



Insights into Homeschooling in Vietnam: Vietnamese Parents' Perspectives and Approaches to Cultivating Mother Language Skills and Literary Appreciation for their Children

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling has emerged as a viable alternative in Vietnam, raising questions about its effectiveness compared to traditional schooling. While offering personalized learning and cultural immersion, concerns remain regarding social development, academic rigor, and systemic recognition. This qualitative study delves into the experiences of Vietnamese homeschooling families, utilizing semi-structured interviews to uncover thematic patterns in parental narratives. We explore how parents navigate curriculum design, resource utilization, and social interaction to foster their children's Vietnamese language fluency and literary appreciation. By analyzing their strategies and challenges, our findings inform educational policymakers in developing support systems for homeschooling families and guide parents in creating enriching learning environments. This study opens a crucial dialogue on the future of homeschooling in Vietnam, encouraging stakeholders to explore its potential and address its limitations to ensure every child receives a high-quality education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling, recognized as the home education model, has been a prominent learning approach in Western countries since the 1970s. While the traditional teaching model remains popular in Vietnam, it may not always align with the unique needs of every student. While Vietnam's classrooms have long resonated with the hum of traditional learning, the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a quiet revolution. Homeschooling, once a distant echo from Western nations, ignited the curiosity of thousands of Vietnamese parents seeking alternative paths for their children's education. During and even after the COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling emerges as an alternative method to cater to the individualized needs of each child (Roe et al., 2021). However, this educational model is still in its nascent stages in Vietnam. Homeschooling, considered a relatively new educational paradigm, is yet to gain official recognition from the Vietnamese education system. In recent times, Vietnamese parents have shown a growing interest in homeschooling, utilizing it primarily as a home-based method to supplement and enrich their children's knowledge. Notably, the COVID-19 epidemic has further fueled this interest, with the largest Facebook group dedicated to homeschooling boasting nearly 70,000 members engaged in discussions about this alternative educational model (Trong Nhan, 2022). As Vietnam undergoes educational reforms, research on homeschooling plays a crucial role in introducing new educational methodologies and diversifying the national education system.

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Despite extensive discussions on homeschooling in social media forums and newspapers, there is a notable gap in comprehensive scientific studies addressing its theoretical foundations, and practical significance (Korkmaz, & Duman, 2014; Dongabanti, 2021). Especially, existing research offers tend to focus primarily on Western contexts and neglect the unique challenges and opportunities of homeschooling in Vietnam. Moreover, as homeschooling programs and materials predominantly originate from abroad, often utilizing English as the primary language, there is a need to investigate how parents practice homeschooling to develop their children's native language proficiency. This research seeks to fill this void by focusing on homeschooling practices in Vietnam, with a specific emphasis on developing children's competence in their mother tongue and fostering literary appreciation. This study is designed to provide a clear understanding of Vietnamese parents' views on the importance of developing language skills and literary appreciation within the homeschooling model, along with insights into how these parents actively cultivate these skills at home. The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do parents recognize the importance of cultivating mother language proficiency and fostering literary appreciation for their children in the context of homeschooling?

RQ2: What distinct strategies do parents implement to nurture both mother language proficiency and literary appreciation of their children during homeschooling?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Homeschooling

The landscape of homeschooling comprises three primary categories: homeschooling, unschooling, and home-based education. In homeschooling, parents serve as educators, guiding their children's learning beyond traditional school structures (Isenberg, 2007; Watson, 2019; Gururaj, 2021). Patricia's (2001) nuanced perspective portrays homeschooling as an approach where parents, not traditional teachers, shape their children's academic paths. Miller (2014) distinguishes homeschooling from unschooling, highlighting a structured curriculum and parental instruction in the former, while the latter adopts a flexible, self-directed learning approach. Meanwhile, home-based education's unique nature encompassed learning at home (Punia & Sharma, 2014), embracing non-formal education and allowing engagement in traditional school settings (Ray, 2021).

Global research on homeschooling raises concerns about drawbacks, such as limiting socialization and impacting public school resources (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2013). Legal issues, challenges, and rights in homeschooling are prominent (Bell et al., 2016). Despite concerns, homeschooling is linked to high learning ability, strong academic performance, and the development of self-study skills (Baig, 2018). Some other research (Ray, 2021; Yu et al., 2016) indicates that homeschooled students often outperform their traditional schooled counterparts. Gururaj (2021) underscores home-based education's distinctive features, differing from institutional public and private schools in educational paradigms, climates, and experiences. The exploration of academic achievement and social, emotional, and psychological development of homeschooled students contributes significantly to understanding alternative education methods (Ray, 2021; Ray, 2017; Jamaludin et al., 2015). The multifaceted landscape of homeschooling is illuminated by these diverse perspectives, offering valuable insights into homeschooling, unschooling, and home-based education.

In contexts of disagreement with children's learning environments, homeschooling becomes a preferred model (Kim et al., 2015). Noticeably, there has been a growing trend of homeschooling in China due to dissatisfaction with the education system (Zhao et al., 2020; Lee, 2023). In Vietnam, homeschooling has gained traction as an alternative, catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Homeschooling communities like "Homeschooling in VietNam" and "Homeschooling and Friends" facilitate experience exchange. Worldwide, homeschooling involves educating children without adhering to the state-prescribed program (Le, 2017). In Vietnam, the absence of specific regulations may pose challenges for higher education entry due to the lack of comparable test result systems.

2.2. Vietnamese language proficiency

This study focuses on Vietnamese homeschooling and its impact on native language development. While participants varied in their learning models, they shared Vietnamese as their mother tongue and resided in Vietnam. The central research question is whether homeschooled students achieve comparable language competency to those educated with the traditional Vietnamese general education program. To address this issue, the study employs the language competency standards outlined in the current Literature curriculum of the Vietnam General Education program (MOET, 2018) as a benchmark for assessing native language proficiency in the homeschooling context.

2.3. Literary Appreciation Skills

Literary appreciation encompasses the capacity to comprehend, evaluate, and derive enjoyment from literary works. Magulod (2018) posits that this involves a fusion of cognitive and emotional elements. Readers must not only grasp the literal meaning of text but also discern non-linguistic components such as images and symbols, enriching the reading experience. Furthermore, literary appreciation involves understanding and evaluating artistic elements within texts, including an author's writing techniques, structure, and style (Nilsen & Donnellson, 2009). Readers analyze how literary elements contribute to the overall impact, fostering a deeper connection with the content. The ability to perceive literature extends to the analysis and evaluation of various literary works, enabling readers to compare, reflect, and identify trends (Masjid et al., 2022). Shier et al. (2014) emphasize subjectivity as a key feature, linking literary appreciation to the development of creative reading skills. This involves reading with awareness, adjusting reading speed, and uncovering hidden meanings through analysis, reasoning, and imagination.

Zaidin and Karumpa (2022) underscores the significance of literary appreciation in enhancing students' reading and writing skills. Interacting with text and exploring linguistic and artistic elements contributes to improved comprehension, text creation, and meaning construction. Rita (2012) highlights the creation of an exciting learning environment around literature as pivotal for enhancing students' reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, literary appreciation fosters thinking sensitivity and cultural awareness (Prayitno et al., 2022). Exposure to diverse literary works allows students to explore various cultural values, concepts, and realities, promoting respect, empathy, and diversity in thinking and communication. Ultimately, literary appreciation contributes to a more personal, immersive, and interactive reading experience, shaping a nuanced understanding of literature's profound impact on individuals and society.

In summary, the ability of literary appreciation holds a crucial role in understanding, evaluating, and deriving enjoyment from literary works. The following table (Table 1) outlines the components and levels of literary appreciation capacity based on the above analysis.

Table 1. Levels and components of literary appreciation skills

Level	Literary Appreciation
Level 1: Artistic Element Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Assessing an author's writing techniques, style, and incorporation of non-linguistic elements. - Objective: Enhancing comprehension and establishes a connection with the artistic aspects of literary works.
Level 2: Evaluation and Comparison between Literary Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Analyzing and critiquing different literary works, identifying similarities, differences, and trends. - Objective: Enabling a deeper understanding of literature and fosters critical thinking skills through comparative analysis.
Level 3: Creative Reading Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activity: Reading with awareness, adjusting pace, and delving into hidden meanings through analysis, reasoning, and imagination. - Objective: Encouraging a subjective and imaginative engagement with literature, contributing to a more personalized and immersive reading experience.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. Participants

In-depth interviews reveal the experiences and perspectives of 10 Vietnamese parents (80% female) who, through a random sampling process, were selected to share their insights on utilizing the homeschooling model for their children's education. Participants range in age from 30 to 45 and come from households characterized by high educational attainment, affluent economic conditions, and actively engaged working hours, factors relevant to understanding the specific context and challenges of their homeschooling journeys. Their children, aged 6 to 15, complete the study sample, their demographic details are further outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' demographic

Code	Sex - Age	Parent's Job	Age of Children	Homeschool Program
PH01	Female - 32	Page administrator	7	Vietnam's National General Education Program and Full Homeschooling (self-directed program based on learners' abilities and interests)
PH02	Female - 41	Freelancer	14	Online program of the Cambridge Home School, the UK
PH03	Female - 34	Housewife	10	Acellus Program
PH04	Female - 38	Housewife	9	ACE Program
PH05	Female - (40-45)	Farmer & Content Creator	8	Acellus Program
PH06	Female - (30-40)	Accounting profession	4	Vietnam's National General Education Program and Abeka
PH07	Male - (40-45)	Teacher	2	Vietnam's National General Education Program and Acellus
PH08	Male - (30-40)	Businessman	4	Vietnam's National General Education Program and Acellus
PH09	Female - (40-45)	Volunteers	2	Online program of ASU Prep Digital
PH10	Female - (40-25)	Businessman	8	Flexible program based on Khan Academy

3.2. Data collection

To delve into the strategies Vietnamese parents utilize within the homeschooling environment to foster their children's Vietnamese proficiency and literary appreciation skills, this qualitative study employed in-depth interviews with 20 parents residing in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Through a series of semi-structured interviews exploring parents' perspectives on learning goals, preferred methods, and chosen materials, the interviews aimed to capture rich and nuanced narratives. Sessions lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour, with some participants interviewed multiple times for deeper insights. Utilizing thematic analysis with NVivo software, the interview data was subsequently coded and analyzed to identify key themes and patterns in parents' approaches and experiences.

3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis process is structured into three distinct steps:

1. Transcription and Cleaning: All interviews were transcribed verbatim and underwent quality checks to ensure accuracy. Minor inconsistencies and filler words were removed to refine the data for analysis.

2. Developing the Analytical Framework: Informed by grounded theory principles, the first author constructed an analytical framework focusing on key themes of parental motivations, challenges, and perceived benefits of the homeschooling model. This framework provided a structured approach for identifying and categorizing relevant data during coding.

3. Coding Reliability: To ensure consistent data interpretation, the first and the third authors initially coded two transcripts. These results were then calculated for inter-coder reliability. The kappa coefficient of 0.91 (95% CI: 0.88-0.98) confirmed acceptable agreement between coders, establishing the reliability of the coding process.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Parents' perspectives on the importance of children's Vietnamese proficiency

It is found out that most parents opted for educational materials and a homeschooling curriculum that is not exclusively in foreign languages such as English or French. However, most interviewed parents underscored the paramount importance of fostering Vietnamese language skills in their children. The parents contended that regardless of the language used in a homeschooling program, students should possess proficiency in their native language. Many parents supported this perspective by citing concerns over preserving culture, maintaining national identity, or connecting with their roots if learning Vietnamese is neglected. These reasons underscore the importance of keeping Vietnamese as a compulsory subject in homeschooling. The parents believed that acquiring an understanding of Vietnamese is crucial for preserving and upholding the traditional values of Vietnamese culture. Contrastly, some other interviewees prioritized instilling a new language in their children to enhance future career prospects rather than emphasizing proficiency in Vietnamese. These parents posited that their children’s mother tongue would naturally develop in the Vietnamese social milieu without the need for formal academic training.

“Honestly, I don’t place a significant emphasis on how my child utilizes Vietnamese. Basic communication is sufficient for her. What holds paramount importance for my children is her proficiency in English and the ability to use multiple foreign languages, as this will unlock numerous promising job opportunities for her in the future. As mentioned earlier, even a typical job becomes more appealing if your child possesses the skill to use a foreign language, translating into a higher salary”. (PH04)

Despite variations in parents’ perspectives on how to cultivate Vietnamese language skills within the homeschooling model, all interviewees concur on the necessity of providing structured training for their children’s Vietnamese proficiency.

4.2. Parent’s strategies to foster Vietnamese proficiency for their children

The parents provided varying assessments of the importance of developing Vietnamese language skills for their children in the homeschooling model, reflecting individual family perspectives. Likewise, the approaches to developing Vietnamese language skills during the homeschooling process exhibited diversity.

Despite lacking pedagogical expertise in Philology, all interviewed individuals were Vietnamese. Hence, it is understandable that some parents prioritized fostering their children’s vocabulary and expressive abilities in Vietnamese rather than concentrating on formal academic instruction. Activities such as reading books, stories, and publications in Vietnamese, as well as encouraging children to watch and listen to Vietnamese television programs and information channels, were commonly employed. The children often engaged with materials based on personal interests, guided by parental direction and censorship. In contrast, some parents assumed the role of ‘Vietnamese teacher’ for their children, utilizing current Literature textbooks as the primary teaching materials. They guided their children through the structured content of the textbooks to facilitate learning and practice. The materials used by parents to enhance Vietnamese language skills are detailed in Table 3. Those parents employed specific methods and approaches tailored to each aspect of Vietnamese language proficiency (Listening & Speaking, Reading-comprehension, Writing). These methods are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. The materials used by the participant parents to foster Vietnamese proficiency for their children

Reading materials	Audio & Visual materials
- Fairy tales	- TV education and entertainment program
- Comic books	- Videos on YouTube: Vietnamese fairy tales, gifts of life, a beautiful story every day, broadcasting program: living beautifully
- Children’s literature	
- Seeds for the soul	
- Scientific books	
- Celebrity books	
- Vietnamese history books	

Table 4. The approaches used by the participant parents to foster Vietnamese proficiency for their children

Type of skills	Approaches
Reading	- Reading books

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requiring children to summarize the content they have read - Asking questions to assess the children's comprehension - Encouraging children to express their thoughts after reading
Listening & Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily communication with children - Finding a group of friends for children to chat with - Teaching children to speak with a standard accent for better listening - Showing Vietnamese language programs - Asking children to summarize or retell the content they have just heard - Explaining words or sentences that children do not understand - Correcting words or sentences used incorrectly or confused by children - Asking children to repeat words or sentences after explaining or correcting
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading books - Copying or dictating spelling - Teaching children to use diverse vocabulary and write correctly according to the required essay genre - Encouraging children to participate in writing competitions

In specific cases, the actual learning activities diverged from or contradicted the parents' initial views regarding the significance of fostering Vietnamese language proficiency in the homeschooling model. For example, in the case of parent PH02, despite prioritizing the enhancement of their child's Vietnamese proficiency, there was a noticeable absence of concrete solutions and actions. Consequently, their children exclusively communicated in English and lacked fluency in Vietnamese even though they are Vietnamese and are surrounded by Vietnamese society. This underscores the gap between parents' perspectives and their practices.

"My child often communicates in English rather than Vietnamese because they have been learning English since childhood, making it more comfortable for them. They prioritize using whatever is easier for them. As my child is enrolled in an online program based in England, extracurricular activities often coincide with our nighttime, making it challenging for them to participate in local clubs or activities to enhance their Vietnamese. (...) Since my child's education is entirely in English, there is no inclination to read Vietnamese books. Moreover, they are not interested in doing so because they find it challenging to understand the content. Although they can recognize the characters, grasping the meaning is elusive. Therefore, I don't insist on them reading in Vietnamese, as the academic workload is already substantial." (PH02).

4.3. Parents' perspectives on the importance of children's literary appreciation skills

Irrespective of the curriculum employed, the ability to appreciate literature plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of children. Insights derived from interviews indicate that 20% of the interviewed parents perceived the development of literary abilities during homeschooling as less significant. These parents contended that delving deeply into a literary work is unnecessary, emphasizing that reading and enjoying literature or stories serve as a form of relaxation after demanding school hours.

In contrast, most parents held a high regard for cultivating literary appreciation skills in the context of homeschooling (PH 005 is an example). For them, their children must hone the skills to comprehend the messages and profound lessons embedded in literary works. Nurturing a foundation in literature and narrative art was also viewed as a means to facilitate the development of artistic thinking—a skill deemed essential for children to achieve success and happiness in the future.

"You know, the first thing I ask from my kids is to really get what they're reading. But once they've got the hang of writing correctly, that's when I kick in the writing practice. I tell them, "Read more books, it helps with words, and you'll get more chances to write, you know?" And hey, I'm all for them joining writing competitions too, with a bit of guidance from us parents. Been keeping an eye on it, and the kiddo's writing skills are shaping up quite nicely!" (PH05)

4.4. Parent's strategies to foster literary appreciation skills for their children

Starting with listening...

To nurture their children's literary appreciation within the homeschooling environment, the participant parents embraced diverse listening mediums as gateways to richer understanding. Audiobooks narrated by acclaimed actors, YouTube channels delving into historical contexts of literary periods, and podcasts featuring interviews with authors or literary critics are just a few examples of the resources employed. These parents believed this exposure equips their children with valuable background knowledge, enriching their interpretations of themes, symbolism, and character motivations within literary works. For instance, listening to a documentary on the French Revolution prior to tackling Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* provides a deeper understanding of the historical setting and social injustices that fuel the narrative. Furthermore, they implemented a well-structured schedule, balancing dedicated listening sessions with independent reading time and creative activities, ensuring both focused engagement and enjoyment of the literary journey. The diverse soundscapes and engaging narratives from these platforms not only enhance literary appreciation but also foster critical thinking skills, cultivate cultural awareness, and expand vocabulary, creating a well-rounded learning experience for children in the homeschooling environment.

Then, reading and reading...

The Interviews reveal a wide spectrum of parental perspectives on utilizing reading to cultivate literary appreciation in the homeschooling landscape. While most parents actively encouraged their children to immerse themselves in diverse literary genres, from the timeless wisdom of the Bible to the whimsical escapades of fairy tales and the rich tapestry of Vietnamese literature, their reasons and expectations diverged. For some, the fundamental element lies in comprehending the core narrative threads, ensuring their children grasp the main storyline and identify key characters and events. The parents in this group frequently utilized children's classics or age-appropriate adaptations, praising the clarity and directness of these works. Conversely, others contended that true literary value emerges when works challenge readers to engage in active reflection and critical thinking. They believed that *"literary works become valuable when they provide readers with a multi-dimensional and comprehensive perspective on the world, stimulating their children's thinking and reflection on what they have read"* (PH07). Hence *"this is considered the most effective approach to enhance their child's literary appreciation ability"* (PH09). This divergent approach to reading within homeschooling underscores the complex interplay between parental priorities, desired learning outcomes, and the vast possibilities inherent in engaging with literary works.

Finally, analyzing and writing

Homeschooling parents weave a tapestry of writing instructions, nurturing each child's literary voice while guiding them towards the pinnacle of creative expression. Providing writing instructions at each level is a crucial element of the homeschooling process, emphasizing the dedicated effort of parents in nurturing their children's literary skills. This commitment became evident as the parents keenly recognized the varying levels and capabilities of their learners, guiding them systematically to attain the pinnacle in literary appreciation and creative expression.

The initial phase involves encouraging children to articulate their thoughts, with less emphasis on crafting polished sentences and more focus on expressing ideas comprehensively and accurately.

Subsequently, parents steer their children towards employing diverse writing forms, tailored to the specific purpose of each composition. Children are urged to discern the appropriate genre for their intended expression, whether it involves recreating scenarios, articulating emotions, or presenting personal viewpoints.

Following this, parents guide developing the fluency and smoothness of expression, coupled with the structured presentation of a scientific essay. This equips children with the understanding of how to systematically organize ideas and thoughts within their written work.

Ultimately, parents set the highest level of achievement by tasking their children with composing a high-quality essay. In this scenario, children must delve deeply into the value of the literature they have encountered. Crafting an outstanding essay necessitates a refined use of vocabulary, thoughtful consideration of word choices, and the skill to seamlessly integrate knowledge from various disciplines into their writing. This holistic approach enriches learners' ability to perceive literature and refines their unique writing styles.

The limitation of this study

While the qualitative framework of this study allows for a rich exploration of the spiritual and social aspects of family education, it also comes with inherent limitations. The focus on a specific group of Vietnamese

homeschooling parents (n=10) restricts the generalizability of the findings beyond Vietnam context. However, the diverse experiences and perspectives captured through in-depth interviews offer valuable insights into parental approaches and their perceived impact on children's language skills and literary appreciation. Although measuring the precise impact of home learning methods remains a challenge, qualitative evidence suggests positive outcomes like enhanced reading engagement and critical thinking skills among children. Recognizing these limitations paves the way for future research with larger and more diverse samples, potentially incorporating mixed methods approaches to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for a more comprehensive understanding of family education's effectiveness. Ultimately, acknowledging and addressing these limitations strengthens the research process and contributes to refining methodologies for future studies in this increasingly important field.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to elucidate the perspectives of Vietnamese parents regarding the significance of nurturing language abilities and literary appreciation, along with the strategies employed to foster these skills in Vietnam. The research delves into two crucial aspects of children's growth and development: linguistic competence and literary appreciation. Through an exploration of how parents cultivate these skills within a homeschooling environment, the study introduces innovative methods, techniques, and viewpoints to enrich the holistic development of children. It goes beyond theoretical considerations, examining the practical application of homeschooling by parents to enhance language proficiency and literary appreciation in Vietnamese children. Our findings serve as a reference for parents seeking insights into perspectives and strategies for developing language skills and literary appreciation within the homeschooling framework. Additionally, it contributes to the quality of education within the homeschooling model by guiding and equipping parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster their children's language proficiency and literary appreciation. Training programs, reference materials, and support from educational experts can be developed based on the findings, facilitating the effective application of teaching methods.

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