alignment with communicative goals.

By the end of this cycle, the PLC had produced five sets of classroom-ready task-based materials, accompanied by design rationales and teaching notes. Just as importantly, participants reported increased confidence in their ability to design tasks independently, as well as a clearer understanding of how TBLT

principles translate into concrete instructional decisions.

Cycle 3: Evaluating and revising tasks (Fall 2025)

The third cycle was designed to focus on evaluating task implementation and revising materials based on classroom evidence. Drawing on a micro-task evaluation approach, participants planned to treat their classrooms as sites of inquiry, examining whether tasks were feasible, meaningful, and effective for their learners.

In practice, this cycle was affected by scheduling conflicts and time-zone differences, which limited opportunities for synchronous monthly meetings. As a result, the evaluation phase was delayed and extended into the following year. Participants agreed to continue task evaluation as small-scale, classroom-based inquiry projects, with the goal of sharing findings and revisions in the next PLC cycle.

Although the originally planned VietTBLT Symposium did not take place, the year concluded with a final reflective meeting. This meeting provided space for participants to reflect on their professional growth, revisit key insights from the year, and discuss how PLC structures could be improved moving forward.

Overall Outcomes and Professional Impact

Across the year, the VietTBLT PLC 2025 engaged teachers in approximately 20 hours of sustained professional development, including seven monthly meetings, three expert webinars, multiple rounds of peer feedback, and classroom-based teaching connected directly to PLC work. Participants spanned multiple time zones and teaching contexts, underscoring both the challenges and

possibilities of distributed professional learning.

The most significant outcome of the PLC was not only the creation of task-based materials, but the development of a shared professional language and collaborative culture around TBLT. Through sustained engagement in materials work, teachers reported greater clarity about TBLT principles, increased confidence in adapting materials, and a stronger sense of professional agency.

These outcomes suggest that a PLC centered on task-based materials development can serve as a sustainable model for teacher development, supporting both pedagogical growth and community building in TBLT contexts.

Challenges and Constraints

VietTBLT PLC 2025 revealed several structural and pedagogical challenges that shaped the dynamics of the collaboration and underscored the complexity of implementing TBLT across diverse teaching contexts.

First, the small size of the cohort and the fact that participating instructors were spread across multiple countries created logistical difficulties. Because members were located in the United States, Vietnam, and other regions, time zone differences meant that not all participants could consistently attend the live meetings. As a result, some discussions had to be conducted asynchronously, which occasionally slowed collective decision-making and the peer-review process.

A second challenge stemmed from the wide variation in teaching contexts represented within the cohort. Participating instructors work with highly different learner populations, including U.S.-based heritage learners, non-heritage students with no prior exposure

to Vietnamese, and international learners, particularly Chinese students whose linguistic backgrounds and learning strategies differ significantly from those of students in American universities. Because of these differences, task design could not be standardized, and instructors often had to adapt or reconfigure tasks to fit their learners' linguistic profiles, cultural expectations, and proficiency needs.

In addition, there is a substantial variation in instructors' interpretations of TBLT principles. Some teachers followed a strong interpretation of TBLT, providing reactive focus on form and placing the focus on meaning-making, while others used a more task-supported approach, supplying vocabulary lists and grammar explanations before task performance. Conversely, some instructors delayed grammar instruction until after the task was completed. Similar variation occurred in how teachers conceptualized task sequences: several participants implemented a full Pre-Task → Task Cycle → Language Focus sequence, whereas others treated the task as a standalone activity rather than a structured sequence with pedagogical dependencies. These differences complicated efforts to develop shared templates and common evaluation criteria.

Finally, a broader challenge relates to the linguistic nature of Vietnamese itself, which complicates TBLT implementation more than in many Indo-European language contexts. Vietnamese phonology, particularly tones, consonant distinctions, and rhythm creates significant processing difficulty for learners and often requires explicit and repeated form-focused support. Likewise, Vietnamese grammar is highly flexible and context-dependent, lacking many morphosyntactic markers found in English or Chinese. This linguistic flexibility frequently leads to learner confusion and places additional

pressure on instructors to balance communicative task work with targeted language focus. As a result, integrating TBLT with the specific phonological and grammatical demands of Vietnamese remains an ongoing pedagogical challenge.

Together, these challenges underscore the need for continued professional development, clearer shared frameworks, and adaptive curriculum design as the VietTBLT PLC moves into its next phases.

Plans for the Next PLC 2026

The VietTBLT Professional Learning Community (PLC) 2026 represents the second phase of a multi-year initiative to advance Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Vietnamese language education through collaborative curriculum development, teacher capacity building, and research-informed practice. Building on the progress made in 2025, the 2026 cycle focuses on three major objectives: (1) expanding the instructional cohort, (2) designing and testing a three-week task-based curriculum at the prototype level, and (3) implementing the curriculum in Fall 2026 followed by dissemination at the First VietTBLT Symposium, held online in early December.

Cycle 1 (Spring 2026) emphasizes community expansion and task refinement. The PLC will recruit an additional three to five instructors from the United States, Vietnam, and international institutions, thereby broadening linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical perspectives within the cohort. Returning and new members will participate in onboarding workshops reviewing TBLT principles, classroom procedures, and the material design templates produced in 2025. Throughout this period, instructors will refine previously developed tasks and create new tasks aligned

with their teaching contexts. Peer feedback sessions will ensure that each task meets standards of authenticity, cognitive engagement, and performance alignment.

Cycle 2 (Summer 2026) shifts to designing and paper-testing a three-week task-based curriculum prototype. Unlike classroom implementation, this stage involves on-paper trialing and analytic walkthroughs rather than real-time teaching with students. “Paper-based prototyping” consists of several structured steps:

- *Lesson Simulation*: Each teacher mentally simulates the three-week sequence, walking through each activity as though teaching it, and noting timing, scaffolding requirements, potential student challenges, and missing supports.
- *Task Mapping*: Teachers map task goals, pre-task activities, main task procedures, and post-task language focus to ensure logical sequencing and internal coherence.
- *Feasibility Analysis*: Teachers evaluate the practicality of each lesson—assessing workload, materials needed, cognitive demands, and suitability for their specific learner population (heritage, non-heritage, online learners, etc.).
- *Peer Review*: Members exchange curriculum prototypes and provide structured feedback on alignment with outcomes, clarity of instructions, and authenticity of communicative tasks.
- *Comparative Reflection*: Teachers compare the task-based prototype with their current curriculum to identify innovations, redundancies, and areas benefiting from TBLT restructuring.

Through this process, the curriculum is tested conceptually, refined collaboratively, and prepared for actual implementation in Fall

2026. No student-facing teaching occurs during this cycle. By late August, each instructor produces a completed prototype curriculum pack ready for piloting in the fall, accompanied by a short reflection report documenting anticipated opportunities and challenges.

Cycle 3 (Fall 2026) introduces real-world implementation and prepares for public dissemination. Teachers will pilot their three-week task-based curriculum modules in their classrooms, collecting data on student engagement, task performance, and overall feasibility. Reflection roundtables in October and November will synthesize insights across teaching contexts, generating a set of shared teaching cases that highlight common patterns and contextual differences. The cycle concludes with the First VietTBLT Symposium, held online in early December 2026. This symposium, open to all Vietnamese language educators and world language teachers working with Vietnamese learners, will showcase the pilot results through teacher-led presentations, workshops, and curricular demonstrations.

The VietTBLT PLC 2026 thus advances a scalable, community-driven model of TBLT innovation by expanding participation, strengthening collaborative curriculum design, and promoting knowledge sharing across institutions.

In conclusion, the VietTBLT PLC demonstrates the value of professional learning communities centered on task-based materials development as a sustainable model for teacher development. By engaging teachers in the concrete work of selecting, designing, evaluating, and revising tasks, the PLC supports learning that is grounded in classroom realities while remaining firmly connected to TBLT research. This ground-up, incremental approach, from developing individual tasks, to piloting small clusters of tasks, to designing

and evaluating task-based curricula, offers a practical pathway for expanding access to high-quality TBLT materials. When these materials, rationales, and implementation plans are shared as open educational resources, they not only support teacher learning but also make instructional decision-making more transparent and reproducible. Over time, this approach enables programs to ensure that they are truly task-based, while creating conditions for meaningful course- and program-level evaluation grounded in shared, openly available designs. In this sense, PLCs like VietTBLT do more than support individual teachers; they lay the foundation for sustainable, collaborative, and research-informed curriculum development in TBLT.

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About the Authors

Huy Phung is an experienced language educator specializing in both English and Vietnamese as second/heritage languages. His expertise lies at the intersection of language learning, teaching, and assessment, with a particular focus on the role of conversational interaction in language acquisition, TBLT, and bilingual education.

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Digitizing Việt Nam: Archives & AI Tools for Teaching Vietnamese as a Foreign Language

1. Introduction: Bridging Vietnamese Archives and VFL Pedagogy

Digitizing Việt Nam is a long-term digital initiative dedicated to preserving and promoting Vietnamese cultural and scholarly heritage. With this mission, Digitizing Việt Nam also strives to connect Vietnamese cultural-historical-linguistic archives with contemporary Vietnamese-as-a-Foreign-Language (VFL) pedagogy. The project transforms scholarly works and cultural materials into accessible digital resources that can be used directly in classrooms and self-study environments. Its core philosophy—moving from archive to learning resource to digital tool—allows historical materials to become living pedagogical assets, supporting instructors and learners across the world.

2. Core Collections for Vietnamese Language Teaching

Digitizing Việt Nam's archive is built on a foundational set of works by four major linguists—Prof. Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, Prof. An Chi, Prof. Cao Xuân Hạo, and Prof. Nguyễn Quang Hồng—whose scholarship clarifies the development of Vietnamese phonology, writing systems, grammar, etymology, syllable structure, and poetic sound aesthetics. Their research offers instructors a rigorous base for explaining how Vietnamese is formed, structured, and expressed. To complement this linguistic foundation, Digitizing Việt Nam curates other cultural

collections that bring authentic context into the VFL classroom. The Sounds of Vietnam collection offers everyday soundscapes—from Sài Gòn markets to street vendors—that help learners attune to natural intonation, rhythm, and sociolinguistic patterns. The Vietnamese Proverbs collection draws from early twentieth-century sources documenting proverbs, folk songs, riddles, and idioms, including early bilingual editions that preserve regional wisdom and folk expression.

Together, these collections pair scholarly depth with cultural immersion, allowing learners to grasp both the structure of Vietnamese and the lived meanings it carries in daily life.

3. AI Tools for Vietnamese Language Learning

Digitizing Việt Nam aims to develop an integrated AI assistant designed to support Vietnamese language teaching and learning. Drawing on the Linguistic & Literary Studies Collection, it can answer complex questions about grammar, pronunciation, etymology, and linguistic history with scholarly accuracy. At the same time, it serves as a flexible teaching companion that diagnoses common learner errors, creates practice exercises, and quizzes students on vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening, adjusting to their progress. These combined functions allow the AI to complement classroom instruction and provide learners with reliable, personalized support—especially valuable for those without regular access to Vietnamese-speaking environments.

4. Collaboration Opportunities for GUAVA Instructors

Digitizing Việt Nam welcomes collaboration with GUAVA instructors in building a

community-centered ecosystem. Instructors are invited to:

- Share teaching materials—handouts, glossaries, audio/video resources, and reading sets—for digitization and inclusion in the open-access library.
- Co-develop pedagogical modules that integrate linguistic heritage with contemporary VFL practice.
- Contribute exemplary student projects such as podcasts, creative writing, short films, or photo essays for archival and showcase.
- Co-organize workshops and academic exchanges to present collections, demonstrate AI tools, and discuss heritage-based teaching approaches.
- Help shape the VFL AI Assistant by identifying common learner questions, drafting clear explanations, testing responses, and contributing to a shared benchmark dataset.

These collaborations ensure that the Digitizing Việt Nam ecosystem grows in ways that are pedagogically grounded, globally relevant, and truly community-driven.

5. Conclusion: An Archive-Rooted, Future-Oriented Vietnamese Learning Ecosystem

Through collaboration with GUAVA instructors, the project hopes to cultivate a vibrant, sustainable, and globally connected ecosystem of Vietnamese learners. By combining rigorous scholarship, authentic cultural materials, and innovative tools, *Digitizing Việt Nam* aims to support a new generation of students who can engage deeply and confidently with the richness of the Vietnamese language. We warmly invite GUAVA educators to join us—by sharing materials, proposing collaborations, or contributing classroom insights via e-mail at

info@digitizingvietnam.com—to help shape the next chapter of Vietnamese language education worldwide.

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Dr. Trâm Nguyễn curates Vietnamese Studies collections at Columbia University. She holds a Ph.D. in Ethnology. Her research covers Vietnam, Siberia, and Central Asia, focusing on local knowledge, symbolic customs, and cultural revitalization. At *Digitizing Việt Nam*, she leads the Digital Hub, featuring Hán-Nôm manuscripts, modern Vietnamese archives, and multimedia collections.

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Vân Lê specializes in digital curation, comparative literature, and multilingual education. At *Digitizing Việt Nam*, she focuses on participatory storytelling, AI-enhanced archives, and cross-cultural collaboration.

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Lê Hoàng Phúc develops AI tools and platforms for *Digitizing Việt Nam*, including Hán-Nôm OCR, annotation systems, and multilingual interfaces. With a background in computer science and a passion for digital heritage and conservation, he also creates apps for wildlife preservation, like identifying endangered turtles in Vietnam.

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