The Influence of Cultural Background on Oral Proficiency Development in Foreign Language Learners: An Empirical Study at a University in Hanoi, Vietnam

[1]Bui Thi Khanh Huyen, [2]Nguyen Vy Ngoc

[1,2]Dai Nam University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of cultural background on the development of oral proficiency among second language learners. Quantitative analysis was conducted to examine attitudes towards language learning, communication styles, educational practices, social support and exposure, and perception of language use among participants from five distinct ethnic groups. The results revealed significant variations across cultural factors, with H'mong participants exhibiting the highest mean scores, indicating a generally positive outlook on language learning and strong communication skills. Conversely, Dao participants reported lower mean scores, suggesting less enthusiasm towards language learning and communication. Qualitative insights further elucidated the role of cultural emphasis on language learning, communication styles, educational focus, immersion and exposure, and motivation and support in shaping oral proficiency development. The findings underscore the importance of considering cultural factors in language learning contexts to design effective language programs and interventions. By fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity, educators can create inclusive learning environments that support oral proficiency development and promote cross-cultural understanding and communication. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between culture and language learning and provides valuable insights for improving oral proficiency development among second language learners in diverse cultural contexts.

Key words: Cultural background, attitudes towards language learning, communication styles, educational practices, social support and exposure, ethnic minority groups

INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background and Rationale

Oral proficiency refers to the ability to use spoken language effectively and appropriately in various communicative contexts. It includes several dimensions such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and the capacity to engage in meaningful conversations. Oral proficiency is assessed through structured interviews, conversational tasks, and standardized tests that measure a learner's ability to produce and comprehend spoken language (Ellis, 2021).

The importance of oral proficiency in language learning is multifaceted. Firstly, it is critical for effective communication in real-life situations, enabling learners to express ideas, needs, and emotions clearly, and to understand others (Ellis, 2021). High levels of oral proficiency facilitate meaningful interactions in personal, academic, and professional settings. Secondly, in educational contexts, oral proficiency is essential for participating in class discussions, presentations, and group work, allowing students to engage with peers and instructors and to access course content delivered orally (Graham, 2022).

In the professional sphere, oral proficiency can enhance employability and career advancement, as many professions require strong oral communication skills for tasks such as client interactions, negotiations, presentations, and teamwork (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2020). Additionally, oral proficiency aids in cultural integration and social inclusion for language learners in new linguistic environments, helping them navigate everyday interactions and build social networks, thus fostering a sense of belonging (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Moreover, developing oral proficiency in a second language has cognitive benefits, such as improved memory, problem-solving skills, and mental flexibility, with bilingual individuals often exhibiting greater cognitive control (Bialystok, 2017).

Limited exposure and practice opportunities can impede oral proficiency development. Immersion experiences, language exchange programs, and interactive classroom activities are effective in bridging this gap (Lightbown & Spada, 2019). Furthermore, variability in instructional quality and methods significantly influences oral proficiency development. Effective

teaching strategies include communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based language teaching (TBLT), and the use of technology-enhanced language learning tools (Richards, 2020). Understanding its importance and addressing the challenges associated with developing oral proficiency can enhance language education and support learners in achieving their linguistic and communicative goals.

Cultural background significantly influences language learning in various ways, shaping learners' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. Cultural norms and values can affect learners' motivation and attitudes towards language learning. For instance, cultures that prioritize education and multilingualism often encourage positive attitudes and sustained efforts towards mastering new languages (Graham, 2022).

Communication styles inherent in different cultures also play a crucial role. Cultures that emphasize oral traditions and verbal expression may provide a supportive environment for developing strong speaking skills, while those that prioritize written communication might focus more on literacy skills (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2020). Additionally, educational systems and teaching methodologies rooted in cultural practices can influence language acquisition. For example, some cultures emphasize rote learning and grammar-focused instruction, while others may adopt more interactive and communicative approaches (Ellis, 2021).

Furthermore, cultural background affects the pragmatic use of language. Pragmatic competence, or the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, is deeply rooted in

cultural understanding. Learners must grasp cultural nuances, such as politeness strategies and conversational norms, which vary significantly across cultures (Derwing & Munro, 2015).

Sociocultural factors, including the learner's community and social networks, also contribute to language learning. Immersion in a community that speaks the target language can provide many opportunities for practice and authentic interactions, enhancing language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2019). Conversely, learners from cultural backgrounds with limited exposure to the target language may face additional challenges in achieving proficiency.

1.2. Statement of the research problem and objectives.

The development of oral proficiency in second language learners is a complex process influenced by various factors, including cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions. Despite the extensive research on second language acquisition, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific role that cultural background plays in shaping oral proficiency development. While it is recognized that cultural norms, values, communication styles, and educational practices can influence language learning, the precise mechanisms and extent of this influence are not well understood.

Current studies often focus on general aspects of language learning or specific instructional methods, but there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines how different cultural backgrounds contribute to or hinder the development of oral proficiency. This gap in knowledge is particularly important to address as classrooms around the world become increasingly multicultural, and educators seek effective strategies to support diverse learners.

Furthermore, the interaction between cultural background and other factors, such as motivation, anxiety, and exposure to the target language, needs more exploration. Understanding these interactions can provide insights into why learners from different cultural backgrounds may experience varying degrees of success in acquiring oral proficiency.

Additionally, there is a need to investigate how cultural background affects pragmatic competence, which is essential for using language appropriately in social contexts.

Given the critical importance of oral proficiency for academic success, professional development, and social integration, it is imperative to identify and understand the cultural factors that influence its development. This research problem aims to bridge the gap by systematically examining the influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development in second language learners. Addressing this problem can inform the creation of more culturally responsive teaching practices and policies that support all learners in achieving their full potential in language proficiency.

1.3. Research Questions

To systematically investigate the influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development in foreign language learners, the following research questions are proposed:

1.3.1. *What specific cultural factors such as attitudes towards language learning, communication styles, and educational practices significantly influence oral proficiency development?*

1.3.2. *How does cultural background affect the development of oral proficiency in second language learners?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of existing research on language acquisition and cultural background.

The interplay between language acquisition and cultural background has been a subject of interest in the field of applied linguistics for decades. Researchers have explored how cultural factors influence various aspects of language learning, including motivation, communication styles, and educational practices. This overview highlights key findings and theories from existing research, providing a foundation for understanding the role of cultural background in language acquisition.

Theories and Models

Several theories and models address the influence of cultural background on language acquisition. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development, suggesting that language learning is deeply rooted in cultural practices and social interactions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Similarly, the Intercultural Communicative Competence model developed by Byram (1997) highlights the need for learners to understand and navigate cultural nuances to communicate effectively in a second language.

Motivation and Attitudes

Cultural background significantly influences learners' motivation and attitudes towards language learning. Gardner's Socio-Educational Model posits that integrative motivation, the desire to integrate into the target language community, is a key factor in successful language acquisition (Gardner, 2010). Research has shown that learners from cultures that value multilingualism and education are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and higher motivation towards learning a second language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

Communication Styles and Pragmatics

Cultural norms and communication styles also play a crucial role in language learning. Hall's (1976) concept of high-context and low-context communication describes how cultures vary in their reliance on implicit versus explicit communication. Learners from high-context cultures, where communication is more implicit and context-dependent, may face challenges when learning languages that require explicit expression. Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, is deeply influenced by cultural norms and practices (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Educational Practices

The influence of cultural background extends to educational practices and classroom dynamics. Different cultures have varying approaches to education, which can affect language learning outcomes. For example, some cultures prioritize rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction, while others emphasize communicative and interactive methods (Ellis, 2021). Research has indicated that culturally responsive teaching, which incorporates students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum and pedagogy, can enhance language learning by making it more relevant and engaging (Gay, 2018).

Sociocultural Environment

The sociocultural environment, including the learner's community and social networks, provides crucial opportunities for language practice and immersion. Immersion in a community that speaks the target language enhances exposure and authentic interaction, which are vital for language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2019). Conversely, learners from cultural backgrounds with limited exposure to the target language may struggle to develop oral proficiency.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite these insights, several challenges and barriers persist in understanding the full impact of cultural background on language acquisition. Learners often face anxiety and inhibition influenced by cultural factors, which can hinder their willingness to speak and practice the language (Horwitz, 2016). Additionally, the diversity within cultural groups means that individual experiences and perceptions can vary widely, making it difficult to generalize findings.

Existing research underscores the significant influence of cultural background on language acquisition. Theories such as Sociocultural Theory and models like Intercultural Communicative Competence provide a framework for understanding these influences. Motivation, communication styles, educational practices, and the sociocultural environment all play critical roles in shaping language learning experiences. However, further research is needed to address the complexities and nuances of how cultural background affects language acquisition, particularly in increasingly multicultural and globalized educational settings.

2.2. Theories on oral proficiency development

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis is a fundamental theory in second language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input. According to Krashen (1985), learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level (i+1). This theory suggests that for oral proficiency development, learners need ample exposure to spoken language that is understandable yet challenging, allowing them to gradually expand their linguistic abilities through natural, meaningful communication.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the role of social interaction and cultural context in language development. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that language learning occurs through collaborative activities where learners engage in dialogue with more knowledgeable others (teachers, peers) within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This interaction facilitates the internalization of language structures and the development of oral proficiency. The theory underscores the importance of communicative practices and culturally relevant contexts in fostering oral language skills.

Interaction Hypothesis

The Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Michael Long (1996), posits that interaction and negotiation of meaning are crucial for language acquisition. Long argues that through conversational interactions, learners receive feedback and opportunities to modify their output, which enhances their linguistic competence. This hypothesis suggests that engaging in interactive communication, where learners actively participate in conversations and clarify misunderstandings, is essential for developing oral proficiency.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of language production in learning. Swain (1985) argues that producing language (speaking or writing) pushes learners to process language more deeply and notice gaps in their knowledge. This productive practice helps learners refine their linguistic abilities and improve their oral proficiency. The hypothesis highlights the need for learners to have opportunities to produce language in meaningful contexts, thereby solidifying their skills through practice and feedback.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a pedagogical approach that focuses on using language to complete meaningful tasks. According to Ellis (2003), tasks that require learners to use language for real-world purposes facilitate the development of communicative competence, including oral proficiency. TBLT emphasizes the use of authentic tasks that promote interaction, negotiation of meaning, and language use in context, aligning with the principles of the Interaction and Output Hypotheses.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that prioritizes the ability to communicate effectively in the target language. CLT advocates for teaching methods that involve real-life communication, role-plays, discussions, and problem-solving activities. According to Richards (2006), CLT aims to develop learners' communicative competence, including their ability to use language fluently and appropriately in various social contexts. This approach supports oral proficiency development by engaging learners in meaningful and interactive language use.

2.3. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory is a seminal framework for understanding cognitive development, emphasizing the fundamental role of social interaction and cultural context. According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive functions, including language acquisition, develop through social interactions within a cultural context. This theory posits that learning is inherently a social process, mediated by language and cultural tools.

A key concept in Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the gap between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance and support from a more knowledgeable other (MKO), such as a teacher or peer (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD emphasizes the potential for cognitive development through social interaction, where learners are guided through tasks they cannot yet perform alone but can complete with assistance.

Scaffolding is a related concept, where the MKO provides temporary support to help the learner accomplish a task within their ZPD. As the learner gains competence, the support is gradually removed, promoting independence. Scaffolding involves techniques like questioning, modeling, and feedback, enabling learners to internalize new skills and knowledge (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Vygotsky also emphasized the importance of cultural tools—both symbolic (e.g., language, signs) and physical (e.g., technology, books)—in cognitive development. These tools mediate cognitive processes, shaping how individuals think, learn, and understand the world. Language, as a primary cultural tool, plays a crucial role in mediating social interactions and facilitating cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1987).

Vygotsky's theory is foundational to social constructivism, which posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and shared experiences. Learning is seen as a collaborative process, where dialogue and interaction with others lead to deeper understanding and knowledge construction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

In the context of language learning, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory underscores the importance of interactive and communicative practices. Language learners benefit from engaging in meaningful dialogues, collaborative tasks, and interactions with more proficient speakers. These social interactions provide opportunities for learners to receive feedback, negotiate meaning, and practice language in authentic contexts, facilitating the development of oral proficiency and other language skills.

Recent studies continue to explore and expand on Vygotsky's concepts. Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of collaborative learning environments, peer-assisted learning, and technology-mediated interaction in language education, all grounded in sociocultural principles (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015). These studies highlight the enduring relevance of Vygotsky's theory in contemporary educational practices, emphasizing the critical role of social interaction and cultural context in language learning.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the social and cultural dimensions of cognitive development and language acquisition. By emphasizing the ZPD, scaffolding, and the mediating role of cultural tools, this theory highlights the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in fostering cognitive growth and language proficiency.

2.4. *Cultural factors that affect the oral proficiency development*

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping oral proficiency development in second language learners. One crucial aspect is cultural attitudes towards language learning. Cultures that prioritize multilingualism and view language acquisition positively tend to foster a supportive environment for developing oral proficiency (Gardner, 2010). However, differing communication styles across cultures can pose challenges. High-context cultures, where communication relies heavily on implicit cues and context, may present obstacles for learners in expressing themselves orally, compared to low-context cultures (Hall, 1976).

Furthermore, cultural differences in educational practices influence oral proficiency development. Teaching methodologies and attitudes towards authority vary across cultures, impacting language learning outcomes. For instance, cultures that emphasize rote memorization may prioritize grammar and vocabulary acquisition over communicative skills (Ellis, 2021). Additionally, pragmatic competence, essential for effective oral communication, is deeply influenced by cultural norms and conventions (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Learners must navigate cultural nuances in politeness, turn-taking, and speech acts to develop proficiency in oral communication.

The sociocultural environment, including social networks and community support, also plays a crucial role. Immersion in a community that speaks the target language provides valuable opportunities for authentic language practice and interaction, which enhances oral proficiency development (Lightbown & Spada, 2019). These cultural factors interact with individual learner characteristics and instructional contexts to shape the development of oral proficiency in second language learners. Understanding and addressing these cultural influences are essential for designing effective language learning environments that support diverse learners in achieving oral proficiency.

2.5. *Studies linking cultural background to language learning outcomes*

Lam and Warriner (2012) delve into the intricate interplay between cultural background and learner beliefs about language learning. Their research investigates how learners' cultural identities shape their attitudes towards language learning, ultimately influencing their beliefs and learning outcomes. By examining the relationship between cultural identity, language attitudes, and learner beliefs, Lam and Warriner shed light on the nuanced ways in which cultural factors impact language learning.

Kim (2016) focuses on the specific aspect of pronunciation learning strategies among Korean learners of English, considering the influence of their cultural background. Through in-depth analysis, Kim explores how cultural norms and values related to language learning shape learners' approaches to improving pronunciation. By understanding the cultural underpinnings of learners' strategies, educators can better tailor instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners.

In a study by Wu (2019), the influence of cultural background on the use of online learning resources among Chinese learners of English is investigated. Wu examines learners' preferences, motivations, and perceptions regarding online resources, revealing how cultural factors impact their utilization. This research highlights the importance of considering cultural backgrounds when designing and implementing online language learning platforms.

Cheng (2020) explores the link between cultural background and motivation in language learning, focusing on Japanese university students of English. Through surveys and interviews, Cheng investigates how cultural values, social norms, and educational experiences influence students' motivation and engagement in language learning activities. By recognizing the cultural nuances of motivation, educators can better support students in achieving their language learning goals.

Li's (2021) comparative study delves into the differences and similarities in language learning strategies between Chinese and American university students. By analyzing learners' preferences for specific strategies and their cultural orientations, Li identifies cross-cultural patterns in language learning behaviors. Understanding these differences can inform educators' approaches to language instruction, ensuring that pedagogical practices are culturally responsive and effective for all learners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1.   *Research Design*

The selected research design, a mixed methods approach, offers a comprehensive and holistic investigation into the influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development in second language learners. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods within the same study, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of the research questions from multiple perspectives.

The quantitative phase of the study provides numerical data on specific cultural factors, such as attitudes towards language learning, communication styles, and educational practices, and their relationship to oral proficiency development. Through the use of surveys and statistical analysis, this phase offers insights into the prevalence and significance of these cultural factors among participants.

In contrast, the qualitative phase delves into the lived experiences and narratives of participants, offering rich and contextualized insights into the impact of cultural background on oral proficiency development. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this phase explores the nuances and complexities of cultural influences, capturing the subjective perspectives of participants.

By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the mixed methods approach allows for triangulation of findings, where quantitative trends can be corroborated, expanded upon, or challenged by qualitative insights. This integration enhances the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions, offering a more robust understanding of the research topic.

Overall, the mixed methods research design provides a balanced and comprehensive exploration of the influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development, leveraging the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate meaningful insights and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

3.2.   *Participants:*

The participants for this study consist of 69 students enrolled in language learning programs from five ethnic minority groups in the region. The ethnic minority groups include Tay, H'mong, Muong, Thai, Kho Mu and Nung (Table1).

These students were purposively sampled to ensure representation from each ethnic minority group, allowing for a diverse range of cultural backgrounds to be included in the study. The participants were selected based on their enrolment in language learning programs, which indicates their engagement in language learning activities and their potential relevance to the research questions.

The participants are expected to vary in terms of their language proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, and experiences with language learning. Their diverse perspectives and experiences will provide valuable insights into the influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development in second language learners.

It's important to note that all participants provided informed consent to participate in the study, and their confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained throughout the research process. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed to ensure the well-being and rights of the participants throughout the study.

Table 1: The percentage of ethnic minority students participated in the study

Ethnic groups					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Tay	23	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Nung	9	13.0	13.0	46.4
	H'mong	11	15.9	15.9	62.3
	Dao	8	11.6	11.6	73.9
	Muong	11	15.9	15.9	89.9
	Kho Mu	7	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	**69**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. *Quantitative results*

The provided report (table 2) offers a comprehensive overview of the attitudes, communication styles, educational practices, social support and exposure, and perception of language use among participants from five distinct ethnic groups. Each cultural factor exhibits notable variations across the groups, shedding light on the intricate interplay between ethnicity and language learning experiences.

In terms of attitudes towards language learning, H'mong participants stand out with the highest mean score, indicating a generally positive outlook on language acquisition. Conversely, Dao participants reported the lowest mean score, suggesting a comparatively less enthusiastic attitude towards learning a new language. Interestingly, while H'mong participants show the highest variability in attitudes, Dao participants exhibit the least variability, hinting at potentially more uniform perspectives within the Dao community regarding language learning.

When considering communication styles, Dao participants emerge as the group reporting the highest mean score, indicating a strong propensity for effective communication. This is closely followed by Muong participants, suggesting a similar emphasis on clear and efficient communication within their community. On the other hand, Tay participants report the lowest mean score for communication styles, possibly indicating a preference for less direct or assertive communication methods. Notably, Tay participants also display the least variability in reported communication styles, hinting at a relatively consistent approach to communication within the Tay ethnic group.

Educational practices show significant variation across the ethnic groups, with H'mong participants reporting the highest mean score. This suggests a relatively favorable perception of educational practices among H'mong individuals, potentially reflecting their community's emphasis on academic achievement and learning opportunities. Conversely, Muong participants exhibit the highest variability in reported educational practices, indicating diverse perspectives within the Muong community regarding the effectiveness of different teaching methods.

Social support and exposure also differ among the ethnic groups, with H'mong participants reporting the highest mean score. This suggests a strong network of support and exposure to language and cultural experiences within the H'mong community. Conversely, Kho Mu participants report the lowest mean score for social support and exposure, indicating potentially limited access to language learning resources and cultural immersion opportunities within their community.

Perception of language use reveals intriguing insights, with H'mong participants once again reporting the highest mean score. This suggests a high level of confidence and comfort in using the target language within the H'mong community. Meanwhile, Muong participants display the highest variability in reported perception of language use, indicating diverse attitudes and experiences related to language proficiency within the Muong ethnic group.

Overall, these findings underscore the significance of cultural background in shaping language learning behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions. By examining these cultural factors across multiple ethnic groups, we gain valuable insights into the diverse experiences and perspectives of second language learners, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between culture and language acquisition.

Table 2: Specific cultural factors influence oral proficiency development

Ethnic groups		Attitude towards language learning	Communication styles	Educational practice	Social support and exposure	Perception of language use
Tay	Mean	3.5072	1.6522	3.4928	3.7681	3.6812
	N	23	23	23	23	23
	S.D	.75792	.53634	.81569	.60665	.40798
Nung	Mean	2.0370	3.4444	3.4815	3.8519	3.4815
	N	9	9	9	9	9
	S.D	.63343	.72648	.98758	.68943	.41201
H'mong	Mean	3.8788	3.7879	3.6364	3.8182	3.6970
	N	11	11	11	11	11
	S.D	1.00303	.37335	.86223	.98165	.54680
Dao	Mean	2.0000	4.3750	3.7917	2.7083	3.5833
	N	8	8	8	8	8
	S.D	.35635	.27817	.90742	1.25277	.66069
Muong	Mean	2.1515	4.3333	3.8788	2.5455	3.8485
	N	11	11	11	11	11
	S.D	.56497	.55777	.73443	1.03573	.75076
Kho Mu	Mean	2.6667	3.4286	3.5714	1.9524	3.5238
	N	7	7	7	7	7
	S.D	.63828	.46004	.41786	.52453	.50395
Total	Mean	2.8986	3.1498	3.6184	3.2850	3.6570
	N	69	69	69	69	69
	S.D	1.02311	1.22279	.80089	1.06684	.53005

4.2. Qualitative results

Cultural Emphasis on Language Learning

Respondents highlighted the influence of cultural attitudes towards language learning on oral proficiency development. Cultures that highly value education and multilingualism tend to provide motivation and support for language acquisition, contributing to stronger oral skills.

Communication Styles

Differences in communication styles between cultures were noted as affecting oral proficiency development. Respondents mentioned challenges in adapting to different communication norms, such as direct versus indirect communication, which impacted their ability to express themselves orally.

Educational Focus

The educational practices and priorities within cultures were highlighted as influential factors. Cultures that prioritize grammar and written proficiency may initially neglect oral skills development, leading to challenges in speaking fluently in a second language.

Immersion and Exposure

Immersion in an English-speaking environment or exposure to diverse cultural contexts was recognized as crucial for improving oral proficiency. Interaction with native speakers provided valuable opportunities for practice and development of oral skills over time.

Motivation and Support

The role of motivation and support from cultural environments was emphasized. Respondents mentioned that cultural attitudes towards language learning influenced their motivation to excel in oral proficiency development, highlighting the importance of cultural encouragement.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The research findings underscore the significant influence of cultural background on oral proficiency development among second language learners. Quantitative analysis revealed notable variations in attitudes, communication styles, educational practices, social support, and perception of language use across different ethnic groups. H'mong participants exhibited the highest mean scores across several cultural factors, indicating a generally positive outlook on language learning and strong communication skills. Conversely, Dao participants reported lower mean scores, suggesting less enthusiasm towards language learning and

communication. These findings highlight the diversity of experiences and perspectives within and across ethnic groups, emphasizing the complex relationship between culture and language acquisition.

Qualitative insights further elucidated the role of cultural emphasis on language learning, communication styles, educational focus, immersion and exposure, and motivation and support in shaping oral proficiency development. Cultures that highly value education and multilingualism tend to provide motivation and support for language acquisition, contributing to stronger oral skills. Differences in communication norms between cultures pose challenges for second language learners, affecting their ability to express themselves orally. Moreover, variations in educational practices and priorities influence oral proficiency development, with cultures prioritizing grammar and written proficiency potentially neglecting oral skills development initially.

Additionally, immersion in an English-speaking environment and exposure to diverse cultural contexts are recognized as crucial for improving oral proficiency. Interaction with native speakers offers valuable opportunities for practice and development of oral skills over time. Furthermore, the role of motivation and support from cultural environments emerges as significant, with cultural attitudes towards language learning influencing learners' motivation to excel in oral proficiency development.

The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between cultural background and oral proficiency development among second language learners. They highlight the importance of considering cultural factors in language learning contexts to design effective language programs and interventions. Recognizing and accommodating diverse cultural attitudes, communication styles, and educational practices can enhance language learning outcomes and promote linguistic and cultural competence.

Moreover, the findings underscore the need for tailored approaches to language instruction that address the unique needs and preferences of learners from different cultural backgrounds. By fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity among educators and learners, language programs can create inclusive learning environments that support oral proficiency development and promote cross-cultural understanding and communication.

Furthermore, the findings have implications for policy and practice in language education. They emphasize the importance of promoting cultural diversity and inclusion in educational settings and advocating for policies that support equitable access to language learning opportunities for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the findings highlight the value of collaboration between educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders to design culturally responsive language programs and initiatives that meet the needs of all learners.

Overall, the research findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection of culture and language learning and provide valuable insights for improving oral proficiency development among second language learners in diverse cultural contexts. They underscore the importance of adopting a holistic and culturally responsive approach to language education that recognizes and celebrates the rich diversity of learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cultural factors that influence oral proficiency development

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding cultural factors and their influence on oral proficiency development. Use the scale below:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

#	STATEMENTS	RATINGS				
Attitudes Towards Language Learning						
1.	My cultural background values multilingualism as an asset.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2.	Language learning was actively encouraged in my cultural upbringing.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3.	The cultural emphasis on language learning positively influenced my motivation to develop oral proficiency.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Communication Styles						
4.	In my culture, communication tends to be indirect, relying on implicit cues.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5.	Direct communication is valued and encouraged in my cultural context.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6.	Differences in communication styles between my culture and English-speaking cultures have posed challenges for my oral proficiency development.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Educational Practices						
7.	Grammar and written proficiency were prioritized over oral skills development in my educational upbringing.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8.	Language education in my culture places a strong emphasis on oral communication skills.	①	②	③	④	⑤
9.	Educational practices in my culture significantly affected my oral proficiency development.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Social Support and Exposure						
10.	Opportunities for immersion in English-speaking environments were readily available in my cultural context	①	②	③	④	⑤
11.	Interaction with native speakers of the target language positively influenced my oral proficiency development.	①	②	③	④	⑤
12.	My cultural background provided ample support and encouragement for practicing oral skills in the target language.	①	②	③	④	⑤
Perceptions of Language Use						
13.	The cultural perception of language as a tool for social interaction influenced my approach to developing oral proficiency.	①	②	③	④	⑤
14.	Culturally specific norms regarding politeness and formality affected my oral communication in the target language.	①	②	③	④	⑤
15.	Cultural attitudes towards language use in everyday life significantly influenced my oral proficiency development.	①	②	③	④	⑤

Appendix 2: Interview question

How does cultural background affect the development of oral proficiency in second language learners?

Respondent 1

"I believe cultural background profoundly influences oral proficiency development. Growing up in a bilingual household where language learning was highly valued, I developed strong oral skills from an early age. The cultural emphasis on clear and direct communication in my community also played a significant role in shaping my ability to express myself orally."

Respondent 2

"In my experience, cultural background has a significant impact on oral proficiency development. Coming from a culture where indirect communication is the norm, I initially struggled with expressing myself confidently in English. It took me time to adapt to the more direct communication style prevalent in English-speaking cultures, which affected my oral proficiency development."

Respondent 3

"Cultural attitudes towards language learning greatly influence oral proficiency development. Growing up in a culture that highly values education and multilingualism, I was motivated to excel in language learning. This cultural emphasis on language acquisition provided me with the motivation and support necessary to develop strong oral proficiency skills."

Respondent 4

"I believe cultural background plays a crucial role in oral proficiency development. Coming from a culture where education focuses heavily on grammar and written proficiency, I initially struggled with speaking fluently in English. It wasn't until I immersed myself in an English-speaking environment that I began to develop confidence and fluency in oral communication."
Respondent 5

"From my perspective, cultural background significantly influences oral proficiency development. Growing up in a culture where communication is highly contextual and relies on implicit cues, I found it challenging to express myself clearly in English. Adapting to the more direct communication style in English-speaking environments was a key factor in improving my oral proficiency."
Respondent 6

"Cultural background has a profound impact on oral proficiency development. Coming from a culture where language learning is not prioritized, I initially lacked motivation to develop strong oral skills in English. However, exposure to diverse cultural contexts and interaction with native speakers provided me with valuable opportunities to practice and improve my oral proficiency over time."