



Academic Performance and Adaptation of Lao International Students: Evidence from Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho Province, Vietnam

Vu Thanh Mai^{1*}, Hoang Thi Phuong Thuy¹

¹Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho Province, Vietnam

<p>Abstract: Training Vietnamese language and undergraduate majors for Laotian international students is a specialized and strategic educational task of Hung Vuong University in Phu Tho province. Based on a practical analysis of training and managing 107 Laotian students at the university, this paper identifies and analyzes the subjective and objective factors directly influencing their academic performance and adaptation. Utilizing a qualitative approach, practical review, and scientific data benchmarking, the findings indicate that initial language barriers, self-study methods, and peer support mechanisms are core elements determining academic outcomes (GPA) and cultural integration. Guided by these insights, the article proposes four synchronized educational management measures to optimize these influential factors, aiming to enhance the training quality of high-quality human resources for Laos.</p>	<p>Research Paper</p>
	<p>*Corresponding Author: <i>Vu Thanh Mai</i> Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho Province, Vietnam</p>
	<p>How to cite this paper: Vu Thanh Mai & Hoang Thi Phuong Thuy (2026). Academic Performance and Adaptation of Lao International Students: Evidence from Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho Province, Vietnam. <i>Middle East Res J. Humanities Soc. Sci.</i>, 6(3): 71-75.</p>
	<p>Article History: Submit: 15.05.2026 Accepted: 17.06.2026 Published: 19.06.2026 </p>
<p>Keywords: Influential Factors, Learning Outcomes, Adaptation, Laotian International Students, Hung Vuong University.</p>	
<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p>	

I. INTRODUCTION

The traditional friendship, special solidarity, and comprehensive cooperation between Vietnam and Laos have provided a strong foundation for exchanges and collaboration across various sectors, among which education and training play a pivotal role. In recent years, in line with international cooperation policies and Phu Tho Province's strategy of attracting international students, Hung Vuong University has become one of the key educational institutions responsible for receiving and training high-quality human resources for the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The number of Lao students enrolling at the university has steadily increased, creating growing demands for effective student management and continuous improvement in educational quality.

Although Vietnam and Laos share certain geographical and cultural similarities within the broader East Asian context, international students in general, and Lao students in particular, often encounter numerous challenges when transitioning to a new academic environment. Previous studies have indicated that language barriers, differences in cultural practices and lifestyles, and especially disparities in higher education learning methods are among the most significant

obstacles faced by international students. The ability of these students to adapt to a new environment not only affects their psychological well-being but also directly influences their capacity to acquire knowledge and achieve academic success, commonly reflected through their Grade Point Average (GPA).

However, at Hung Vuong University, existing reports have primarily focused on administrative management and enrollment statistics. There remains a research gap regarding the systematic and evidence-based assessment of Lao students' adaptation levels, as well as the precise measurement of how adaptation-related barriers affect their academic performance. Against this backdrop and in response to the growing need for empirical evidence, the present study, entitled "*Factors Affecting Academic Performance and Adaptation of Lao International Students: A Case Study at Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho Province,*" was conducted to identify the key factors influencing students' integration and to examine their relationship with academic outcomes.

Rather than adopting a conventional administrative reporting approach, this paper employs an educational management perspective grounded in

qualitative analysis of practical experiences. The study aims to comprehensively identify and examine both subjective and objective factors affecting the adaptation process and academic performance of Lao international students at Hung Vuong University. The findings are expected to provide a scientific basis for proposing timely and practical management interventions, thereby contributing to the standardization and enhancement of the quality of international student education and training at the university.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, incorporating the following specific methods:

2.1. Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data were collected, reviewed, and synthesized from training reports, academic management records, student conduct and living condition reports, and cumulative academic performance data of all 107 Lao international students currently enrolled at Hung Vuong University.

2.2. Expert Consultation and Field Observation

Professional assessments and evaluations were gathered from university administrators (Office of Academic Affairs and Office of International Cooperation), Vietnamese language instructors (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities), subject lecturers, and academic advisors. These insights were utilized to conduct an in-depth analysis of students' adaptation behaviors and their actual academic performance.

2.3. Benchmarking Method

Recently published quantitative and qualitative studies on international students and university students in Vietnam were reviewed and used as theoretical references and comparative benchmarks. This approach enhances the objectivity and credibility of the study's analysis and discussion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Subjective Factors Associated with Lao International Students

Subjective factors constitute the fundamental determinants that directly influence both the pace of adaptation and the academic performance (GPA) of Lao international students as they transition into the university environment.

Vietnamese Language Proficiency and Initial Language Barriers

Language proficiency represents the most critical factor and the greatest obstacle to academic adaptation. At Hung Vuong University, Lao students admitted through provincial partnership scholarships, government-sponsored scholarship programs, or official

staff training schemes (without undergoing competitive entrance examinations in Laos) often demonstrate significant limitations in both general academic knowledge and basic Vietnamese language competence.

Although all students complete a one-year preparatory Vietnamese language course consisting of 950 instructional hours, limited mastery of specialized academic vocabulary continues to pose substantial challenges during their first year of university study. Lao students themselves acknowledge that they are able to comprehend only approximately 80% of classroom lectures. As a consequence, many students experience academic difficulties, requiring retakes, repeated courses, or grade improvement examinations. The majority achieve only average academic standing, while relatively few attain good or excellent results.

This finding is consistent with the analysis of Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) on international student recruitment and retention in several countries, which emphasizes that local language barriers and insufficient advanced communication skills remain the most significant variables hindering the academic adaptation of international students. However, the influence of this factor tends to diminish over time. From the second academic year onward, as students' language proficiency improves, their academic performance generally shows noticeable progress.

Self-Directed Learning and Personal Discipline

Most Lao students demonstrate a positive attitude toward self-improvement and personal development. Nevertheless, a small proportion have yet to establish effective university-level learning strategies or adapt successfully to the self-discipline required in higher education. Behaviors such as staying up late, engaging in late-night social activities, oversleeping, arriving late to class, excessive alcohol consumption, or absenteeism without legitimate reasons have directly affected their ability to accumulate knowledge and achieve satisfactory academic outcomes.

The significance of this relationship is strongly supported by the large-scale study conducted by Tran *et al.*, (2025) involving 2,170 students at the University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Their regression analysis identified students' "learning methods" as one of the two factors exerting the strongest and most statistically significant effects on cumulative GPA. This finding suggests that unless Lao international students proactively adjust their learning strategies and maintain self-discipline, institutional support measures alone may not fully achieve their intended impact.

Career Orientation and Academic Motivation

Some Lao students receive insufficient career guidance prior to studying in Vietnam, resulting in academic major selections based on personal

assumptions, external influence, or administrative assignment rather than actual interests and abilities. This mismatch often generates feelings of dissatisfaction and reduced motivation, thereby hindering the adaptation process. Consequently, every year a number of students submit requests to change their academic majors.

3.2. Objective Factors Related to the Institutional and Social Environment

The university environment functions as a supportive ecosystem that can either foster positive adaptation factors or mitigate barriers encountered by students.

Curriculum Design and Teaching Organization

Hung Vuong University has implemented a range of coordinated measures to enhance academic management and support international students. These include the development of a 950-hour Vietnamese language preparatory program, the provision of substitute courses in place of foreign language requirements, and the introduction of supplementary Vietnamese language modules tailored to disciplinary knowledge.

Assessment procedures, including examination design, invigilation, and grading, are conducted rigorously and systematically to ensure academic integrity and timely progress. This combination of flexibility and academic rigor provides a structured framework that enables Lao international students to maintain stable learning progress throughout their studies.

Teaching Staff and Pedagogical Approaches

The support of experienced and highly qualified lecturers serves as a significant source of academic and psychological encouragement for Lao students. The university assigns competent lecturers as academic advisors and instructors for classes with Lao students and promotes the use of information technology and visual teaching aids, such as pictures, illustrations, and dictionaries, to facilitate learning from the earliest stages of instruction.

Although the university continues to face certain objective challenges, including a limited number of specialized Vietnamese language instructors and communication difficulties during the initial adaptation period, the dedication and close guidance provided by lecturers have substantially alleviated students' feelings of uncertainty and anxiety.

These findings align with the study conducted by Doan Chan Vinh *et al.*, (2025), which confirmed that lecturer quality and lecturer support exhibit strong positive correlations with students' academic performance.

Cultural, Living, and 24/7 Support Environment

Hung Vuong University has successfully fostered a supportive and healthy living environment for international students by providing suitable accommodation in student dormitories, organizing traditional Bunpimay New Year celebrations with full cultural rituals, hosting Vietnamese-language singing competitions, and arranging field trips and visits to cultural and historical attractions.

Learning Vietnamese through authentic social and cultural experiences enables students to acquire the language more naturally while developing a deeper understanding of Vietnamese culture. Particularly noteworthy is the university's effective implementation of the "Peer Support Partnership" model, which operates on a 24/7 basis. Under this initiative, Vietnamese students and senior Lao students mentor newly enrolled Lao students, providing academic guidance, practical assistance, and social support.

In discussing this aspect, Nguyen Thuy Anh and Nguyen Lan Anh (2024) emphasized that the creation of an inclusive ecosystem through community networks, intercultural exchange activities, and the friendliness of local people is a decisive factor in retaining and facilitating the adaptation of international students. At Hung Vuong University, positive interactions with Vietnamese peers have created a natural communication environment that often proves more effective in supporting language acquisition and cultural adaptation than classroom-based theoretical instruction alone.

IV. EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO OPTIMIZE INFLUENCING FACTORS

Based on the identified factors affecting the adaptation and academic performance of Lao international students, and with the aim of improving training quality and promoting their comprehensive integration, the research team proposes several educational management measures for consideration and implementation by Hung Vuong University as part of an integrated support framework.

4.1. Strengthening Student Classification and Standardizing Language Support

The Office of Academic Affairs, in collaboration with academic faculties, should conduct systematic assessments and classify students according to their academic preparedness and Vietnamese language proficiency at the beginning of each academic year. Based on these assessments, targeted remedial and supplementary learning plans should be developed for students with weaker academic backgrounds.

In addition to regular Vietnamese language courses, the university should increase instructional time and diversify specialized Vietnamese language modules

to equip students with discipline-specific terminology before they enter professional coursework.

Furthermore, cooperation with partner localities in Laos should be strengthened to provide early Vietnamese language orientation and preparation for prospective students at the secondary school level or through training centers in Laos prior to their enrollment in Vietnam.

4.2. Innovating Assessment and Evaluation Methods Suitable for International Students

Assessment methods should be adapted to better accommodate the specific characteristics of international students. Rather than relying exclusively on traditional written examinations identical to those administered to Vietnamese students, the university should expand the use of alternative assessment formats such as research papers, thematic assignments, project-based evaluations, and oral examinations for Lao international students. These approaches can reduce the burden associated with written expression while simultaneously enhancing students' communication skills, language responsiveness, and ability to demonstrate knowledge acquisition in Vietnamese.

Examination design should also be reformed toward more open-ended and application-oriented formats that encourage independent thinking and creativity. Likewise, graduation thesis requirements and implementation procedures should be adjusted where appropriate to better reflect the linguistic and academic realities of international students.

At the same time, examination marking and academic evaluation processes must continue to be conducted rigorously, objectively, and transparently to ensure that graduates meet the learning outcomes and quality standards stipulated by the training programs.

4.3. Optimizing the “Peer Support Partnership” Model, 24/7 Assistance, and Experiential Learning Opportunities

The University Youth Union and Student Association should establish structured peer-support clubs that pair Vietnamese students with Lao international students. These partnerships can provide assistance in both academic learning and daily-life communication, thereby expanding and institutionalizing the existing “Peer Support Partnership” model and ensuring continuous support on a 24/7 basis.

The university should further promote experiential approaches to Vietnamese language acquisition through field trips, Vietnamese public-speaking competitions for preparatory students, visits to historical and cultural sites, and increased opportunities for collaborative learning, laboratory practice, and field-based activities. Such experiences enable international

students to acquire language skills more naturally while simultaneously strengthening their cultural understanding and social integration.

4.4. Standardizing Student Conduct Management and Enhancing Faculty Capacity

The university should strengthen monitoring and supervision of both teaching and learning activities to ensure compliance with academic regulations and minimize issues such as late attendance or early departure from classes. Academic schedules should be organized in a scientific and student-centered manner to facilitate effective learning.

The role of academic advisors and dormitory management staff should be further reinforced in monitoring, guiding, and promptly addressing inappropriate lifestyle behaviors among a small number of students, including staying up late, oversleeping, absenteeism without valid reasons, and excessive alcohol consumption. These efforts can help students establish healthy routines and maintain disciplined study habits.

In addition, the university should develop policies to attract, train, and retain qualified lecturers specializing in teaching Vietnamese as a foreign language. Priority should be given to developing faculty members with complementary language competencies, particularly in Lao and English, to enhance communication and instructional effectiveness.

Finally, Hung Vuong University should expand collaboration and experience-sharing initiatives with other Vietnamese universities that enroll Lao international students. Such cooperation would facilitate the adoption of best practices and innovative management models, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement of international student education and support services.

V. CONCLUSION

The academic performance and adaptation of Lao international students at Hung Vuong University are shaped by the combined influence of both individual and institutional factors. These include learners' internal characteristics, such as language proficiency, self-directed learning strategies, and personal discipline, as well as environmental factors provided by the university, including curriculum design, teaching staff, and cultural support systems.

The analysis and identification of these influencing factors suggest that educational management practices should not follow a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, they require flexible, student-centered, and context-sensitive interventions while maintaining academic rigor and quality standards. The findings

highlight the importance of adopting a comprehensive support framework that addresses both academic and socio-cultural dimensions of international student adaptation.

By implementing coordinated measures such as student classification and targeted support, innovation in assessment and evaluation methods, and the optimization of the “Peer Support Partnership” model, Hung Vuong University can further strengthen its role as a trusted destination for international education. More importantly, the university can continue to serve as a “second home” for generations of Lao students, fostering their academic success and personal development while contributing to the enduring friendship, solidarity, and cooperation between the peoples of Vietnam and Laos.

REFERENCES

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2011). *Agreement on Economic, Cultural, Educational, and Scientific–Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for the Period 2011–2015*. Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Ministry of Education and Training. (2011). *Project on Enhancing the Quality and Effectiveness of Vietnam–Laos Cooperation in Education and Human Resource Development (2011–2020)*. Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Dang Xuan Hai, & Nguyen Sy Thu. (2012). *Educational Management and School Management in a Changing Context*. Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Luu Phuong. (2021). “Improving the Quality of Training and Management of Lao International Students.” *Thai Nguyen Electronic Newspaper*, December 2021.
- Doan Chan Vinh, Nguyen Thi Kim Son, Le Ngoc Diep (2025). Dataset of factors affecting learning outcomes of students at the University of Education, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. *Data in Brief*, 59, 111438.
- Nguyen Thuy Anh, Nguyen Lan Anh (2024). Attracting and retaining international students in emerging countries: a case of Vietnam. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 13(1), 118-142.