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Article

Institutional support and teacher mediation in multilingual educational inclusion among Hmong primary students in rural Vietnam: evidence from Pu Nhi Commune

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Abstract: This study examines multilingual educational inclusion among Hmong primary students in rural Vietnam, focusing on linguistic challenges, teacher-mediated support, school-level assistance, and family–school relationships. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted with 300 Hmong students in Grades 1–5 at a primary school in Pu Nhi Commune, Vietnam. The findings show that 80.3% of students reported difficulty understanding unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary, while 75.0% reported difficulty understanding some teacher instructions. Teacher support was frequently reported, including repetition or clarification of instructions (86.0%), explanation of unfamiliar vocabulary (82.3%), provision of additional examples (79.7%), and encouragement to ask questions (78.7%). Although 91.0% of students reported feeling safe, 89.0% felt respected, and 85.0% expressed a sense of belonging to the school community, only 69.0% reported confidence in speaking in class. This pattern highlights a distinction between students' positive social experiences at school and their confidence in classroom participation. The study provides an integrated descriptive account of students' linguistic resources, teacher-mediated practices, school-level support, and family–school relationships. From a human resource management perspective, the findings identify teacher professional development, instructional resource provision, and organizational coordination as relevant areas for further investigation in multilingual educational settings. These organizational dimensions were not directly measured as causal variables. The findings should therefore be interpreted as students' reported experiences within one school, rather than as evidence of causal relationships or as representative of all Hmong primary students in Vietnam.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching; educational inclusion; Hmong students; institutional support; teacher mediation; teacher professional development

1. Introduction

Primary education provides children with opportunities to develop academic knowledge, social relationships, and a sense of belonging. For students from ethnic minority communities, these experiences are shaped partly by the relationship between the language used at home and the language of formal schooling. When these languages differ, students may face additional challenges in understanding instruction and participating in classroom activities. Multilingual educational inclusion therefore requires attention not only to students' language development but also to the educational practices and institutional conditions that support their participation (UNESCO, 2025).

In multilingual classrooms, differences between students' home languages and the language of instruction should not automatically be interpreted as

individual learning deficits. Rather, they reflect the relationship between students' existing linguistic resources and the communication demands of formal education. Recent research emphasizes the importance of recognizing multilingual learners' linguistic repertoires and creating classroom environments that enable meaningful participation (Wesley-Nero & Donley, 2024). This perspective shifts attention from students' perceived deficiencies toward the educational practices and institutional arrangements that may facilitate or constrain their learning opportunities.

This issue is particularly relevant in Vietnam, where children from ethnic minority communities enter a national education system in which Vietnamese plays a central role as the language of schooling. Research on educational equity in Vietnam has identified language barriers and limited teacher preparation as important challenges affecting ethnic minority students' educational opportunities (Nguyen & Hac, 2023). More recent research focusing on ethnic minority students in the Central Highlands has similarly shown that limited proficiency in Vietnamese can constrain schooling opportunities, while students' indigenous languages are not always sufficiently recognized as resources for classroom learning and engagement (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). These findings suggest that linguistic differences need to be considered within the wider institutional and social organization of schooling.

The Hmong community provides a particularly relevant case for examining these processes. Hmong children may use Hmong extensively in family and community interactions while encountering Vietnamese as the dominant language of formal schooling. Research specifically examining Hmong students in Vietnam has shown that their family activities, community experiences, cultural practices, and everyday knowledge constitute important sources of funds of knowledge that teachers can draw upon to support participation and learning (Tran & Le, 2021). A related study argues that the funds-of-knowledge approach provides an important pathway for improving ethnic minority students' access to education by shifting attention from deficit perspectives toward the knowledge and experiences available within students' families and communities (Ha, 2021).

The funds-of-knowledge perspective is particularly relevant in rural multilingual settings because children develop knowledge through household responsibilities, community participation, and everyday cultural practices. Such experiences may provide meaningful connections between students' existing knowledge and formal curricular content (Waddington & Esteban-Guitart, 2024). For Hmong primary students, recognizing these resources may help teachers relate classroom learning to students' lived experiences rather than interpreting linguistic differences solely as barriers to learning.

Teachers play a central mediating role in connecting students' home and community resources with institutional expectations. Research on teacher agency in culturally responsive teaching in Vietnam has shown that teachers working with ethnic minority students may develop more inclusive practices through engagement with local communities, indigenous cultures, and students' everyday lives (Nguyen & Huynh, 2023). Such mediation may involve clarifying instructions, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, using visual materials, providing additional examples, encouraging questions, and connecting curriculum content with students' lived experiences. These practices are important because classroom participation depends not only on students' language abilities but also on the extent to which teachers create accessible and culturally responsive opportunities for interaction.

However, teachers do not respond to linguistic and cultural diversity in isolation. Their capacity to provide clarification, additional explanations, culturally relevant examples, individualized assistance, and opportunities for

participation is embedded within the organizational conditions of the school. Curriculum requirements, teaching resources, professional development, school leadership, communication mechanisms, and the availability of additional learning support may shape the extent to which teachers can respond to students' diverse needs. From this perspective, inclusive education can also be understood as an institutional process in which schools organize resources and support systems that enable teachers to perform their educational and relational roles effectively. Teachers therefore represent frontline educational actors through whom institutional expectations and organizational practices become visible in students' everyday educational experiences.

The relationship between culturally responsive teaching and students' social experiences at school is also important. Evidence from ethnically diverse elementary classrooms indicates that culturally responsive teaching and positive teacher–student relationships are associated with students' experiences of school belonging (Ialuna et al., 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant to minority-language students because belonging involves more than academic achievement: it includes feeling respected, recognized, safe, and accepted within the school community. In multilingual contexts, therefore, classroom language practices, teacher–student relationships, and institutional support may influence not only learning participation but also students' perceptions of their position within the school.

Home-language use is another relevant dimension of multilingual educational inclusion. Research in Vietnamese primary schools has highlighted the importance of mother-tongue use for ethnic minority students' communication and cultural identity, while also identifying differences in the opportunities to use minority languages in educational settings (Nguyen et al., 2023). Research on multilingual learners has likewise emphasized the relevance of social and emotional resources, including peer support and school belonging, to students' learning experiences (Wang & Hindman, 2023). These perspectives suggest that linguistic inclusion should be examined alongside students' social relationships and opportunities for classroom participation.

Family–school relationships are particularly important in rural ethnic minority settings, where family and community environments remain central to language use, cultural transmission, and everyday learning. Effective communication between teachers and families may help schools better understand students' linguistic and family circumstances, while enabling families to understand classroom expectations and available educational support (UNESCO, 2025). From an organizational perspective, such communication represents a potential coordination mechanism linking students' home environments with school-based support. Examining students' reports of family–school communication can therefore provide insight into this relational dimension of educational inclusion, although it cannot independently establish the effectiveness of school coordination practices.

The rural context is also significant because educational experiences are shaped by local social, economic, geographical, and institutional conditions. Research on ethnic minority education in Vietnam has shown that educational inequality cannot be explained by language alone; teacher preparation, social attitudes, economic constraints, and local conditions also influence students' opportunities to benefit from schooling (Nguyen & Hac, 2023). Consequently, multilingual education in rural ethnic minority communities should be examined as a relationship between students, families, communities, teachers, and educational institutions.

Recent scholarship further indicates that multilingual education involves questions of linguistic inclusion and the distribution of opportunities to participate.

Research on translanguaging and linguistic justice cautions that simply allowing additional languages into classrooms does not automatically eliminate unequal language relations; inclusive practices need to recognize the social and institutional power associated with different languages (Sah & Li, 2024). This perspective is particularly useful for understanding Hmong students' experiences because Vietnamese is institutionally dominant in formal schooling, whereas Hmong remains an important language of family and community life.

Despite growing scholarship on multilingual education, culturally responsive teaching, and ethnic minority education, less attention has been given to the institutional conditions through which teachers are supported in responding to multilingual and culturally diverse learners. Existing research has often examined language barriers, teacher practices, or family engagement as separate dimensions, while fewer studies consider how these dimensions are connected within the organizational context of schooling. In particular, there remains limited empirical evidence from rural ethnic minority communities in Vietnam concerning how school-level support, teacher-mediated practices, and school–family relationships are connected with students' opportunities for participation, recognition, and belonging.

The present study addresses this gap by examining 300 Hmong primary students in Pu Nhi Commune through a descriptive cross-sectional survey. Rather than treating teacher support as an isolated individual characteristic, the study interprets teacher-mediated practices within the broader institutional environment of the school. The study examines five empirical domains of multilingual educational inclusion: (1) linguistic challenges and classroom participation; (2) teacher support and adaptive instructional practices; (3) home-language use and family and community knowledge; (4) family–school relationships and school-level support; and (5) recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

What linguistic challenges do Hmong primary students report in Vietnamese-medium schooling?

What forms of teacher support and adaptive instructional practices do Hmong primary students report, and how are these practices situated within the school environment?

How do Hmong students describe the role of home language, family, and community knowledge in their educational experiences?

How do Hmong students describe family–school relationships, school-level support, recognition, classroom participation, safety, and belonging?

The study contributes to the Sociology of Education by examining multilingual educational inclusion as a relational and institutionally situated process. Drawing on evidence from Hmong primary students in rural Vietnam, it connects linguistic challenges, teacher-mediated support, family–school relationships, community resources, and students' experiences of recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom participation. Its contribution lies in bringing these dimensions together within a single descriptive framework. From a human resource management perspective, the study identifies organizational support, teacher development, and school–family coordination as relevant areas for further investigation, while recognizing that these processes were not directly measured as causal variables.

The study also offers a human resource management perspective on inclusive education. It draws attention to teachers as frontline educational professionals whose capacity to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity may depend not only on individual practices but also on access to instructional

resources, professional learning opportunities, and organizational coordination. The empirical findings document students' reported experiences of teacher support and school-level assistance; they do not directly measure teachers' competencies, professional development, leadership practices, or human resource management systems. Accordingly, the study's theoretical contribution lies in identifying these organizational dimensions as relevant areas for interpretation and further investigation, rather than establishing causal effects. Practically, the findings provide a basis for considering how teacher development, resource provision, and school–family coordination might be strengthened in multilingual educational settings.

2. Literature review

2.1. Multilingual education and minority-language learners

Multilingual education should be understood as an educational approach in which students' linguistic resources are considered relevant to learning, participation, and inclusion rather than as barriers that students must overcome before they can fully participate in school. For minority-language learners, the relationship between the home language and the language of schooling is particularly important because students must simultaneously acquire academic knowledge and develop the linguistic practices required by formal education. Recent systematic evidence from primary education indicates that multilingual pedagogies can generate both cognitive and socio-affective benefits, including improved access to curricular content, language development, student engagement, self-efficacy, and identity affirmation (Veerman et al., 2026).

From a sociological perspective, the language of schooling is also connected to the distribution of educational opportunities. When the dominant school language is substantially different from the language used in students' homes and communities, students may encounter difficulties not because of limited intellectual capacity but because the linguistic conditions of schooling do not fully correspond with their existing resources. Research on ethnic minority education in Vietnam similarly demonstrates that language barriers are closely associated with unequal educational opportunities and that minority students' indigenous languages may be insufficiently recognized in mainstream schooling (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). This suggests that multilingual education should be examined not simply as a pedagogical issue but also as a question of participation, recognition, and educational equity.

Recent research on ethnic minority primary students in Vietnam also indicates that linguistic competence is influenced by broader natural, economic, and social conditions. Dang (2023), for example, found that the multilingual and socioeconomic characteristics of ethnic minority communities can create difficulties for students' language development and educational participation. Such findings are relevant to rural Hmong education because students' experiences of Vietnamese-medium schooling are embedded within wider community contexts in which Hmong remains an important language of everyday communication.

Multilingual education therefore requires attention to the ways in which students move between different linguistic spaces. At home and in the community, Hmong may function as a primary language of interaction and cultural transmission, while Vietnamese has a dominant institutional role in school. The transition between these linguistic environments may influence students' comprehension, classroom communication, confidence, and opportunities for participation. Rather than assuming that successful schooling requires students to replace their home language with Vietnamese, multilingual education provides a framework for examining how existing linguistic resources can support access to

formal learning.

2.2. Language, classroom participation, and educational inclusion

Language proficiency is closely related to classroom participation because students need to understand instructions, interpret academic vocabulary, formulate responses, and communicate with teachers and peers. In primary education, these demands are particularly significant because students are developing both foundational academic knowledge and school-based language practices. Research on multilingual pedagogies demonstrates that scaffolding, translanguaging-based practices, affirming approaches, and cross-linguistic pedagogies can provide students with additional pathways for accessing curricular content and participating in classroom interaction (Veerman et al., 2026).

The relationship between language and participation can also be understood through the concept of educational inclusion. Inclusion involves more than physical access to school; it also concerns students' opportunities to participate meaningfully in classroom activities and to experience recognition within the educational community. When students struggle to understand the language of instruction, they may have fewer opportunities to ask questions, respond to teachers, contribute to discussions, or demonstrate what they know. Consequently, linguistic barriers may become social barriers to participation.

This issue is particularly important for Hmong primary students because the language used most frequently in their families and communities may differ from the language used in formal classroom instruction. Evidence from northern mountainous Vietnam indicates that ethnic minority students continue to use their mother tongues in everyday life while experiencing different levels of opportunity to use these languages in educational settings (Nguyen et al., 2023). The distinction between home-language practices and school-language expectations therefore provides an important basis for understanding students' educational experiences.

The sociological significance of this relationship lies in the fact that classroom participation is not produced by students alone. It emerges through interactions among students, teachers, peers, curriculum, language norms, and institutional expectations. A student who is reluctant to speak in class may not necessarily lack knowledge or motivation; reluctance may also reflect uncertainty about language, fear of making mistakes, limited confidence, or previous experiences of classroom interaction. Examining students' reported confidence and participation is therefore important for understanding educational inclusion among minority-language learners.

2.3. Teacher mediation in multilingual classrooms

Teachers play an important mediating role between institutional expectations and students' linguistic and cultural resources. Their everyday decisions determine how instructions are communicated, how unfamiliar concepts are explained, how students are invited to participate, and how linguistic differences are interpreted. Research on primary teachers' beliefs about multilingualism shows substantial variation in how teachers understand multilingual students and the role of multiple languages in classroom teaching (Polat & Lange, 2025). This variation is important because teachers' beliefs can influence the pedagogical opportunities available to multilingual learners.

Teacher mediation can take multiple forms. These include repeating or simplifying instructions, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, providing additional examples, using pictures or other visual materials, organizing peer assistance, encouraging students to ask questions, and relating academic content to familiar experiences. Such practices can reduce the linguistic distance between formal curriculum content and students' existing knowledge. They can also create

additional opportunities for students to participate without requiring them to possess complete mastery of the school language.

However, teacher mediation is embedded within organizational conditions. Teachers do not operate independently of curriculum requirements, assessment practices, teaching materials, class size, professional development, school leadership, and other forms of institutional support. Research on language and learning in Vietnam demonstrates that the design and provision of educational materials can affect ethnic gaps in learning, highlighting the importance of aligning educational resources with the linguistic and contextual characteristics of target learners (Fujii et al., 2023).

This institutional perspective is important for understanding teacher capacity. Teachers may have the motivation and professional commitment to support multilingual learners, but the extent to which they can provide individualized assistance, adapt instruction, communicate with families, and use culturally relevant resources may also depend on the organizational environment in which they work. Teacher support can therefore be understood as both an interpersonal practice and an expression of the school's capacity to organize educational resources around diverse student needs.

In the present study, reported teacher support is examined from the students' perspective rather than treated as an independent teacher characteristic. This distinction is important because the study seeks to understand what students actually experience in their everyday classrooms, including the extent to which teacher practices make formal learning more accessible. At the same time, interpreting teacher support within its institutional context allows the study to consider how frontline educational practices are connected with broader organizational conditions.

2.4. Institutional support, teacher capacity, and school-level practices

Educational inclusion depends not only on what individual teachers do but also on the institutional environment in which teaching takes place. Schools organize curriculum implementation, allocate instructional resources, provide professional learning opportunities, establish communication mechanisms, and coordinate additional support for students. These organizational processes may influence teachers' opportunities to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity.

From an organizational perspective, teachers can be understood as frontline educational professionals. They translate curriculum requirements and institutional expectations into everyday interactions with students and families. In multilingual classrooms, this role requires teachers to manage linguistic differences, interpret students' cultural and family contexts, adapt instructional communication, and create opportunities for participation. Consequently, teacher capacity is not solely an individual attribute; it is also situated within organizational arrangements that provide or constrain resources, information, collaboration, and professional support.

School-level support may take different forms, including additional learning assistance, appropriate teaching materials, professional development, collegial collaboration, leadership support, and mechanisms for communication with families. Such support does not necessarily determine teacher practice, but it may create conditions under which inclusive practices become more feasible and sustainable. The importance of these organizational conditions is particularly relevant in rural ethnic minority schools, where geographical, socioeconomic, and resource constraints may influence the delivery of educational services.

The present study does not directly measure teacher professional development, school leadership, or organizational climate as independent variables. Therefore, these dimensions are not treated as causal predictors.

Instead, the institutional perspective is used to interpret reported teacher support and school-level educational support as components of the organizational environment in which multilingual inclusion takes place. This approach is consistent with the study's descriptive design while providing a broader interpretation of teacher practices.

2.5. Home language, funds of knowledge, and cultural resources

The concept of funds of knowledge provides an important bridge between multilingual education and the Sociology of Education. Students do not enter school without prior knowledge. They bring experiences, skills, language practices, family histories, cultural knowledge, and community-based understandings developed through everyday participation. For Hmong students, these resources may include knowledge related to household responsibilities, agriculture, local environments, traditional practices, family relationships, and community life.

Research specifically on Hmong students in Vietnam has demonstrated that teachers can identify diverse sources of students' funds of knowledge and potentially use them to strengthen participation and learning (Tran & Le, 2021). This finding challenges deficit-oriented perspectives in which minority students are primarily understood through what they lack in comparison with dominant-language students. Instead, the funds-of-knowledge perspective directs attention toward what students already know and how this knowledge may be connected to formal schooling.

The relationship between family knowledge and schooling is especially important in rural ethnic minority communities. Family and community members may function as important sources of practical knowledge, cultural knowledge, and language socialization even when they have limited direct involvement in formal academic tasks. Students' reported sources of knowledge can therefore provide insight into how learning is distributed across school, family, household, and community spaces.

From this perspective, educational inclusion requires more than allowing students to attend school. It also involves recognizing whether the knowledge and identities students bring from their communities have a legitimate place within formal education. When students perceive that their cultural experiences are respected, they may have greater opportunities to connect prior knowledge with new academic content. Conversely, when home and community knowledge is consistently separated from formal schooling, students may experience a greater distance between their everyday lives and classroom learning.

This approach is particularly relevant to the present study because the survey examines not only classroom language use but also students' reported sources of knowledge, including teachers and school materials, parents and family members, household activities, local environments, grandparents and elders, friends and peers, and traditional practices. These dimensions allow educational inclusion to be examined as a relationship between formal and informal learning environments rather than solely as an outcome of classroom instruction.

2.6. Family–school relationships and organizational coordination

The relationship between school and family constitutes another important dimension of educational inclusion. Families influence students' educational experiences through encouragement, communication with teachers, support for learning, and the transmission of language and cultural practices. Schools, in turn, influence how families are recognized as partners in children's education. For minority-language communities, effective family–school relationships may be particularly important because families can provide teachers with knowledge about students' language practices, cultural backgrounds, household

responsibilities, and learning environments.

From an organizational perspective, family–school relationships can also be understood as a coordination mechanism. Teachers and school staff require information about students that may not be visible within the classroom, while families may require information about school expectations, learning difficulties, and available forms of educational support. Communication between these groups can therefore connect different social environments surrounding the child.

This coordination may be particularly important in multilingual rural settings. When teachers communicate with families, they may gain a better understanding of students' home-language practices and community experiences. At the same time, families may become more aware of the linguistic and academic demands of Vietnamese-medium schooling. Such reciprocal communication can potentially strengthen the alignment between school-based support and students' home and community environments.

Educational belonging is closely connected to these relational processes. Students' sense of belonging develops through everyday interactions with teachers, peers, and the wider school community. Recent empirical research in ethnically diverse elementary classrooms demonstrates that positive teacher–student relationships are associated with students' school belongingness, highlighting the importance of relational experiences alongside instructional practices (Ialuna et al., 2024). This is particularly relevant to minority-language students because feeling respected and accepted may influence their willingness to participate and communicate in classroom settings.

Family–school relationships can therefore be considered alongside indicators such as safety, respect, confidence, and participation. A student may attend school regularly and receive instructional support while still feeling uncertain about speaking in front of classmates. Conversely, a student who feels safe, respected, and connected to the school community may have greater opportunities to participate actively even when linguistic challenges remain.

2.7. Rural context, ethnic minority education, and the vietnamese setting

Rural ethnic minority education needs to be interpreted within its specific social and institutional context. Geographical distance, limited educational resources, socioeconomic conditions, teacher preparation, and differences in students' previous educational experiences may affect how multilingual education is implemented. These factors can interact with language differences and shape students' opportunities to participate in school.

Research in Vietnam has repeatedly identified educational inequality between ethnic majority and minority students as a multidimensional problem. Language barriers are important, but they intersect with teacher preparation, socioeconomic conditions, community attitudes, and institutional structures (Nguyen & Hac, 2023). This broader perspective is important because it prevents linguistic difference from being treated as the sole explanation for educational challenges.

For Hmong students, the rural setting is also important because language and culture are closely embedded in community life. Hmong may remain dominant in interactions with parents, grandparents, relatives, and community members, while Vietnamese is more prominent in teacher–student interaction and formal schooling. The coexistence of these linguistic spaces means that students continuously negotiate different expectations regarding communication, participation, and knowledge.

The educational implications of this situation extend beyond language acquisition. Students' experiences of school are shaped by whether they can connect classroom learning with their family and community experiences, whether teachers recognize their cultural background, whether they feel comfortable

communicating with teachers and peers, and whether they perceive themselves as legitimate members of the school community. These dimensions place multilingual education firmly within the field of Sociology of Education because they concern relationships between individuals and institutions, the recognition of cultural resources, and the distribution of opportunities for participation.

2.8. Research gap and analytical position of the present study

The literature reviewed above establishes several interconnected points. First, multilingual education can support learning and inclusion when students' linguistic resources are recognized and pedagogically supported. Second, classroom participation is shaped by the interaction between students' language resources and institutional language expectations. Third, teachers mediate this relationship through everyday instructional practices. Fourth, teachers' capacity to provide such mediation is situated within organizational conditions, including instructional resources, professional support, and school-level educational practices. Fifth, family and community knowledge constitutes an important resource that can connect formal schooling with students' lived experiences. Finally, educational inclusion involves not only access to school but also participation, recognition, safety, relationships, and belonging.

Nevertheless, important gaps remain. Research on multilingual education has often focused on language pedagogy, language policy, or teacher practices, while fewer studies examine these dimensions simultaneously from the perspective of minority-language primary students and within the organizational context of schooling. In Vietnam, existing research has provided important evidence on ethnic minority language development, educational equity, and Hmong students' funds of knowledge, but there remains limited empirical evidence connecting students' linguistic challenges with teacher support, school-level support, family–school coordination, classroom participation, and belonging within a single study.

The present study addresses this gap by examining 300 Hmong primary students in Pu Nhi through a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The analytical position of the study is that educational inclusion is relational and institutionally situated: students enter school with linguistic and cultural resources; schools operate through institutional language expectations and organizational practices; teachers mediate between these resources and formal curriculum demands; families and schools provide complementary social environments; and students' opportunities for classroom participation, recognition, safety, and belonging emerge through these interactions.

Accordingly, the literature supports an analytical sequence linking:

Institutional context and school-level support + Home and community resources → Teacher mediation and adaptive instructional practices → Classroom participation → Recognition, safety, and belonging → Educational inclusion.

This framework is interpretive rather than causal. It provides a basis for understanding how institutional conditions, teacher practices, family–school relationships, and students' educational experiences are interconnected, while recognizing that the present descriptive study does not statistically test causal relationships among these dimensions.

3. Theoretical framework and methodology

3.1. Theoretical framework

This study adopts a sociology of education perspective to examine multilingual educational inclusion among Hmong primary students in Pu Nhi, Vietnam. Educational inclusion is conceptualized as a relational and institutionally situated process through which students' linguistic and cultural resources interact with institutional expectations, school-level support, teacher mediation, family–

school relationships, classroom participation, and students' experiences of recognition, safety, and belonging.

The framework integrates four complementary perspectives. First, multilingual education explains how differences between Hmong as the dominant home and community language and Vietnamese as the dominant language of formal schooling may shape students' access to classroom communication and learning (UNESCO, 2025). Second, culturally responsive teaching emphasizes teachers' roles in adapting instruction through language clarification, contextualized examples, visual supports, and culturally meaningful classroom interactions (Wesley-Nero & Donley, 2024). Third, the funds-of-knowledge perspective recognizes families and communities as important sources of linguistic, cultural, and experiential knowledge that can support students' learning and identity development (Tran & Le, 2021; Waddington & Esteban-Guitart, 2024). Fourth, an institutional perspective draws attention to the organizational conditions in which teachers perform their educational roles, including school-level educational support, instructional resources, professional support, and mechanisms for communication with families.

Within this framework, four dimensions are conceptually connected. First, the institutional context provides the organizational setting in which teaching takes place, while home and community environments provide students with linguistic, cultural, and experiential resources. Second, teachers mediate between these resources and the demands of Vietnamese-medium schooling through practices such as clarifying instructions, explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, providing additional examples, and encouraging classroom participation. Third, these practices are relevant to students' opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Finally, students' reports of recognition, safety, and belonging provide complementary indicators of their social experiences within school.

Family–school relationships form a connecting dimension because communication between teachers and families may help link students' home circumstances with school-based educational support. From a human resource management perspective, this framework directs attention to the organizational conditions that may enable teachers to perform their professional roles, including access to instructional resources, professional learning, and coordination with colleagues and families.

The framework is interpretive rather than causal. The survey directly captures students' reported linguistic difficulties, experiences of teacher support, language use, perceived school-level support, family–school relationships, and feelings of recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence. It does not directly assess teachers' professional competencies, human resource management practices, or the effects of institutional policies. The framework therefore guides the interpretation and organization of descriptive findings rather than representing a statistically tested causal model.

Based on these perspectives, the study uses the following analytical sequence:

Institutional context and school-level support + Home and community linguistic and cultural resources → Teacher mediation and adaptive instructional practices → Classroom participation → Recognition, safety, and belonging → Multilingual educational inclusion.

The sequence is interpretive rather than causal. It is used to organize and interpret the descriptive evidence rather than to test whether one variable statistically causes another. This distinction is important because the study does not directly measure institutional support, teacher performance, or educational inclusion as independent and dependent constructs within a causal model.

3.2. Research design and participants

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine the educational experiences of Hmong primary students in a multilingual rural context. The target population consisted of Hmong students enrolled in Grades 1–5 at the selected primary school in Pu Nhi Commune, Vietnam. The school enrollment lists were used as the sampling frame.

To ensure representation across all five grade levels, students were stratified by grade. Sixty students were randomly selected from each grade, resulting in a total sample of 300 students. Random selection was conducted from the enrollment lists within each grade stratum. Selected students participated in the survey after parental or guardian consent and student assent were obtained.

The study included 300 Hmong primary students enrolled in Grades 1–5 at one primary school in Pu Nhi Commune, with 60 students from each grade. The participants were selected from Grades 1 to 5 to ensure representation across all five primary-school grade levels. The study focused exclusively on Hmong students because its purpose was to describe their home and community language resources and their educational experiences within Vietnamese-medium schooling.

The allocation of 60 students to each grade was intended to ensure balanced descriptive coverage of Grades 1–5. This equal allocation was a design choice for descriptive coverage and should not be interpreted as evidence that each grade contained the same proportion of the eligible school population.

The study included 300 Hmong students selected from Grades 1–5 at one primary school in Pu Nhi Commune, with 60 students from each grade. Equal allocation was used to ensure descriptive coverage of all five grade levels rather than to reproduce the grade-level distribution of the eligible population. The total number of eligible students, the number invited, and the number who declined or were excluded were not available for reporting in the current study documentation. Consequently, a response rate cannot be calculated, and the possibility of non-response bias cannot be ruled out. Because the sample was drawn from a single school, the findings should be interpreted within this specific setting rather than generalized to all Hmong primary students in Pu Nhi Commune or rural Vietnam.

Data were collected in September 2026. The questionnaire was administered by the research team using procedures appropriate to the age and linguistic background of the students. The questionnaire was provided bilingually in Vietnamese and Hmong to facilitate students' understanding of the survey items.

The sample was analyzed as a single descriptive group. Grade-specific comparisons have been omitted from the present revision because the available manuscript does not provide verified grade-level counts that can be reconciled with the overall totals. The analysis therefore characterizes students' reported educational experiences without presenting unverified subgroup estimates.

3.3. Survey instrument and data collection

Data were collected using a structured bilingual questionnaire designed to examine Hmong primary students' experiences of multilingual educational inclusion. The questionnaire was developed by the research team in accordance with the study objectives, research questions, and the empirical domains examined in the study. The instrument comprised 42 substantive closed-ended items organized into five empirical domains: (1) linguistic challenges and classroom participation; (2) teacher support and adaptive instructional practices; (3) home-language use and family and community knowledge; (4) family–school relationships and school-level support; and (5) recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence.

The questionnaire was organized around the study objectives and five

empirical domains. Item wording was intended to capture students' reported experiences in concrete and accessible terms, particularly in relation to classroom communication, teacher assistance, language use, family–school interactions, and school belonging. Because the participants were in Grades 1–5, the instrument was administered bilingually in Vietnamese and Hmong, and the research team provided age-appropriate explanations when students encountered unfamiliar wording. Clarifications were intended to explain the meaning of an item without directing students toward a particular response.

Responses to the closed-ended questionnaire items were coded according to the response options provided for each item. Language-use items were classified into three categories: mainly Hmong, mainly Vietnamese, and both languages. For items reporting linguistic difficulties, teacher support, family–school relationships, school-level support, and students' school experiences, responses were summarized as "reported" or "not reported", where applicable, in accordance with the item-specific response options. Frequencies and percentages were calculated separately for each item using the number of valid responses to that item as the denominator. Missing, uncertain, or invalid responses were excluded from the denominator rather than assigned to either response category. The questionnaire items were analyzed individually to provide descriptive summaries of students' reported experiences; no composite scale scores were calculated.

Given the participants' young age, the interpretation of the findings takes account of the possibility that comprehension, recall, and willingness to report experiences may differ across grade levels. The bilingual administration and age-appropriate clarification were intended to facilitate comprehension, but they cannot eliminate all potential response bias. The results are therefore interpreted as students' reported experiences rather than as independent assessments of teacher performance or institutional effectiveness.

The questionnaire primarily used closed-ended response formats. Items addressing linguistic challenges, teacher support, family–school relationships, school-level support, recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence asked students to report their experiences. Items concerning language use across social contexts included three response options: mainly Hmong, mainly Vietnamese, and both languages. This structure was used to facilitate comprehension and allow the responses to be summarized descriptively.

The questionnaire was prepared in Vietnamese and Hmong. The Hmong version was reviewed for consistency of meaning and suitability for the local linguistic context. The research team administered the questionnaire directly to selected students in September 2026, using the same general procedures across Grades 1–5 and age-appropriate clarification without suggesting answers. No formal pilot study or psychometric validation is reported for this study; the findings are therefore interpreted as descriptive reports of students' experiences, not as measurements from a validated standardized instrument.

Because the participants ranged from Grade 1 to Grade 5, differences in reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, recall, and willingness to express difficulties may have influenced their responses. Bilingual administration and age-appropriate clarification were intended to support comprehension, but they cannot eliminate all potential response bias. The findings should therefore be interpreted as students' reported experiences rather than objective assessments of teacher effectiveness or institutional performance. In addition, the use of closed-ended items and descriptive statistics limits the extent to which the study can explain why students reported particular experiences. Future research could combine student surveys with classroom observations, teacher interviews, and family perspectives to provide a more comprehensive assessment of multilingual

educational inclusion.

Particular attention was given to the comprehension needs of younger students, especially those in Grade 1. Instructions and questionnaire items were presented in age-appropriate language. When necessary, members of the research team clarified the meaning of unfamiliar terms or instructions without suggesting particular answers. This approach was intended to support students' understanding while maintaining consistency in the administration of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was administered to 300 Hmong students, with 60 students randomly selected from each grade from the school enrollment lists. Students participated voluntarily after parental or guardian consent and student assent had been obtained. The completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the dataset for descriptive analysis.

3.4. Data analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each questionnaire item to summarize students' reported experiences. Percentages were calculated using the number of valid responses for the corresponding item as the denominator. Missing, uncertain, or invalid responses were excluded from the relevant item-level calculations. The results are presented descriptively for the full sample, with no grade-level comparisons or inferential statistical tests. All reported frequencies, percentages, and denominators were checked for consistency before the results were finalized.

The results were organized into five empirical domains: (1) linguistic challenges and classroom participation; (2) teacher support and adaptive instructional practices; (3) home-language use and family and community knowledge; (4) family–school relationships and school-level support; and (5) recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence.

No grade-specific comparisons are reported because the grade-level counts could not be verified against the original records. The analysis is therefore limited to descriptive summaries for the full sample, and no subgroup estimates or inferential tests are presented.

Because the study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design, no inferential statistical tests, causal analyses, or longitudinal interpretations were conducted. The descriptive findings were also interpreted in relation to the institutional context of schooling, particularly school-level educational support, teacher-mediated practices, and family–school communication. These dimensions were treated as contextual and organizational features of students' educational experiences rather than as statistically tested causal variables.

The analytical procedure was aligned with the four research questions, with the fourth research question encompassing family–school relationships, school-level support, recognition, classroom participation, safety, and belonging. The five empirical domains therefore provided the organizational structure for presenting the findings, while the four research questions defined the substantive focus of the analysis.

3.5. Ethical considerations

The study was conducted with the agreement and cooperation of the management board of the participating primary school and the relevant local authority. The survey was undertaken to document students' educational experiences and provide evidence that could inform the school's efforts to improve educational quality, instructional practices, and educational management. The school management board considered the survey potentially beneficial for institutional reflection, educational planning, and future management decisions.

No formal approval from an institutional ethics committee was obtained. The

school management board's agreement authorized the study to be conducted in the school setting but did not constitute independent institutional ethics approval. Before data collection, parents or legal guardians were informed about the study during a parent meeting. Oral parental permission was sought through a show-of-hands procedure, and the collective agreement was documented in the meeting minutes. No individual written parental consent was obtained. Given the participants' young age, each student received an age-appropriate explanation of the study and was asked whether they wished to participate. Participation was voluntary, and students were free to decline.

The study procedures and the absence of formal institutional ethics committee approval are reported transparently. The latter is acknowledged as a limitation of the study's ethical oversight documentation. Available documentation concerning the school's agreement and the parent meeting can be provided to the journal for editorial review. The findings are presented as descriptive summaries of participating students' reported experiences and are intended to inform educational reflection and management rather than to establish causal relationships.

4. Research findings

The findings are organized into five empirical domains corresponding to the research questions: (1) linguistic challenges and classroom participation; (2) teacher support and adaptive instructional practices; (3) home-language use and family and community knowledge; (4) family–school relationships and school-level support; and (5) recognition, safety, belonging, and classroom confidence. The findings are presented descriptively and are interpreted in relation to the institutional and relational dimensions of multilingual educational inclusion.

4.1. Linguistic challenges and classroom participation

The findings indicate that language-related difficulties were frequently reported by Hmong primary students in relation to classroom participation. **Table 1** shows that 241 students (80.3%) reported difficulty understanding unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary, while 225 students (75.0%) reported difficulty understanding some teacher instructions delivered in Vietnamese. Similarly, 218 students (72.7%) indicated that teachers frequently needed to repeat or clarify classroom instructions.

Oral participation was also affected by language-related challenges. Approximately 68.0% of students reported difficulty answering questions in Vietnamese, 65.3% experienced difficulty expressing their ideas, and 60.3% reported limited participation in whole-class discussions. More than half of the students (58.0%) relied on classmates for assistance in understanding classroom tasks.

Table 1. Linguistic challenges and classroom participation among Hmong primary students (N = 300)

Indicator	n	%
Difficulty understanding unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary	241	80.3
Difficulty understanding teacher instructions	225	75.0
Need teachers to repeat or clarify instructions	218	72.7
Difficulty answering questions in Vietnamese	204	68.0
Difficulty expressing ideas in Vietnamese	196	65.3
Difficulty participating in classroom discussions	181	60.3
Need classmates' assistance during learning tasks	174	58.0

Overall, the findings suggest that, within the dimensions examined in this

study, linguistic challenges were more frequently reported in relation to classroom communication and participation.

4.2. Teacher support and adaptive instructional practices

As shown in **Table 2**, students reported widespread teacher support aimed at facilitating learning in Vietnamese-medium classrooms. The most frequently reported instructional practice was repetition or clarification of classroom instructions (86.0%), followed by explanation of unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary (82.3%) and providing additional examples (79.7%). Approximately 78.7% of students stated that teachers encouraged them to ask questions during lessons.

Teachers also employed visual and contextualized instructional strategies. Nearly 74.7% of students reported that teachers regularly used pictures or visual materials, while 68.3% indicated that teachers connected lessons with familiar local experiences. Individual explanations (70.3%) and peer-support activities (64.0%) were also commonly experienced.

Communication between teachers and families was reported less frequently than classroom-based instructional support. About 62.3% of students stated that teachers communicated with parents when learning difficulties occurred.

Table 2. Teacher support and adaptive instructional practices (N = 300)

Teacher support practice	n	%
Repeat or clarify instructions	258	86.0
Explain unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary	247	82.3
Provide additional examples	239	79.7
Encourage students to ask questions	236	78.7
Use pictures or visual materials	224	74.7
Provide individual explanations	211	70.3
Connect lessons with local examples	205	68.3
Organize peer-support activities	192	64.0
Communicate with parents about learning difficulties	187	62.3

These findings indicate that teacher support was most frequently reported through instructional scaffolding and classroom interaction strategies. From an institutional perspective, these practices represent frontline forms of educational support through which teachers respond to the linguistic and cultural diversity encountered in everyday classroom settings. However, the descriptive data do not establish whether these practices result from formal school policies, professional development, leadership practices, or individual teacher initiative.

4.3. Home language and community educational resources

Table 3 summarizes students' language use differed considerably across social contexts. Hmong remained the dominant language within families and communities, while Vietnamese dominated communication between teachers and students. Specifically, 86.3% of students mainly used Hmong with parents, 89.0% with grandparents, and 77.0% with community friends. By contrast, 91.3% reported communicating primarily in Vietnamese with teachers.

Communication with classmates was more linguistically diverse: 50.3% mainly used Vietnamese, while 24.3% mainly used Hmong and 25.3% used both languages.

Table 3. Students' language use across social contexts (N = 300)

Social context	Mainly Hmong (%)	Mainly Vietnamese (%)	Both languages (%)
Parents	86.3	5.0	8.7
Grandparents	89.0	2.7	8.3
Siblings	75.0	8.0	17.0
Community friends	77.0	8.3	14.7
Teachers	4.0	91.3	4.7
Classmates	24.3	50.3	25.3

As shown in **Table 4**, students also identified multiple sources of educational resources beyond formal classroom instruction. Teachers and school materials were identified by 96.3% of students, followed by family members (82.7%), agricultural and household activities (77.3%), local environments (75.3%), grandparents and community elders (72.7%), peers (69.0%), and traditional cultural practices (67.0%).

Table 4. Students' reported educational resources (N = 300)

Educational resource	n	%
Teachers and school materials	289	96.3
Family members	248	82.7
Agricultural and household activities	232	77.3
Local environments	226	75.3
Grandparents and community elders	218	72.7
Peers	207	69.0
Traditional cultural practices	201	67.0

The findings indicate that students navigate distinct linguistic environments across family, community, and school settings. They also report access to educational resources extending beyond formal classroom instruction to include family knowledge, household activities, local environments, elders, peers, and traditional cultural practices. These findings highlight the coexistence of institutional educational resources and community-based resources within students' educational experiences.

4.4. Family–school relationships and educational inclusion

Table 5 presents the reported family–school relationships, school-level support, and educational inclusion indicators. Family support for education was consistently reported across the sample. A large majority of students (92.0%) stated that parents encouraged regular school attendance, while 80.3% reported that parents regularly asked about their learning. Approximately 66.0% received homework support from family members, and the same proportion reported communication between family members and teachers when learning difficulties occurred.

Students also reported school-level support in their educational experiences. Approximately 75.3% stated that the school provided additional learning support when necessary, while 78.0% indicated that teachers understood their family circumstances. These findings suggest that educational support was experienced not only through direct classroom interactions but also through broader relationships between students, families, teachers, and the school.

Students described generally positive experiences of inclusion within school. Most students reported feeling safe at school (91.0%), respected by teachers and

classmates (89.0%), and a sense of belonging to the school community (85.0%).

Table 5. Family–school relationships, school-level support, and educational inclusion

Indicator	n	%
Parents encourage regular school attendance	276	92.0
Students feel safe at school	273	91.0
Students feel respected at school	267	89.0
Students feel they belong to the school community	255	85.0
Parents ask about school learning	241	80.3
Teachers understand students' family circumstances	234	78.0
School provides additional learning support	226	75.3
Parents communicate with teachers about learning	198	66.0
Parents help with homework	198	66.0

The descriptive results show higher reported levels of family encouragement than direct academic support. They also show that school-level support and teacher understanding of family circumstances were reported by substantial proportions of students, while direct teacher–parent communication was reported less frequently than classroom-based teacher support.

4.5. Integrated profile of multilingual educational inclusion

Table 6 summarizes students' reported experiences in the fifth domain, which focuses on cultural recognition, Hmong cultural identity, and classroom confidence. The findings indicate relatively positive experiences of cultural recognition and identity, although confidence in classroom participation remained comparatively lower.

Approximately 83.0% believed that teachers respected their Hmong cultural background, while 82.0% reported feeling proud of their Hmong identity at school. However, only 71.0% felt comfortable asking teachers questions and 69.0% reported confidence speaking during classroom activities.

Table 6. Recognition, cultural identity, and classroom confidence among Hmong primary students (N = 300)

Indicator	n	%
Teachers respect Hmong cultural background	249	83.0
Feel proud of Hmong identity at school	246	82.0
Feel comfortable asking teachers questions	213	71.0
Feel confident speaking in class	207	69.0

Overall, the findings indicate a multidimensional pattern of multilingual educational inclusion. Students generally reported positive experiences of relationships, cultural recognition, safety, and belonging within school, while linguistic difficulties remained evident in classroom communication and confidence in academic participation. Teacher support was commonly reported through classroom-based mediation, while school-level support and family–school relationships represented additional contextual dimensions of students' educational experiences.

Taken together, the findings suggest that students' experiences of multilingual inclusion are situated within several interconnected environments. Classroom teacher support represents the most immediate form of educational mediation, while school-level support and family–school relationships provide broader

organizational and relational contexts. These findings provide the empirical basis for the discussion of institutional support, teacher capacity, organizational coordination, and educational inclusion that follows.

5. Discussion

5.1. Linguistic difference and classroom participation

The findings indicate that language difference remains an important dimension of educational participation among Hmong primary students in Pu Nhi Commune. A substantial proportion of students reported difficulty understanding unfamiliar Vietnamese vocabulary (80.3%) and some teacher instructions (75.0%). Difficulties were also reported in answering questions in Vietnamese (68.0%), expressing ideas (65.3%), and participating in classroom discussions (60.3%). These findings suggest that multilingual students may encounter barriers to participation even when they are physically present in mainstream Vietnamese-medium classrooms.

The findings should not be interpreted as evidence of a deficit in students' linguistic or intellectual capacity. Rather, they highlight the interaction between students' existing linguistic repertoires and the language practices of formal schooling. For Hmong students whose everyday communication is predominantly conducted in Hmong, the use of Vietnamese as the principal language of classroom instruction creates additional demands for understanding, processing, and expressing academic content. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing that language is closely connected with participation, identity, and access to learning opportunities in multilingual educational settings.

From an institutional perspective, these findings also suggest that language-related participation should not be addressed solely as an individual student problem. The accessibility of classroom communication is partly shaped by how schools and teachers organize instructional interaction. This makes teacher mediation and school-level support relevant dimensions of inclusive educational practice.

5.2. Teacher mediation as frontline educational practice

One of the most important findings concerns the range of adaptive practices reported by students. Most respondents indicated that teachers repeated or clarified explanations (86.0%), explained unfamiliar vocabulary (82.3%), provided additional examples (79.7%), and encouraged students to ask questions (78.7%). The use of pictures or visual materials (74.7%) and individual explanations (70.3%) was also relatively common.

These practices illustrate the central role of teachers as frontline educational actors in multilingual classrooms. Teachers do not simply transmit the official curriculum; they mediate between institutional instructional expectations and the linguistic and cultural realities of students. Through repetition, clarification, examples, visual materials, and individualized explanations, teachers can make classroom communication more accessible to students who are learning through a language that is not dominant in their homes.

The findings are consistent with the broader literature on culturally responsive and multilingual teaching, which emphasizes the importance of adapting classroom interaction to students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the present study, such adaptation appears primarily through everyday instructional practices rather than through formally measured institutional programs.

At the same time, the data do not allow the study to determine whether these practices result from formal professional development, school leadership, institutional policies, individual teacher initiative, or combinations of these

factors. This distinction is important for interpreting the findings in relation to human resources and educational services. The study demonstrates that students report receiving substantial teacher support, but it does not directly measure the organizational conditions that enable or constrain such support.

5.3. Institutional support, teacher capacity, and organizational coordination

The findings provide a descriptive picture of how students perceive school-level support and teacher–family coordination. Specifically, 75.3% of students reported that the school provided additional learning support when necessary, 78.0% indicated that teachers understood their family circumstances, and 62.3% reported teacher–parent communication when learning difficulties occurred. These indicators capture students' perceptions of support and communication; they do not directly measure the quality of institutional systems or the effectiveness of particular management practices.

From a human resource management perspective, the findings raise questions about the organizational conditions that enable teachers to respond to multilingual learners. Relevant issues include access to appropriate instructional materials, professional development in multilingual and culturally responsive teaching, opportunities for collegial collaboration, and procedures for coordinating support between teachers, school leaders, and families. These are plausible institutional areas for further investigation, rather than mechanisms demonstrated by the present data.

The distinction is important because the study does not directly measure teacher qualifications, professional learning, leadership behavior, staffing arrangements, resource allocation, or formal school policies. It therefore cannot establish whether the reported support resulted from institutional programs, individual teacher initiative, or other factors. The contribution of the findings is to identify students' experiences of support and the organizational questions they raise, while recognizing the need for additional evidence from teachers, school leaders, and families.

5.4. Hmong language and community knowledge as educational resources

The findings demonstrate that students' linguistic and cultural environments extend well beyond the formal classroom. Hmong was the predominant language used with parents (86.3%), grandparents (89.0%), siblings (75.0%), and community friends (77.0%), whereas Vietnamese was predominantly used by teachers (91.3%). This distribution indicates a clear distinction between the linguistic environment of home and community and that of formal schooling.

At the same time, students identified multiple sources of knowledge that could support learning. Teachers and school materials were reported by 96.3% of respondents, but family knowledge (82.7%), agricultural and household activities (77.3%), local environments (75.3%), grandparents and elders (72.7%), peers (69.0%), and traditional cultural practices (67.0%) were also recognized as educational resources.

These findings support the concept of funds of knowledge, which emphasizes that students' families and communities possess knowledge and experiences that can contribute to formal education. In the Pu Nhi context, such resources include household activities, agricultural experience, local environments, intergenerational knowledge, and cultural practices. Their educational value does not depend on replacing formal school knowledge; rather, they can provide meaningful points of connection between students' lived experiences and classroom learning.

From an institutional perspective, recognizing these resources also places demands on schools and teachers. Teachers need opportunities and resources to connect classroom content with students' local experiences, while schools can facilitate communication with families and communities. Such practices can

be understood as part of the organizational environment supporting culturally responsive teaching rather than solely as individual teacher creativity.

5.5. Family–school relationships, recognition, and belonging

The findings further indicate that educational inclusion is closely connected with family engagement and students' experiences of recognition and belonging. A large majority of students reported that their parents encouraged regular school attendance (92.0%), asked about their learning (80.3%), and communicated with teachers (66.0%). These findings demonstrate that families remain important participants in children's educational experiences despite the linguistic and institutional differences between home and school.

However, the relatively lower proportion reporting parent–teacher communication and parental assistance with homework (both 66.0%) suggests that family engagement does not take a single form. Differences in language, educational experience, household responsibilities, geographical conditions, or access to school may shape how families participate. The present study does not directly measure the reasons for these differences, and therefore such explanations should be investigated in future research rather than assumed.

Students' responses concerning recognition and belonging were generally positive. Most reported feeling safe at school (91.0%), respected (89.0%), and that they belonged in the school environment (85.0%). In addition, 83.0% reported that teachers respected their Hmong cultural background, and 82.0% expressed pride in their Hmong identity.

An important finding is the difference between students' positive social experiences at school and their comparatively lower confidence in classroom participation. Although 91.0% reported feeling safe, 89.0% felt respected, and 85.0% reported a sense of belonging to the school community, only 69.0% reported confidence in speaking in class, while 71.0% felt comfortable asking teachers questions.

This pattern suggests that social inclusion and active instructional participation should be distinguished analytically. Feeling safe and accepted reflects students' reported experiences of their relationships and position within the school community, whereas speaking in class also requires students to understand classroom language, formulate responses, and feel sufficiently confident to express their ideas. For Hmong students learning through Vietnamese, linguistic demands may be relevant to this difference. However, the present study did not directly test whether language difficulties explain lower participation confidence, and other possible influences were not independently measured.

The findings therefore caution against interpreting positive reports of safety and belonging as evidence that all barriers to meaningful participation have been resolved. An inclusive educational environment needs to support both students' social and emotional experiences and their practical opportunities to understand, ask questions, express ideas, and participate in classroom activities. Future research incorporating classroom observations and teacher and student interviews could investigate how these dimensions interact in everyday educational practice.

5.6. Educational inclusion as a relational and institutional process

Taken together, the findings support an understanding of educational inclusion as a relational and institutionally situated process. Students' experiences cannot be explained by language difference alone. They emerge within the interaction of linguistic background, teacher practices, school-level support, family engagement, community resources, recognition, and classroom participation.

Within this sample, students reported experiences of instructional support,

cultural recognition, safety, and belonging. These descriptive findings identify dimensions of educational inclusion that warrant further investigation. The study did not test statistical associations among these dimensions and cannot establish whether instructional support or cultural recognition was related to students' reported safety or belonging.

This interpretation is consistent with a sociological understanding of education in which inclusion is shaped by relationships among students, teachers, families, schools, and communities. It also provides a useful organizational perspective: teachers function as frontline professionals whose daily practices are situated within institutional arrangements and whose work requires coordination with families and school structures.

The conceptual sequence proposed in this study—institutional context and school-level support together with home and community resources → teacher mediation and adaptive instructional practices → classroom participation → recognition, safety, and belonging → educational inclusion—should therefore be understood as an interpretive framework rather than a tested causal model.

The contribution of the present study lies in connecting the student-level experience of multilingual inclusion with the institutional context in which teachers perform their educational work. This perspective helps avoid treating multilingual students' difficulties as individual deficits and instead directs attention toward the interaction between learners, teachers, schools, families, and communities.

5.7. Practical implications for educational management and human resource development

The findings suggest four priorities for educational management in multilingual primary-school settings.

First, teacher professional development should address practical strategies for supporting students whose home language differs from the language of instruction. Training may focus on explaining unfamiliar vocabulary, simplifying instructions, using visual and locally relevant examples, checking comprehension, and encouraging students to participate without fear of making linguistic mistakes.

Second, school leaders should review the availability and use of instructional resources for multilingual classrooms. Bilingual support materials, visual aids, and examples drawn from students' family and community experiences may help teachers make lessons more accessible. Resource allocation should be informed by identified student needs and reviewed through classroom practice rather than assumed to be effective simply because materials are provided.

Third, schools should strengthen coordination among teachers, school managers, and families. Practical procedures for identifying learning difficulties, sharing relevant information, and communicating with parents may help align classroom support with students' home circumstances. The relatively lower reported level of teacher–parent communication compared with classroom-based support indicates an area warranting further attention, although the present study does not establish the reasons for this difference.

Fourth, school monitoring should distinguish social inclusion from active classroom participation. Student feedback on safety, respect, belonging, confidence in speaking, and comfort in asking questions should be considered alongside classroom observations and consultation with families. These indicators capture related but distinct dimensions of educational inclusion.

These recommendations are proposed directions for institutional development rather than interventions whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by the present study. Future research should examine how professional development, instructional resources, and school–family coordination relate to changes in

students' reported participation and educational experiences.

6. Conclusion

This study examined multilingual educational inclusion among Hmong primary students in a rural setting, with particular attention to linguistic challenges, teacher support, school-level support, family–school relationships, community resources, recognition, safety, and belonging. The findings indicate that educational inclusion in Pu Nhi Commune is shaped by the interaction between students' linguistic backgrounds and the practices and relationships surrounding their schooling.

The results show that Vietnamese language demands remain an important challenge for many Hmong students. Difficulties in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary and teacher instructions, answering questions, expressing ideas, and participating in classroom discussions indicate that linguistic differences may constrain students' opportunities for active classroom participation. At the same time, students frequently reported receiving teacher support through repetition and clarification, vocabulary explanations, additional examples, visual materials, individualized explanations, and encouragement to ask questions. These findings highlight the role of teachers as frontline educational professionals who help make classroom communication more accessible to students learning in a language that differs from their dominant home language.

The study also highlights the importance of the broader institutional and relational context of education. Students reported school-level learning support, teachers' understanding of their family circumstances, and family engagement through encouragement of school attendance and interest in learning. Hmong language and community knowledge were also identified as important educational resources, including family knowledge, household and agricultural activities, local environments, elders, peers, and traditional cultural practices. These findings suggest that inclusive education should recognize the connections between formal schooling and students' linguistic, cultural, and community experiences.

Although most students reported feeling safe, respected, and a sense of belonging at school, their reported confidence in speaking in class was comparatively lower. This distinction indicates that positive social experiences do not necessarily translate into confident classroom participation. Educational inclusion therefore requires attention to both students' social and emotional experiences and the classroom conditions that enable them to participate actively in learning.

From an organizational perspective, the findings identify teacher professional development, appropriate instructional resources, and coordination between schools and families as relevant areas for further consideration. However, these organizational dimensions were not directly measured as causal variables in this study. The findings should therefore be interpreted as descriptive evidence of students' reported experiences within one school, rather than as proof of causal relationships or as representative of all Hmong primary students in Vietnam. Overall, the study contributes to understanding multilingual educational inclusion as a relational and institutionally situated process involving students, teachers, schools, families, and communities.

Limitations: Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in one primary school in Pu Nhi Commune and included only Hmong students. The findings provide context-specific evidence and cannot be generalized to all Hmong students, other ethnic minority groups, or schools across Vietnam.

Second, the cross-sectional design and descriptive analysis do not establish causal relationships or changes over time. The study used frequencies and

percentages to summarize students' reported experiences and did not conduct grade-level comparisons or inferential statistical tests.

Third, the data relied on self-reports from children in Grades 1–5. Although the questionnaire was administered bilingually in Vietnamese and Hmong and age-appropriate clarification was provided, differences in comprehension, recall, and willingness to report experiences may have influenced responses. The findings should consequently be understood as students' reported experiences rather than objective assessments of instructional quality or institutional performance.

Fourth, the questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended items and was not formally pilot-tested or psychometrically validated. The findings are therefore descriptive and should not be interpreted as measurements from a validated standardized instrument. In addition, institutional support was captured through students' perceptions rather than direct measures of teacher competencies, professional development, leadership practices, resource allocation, or formal school policies.

Future research could address these limitations by involving multiple schools and ethnic minority communities, incorporating perspectives from teachers, school leaders, and families, and combining surveys with classroom observations and qualitative interviews. Where appropriate data and validated measures are available, subsequent studies could also examine differences across grade levels and investigate how institutional support and teacher practices relate to students' classroom participation and experiences of educational inclusion over time.

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