



## **THE POTENTIAL OF TEACHING VIETNAMESE IN INDONESIA UNDER A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN VIETNAM AND INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the potential development of Teaching Vietnamese to Speakers of Other Languages (TVSOL) in Indonesia within the framework of the Vietnam–Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). The study aims to analyze the geopolitical, economic, and educational factors driving the need for Vietnamese language education in Indonesia, while also identifying institutional and pedagogical challenges in establishing such programs. The research employs theories of second language acquisition, negative language transfer, human capital theory, and soft power diplomacy to explain both linguistic difficulties and the strategic significance of language education. Using a qualitative research design, the study employs documentary research, a systematic literature review, and qualitative content analysis of policy documents, labor market data, academic literature, and online educational platforms. The findings reveal that increasing bilateral cooperation in trade, tourism, investment, and education has generated growing demand for Vietnamese language proficiency in Indonesia, particularly in business, diplomacy, and cross-cultural communication sectors. However, the absence of formal Vietnamese language programs, limited institutional support, and significant phonological differences between Indonesian and Vietnamese remain major barriers. The study concludes that integrating Vietnamese language education into the CSP agenda through government support, university partnerships, teacher training, and public–private collaboration could strengthen Indonesia’s regional engagement with Vietnam and contribute to broader ASEAN cooperation.

**Keywords:** ASEAN; comprehensive strategic partnership; Indonesia; Vietnam; Vietnamese language program

## Introduction

In March 2025, Indonesia and Vietnam elevated their relationship to a level now termed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), marking a subtle yet significant shift in Southeast Asia's political landscape (Nguyen et al., 2025). This development took many by surprise, as Jakarta granted Hanoi a diplomatic status typically reserved for major powers on the global stage. What began as basic collaboration quickly evolved into deeper connections between the two nations. One aspect of this transformation that often goes unnoticed is the increasing integration of Vietnamese language programs in Indonesian schools. It has become clear that embracing each other's languages transcends cultural exchange; it is a vital necessity. To fully benefit from this elevated partnership, whether in trade or long-term strategic planning, proficiency in the language is proving to be crucial. This study explores a gradual yet significant shift in classrooms shaping the next generation of diplomats, traders, and policymakers.

Recent empirical developments in bilateral cooperation reinforce the urgency of this study. In 2024, Vietnam welcomed more than 184,000 Indonesian tourists, while Indonesia received over 106,000 Vietnamese visitors (BPS, 2025; VNA, 2025b). At the same time, labor market platforms such as JobStreet and Indeed show increasing demand for Vietnamese-speaking professionals in manufacturing, technology, translation, and international business sectors in Indonesia (Vietnam Jobs, 2025; Vietnam Jobs in Indonesia, 2025). The upgrading of bilateral relations into a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2025 further intensified cooperation in trade, investment, education, tourism, maritime affairs, and people-to-people exchanges (Nguyen et al., 2025). Nevertheless, Indonesia still lacks formal Vietnamese language programs, institutionalized Vietnamese Studies centers, and specialized teacher-training mechanisms. This mismatch between strategic demand and educational infrastructure underscores the need for a systematic study of the feasibility and significance of Vietnamese-language education in Indonesia.

Recent scholarship on Vietnam–Indonesia relations has primarily focused on political diplomacy, economic cooperation, maritime security, ASEAN regionalism, tourism collaboration, and the development of strategic partnerships (Antonio, 2025; Montratama, 2016; Nashir, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2025). Other studies have examined

Indonesia's public diplomacy through international education programs such as Darmasiswa and the KNB Scholarship, highlighting the role of language and education in strengthening regional engagement (Baihaqi, 2024; Brilyanti, 2021). Meanwhile, research on Vietnamese language education has largely focused on pedagogical approaches, phonological challenges, and second-language acquisition in Western and East Asian contexts (Millet et al., 2021; Sumarti et al., 2021). Existing studies also discuss the internationalization of Vietnamese language instruction through universities and digital learning platforms in countries such as Australia, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom (ANU, 2025; Harvard University, 2025; SOAS, 2025).

However, despite the growing strategic partnership between Vietnam and Indonesia, there remains very limited academic attention to the development of Vietnamese-language education in Indonesia. In particular, no study has systematically examined how geopolitical cooperation, labor-market transformation, and foreign-language education intersect within the Vietnam–Indonesia CSP framework. This gap becomes increasingly significant as bilateral relations continue to deepen across multiple sectors. This study contributes to the literature by integrating perspectives from international relations, labor-market analysis, second-language acquisition, and language policy into a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that separately discuss diplomacy, economic cooperation, or language pedagogy, this article positions Vietnamese language education as both a strategic soft-power instrument and a form of human capital development within the CSP framework. The novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which connects geopolitical cooperation with linguistic and educational dimensions in the context of ASEAN regional integration.

One significant challenge in launching these programs lies not merely in organizational matters but also in the teaching methodology. Indonesian features a non-tonal structure and belongs to the Austronesian language family (Cohn & Maya, 2014), and Vietnamese employs pitch variations within single-syllable words, rooted in an Austroasiatic framework, which creates a complex combination for learners (Sumarti et al., 2021). Standard classroom techniques often struggle to accommodate this linguistic dichotomy effectively. Genuine progress emerges only when instruction shifts to approaches specifically designed for this unique blend. Insights drawn from leading global universities provide a pathway forward, adapted rather than directly copied,

resulting in tools that cater to learner needs while ensuring the sustainability of the programs over time.

Accordingly, this article aims to analyze the potential for the development of Vietnamese language education in Indonesia within the framework of the Vietnam–Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) examine the geopolitical and economic factors driving demand for Vietnamese language proficiency in Indonesia; (2) identify institutional and pedagogical challenges in developing Vietnamese language programs; and (3) propose strategic recommendations for establishing sustainable Vietnamese language education initiatives in Indonesia. Through these objectives, the study seeks to demonstrate how language education can function as a strategic instrument for strengthening bilateral cooperation and regional connectivity within ASEAN.

## Literature Review

### *The current landscape of Vietnamese language instruction*

While the strategic and economic rationale for Vietnamese language education in Indonesia is compelling, the current supply of such instruction is virtually nonexistent (ANU, 2025). This section examines the sharp contrast between Indonesia's severe shortage of skilled workers and the increasing institutionalization of Vietnamese studies at top universities worldwide. Drawing on both international best practices and the effective model of Indonesia's language promotion initiatives in Vietnam, this research identifies a substantial opportunity for Indonesian institutions to close a strategic gap.

Worldwide, higher education has valued Vietnam for its academic weight and global reach. Notable schools across Australia, the US, Britain, and Japan built thorough programs that provide clear examples of how institutions can support a language through teaching methods, course structure, and lasting support. Online learning meets real engagement at the Australian National University, where Vietnamese can be studied as either a full major or a shorter minor path (ANU, 2025). Not every course reshapes how lessons flow, yet this one does by flipping the script: learners review content solo ahead of live digital classes built around speaking and doing. What sets it apart? A sharp eye on culture right from day one, plus extra care with tones, those tricky sound shifts that trip up many native English speakers. Flexibility comes only through web delivery, making

access easier without sacrificing depth. This model thrives not by adding flash but by focusing on what helps: structured prep followed by lively practice.

Years stretch back to schools such as Harvard and Wisconsin, where Vietnamese students live inside classrooms. Task-driven methods shape how students learn day by day in Cambridge (ALC, 2025; Harvard University, 2025). Interaction guides each lesson, built around real skill growth instead of tests alone. Some arrive already speaking thanks to family roots, yet stumble on rules or script, while Harvard meets them there with tailored paths. Grammar tightens, reading deepens, writing sharpens under that focused care. Farther west, summer heats up with intensive courses tied to broader cultural exploration. Madison pushes travel beyond borders, so tongues pick up rhythm abroad. Language slips into broader pictures through majors that wrap around people, places, and histories. SEASSI fuels much of that motion, linking words to worlds.

One way to learn Vietnamese? At SOAS in the United Kingdom, the programs is integrated into academic life through immersive and structured coursework focused on Asia and Africa (SOAS, 2025). Over in Japan, training at Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages gets intense: two full years focused on active use and daily practice (Kanda Gaigo, 2025). What makes that course stand out? Halfway through, everyone spends six months living in Hanoi, pushed into real situations where speaking Vietnamese isn't optional. While there, they do more than sharpen conversation skills; studying local customs, economic patterns, and social structures becomes part of everyday routine. Learning the language then doesn't happen in isolation —it grows alongside firsthand observation.

Out there on the web, Vietnamese classes keep showing up more often than before. Not just in schools anymore, they're reaching people across continents through screens. What stands out is how learners are finding their way without relying on standard classrooms. These online spaces aren't only popular - they also hold useful tools and fresh ways to teach. Behind each click, there's a quiet sign of rising interest pulling attention toward this tongue. Hundreds of Vietnamese tutors show up on tutoring sites such as Preply (Tatomyr & Kvasnii, 2023, p. 130), where more than 427 instructors offer private lessons online. Because users leave feedback and give ratings, it's clear that the market for tailored one-on-one teaching has sharpened and grown crowded. Learners aiming at

anything from daily chat skills to full mastery can find help easily. Clearly, many people around the world are ready to spend money on strong Vietnamese lessons.

Learning apps aimed at the general public are increasingly offering Vietnamese. Free tools like Duolingo provide playful lessons in Vietnamese, letting people explore the language on their own time (Guo, 2025). Not every feature matches what schools offer. Still, having it available shows growing worldwide curiosity about the language. Its place among the bigger ones marks a quiet shift. Dedicated websites go deeper for those aiming beyond basics. Some learners turn to sites like Udemy, which studies show it carries many options for Vietnamese students (Qiu, 2020), especially those zeroing in on regional speech patterns, say North versus South, or sharpening exact sounds when speaking. Elsewhere, digital academies such as Tieng Viet Oi and Berlitz run organized remote sessions; they arrange personal coaching, team-based instruction, and sometimes tailor programs for companies—proof that workplaces actively seek polished command of the language (*Learn with Berlitz Vietnam*, n.d.; *Tieng Viet Oi – Vietnamese Lessons – Our Story*, n.d.).

Out here, where online platforms are growing fast, opportunities to study Vietnamese in Indonesia are scarce. Even though schools teach Indonesian quite well to outsiders, locals searching for structured Vietnamese classes hit a wall. Missing entirely are proper courses - no system supports them. While demand might stir somewhere, real access stays locked away. Out there, hunting for Vietnamese classes at Indonesian colleges comes up empty. Even in big cities like Jakarta, private language centers don't offer any Vietnamese-language options. Schools like SIB School of Language and *Jembatan Bahasa* run plenty of courses - intensive ones, culture-based sessions, personal tutoring - all focused on teaching foreigners Bahasa Indonesia (LI, 2025). Their experience demonstrates that they're capable of teaching another language if needed. Likewise, universities such as Trisakti and Unpad already have strong BIPA programs in place (BIPA Unpad, 2025; Universitas Trisakti, 2025). However, when it comes to adding Vietnamese, nothing's moved forward.

Right now, Vietnamese culture and language lack any official base in Indonesia. Not like in France or the Czech Republic (Duong, 2025; *PARIS*, 2023), where cultural centers spread Vietnamese heritage through events and classes, Jakarta lacks anything close to that setup. Even though colleges across Indonesia hold ties abroad - including

signed understandings with schools in Vietnam such as the University of Social Sciences and Humanities and Duy Tan University - these links mostly deal with moving students back and forth, along with broad research sharing, instead of creating real Vietnamese language instruction within local campuses (humas, 2017; UMM, 2026). Without such programs, a major gap remains open. Other nations advancing rapidly in global influence are already training experts who deeply understand Vietnam's society and language. However, Indonesia, although closely linked to Vietnam within ASEAN, hasn't developed the basic knowledge needed to pursue its own diplomatic aims.

### *Profiling Indonesian learners of Vietnamese*

Imagine developing a Vietnamese language course in Indonesia. In language classes, participants' backgrounds always play a crucial role (Gujord, 2022; Morita, 2004). It is essential to think beyond mere teaching methods and consider how nations strengthen their ties through trade, culture, and exchange (Lima, 2007; Zalli, 2024). Delve into the motivations behind why individuals choose to learn a second language (Cao et al., 2023; Huber et al., 2022), exploring what drives them financially or socially. Four distinct groups emerge clearly. First, workers are seeking better opportunities abroad. Next, we have university students represent a group of young adults who are beginning to explore their options. The third group comprises officials engaged in cross-border negotiations. Lastly, we find travelers drawn in by Vietnam's vibrant culture, cuisine, and narratives. Each group arrives with unique habits, goals, and life stages. Recognizing these differences is key to crafting lessons that resonate. By aligning the material with real-life contexts and authentic motivations, the learning experience becomes more engaging. Tailor the approach enough, and interest flourishes organically.

Business professionals represent the primary audience for Vietnamese classes throughout Indonesia. This includes engineers, technicians, plant supervisors, HR representatives, sales personnel, marketers, and finance experts—some employed by Vietnamese companies like VinFast, FPT, or Sovico, while others work for local businesses with ties to Vietnam. Advancing their careers is a significant motivator for them, as is the need for smooth collaboration across cultures. For many, proficiency in Vietnamese is not merely advantageous; it is often a gateway to prestigious positions in global organizations. So, what do they truly require? Practical, real-world lessons that

cover essential vocabulary relevant to industries like electric vehicles and finance, alongside guidance on appropriate professional conduct and communication.

Not just any crowd, these young minds gather in lecture halls across Indonesia's top universities, strategizing their futures and planning their next moves (Nilan et al., 2011). Some aim to sharpen their skills to stand out in the competitive job market, while others delve into subjects like trade and technological trends, driven by a genuine desire to expand their knowledge (Sain et al., 2024). They explore global affairs, economic systems, engineering pathways, and the interconnectedness of Southeast Asian nations, with esteemed institutions such as UI, UGM, Unair, Unpad, and ITB providing their education. What unites them is a demand for structured Vietnamese language courses accredited by their universities that contribute towards their degrees. Here, academic credit is essential—this is not merely about personal interest but about advancing their educational journey. One promising avenue is establishing clear pathways to new opportunities, such as exchange programs, practical work placements, or future employment with companies operating in both Vietnam and Indonesia. Supportive measures, such as official partnerships between institutions or grants, can sustain ongoing interest over the years, fostering fluent speakers prepared to collaborate across borders.

Among those learning Vietnamese are government workers and diplomats, motivated primarily by specific job requirements rather than casual interest. Individuals in government roles—such as those involved in trade, defense, or international relations—dedicate time to preparing for assignments related to Vietnam. Given the nature of their responsibilities, they strive to master not only the language but also the nuanced norms necessary for operating under pressure. Their training progresses rapidly, with a concentrated focus on clear communication in formal contexts and a thorough understanding of diplomatic customs. Training may cover various topics, such as border issues, business relationships, and collaborative projects. What matters is knowing precisely what to say, how to behave, and which terminology is appropriate for each situation. In contrast to others, their education typically involves custom courses developed in partnership with government agencies, ensuring the content remains confidential and closely aligned with specific needs. These efforts subtly influence how effectively the outcomes can be achieved.

In this realm, a different kind of learner emerges—those who may not form the majority but still play an important role. These individuals engage with the Vietnamese language because something resonates with them, whether through the allure of the music, the richness of the cuisine, or the anticipation of a journey to the south. Imagine someone booking flights to explore the streets of Hanoi, eagerly picking up phrases to enhance their experience. Tour guides, already familiar with the ins and outs of the area, tune their ears as well—better vocabulary leads to smoother days on the job. Some have familial ties to Vietnam, even if those connections feel faint across generations. Though not numerous, they remain present where culture thrives, their interests subtly intertwining with larger trends. What motivates them is not career aspirations but personal reasons, prompting them to seek simpler, more organic ways of learning that seamlessly integrate into their daily lives—learning flourishes when it feels natural—through conversation practice and real-life interactions, rather than rigid frameworks.

One perspective to consider is through the experiences of those who are actually learning, each driven by distinct motivations and living unique lives. Business professionals come with specific goals in mind, while college students contribute their own pace to the environment. Government employees may enter quietly, yet their influence often extends far beyond initial impressions. Enthusiastic individuals passionate about the arts and culture bring an enriching depth that others may overlook. Customized lessons are particularly effective when they resonate with personal objectives. When teaching aligns with learners' true identities, positive outcomes emerge organically, without the need for grandiose claims. Stronger connections develop gradually, not through elaborate plans but through consistent interaction. In this context, language education transcends mere vocabulary instruction—it fosters enduring connections across distances and through time.

### **Research Method**

This work draws on qualitative methods to examine how Vietnamese is taught to non-native speakers in Indonesia. Since it digs into systemic shortcomings, reads economic patterns, yet builds a practical model, causal proof takes a back seat. Guided by Creswell & Creswell, the method fits well to such exploratory terrain (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Layering insights from education, language science, and global politics shapes its

backbone. Multiple archived materials feed into structured analysis, all tightly tied to core aims.

The research relies primarily on primary and secondary data collected from a variety of credible sources (Yavuz, 2022). Policy records and official correspondence about the CSP involving Vietnam and Indonesia form part of the big-picture background. Instead of broad assumptions, actual employment postings on digital hiring sites like JobStreet or Indeed help identify patterns in how often Vietnamese language proficiency is sought after in Indonesia. Numbers tied to travel flows and capital movements are also under review, helping track real-world connections between citizens and business activity. Meanwhile, scholarly work and organizational summaries contribute to understanding worldwide methods for teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language. Because learning follows different paths everywhere, existing studies offer a perspective on what approaches tend to emerge across nations. Looking closely at online learning sites and university pages helps map how Vietnamese is taught worldwide and also checks whether Indonesia offers any courses. Pulling from varied sources builds a fuller picture of the issue, layer by layer.

Data collection is conducted through documentary research and a systematic review process (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Selcuk, 2019). This involves identifying relevant keywords such as “Vietnamese language education”, “Indonesian labor market”, “ASEAN tourism flows”, and “TVSOL programs”, followed by gathering data from official documents, academic publications, and digital platforms. From there, material pours in from government records, scholarly articles, websites, and online databases. Once pulled together, each piece is checked - not every source makes the cut; only those that meet clear standards for trustworthiness, usefulness, and timeliness. After sorting comes grouping: facts slide into clusters focused on workforce needs, holes in training systems, who the learners actually are, plus hurdles in teaching methods. Because steps follow one after another without skipping ahead, everything stays orderly, thoughtful, and grounded in research norms.

To examine the data, researchers used methods such as qualitative content review and theme-based sorting (Castro et al., 2023; Klaus, 2019). Starting, pieces of information were grouped under main topics: geopolitical influences, employment market needs, school systems, and issues tied to language learning. After that, connections began to

emerge when we looked closely at how these sections interacted, revealing what helps or hinders growth in teaching Vietnamese. From there, the results took shape into one clear story, built from insights gathered throughout. Meanwhile, another layer was added through side-by-side comparisons between countries with such programs and Indonesia, which lacks them, highlighting missing structures and potential openings ahead.

This research builds on ideas from different fields to shape how it looks at data and meaning. From SLA, it draws on the Perceptual Assimilation Model (Millet et al., 2021; Tyler et al., 2014), shown in work by Millet and others, as well as Tyler's team. Instead of just listing problems, it uses negative language transfer to make sense of what Indonesian speakers struggle with when learning Vietnamese. By comparing how the two languages are built, contrastive analysis highlights key differences—with classroom teaching in mind. While human capital theory explains the economic worth of knowing Vietnamese, labor-market signaling adds another layer by showing how such skills signal competence. Instead of just focusing on economics, soft power views highlight language teaching as a way to build stronger ties between nations through cultural appeal. Public diplomacy angles extend that idea further, framing language programs as quiet strategies within the CSP setup. These theoretical approaches are directly relevant to addressing the study's objectives.

One step at a time, the process progresses by identifying the core issue: Vietnamese is not taught in Indonesia, despite the strengthening ties between the two nations. Next, previous studies and available data are meticulously analyzed. This is followed by categorizing patterns into groups—what people desire, where resources are lacking, and where teaching encounters obstacles. With these insights in hand, the pre-selected ideas begin to clarify the emerging trends. In the final stage, a detailed plan takes shape, outlining how Vietnamese language initiatives can be effectively implemented in Indonesian contexts. With each stage thoughtfully organized, the work follows a clear, logical, methodical, and evidence-based trajectory, ensuring robust, consistent results.

### ***The Geopolitical and Economic Demands for Vietnamese Language Education***

#### ***The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is a Foundational Driver***

Indonesia and Vietnam began official cooperation in 1955, and then, these relations deepened into what's called a *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* (CSP) in March 2025

(Nguyen et al., 2025). People increasingly recognize the importance of learning one another's languages—now more than ever before. Indonesia's position in the global arena is not merely theoretical; it is tangible and significant. Traditional powers like China, the United States, and Russia typically dominate these connections. However, Vietnam stands out as a unique counterpart within ASEAN, closely aligned with Jakarta. This proximity hints at a deeper bond beneath the surface, that perhaps trust, cultivated over time without much fanfare.

Under its expansive umbrella, the CSP advocates for stronger political ties while fostering broader collaboration across various sectors. Political concerns are aligned with security, defense relationships are strengthened through trade links, and investment flows interact with agricultural initiatives. Issues related to fishing are integrated into ocean policies, educational objectives are combined with technological advancements, but it is the personal connections among citizens that truly stand out (Antonio, 2025, 2025). Although top diplomats often rely on English, genuine progress necessitates clear communication among those engaged in day-to-day operations. When Indonesian workers, officials, and entrepreneurs lack fluency in Vietnamese, the pursuit of shared goals is likely to falter. Effective collaboration becomes challenging when miscommunication occurs, habits conflict, and even when intentions are strong (VNA, 2025a).

Furthermore, the CSP framework is designed to be action-oriented, and both nations have committed to developing a detailed “Action Plan” to translate the partnership's broad vision into “tangible outcomes” (Hanh, 2025; Vinh & Duy, 2025). This establishes a direct and immediate policy opportunity. Proposing and funding language education initiatives can be positioned as a fundamental element of this Action Plan, representing a crucial investment in developing the human capital necessary to fulfill CSP's long-term objectives. Consequently, language proficiency emerges as an enabling tool for the partnership itself, serving as the essential lubricant that ensures the machinery of comprehensive cooperation operates smoothly and effectively.

### **Quantifying the Economic Demand in A Thorough Labor Market Analysis**

The strategic imperative defined by the CSP is strongly supported by tangible evidence from the Indonesian labor market. An analysis of job postings on major platforms like

Jobstreet and Indeed (*Vietnam Jobs*, 2025; *Vietnam Jobs in Indonesia*, 2025) reveals a nascent but clear and growing demand for professionals with Vietnamese language skills. This demand is not for academic or cultural roles but for practical, operational positions that directly bridge the two economies, providing a compelling economic incentive for individuals to acquire the language and for institutions to provide training.

The job titles themselves are indicative of the functions these professionals serve. Roles such as “Vietnam Translator”, “QA Tester/Tech Support (Hybrid Vietnam & Indonesia)”, and “Sales Manager Metals Vietnam/Malaysia/Indonesia” explicitly link corporate operations between the two nations. Most of these jobs sit in fast-moving industries that matter deeply to both economies, including garment making, digital systems, shipping goods across borders. Speaking Vietnamese is a must, along with a strong command of either Indonesian or English, because workers often bridge conversations between foreign leaders and homegrown teams. Clear talk matters here, especially when explaining complex guides or guiding groups split by national lines.

The value of this specialized skill set is reflected in the compensation offered. As detailed in Table 1, advertised salary ranges are highly competitive within the Indonesian market. Month by month in Subang, translating into Vietnamese may bring in 5 to 12 million rupiah. When it comes to QA testing or tech support bridging Vietnam and Indonesia, earnings tend to settle around 8 to 9 million rupiah. Because of this gap, workers fluent in both tongues often land higher pay. Speaking Vietnamese opens doors where few apply, so salaries rise. Companies value those who clear communication hurdles without delay. The geographic concentration of this demand is also strategically significant. Most jobs sit where business thrives—around Greater Jakarta, like Tangerang, plus towns in West Java such as Subang and Karawang. Big companies from overseas, along with major local players tied to global markets, appear behind this pattern. These very entities are most likely to expand their investments and activities in Vietnam under the favorable conditions of the CSP.

**Table 1 - Analysis of job market demand for Vietnamese speakers in Indonesia**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Industry/Sector</b>	<b>Required Languages</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Salary (IDR/ Month)</b>
<b>Vietnam Translator</b>	Manufacturing (Textile/Garment)	Vietnamese, Indonesian, English	Subang, West Java	5–12 million
<b>QA Tester/ Tech Support</b>	Information and Communication Technology	Not specified, but the role is “Hybrid Vietnam & Indonesia”	Jakarta	8–9 million
<b>Admin and Translator</b>	Administration/ Translation Services	Indonesian, Vietnamese (fluent written & spoken)	Jakarta	Not Specified
<b>Software Engineer</b>	Technology/ Software Development	Not specified, but the role is “Hybrid Vietnam & Indonesia”	Jakarta	Not Specified
<b>Sales Manager Metals</b>	Manufacturing/ Chemicals	Not specified, but the role covers “Vietnam/Malaysia/Indonesia”	Central Java	Not Specified

Source: Author synthesis.

What drives the need for Vietnamese is not just today’s trade numbers, it is what makes deeper cooperation possible under the CSP. Depending on only a handful of translators means waiting until miscommunication occurs before doing anything. Getting ahead means teaching the language inside Indonesia’s own labor force. That shift turns language training into more than school policy—into fuel for the country’s most vital regional alliance.

**Bilateral Tourism and Investment as Organic Demand Drivers**

In this realm, far removed from official job markets, the interactions of people and finance between Indonesia and Vietnam create a subtle yet powerful demand for understanding languages and cultures. An increasing number of travelers are arriving, and cross-border monetary exchanges are taking place—both of which significantly enhance the advantage of speaking the local language. These instances are becoming increasingly intertwined, as the CSP envisioned from the outset.

Out of the pandemic shadow, travel activity in Vietnam and Indonesia has bounced back with noticeable momentum. Data from 2023 indicates that both Vietnam and Indonesia are among the leaders in ASEAN in terms of visitor arrival recovery rates, at 82.25% and 74.11% of pre-pandemic levels, respectively (King & Chin, 2024). In the first half of 2023 alone, ASEAN recorded 46.5 million visitor arrivals, with 43% originating from within the region (King & Chin, 2024). Tourism flows between the two countries are also on an upward trajectory, offering further opportunities to foster mutual

appreciation. In 2024, Vietnam welcomed over 184,000 tourists from Indonesia (VNA, 2025b), making Indonesia a key tourism market for Vietnam within Southeast Asia (Thang, 2019). Conversely, Indonesia received 106,630 Vietnamese tourists in the same year (BPS, 2025). Both governments aim to promote tourism partnerships, leveraging their cultural and natural similarities to develop new travel products and enhance visitor experiences (Nguyen et al., 2025). As travel between Indonesia and Vietnam becomes more common, demand for Vietnamese language skills in Indonesia's hospitality and tourism industry, including hotels, restaurants, tour agencies, and airports, will increase to serve Vietnamese tourists better and create a more welcoming environment.

“People-to-people” exchanges are already occurring through various channels, such as academic collaborations and cultural programs, such as Darmasiswa (Baihaqi, 2024; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024a) and the KNB Scholarship (Brilyanti, 2021; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024b), which involve students from Vietnam, Indonesia, and international students. Still, English tends to stand between people, thinning out true cultural exchange. Clearer ties might grow in Indonesian classrooms where Vietnamese is taught. Rather than quick talks blurred by mixed-up meanings, deeper links could build slowly, trust taking root not in fleeting exchanges but in words learned together.

One significant reason why Indonesian firms are looking towards Vietnam is the trade framework designed to enhance cross-border transactions. As companies establish themselves, there will be a strong demand for staff proficient in Vietnamese—not just for discussions, but also for fostering genuine connections. Consider this: managers engaging effortlessly with partners, engineers exchanging ideas seamlessly, marketers truly understanding local preferences. Trust develops more rapidly when communication is precise, without the need for intermediaries. Transactions progress more smoothly, and potential missteps diminish. Insider knowledge remains within the organization. While translators play a role, they often miss nuances, humor, and timing—elements that can make a difference. This gap is significant, as is the pursuit of long-term success. Training teams in the language is not merely an addition; it is an integral aspect of the current strategy. As demand rises, so does performance. More firms are recognizing this trend, and action is soon to follow.

### *Addressing the Linguistic Divide between Indonesian And Vietnamese*

Achieving effective Vietnamese language instruction in Indonesia requires navigating substantial linguistic and pedagogical obstacles. Despite sharing some regional context, the core architecture of Bahasa Indonesia diverges sharply from that of Vietnamese, particularly in phonological design. Without clear recognition, followed by structured intervention, the gap between these systems risks undermining learning outcomes. Poorly adapted curricula may lead to widespread student disengagement and wasted investment in long-term cultural exchange. What follows is a comparative examination highlighting precise areas where Indonesian speakers typically struggle when acquiring Vietnamese.

#### *A Contrastive Analysis of Phonological Systems*

Examining how Indonesian and Vietnamese sound systems differ yields three main points essential to shaping teaching plans. While one relies heavily on open syllables, the other builds complex tone patterns across single vowels. Where stress placement remains predictable in Indonesian, Vietnamese uses pitch shifts to entirely distinguish word meaning. These contrasts shape how learners process spoken forms in each language.

Among the initial considerations stands the contrast between tonal and non-tonal systems. In Vietnamese, a standard instance of tone dependence is that word sense shifts according to pitch shape within a single syllable. Six separate tones exist; altering one alters the entire term (Verdonschot et al., 2022). Take “ma”: when flat in intonation, it signifies ghost; yet rising, “má” refers to “mother”. Tone holds the same weight in Vietnamese as any consonant or vowel does which defines word identity. However, Indonesian operates without tonal distinctions altogether (Udayana et al., 2023). Though speakers may shift pitch during speech, such shifts shape only broader utterances rather than individual words in isolation. These variations serve the intent of marking questions, highlighting ideas, and signaling attitude (Sumarti et al., 2021). Never do they alter what a specific term means within the lexicon. From this emerges the largest barrier for learners whose first language lacks tones entirely. Perceiving subtle pitch differences across syllables feels unfamiliar. Producing them accurately demands new muscular precision. The challenge lies not in grammar rules but in auditory awareness. A listener accustomed to flat intonation patterns must now track the melody within each spoken unit.

Second is the difference in syllable structure. Vietnamese is “a fundamentally monosyllabic and isolating language” (Samarina, 2021; Tran et al., 2019). Words are “typically composed of a single syllable, and grammatical relationships are expressed through word order and function words rather than affixation” (Sumarti et al., 2021). These single syllables have “complex structures, including initial consonant clusters and a wide array of vowel combinations” (Karjo, 2024). Indonesian, belonging to the Austronesian family, is “predominantly bisyllabic or polysyllabic, with a relatively regular and straightforward syllable structure” (Karjo, 2024). That can be categorized into six types: (CVC+CVC), (CV+CVC), (CV+CVC), (V+CVC), (CV+CV), and (VC+CVC) (Karjo, 2024). This difference affects the entire rhythm and cadence of the language, influencing “how learners segment the stream of speech and recognize word boundaries” (Batais & Wiltshire, 2015).

Third is the divergence in phonemic inventory. While both languages use a Latin-based script, their sound systems differ significantly. Vietnamese has “a much larger and more complex system of vowels, featuring 13 monophthongs, numerous diphthongs, and even triphthongs” (Castelli & Carré, 2005; Viet Son et al., 2008), which are absent in the Indonesian simpler “six-vowel system” (Masykar et al., 2022; Zanten & Heuven, 1984). Furthermore, there are consonant sounds and, particularly, “final consonant clusters in Vietnamese that do not exist in Indonesian” (Sumarti et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2019). For example, Vietnamese allows final consonants such as /-p/, /-t/, and /-k/ to be unreleased, a feature that Indonesian speakers find difficult to master.

### **Predicting Learner Challenges: Applying Linguistic Theory**

These structural differences enable the prediction of specific, systematic errors that Indonesian learners are likely to encounter, based on established models of second language acquisition.

The Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM), which describes how listeners perceive non-native sounds in terms of their native language categories, provides a helpful framework (Levy, 2009). According to PAM, Indonesian learners are likely to attempt to assimilate Vietnamese tones into their existing phonological system, particularly at the sentence-level intonation. They may perceive a Vietnamese word with a high-rising tone not as a distinct lexical item but as a question word, leading to fundamental

comprehension failures. Studies on learners of other tonal languages have shown that when two different L2 tones are assimilated into a single, overlapping L1 category, learners have immense difficulty distinguishing them (Chen et al., 2023). This is precisely the challenge that Indonesian learners will face with all six Vietnamese tones.

This process is a form of negative language transfer, or L1 interference, where the habits of the learner's native language impede the acquisition of the target language (Tran, 2024). This interference will not be limited to tones. When speaking Vietnamese, Indonesian students often substitute vowels with those from their native tongue. Though the task proves difficult, unfamiliar final consonants without release tend to be recast through added vowel insertions. Instead of tackling clusters directly, speakers break them apart by slipping in extra sounds between stops. These shifts reflect natural adaptation patterns seen across language acquisition paths. Even so, gradual refinement emerges when consistent effort meets attentive practice.

Facing many demands at once places great mental strain on someone just beginning. At the same time, they need to focus on words they do not know, rules of structure, speech sounds, patterns of rhythm, along with tones tied to meaning—all entirely new. If instruction does not guide these elements in a thoughtful order, confusion often follows. This can result in stalled effort, growing irritation, and then stopping altogether. Such outcomes tend to appear when too much is introduced without clear staging.

## Discussion

From a theoretical perspective, the findings demonstrate that Vietnamese language education in Indonesia cannot be understood solely as a linguistic or educational issue, but rather as an interdisciplinary phenomenon situated at the intersection of geopolitics, labor economics, and cultural diplomacy. Human capital theory explains how Vietnamese language proficiency functions as a strategic economic skill that increases employability and supports cross-border professional mobility within the ASEAN region. At the same time, labor-market signaling theory suggests that Vietnamese language competence serves as a marker of specialized regional expertise in sectors increasingly shaped by Vietnam–Indonesia cooperation. From the perspective of soft power and public diplomacy, language education also operates as a mechanism for strengthening mutual

understanding, cultural influence, and long-term bilateral engagement under the CSP. Furthermore, second-language acquisition theories, particularly the Perceptual Assimilation Model and negative language transfer, help explain the pedagogical challenges faced by Indonesian learners due to structural differences between the Indonesian and Vietnamese phonological systems. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study demonstrates that the development of Vietnamese language programs in Indonesia is simultaneously an educational, economic, and geopolitical process within the broader framework of ASEAN regional integration.

### *Systemic Barriers in Indonesian Foreign Language Education*

Starting new language initiatives across Indonesia faces tough conditions that are already shaping how people learn foreign languages. These obstacles fall into three categories: mental, speech-related, and drive-based. One major roadblock lives inside the mind. Research focusing on Indonesians studying English repeatedly spots strong feelings—unease, quietness, tension, low self-assurance, along with constant worry over errors—that block spoken interaction (Sampelolo et al., 2021). Worries might grow stronger while picking up Vietnamese—its sounds and structure feel far removed from many tongues. Mistakes in tone or speech often come fast at first, possibly pushing students away unless the room feels kind and steady. Supportive spaces matter, especially when progress stumbles early (Vy et al., 2024).

One reason lies in language itself. Not every student masters English well, though it receives top attention across schools; weak basics in vocabulary and grammar often get in the way (Putri & Sya, 2023; Sampelolo et al., 2021). Teaching Vietnamese next might stretch things further, since it shares almost nothing with local tongues, uses tones, and lacks familiar roots from old colonial speech. Without daily exposure, few people speak or hear it locally—classrooms become the main space where learning can happen at all. When surroundings offer little support, lessons need far greater depth to stick.

Motivation slips show up when purpose feels missing. For many learners in Indonesia, studying a new language seems pointless without clear ties to work options or everyday use (Hidayat & Devi, 2024). While English opens doors to worldwide knowledge, Vietnamese does not carry the same weight, yet. Because of this gap, schools need to continue showing how learning Vietnamese connects to real jobs, using the

economic reasons outlined earlier in Section 2. The connection between speaking skills and opportunities in Indonesia's growing ties with Vietnam should stay front and center.

### *Institutional and Policy Challenges*

Shortages hit hard across Indonesia's schools, especially those beyond elite circles. Public classrooms frequently lack skilled instructors, rely on outdated books, or lack sufficient funds to grow (Malik et al., 2021). Starting a fresh course in a less common language, such as Vietnamese, creates additional pressure due to the limited availability of support resources (Do et al., 2022). Bringing in foreign teachers is expensive at first. Building lessons out of nothing takes time. Gathering niche study tools stretches budgets even thinner.

Holding sway in government halls, English shapes more than just conversation. Across ASEAN meetings, it runs things without rivals—no second tongue shares the stage (Kirkpatrick, 2017). In classrooms from one end of Southeast Asia to the other, lessons bend toward English, pushed by rules made far above schools (Emilia et al., 2025). Picture a fresh course in Vietnamese stepping into that world—not taking space, but asking for a corner once given freely to others. Its chance lies not in challenging English, but in standing beside it with something different: access where ties run deep, yet words often stumble. That value needs to be shown clearly through institutional commitment, financial support, and ultimately, the choices students make.

It gets worse because there is no clear plan for LCTLs. Critics say language teaching across the area usually responds late, chasing popular languages like English rather than planning (Pham & Dinh, 2019). Big picture thinking about which nearby languages matter most and how they should be developed remains lacking in Indonesia. Even as efforts rise to make Bahasa Indonesia one of ASEAN's main languages, knowing partner nations' speech matters just as much (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Missing that wider vision means attempts to spread Vietnamese could fade fast, scattered moves without real roots or follow-through.

### *Building A Sustainable Resource Pipeline*

The biggest hurdle is finding enough skilled teachers in practice. Not one trained Vietnamese language instructor works in Indonesia today. Addressing this issue requires more than short-term solutions; meaningful and lasting change depends on pursuing two approaches simultaneously. For starters, Indonesian colleges should hire directly from Vietnam, teaming up with schools there to move fluent speakers into classrooms here. Later on, local talent must grow from within, using hands-on teacher training that multiplies expertise over time. A scholarship program could be launched, possibly supported under the CSP's education collaboration rules, to send talented Indonesian scholars and language instructors to Vietnam for in-depth training in linguistics and teaching methods (Nguyen et al., 2025). As years pass, Indonesia may grow its own group of specialists in Vietnamese studies, people ready to guide and maintain such efforts at home.

Curriculum work needs steady progress behind the scenes, too. Relying on books made for Vietnamese classrooms won't help much here. Using material built for native English speakers? That misses the mark completely. What matters most is changing content, not copying it outright. Learning tools should be built around how Indonesians actually speak and how they struggle with sounds or rules. Each exercise, each explanation - it has to meet those specific hurdles head-on. On top of custom-built content, courses might pull from a wide pool of free online tools; like those listed through UW-Madison's SEAFli project (UW-Madison, 2025). Think audio stories, live news pages, or dynamic web apps. Such options often bring real-world context into learning at low cost. They work well alongside structured teaching.

One key need stands out: strong support structures to keep the effort visible and lasting. To make that happen, setting up a Vietnamese Cultural Center in Jakarta could play a central role. Much like counterparts around the globe, this space might host language courses, art shows, movie nights, and professional gatherings, helping draw attention to Vietnam-related learning while anchoring ties between nations. In higher education, picking just a handful of top schools, such as Universitas Indonesia or Universitas Gadjah Mada, to lead Vietnamese Studies programs may offer clear direction early on. One way could be focusing scarce resources where they matter most. Grouping enough teachers and learners might just create momentum. A working blueprint would

slowly take shape. Only after that should spreading the idea begin, into more universities nationwide. Using the CSP's network makes sense, given how tough some hurdles are. Tackling shortages through diplomacy offers a real footing. Long-term success in teaching Vietnamese in Indonesia hinges on steps like these.

## Conclusion

The development of Vietnamese language education in Indonesia reflects a broader transformation in Vietnam–Indonesia relations under the CSP. This study demonstrates that language education is no longer merely a cultural or educational issue but is now strategically linked to geopolitical cooperation, labor market transformation, and regional integration within ASEAN. The findings reveal that increasing bilateral cooperation in trade, tourism, investment, diplomacy, and people-to-people exchanges has generated growing demand for Vietnamese language proficiency in Indonesia, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, technology, tourism, and international communication. At the same time, the study identifies major structural obstacles, including the lack of institutionalized Vietnamese-language programs, limited teacher availability, insufficient policy support, and significant linguistic differences between the Indonesian and Vietnamese phonological systems.

Academically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating perspectives from international relations, language policy, labor-market analysis, and second-language acquisition into a single interdisciplinary framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss Vietnam–Indonesia cooperation from political or economic perspectives, this research positions foreign language education as a strategic instrument of soft power and human capital development within ASEAN regionalism. The novelty of this article lies in its effort to connect geopolitical partnership with language education policy and labor-market needs, thereby expanding discussions of regional cooperation beyond conventional diplomatic and economic approaches.

The study also highlights the importance of adopting a long-term institutional strategy involving governments, universities, and public–private collaboration to establish sustainable Vietnamese language programs in Indonesia. In this context, language education can function not only as an academic activity but also as a mechanism

for strengthening intercultural understanding, regional mobility, and strategic cooperation between ASEAN member states.

Nevertheless, this research has several limitations. The study primarily relies on qualitative documentary analysis and secondary data, without incorporating direct fieldwork, interviews, or large-scale surveys involving policymakers, educators, students, or industry stakeholders in Indonesia and Vietnam. In addition, the labor market analysis remains exploratory due to the limited availability of comprehensive statistical data on Vietnamese-language demand in Indonesia.

Future research may expand this study by conducting empirical investigations into learner perceptions, institutional readiness, curriculum development, and policy implementation related to Vietnamese language education in Indonesia. Comparative studies between ASEAN countries that have successfully institutionalized Vietnamese Studies programs may also provide valuable insights for policy design and regional educational cooperation. Furthermore, future scholarship could explore the broader role of language diplomacy and less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in strengthening ASEAN connectivity and regional soft power competition.

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