

Research Article

Exploring Language Contact Influences on Vietnamese Use among English Majors at Nghe An University

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of language contact on Vietnamese language practices among English majors at Nghe An University in the context of globalization. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative surveys (124 students) with qualitative interviews (10 participants), to examine how contact with English shapes students' use of Vietnamese in daily communication. Findings indicate that students frequently mix English with Vietnamese in academic settings and on social media; lexical borrowing and creative online language use are common, reflecting moderate but notable influences of language contact. The study proposes strategies to strengthen Vietnamese in the era of global integration, including bilingual education policies, reinforcement of linguistic norms, and encouragement for students to develop foreign language competence while also preserving the cultural value and identity functions of Vietnamese.

Keywords

Language contact, linguistic behavior, bilingualism, code-switching, Vietnamese identity.

1. Introduction

In the process of development and international integration, Vietnamese has undergone notable transformations in both its social functions and internal structure, particularly through increasing contact with global languages. Across history, language has served not only as a medium of communication but also as a repository of culture, collective memory, and community identity. As the national language, Vietnamese is now adapting to new communicative demands in the global era. Integration, however, also presents challenges: unchecked borrowing and rapid change may weaken established norms and raise concerns about the stability of linguistic identity.

Recent studies highlight the prevalence of bilingualism and code-switching among Vietnamese youth, especially university students in major urban centers. A survey at

Vietnam National University, Hanoi (Nguyen, 2017) found that language majors frequently code-switch, with Vietnamese functioning as the matrix language and English as the embedded language. A large-scale study of 4,205 students across six cities (Institute of IT & Communications, 2022) reported that more than 86% regularly use social media, with a marked tendency to mix English into Vietnamese. In Ho Chi Minh City, research by the Cognitive Linguistics group at Saigon University (2024) similarly documented frequent code-switching in both face-to-face and online communication. Studies of “teencode” and online chat language (Khanh Hoa, 2018) further illustrate the creativity of young people in combining symbols, abbreviations, and English elements, reflecting cultural exchange while also challenging conventional norms.

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Tran (2021) demonstrated that code-switching is widespread in multinational workplaces, where employees mix English into Vietnamese to meet intercultural communication needs. In education, Phung & Tran (2026) analyzed online classroom discourse at SunUni Academy and showed that code-switching is systematically organized to serve pedagogical functions such as classroom management, task clarification, and learning support. These findings suggest that code-switching is not random but has become a communicative and instructional resource in the context of integration.

The challenge for Vietnamese language researchers is therefore to balance preservation of traditional values with adaptation to contemporary demands. Overemphasis on tradition may render the language inflexible, while excessive change risks undermining identity shaped through centuries of history. It is essential to analyze the causes, processes, and consequences of linguistic change in globalization, and to establish appropriate directions for language development. Vietnamese must simultaneously meet the requirements of international integration and sustain its cultural and identity functions, reaffirming its role as the national language and a symbol of community cohesion.

Within the scope of this study, the author focuses on examining students' attitudes, habits of Vietnamese usage, and their perceptions in the context of language contact, particularly bilingualism, code-switching, borrowing, and teencode. The research addresses three guiding questions: (1) What are the primary forms and frequencies of language contact among English majors in daily communication?; (2) To what extent does linguistic behavior vary across different communication contexts?; (3) What are students' attitudes toward the impact of language contact on Vietnamese linguistic identity? On this basis, the paper proposes solutions to help foreign language majors develop competence in international languages while maintaining the cultural value and identity functions of Vietnamese. Issues related to language policy, translation, or general foreign language pedagogy fall outside the scope of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language contact

Language contact is a phenomenon that occurs when two or more languages coexist within a community, leading to mutual influence in vocabulary, grammar, semantics, and communicative style. According to Weinreich (1953), language contact is the direct cause of bilingualism, code-switching, lexical borrowing, and even structural changes in language. In the context of globalization, this phenomenon has become increasingly prominent in countries

undergoing integration, including Vietnam. The interaction between Vietnamese and foreign languages, particularly English, has deepened significantly. Recent studies reveal that young people, especially university students, frequently engage in code-switching and lexical borrowing in everyday communication. For instance, expressions such as “*Em vừa submit assignment rồi*” or “*Deadline của bài này gấp quá*” clearly illustrate the direct impact of language contact on Vietnamese usage habits. Sociolinguistic researchers in Vietnam have also emphasized that this phenomenon is not merely a communicative trend but reflects transformations in linguistic identity. Phan (2025) argues that social media language, as a product of language contact, facilitates rapid and creative communication while simultaneously contributing to linguistic deviation and diminishing young people's practical communication skills. Similarly, Associate Professor Phạm (2019) warns that the excessive use of teencode, a parasitic form of language within Vietnamese, may erode the habit of writing and speaking correctly, thereby affecting the ability to communicate effectively in broader communities.

In summary, language contact is an inevitable phenomenon in the context of international integration. While it offers opportunities to enhance foreign language competence, it also poses challenges to preserving the purity and identity of the Vietnamese language.

2.2. Bilingualism and Code-switching

Bilingualism refers to the phenomenon in which an individual or a community is proficient in using two languages in daily life. According to Grosjean (1982), bilingualism is not merely the ability to know two languages but also the flexibility to select the appropriate language depending on the communicative context.

Code-switching is the practice whereby speakers alternate between two languages within the same utterance or conversation. Poplack (1980) categorizes code-switching into three types: intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag-switching.

2.3. Lexical borrowing and Online language

Lexical borrowing refers to the phenomenon in which one language adopts words from another to enrich its vocabulary system. Haugen (1950) argues that this phenomenon typically arises when the native language lacks an equivalent term or when speakers wish to convey modernity, conciseness, and alignment with international contexts. In Vietnam, English has become the most common source of borrowed words. Words or phrases such as *deadline*, *feedback*, *update*, *inbox*, *comment*, *see you*, *sorry*, *thank you*, *good night*, *goodbye*, *order*, *menu*, *ect*, have become familiar in students' daily

communication, reflecting the strong influence of language contact on Vietnamese usage.

Online language is the product of a combination between lexical borrowing and linguistic creativity in digital environments. Its distinctive features can be identified in three main forms: (1) abbreviations such as *ib* (inbox), *rep* (reply), *ad* (admin); (2) hybrid expressions combining foreign languages, such as “*Like mạnh nha*” or “*Check inbox đi*” or “*deadline khi nào vậy?*”; (3) *slang creation by coining new terms or resemanticize existing ones* such as *Pha ke* (fake), *xì-tai* (style), *bo-đi* (body). These are words borrowed from English but have been localized in Vietnamese through adapted spelling and pronunciation. These manifestations demonstrate the flexibility and creativity of young people in communication, while also reflecting the trend of linguistic integration in digital life. However, the widespread use of online language and borrowed words may erode linguistic norms, making it difficult to preserve cultural identity and the purity of the national language. As Phan (2025) emphasizes, online language not only provides convenience and brevity but also showcases youth creativity. Yet, excessive reliance on it can lead to linguistic deviation, directly affecting the ability to use Vietnamese appropriately in academic and formal communication.

2.4. Linguistic identity and the role of Vietnamese in preserving national identity

Linguistic identity is understood as the distinctive features of a language in terms of structure, vocabulary, semantics, and expressive style, reflecting the history, culture, and cognitive patterns of the community that uses it. According to Fishman (1999), language is not only a tool of communication but also a symbol of national identity, closely tied to the existence and development of a community.

Vietnamese serves as the national language and simultaneously as a medium for preserving and transmitting the cultural, historical, and spiritual values of the Vietnamese people. In the context of international integration, Vietnamese plays a crucial role in affirming cultural identity, fostering community cohesion, and safeguarding cultural diversity. It is not merely a communicative tool but also a symbol of national cultural identity. Within the process of globalization, maintaining and promoting the value of Vietnamese is an essential task, aimed at meeting contemporary demands while protecting the purity and cultural identity of the nation

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design

(quantitative survey + qualitative interviews) to investigate the influence of language contact on Vietnamese usage among English majors at Nghe An University. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches ensures both breadth and depth in data collection and analysis.

Quantitative approach: A structured survey questionnaire was distributed to English majors. The survey focused on the frequency of lexical borrowing, code-switching, and slang usage in everyday communication. Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = very often), with anchors clearly defined for each item. Descriptive statistics were applied to identify patterns, and correlation analysis was conducted only where relationships were statistically supported.

Qualitative approach: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants to capture students' perceptions of linguistic identity, their attitudes toward online language, and the sociocultural implications of language contact. Focus groups were initially planned but not implemented; this has been corrected to avoid conflation. Thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data, supported by representative extracts..

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 134 undergraduate students majoring in English language at Nghe An University, aged 18–23, including both male and female students. Interview participants were drawn from this same pool to ensure consistency between the quantitative and qualitative strands.

3.3. Sampling method

A purposive sampling strategy was employed, focusing on students who actively participate in online communication platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, Zalo). This self-selection bias toward active online users is acknowledged as a limitation, since it may over-represent code-switching and borrowing behaviours.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

Survey questionnaire: A structured questionnaire was developed to collect information on students' frequency of lexical borrowing, code-switching, and slang usage. The survey included closed-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. Instrument reliability was tested (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.616$), based on 23 items and 123 valid cases (out of 124 total) and the questionnaire was piloted with 20 students prior to full distribution.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.833	.827	23

Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with 10 participants to gain deeper insights into perceptions of linguistic identity, attitudes toward online language, and sociocultural implications of language contact.

Document analysis: Samples of online communication (social media posts and chat transcripts) were collected with participants' consent to provide authentic evidence of lexical borrowing and slang creation. Consent procedures were explicitly documented in the ethics statement.

3.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis: Survey data were processed using SPSS and Excel. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) were applied to determine the prevalence of lexical borrowing, code-switching, and slang usage. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between online language use and perceptions of linguistic identity, with results reported only where statistically significant.

Qualitative analysis: Interview transcripts were thematically coded. Key themes such as "linguistic identity," "online language creativity," and "socio-cultural impacts" were identified and analyzed. Representative extracts were included to illustrate each theme. Content analysis was applied to online communication samples to provide authentic evidence of lexical borrowing and slang creation.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Current situation of Vietnamese language use among English majors at Nghe An University

The survey reveals that the Vietnamese language use of students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Nghe An University is clearly influenced by phenomena of language contact, particularly bilingualism and code-switching. In daily communication, many students tend to mix foreign language elements, primarily English, into their spoken and written Vietnamese. This phenomenon is commonly observed in situations such as academic discussions, exchanges on social media, or informal conversations.

4.1.1. Forms of Language Contact

Table 1: Coding of statements in the forms of language contact

Coding	Statements
HT1	I read study materials in foreign languages instead of Vietnamese
HT2	I watch movies, listen to music, or read newspapers in foreign languages more often than in Vietnamese
HT3	I participate in extracurricular activities or clubs that use foreign languages
HT4	I communicate with friends in foreign languages outside of class hours
HT5	I think in foreign languages before expressing myself in Vietnamese
HT6	I use foreign languages when searching for information on the internet
HT7	I often use borrowed words such as <i>deadline</i> , <i>feedback</i> , <i>update</i> , <i>inbox</i> , <i>comment</i> , <i>order</i> , <i>menu</i> in daily communication

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HT1	124	1	4	2.93	.777
HT2	124	2	5	3.31	.868
HT3	124	2	5	3.39	.647
HT4	124	2	4	3.03	.721
HT5	124	1	5	2.85	.955
HT6	124	2	5	3.15	.823
HT7	124	2	5	3.70	.910
Valid N (listwise)	124				

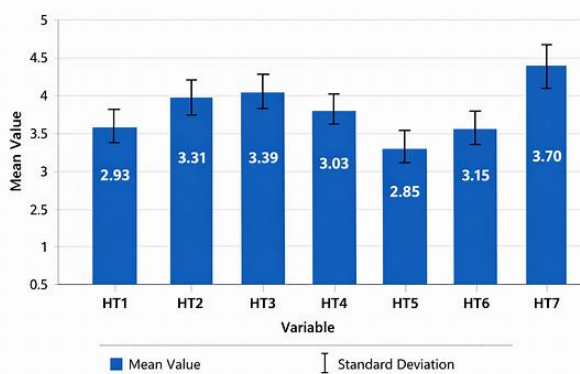


Figure 1: Forms of language contact among students

The survey results presented in Figure 1, which examined forms of language contact (HT1–HT7), demonstrate that the Vietnamese language practices of students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Nghe An University are strongly shaped by foreign-language influence. The mean scores of HT2 (3.31) and HT3 (3.39) indicate that exposure through entertainment and extracurricular activities constitutes common and impactful forms of contact. In addition, lexical borrowing was found to be pervasive in daily communication, with items such as *deadline*, *feedback*, *update*, *inbox*, and *comment* reaching a mean score of 3.70. The frequent use of these borrowed lexical items provides compelling evidence of the deep penetration of foreign languages into students' linguistic repertoires, thereby underscoring the extent to which language contact affects mother-tongue usage. Observations in class and on Facebook further confirm this trend, revealing clear instances of intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag-switching as described by Poplack (1980). Among these, intra-sentential switching emerged as the most prevalent in students' everyday speech, with English words seamlessly embedded into Vietnamese sentences, reflecting both the adaptability of bilingual communication and the challenges it poses for maintaining Vietnamese linguistic norms.

4.1.2. Characteristics of Vietnamese language use behavior among students

Table 2: Coding of statements in language use behavior

Coding	Statement
HV1	I use only Vietnamese when communicating with teachers.
HV2	I use only Vietnamese when communicating on social media.

HV3	I use only Vietnamese when communicating with friends.
HV4	I mix foreign words when communicating with friends.
HV5	I mix foreign words when communicating on social media.
HV6	I mix foreign words when communicating with teachers.
HV7	I use <i>teencode</i> when writing messages or posting content on social media.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HV1	124	3	5	4.25	.823
HV2	124	3	5	4.11	.857
HV3	124	3	5	3.94	.752
HV4	124	2	5	3.98	.754
HV5	124	2	5	3.91	.884
HV6	124	2	5	3.09	.856
HV7	124	2	5	3.72	.842
Valid N (listwise)	124				

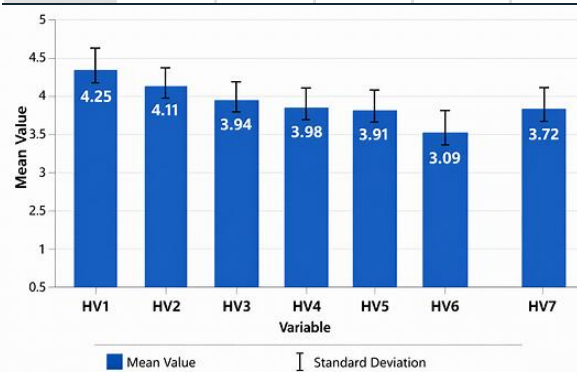


Figure 2: Vietnamese language use behavior among students

The survey results in Figure 2 on students' Vietnamese language use behavior reveal clear differences across communication contexts. When communicating with teachers, students tend to use Vietnamese exclusively, with a mean score of 4.25 (HV1), while the mixing of foreign words shows

a lower mean score of 3.09 (HV6). This reflects respect for linguistic norms and the formality of academic and pedagogical settings. In contrast, in social media communication, Vietnamese still plays a dominant role with a mean score of 4.11 (HV2). However, the presence of foreign words (HV5 = 3.91) and teencode (HV7 = 3.72) indicates that students are flexible, creative, and strongly influenced by digital culture. Furthermore, when communicating with friends, students both use Vietnamese exclusively (HV3 = 3.94) and frequently mix foreign words (HV4 = 3.98). This balance reflects a ten These findings are consistent with Nguyễn (2017) at Vietnam National University, Hanoi, where Vietnamese functions as the matrix language and English serves as the embedded language.

4.1.3. Students' awareness and attitudes toward language contact

Code	Statement
NT1	I clearly understand the phenomenon of language contact.
NT2	Mixing foreign languages in Vietnamese communication is positive, helping with integration.
NT3	I clearly understand teencode.
NT4	I do not like using teencode in communication.
NT5	I wish to preserve more standard Vietnamese.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NT1	124	2	5	4.13	.836
NT2	124	3	5	4.15	.695
NT3	124	3	5	4.24	.840
NT4	124	2	5	3.86	.887
NT5	124	2	5	4.41	.786
Valid N (listwise)	124				

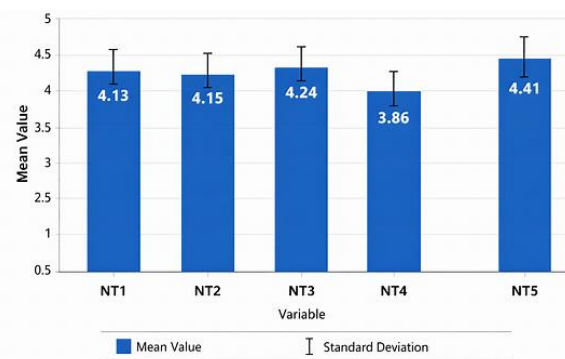


Figure 3: Students' awareness and attitudes toward language contact

The findings presented in Figure 3, which summarize the descriptive statistics for items NT1–NT5, reveal a generally high level of awareness and positive attitudes toward language contact among students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Nghe An University. The mean scores ranged from 3.86 to 4.41, indicating that most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements provided.

The highest mean value was recorded for NT5 (4.41), suggesting that students strongly expressed a desire to preserve standard Vietnamese despite the influence of foreign languages. This finding reflects a balanced linguistic awareness—students recognize the importance of maintaining linguistic purity while engaging in multilingual contexts. Similarly, NT3 (4.24) and NT1 (4.13) demonstrate that students possess a clear understanding of both the phenomenon of language contact and the concept of teencode, implying a high level of metalinguistic competence.

Meanwhile, NT2 (4.15) indicates that students generally perceive the mixing of foreign languages in Vietnamese communication as a positive phenomenon that facilitates cultural and linguistic integration. This aligns with global trends in language contact, where bilingual or multilingual practices are increasingly viewed as markers of adaptability and modernity. However, NT4 (3.86), which expresses disapproval of using teencode in communication, shows slightly lower agreement, suggesting that while students understand and accept linguistic innovation, they remain cautious about informal or non-standard forms.

Furthermore, interviews reveal that many students affirmed Vietnamese as a marker of national identity, emphasizing that maintaining the mother tongue is “the duty of the younger generation.” This highlights the connection between linguistic awareness and social responsibility. At the same time, some students noted that incorporating foreign languages into communication helps them “gain confidence in international integration” and “easily access new knowledge,” reflecting a positive stance toward linguistic blending. Nevertheless, other

opinions stressed that teencode “is only suitable in close peer communication” and “should not be used in academic or professional contexts,” demonstrating caution and a clear boundary between linguistic creativity and the risk of lowering language standards. This finding aligns with Tran (2021), who observed that workers in multinational environments frequently engage in code-switching while still maintaining linguistic norms in formal situations.

4.1.4. The influence of language contact on Vietnamese

Code	Statement
AH1	Learning a foreign language affects my habits of using Vietnamese.
AH2	I face difficulties in choosing appropriate Vietnamese words when expressing ideas.
AH3	My Vietnamese vocabulary has gradually become limited due to using foreign languages more frequently.
AH4	Frequent exposure to foreign languages has altered my Vietnamese pronunciation and intonation.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AH1	124	2	5	2.90	1.118
AH2	124	2	5	2.93	.989
AH3	124	1	5	2.75	.976
AH4	124	1	5	2.44	1.142
Valid N (listwise)	124				

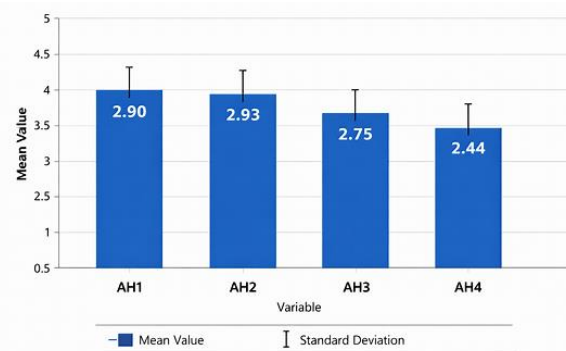


Figure 4: The influence of language contact on Vietnamese

Based on the survey results presented in figure 4, it can be observed that students acknowledge that language contact exerts certain influences on their Vietnamese usage behaviors, although the overall impact level is not high. Specifically, AH1 (Mean = 2.90) indicates that learning foreign languages affects students' habits of using Vietnamese; AH2 (Mean = 2.93) reflects difficulties in selecting appropriate Vietnamese words to express ideas; AH3 (Mean = 2.75) suggests that students' Vietnamese vocabulary has gradually become limited due to more frequent use of foreign languages; and AH4 (Mean = 2.44) shows changes in pronunciation and intonation when Vietnamese is spoken by students who study foreign languages.

These findings are consistent with students' opinions expressed during interviews. Notably, 27% of the students interviewed (n = 10) reported that when writing essays or preparing presentations, they often think in English first and then translate into Vietnamese, which results in less natural expression. Several interviewees further admitted that their Vietnamese vocabulary has been shrinking due to the habitual use of foreign languages in academic contexts. Others acknowledged difficulties in selecting precise Vietnamese words to convey ideas, noting that “certain concepts are familiar in English but difficult to find equivalent terms in Vietnamese.” This observation reinforces the survey result reflected in AH2, which highlights challenges in choosing appropriate Vietnamese words when expressing ideas.

4.2. Solutions for preserving and promoting Vietnamese in the context of integration

In globalization, foreign language teaching must go hand in hand with preserving the mother tongue. Vietnamese is both a foundation of thought and a marker of cultural identity, requiring systematic strategies to balance foreign language competence with Vietnamese proficiency. Here are key solutions:

Parallel integration: Combine foreign language and Vietnamese instruction through comparative activities on grammar, vocabulary, and discourse.

Translation training: Use bilingual translation exercises to strengthen linguistic flexibility and refine Vietnamese expression.

Technology application: Employ bilingual learning apps effectively, guided to avoid hybridized language misuse.

Academic creativity: Encourage writing, presenting, and research in both languages to sustain Vietnamese as an academic medium.

Cultural-linguistic awareness: Emphasize language as national identity, reinforcing responsibility to preserve Vietnamese alongside foreign language learning.

In sum, a comprehensive approach, integrating teaching, translation, technology, academic creativity, and cultural awareness, ensures students achieve global competence while affirming and safeguarding Vietnamese in international integration.

5. Conclusion

Theoretical analyses of concepts such as language contact, bilingualism, code-switching, lexical borrowing, digital language practices, and linguistic identity demonstrate that international integration is both an inevitable process and a major challenge for preserving the purity and cultural value of Vietnamese. Emerging linguistic phenomena in the digital sphere, particularly among youth, reflect dynamism and creativity but also carry risks of deviation, reducing the effectiveness of Vietnamese in academic and formal communication.

On this basis, solutions proposed from the perspective of foreign language educators emphasize the complementary relationship between foreign language learning and strengthening the mother tongue. Directions such as parallel integration in teaching, developing translation competence, selective application of technology, encouraging academic creativity in Vietnamese, and fostering cultural-linguistic awareness aim to create a balanced learning environment where students both access global knowledge and affirm national identity.

Vietnamese, as the national language, is not only a communicative tool but also a symbol of cultural identity and national spirit. In the integration process, preserving and promoting Vietnamese should be regarded as a strategic mission requiring coordinated efforts from schools, teachers, students, families, and society. Only when Vietnamese is positioned as complementary to foreign languages can the younger generation become global citizens while maintaining national identity, thereby affirming the role of Vietnamese in academic and cultural life internationally.

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