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DEVELOPING HANDWRITING SKILLS FOR GRADE 1 STUDENTS THROUGH INTEGRATED VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Handwriting instruction plays an important role in developing language competence for primary students, especially during the early years of schooling. Under the 2018 Vietnamese General Education Curriculum, handwriting teaching is no longer considered merely a mechanical skill but is closely associated with language development, communication competence, and the formation of students' qualities and learning habits. This study aims to develop handwriting skills for Grade 1 students through integrated Vietnamese language activities. The research was conducted at Huong Son Primary School, Thai Nguyen Province, from September 2025 to April 2026 with the participation of 70 Grade 1 students, including 35 students in the experimental class and 35 students in the control class. The study employed educational experimental methods combined with observation, assessment rubrics, and statistical analysis. The integrated activities focused on connecting reading and writing tasks, organizing game-based handwriting activities, and implementing experiential learning activities. The findings indicate that students in the experimental class showed significant improvement in letter formation, spacing, writing speed, and learning engagement compared to students in the control class. The study contributes to clarifying the effectiveness of integrated teaching approaches in handwriting instruction for Grade 1 students within the context of the 2018 General Education Curriculum in Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: handwriting skills, Grade 1 students, integrated activities, Vietnamese language teaching, primary education

1. INTRODUCTION

Handwriting instruction plays an important role in early literacy education and language development for primary school students. For Grade 1 students, handwriting is not merely a mechanical skill but also an essential tool for developing communication competence, thinking ability, and learning habits. Previous studies have indicated that handwriting contributes significantly to spelling ability, reading fluency, written expression, and overall academic achievement among young learners [1], [2]. Research by Graham and Santangelo [3] also confirms that effective handwriting instruction positively influences students' writing quality and literacy performance. In addition, handwriting activities

support the development of fine motor skills, concentration, memory, and aesthetic awareness during the early years of schooling [4].

Recent educational research has emphasized the importance of organizing student-centered and integrated learning activities in handwriting instruction. Feder and Majnemer [5] argue that meaningful handwriting activities can improve students' motivation and learning engagement more effectively than repetitive copying exercises. Similarly, Dinehart [6] highlights the close relationship between early handwriting competence and later academic success. Studies on early literacy development also show that integrating reading and writing activities helps young learners strengthen letter recognition, vocabulary acquisition, and language processing skills [7]. Therefore, handwriting instruction should be organized in meaningful learning contexts that connect language use with practical learning experiences.

In Vietnam, the 2018 General Education Curriculum emphasizes the development of language competence through integrated activities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing [8]. According to the curriculum orientation, Grade 1 Vietnamese language teaching should create opportunities for students to practice language skills through active learning activities instead of focusing solely on mechanical knowledge acquisition. Handwriting instruction is therefore expected to be associated with reading comprehension, language games, communication activities, and experiential learning tasks. The Vietnamese Grade 1 textbook series "Ket noi tri thuc voi cuoc song" also encourages integrated teaching approaches in which students develop literacy skills through practical and engaging learning experiences [9].

Although previous studies have confirmed the importance of handwriting instruction in primary education, many teaching practices in schools still mainly focus on repetitive handwriting exercises and teacher-centered instruction. Such approaches may reduce students' learning interest and limit opportunities for developing language competence through handwriting activities. In the context of implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum in Vietnam, research on integrated Vietnamese language activities for developing handwriting skills in Grade 1 remains limited, particularly studies combining reading-writing connections, game-based learning, and experiential learning activities in classroom practice.

Therefore, this study aims to develop handwriting skills for Grade 1 students through integrated Vietnamese language activities. The research focuses on designing and implementing integrated learning activities associated with reading-writing connections, game-based handwriting activities, and experiential learning activities for Grade 1 students at Huong Son Primary School, Thai Nguyen Province. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to improving the effectiveness of handwriting instruction in primary education within the orientation of competency-based teaching under the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study employed an educational experimental design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research aimed to develop handwriting skills for Grade 1 students through integrated Vietnamese language activities in accordance with the competency-based orientation of the 2018 Vietnamese General Education Curriculum.

The study was conducted from September 2025 to April 2026 at Huong Son Primary School, Tich Luong Ward, Thai Nguyen Province, Vietnam. During the research process, integrated Vietnamese language activities associated with reading-writing connections, game-based learning, and experiential learning activities were designed and implemented in the experimental class. Meanwhile, students in the control class continued learning through conventional handwriting instruction methods commonly used in Grade 1 Vietnamese language teaching.

The research focused on evaluating the effectiveness of integrated learning activities in improving students' handwriting performance, participation, and learning engagement in Vietnamese language lessons.

2.2. Research Participants

The participants of the study included 70 Grade 1 students at Huong Son Primary School during the 2025–2026 academic year. The students were divided into two groups: an experimental class and a control class.

Table 1. Research participants

Class	Number of students	Role
1C	35	Experimental class
1D	35	Control class

Students in the experimental class participated in integrated Vietnamese language activities designed to develop handwriting skills, while students in the control class learned according to regular instructional practices. The two classes were relatively similar in terms of age, learning conditions, and initial handwriting competence before the experiment.

2.3. Research Methods

2.3.1. Observation Method

The observation method was used throughout the pedagogical experiment to monitor students' learning attitudes, participation levels, handwriting performance, and engagement in integrated learning activities. Classroom observations also provided information about students' interaction, concentration, motivation, and responsiveness during handwriting lessons.

2.3.2. Pedagogical Experiment Method

The pedagogical experiment method was employed to evaluate the effectiveness of integrated Vietnamese language activities in developing handwriting skills for Grade 1 students. The experiment was conducted in the experimental class over the research period, while the control class continued using traditional handwriting instruction methods.

Before the experiment, students in both classes completed an initial handwriting assessment to determine their baseline competence. After the implementation process, students' handwriting products were reassessed and compared to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention activities.

2.3.3. Product Assessment Method

Students' handwriting products were collected and analyzed during the experimental process. The assessment focused on letter formation, spacing, writing speed, legibility, and presentation quality. Handwriting samples collected before and after the experiment served as important evidence for evaluating students' progress.

To ensure assessment reliability, students' handwriting products were evaluated by both the classroom teacher and the researcher based on a common assessment rubric.

2.3.4. Statistical Analysis Method

Quantitative data collected from handwriting assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including percentage calculation, mean score comparison, and comparative analysis between the experimental and control classes before and after the pedagogical experiment.

The statistical analysis aimed to identify the level of improvement in students' handwriting performance after participating in integrated Vietnamese language activities.

2.4. Criteria for Assessing Handwriting Skills

To evaluate students' handwriting performance, the study established a set of assessment criteria based on the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum and Grade 1 Vietnamese handwriting standards.

Table 2. Criteria for assessing handwriting skills

Criteria	Description
Correct letter formation	Students write letters with correct structure and stroke order
Proper spacing	Appropriate spacing between letters and words
Writing legibility	Handwriting is clear and easy to read

Writing speed	Students complete writing tasks within the required time
Presentation	Students present their writing neatly and carefully

Each criterion was evaluated according to four performance levels presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Performance levels for handwriting assessment

Level	Score Range
Good	8.0 – 10
Fair	6.5 – 7.9
Average	5.0 – 6.4
Weak	Below 5.0

2.5. Experimental Procedure

The pedagogical experiment was conducted through the following stages:

Stage 1: Investigating the initial handwriting competence of students in both classes through observation activities and handwriting assessment tasks.

Stage 2: Designing integrated Vietnamese language activities associated with reading-writing connections, game-based learning, and experiential learning activities for the experimental class.

Stage 3: Organizing integrated teaching activities in the experimental class while maintaining regular handwriting instruction methods in the control class.

Stage 4: Collecting and analyzing students' handwriting products after the experiment to evaluate the effectiveness of the integrated activities.

Stage 5: Comparing and analyzing the experimental results between the two classes to determine the impact of integrated Vietnamese language activities on the development of handwriting skills for Grade 1 students.

Throughout the research process, regular teaching activities and students' learning rights were fully ensured. The experimental activities were implemented in accordance with the school's educational plan and did not negatively affect students' learning process.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Current Situation of Grade 1 Students' Handwriting Skills

Before conducting the pedagogical experiment, the study investigated the initial handwriting competence of students in both the experimental and control classes. The assessment focused on five criteria, including correct letter formation, proper spacing, writing legibility, writing speed, and presentation quality.

The results showed that many Grade 1 students still experienced difficulties in handwriting activities during the early stage of the school year. Common problems included incorrect stroke order, inconsistent letter size, inappropriate spacing between letters and words, slow writing speed, and untidy presentation. In addition, several students showed limited concentration and low engagement in traditional handwriting practice activities.

Table 4. Initial handwriting assessment results before the experiment

Performance level	Experimental class (1C)	Control class (1D)
Good	5 students (14.3%)	4 students (11.4%)
Fair	10 students (28.6%)	11 students (31.4%)
Average	14 students (40.0%)	13 students (37.1%)
Weak	6 students (17.1%)	7 students (20.0%)

The results in Table 4 indicate that the handwriting competence of students in the two classes was relatively similar before the experiment. In both classes, the percentage of students achieving Good and Fair levels remained relatively low, while a considerable number of students were assessed at Average and Weak levels. Specifically, 57.1% of students in the experimental class and 57.1% of students in the control class were evaluated at Average or Weak levels. These findings demonstrate the necessity of implementing appropriate teaching approaches to improve handwriting skills for Grade 1 students.

Classroom observations also revealed that traditional handwriting instruction mainly focused on repetitive copying activities and teacher-guided practice. Although such activities helped students practice letter formation, they provided limited opportunities for students to actively participate in meaningful language activities. Some students showed signs of boredom, reduced concentration, and limited learning motivation during handwriting lessons.

Therefore, the research proposed the implementation of integrated Vietnamese language activities combining reading-writing connections, game-based learning, and experiential learning activities to improve students' handwriting competence and learning engagement.

3.2. Designing Integrated Vietnamese Language Activities for Developing Handwriting Skills

Based on the orientation of the 2018 General Education Curriculum and the characteristics of Grade 1 students, the study designed integrated Vietnamese language activities to support handwriting development through meaningful and student-centered learning experiences. The activities focused on combining handwriting instruction with language learning tasks instead of organizing isolated handwriting drills.

3.2.1. Reading–Writing Integrated Activities

Reading-writing integrated activities were designed to help students practice handwriting through meaningful language contexts. During Vietnamese language lessons, students participated in activities such as reading syllables and words before rewriting them, completing short sentences, matching words with pictures, and listening-writing tasks.

For example, after reading vocabulary related to family members or school objects in the textbook “Ket noi tri thuc voi cuoc song,” students practiced rewriting the words in their notebooks while paying attention to correct letter formation and spacing. These activities helped students strengthen letter recognition, vocabulary retention, and handwriting performance simultaneously.

The integration of reading and writing activities also created opportunities for students to understand the meaning of language units while practicing handwriting. As a result, handwriting practice became more meaningful and engaging for Grade 1 learners.

3.2.2. Game-Based Handwriting Activities

Game-based handwriting activities were organized to increase students’ motivation and participation during handwriting lessons. Considering the psychological characteristics of Grade 1 students, learning games helped reduce pressure and created a more positive classroom atmosphere.

Several games were implemented during the experiment, including word relay writing games, quick letter recognition games, matching sounds and words, and group handwriting competitions using mini boards. Students participated actively in these activities and demonstrated greater concentration and enthusiasm compared to traditional handwriting exercises.

The use of games not only improved students’ handwriting practice frequency but also encouraged peer interaction and collaborative learning during Vietnamese language lessons.

3.2.3. Experiential Handwriting Activities

Experiential handwriting activities were designed to connect handwriting practice with practical communication situations. Instead of copying isolated letters repeatedly, students were encouraged to use handwriting in meaningful tasks such as writing greeting cards, labeling classroom objects, writing short messages, and creating simple learning products.

For example, students wrote short wishes for family members, decorated their handwriting products, and participated in classroom “beautiful handwriting corners.” These activities created opportunities for students to express emotions and apply handwriting skills in authentic learning contexts.

Experiential activities also contributed to developing students’ carefulness, responsibility, aesthetic awareness, and learning confidence during handwriting lessons.

3.3. Experimental Results

After implementing integrated Vietnamese language activities in the experimental class, students' handwriting performance was reassessed and compared with the results of the control class.

Table 5. Handwriting assessment results after the experiment

Performance level	Experimental class (1C)	Control class (1D)
Good	16 students (45.7%)	8 students (22.9%)
Fair	13 students (37.1%)	12 students (34.3%)
Average	5 students (14.3%)	11 students (31.4%)
Weak	1 student (2.9%)	4 students (11.4%)

The results in Table 5 show a significant improvement in the handwriting performance of students in the experimental class after the pedagogical experiment. The percentage of students achieving the Good level increased from 14.3% to 45.7%, while the percentage of Weak students decreased from 17.1% to 2.9%.

Meanwhile, although students in the control class also showed some improvement, the level of progress was less noticeable. The proportion of students at the Average and Weak levels in the control class remained relatively high compared to the experimental class.

The comparison results suggest that integrated Vietnamese language activities had a positive impact on the development of handwriting skills for Grade 1 students. In addition to improving handwriting quality, the integrated activities also increased students' learning engagement, concentration, and participation during Vietnamese language lessons.

Classroom observations further indicated that students in the experimental class became more confident and interested in handwriting activities. Many students demonstrated greater initiative in completing writing tasks and participated more actively in collaborative learning activities compared to the initial stage of the experiment.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that integrated Vietnamese language activities positively influenced the development of handwriting skills for Grade 1 students. Compared with students in the control

class, students in the experimental class showed clearer improvement in letter formation, spacing, writing speed, and presentation quality after participating in integrated learning activities.

The effectiveness of the experimental activities can be explained by the integration of handwriting instruction with meaningful language learning tasks. Instead of practicing handwriting through repetitive copying exercises only, students participated in reading-writing activities, learning games, and experiential tasks, which increased learning motivation and classroom engagement.

The findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of meaningful and student-centered handwriting instruction in early literacy education [3], [5]. The study also supports the orientation of the 2018 Vietnamese General Education Curriculum, which emphasizes competency-based and integrated teaching approaches in primary education.

However, the study was conducted on a relatively small scale at one primary school, so the findings may not fully represent all educational contexts. Future studies should expand the research scope and investigate integrated handwriting instruction at different grade levels.

Overall, the study demonstrates that integrated Vietnamese language activities can effectively support the development of handwriting skills and learning engagement for Grade 1 students.

5. CONCLUSION

Handwriting instruction plays an important role in the development of language competence and learning habits for Grade 1 students. The findings of this study show that integrated Vietnamese language activities can effectively improve students' handwriting skills, particularly in terms of letter formation, spacing, writing speed, and presentation quality.

The integrated activities combining reading-writing connections, game-based learning, and experiential learning created more engaging and meaningful learning opportunities for students during handwriting lessons. Compared with students in the control class, students in the experimental class demonstrated more positive learning attitudes and better handwriting performance after the pedagogical experiment.

The study contributes to supporting the implementation of the 2018 Vietnamese General Education Curriculum through integrated and competency-based teaching approaches in primary education. In addition, the findings provide practical suggestions for primary school teachers in organizing handwriting instruction for Grade 1 students.

However, the study was conducted within a limited research scope at one primary school. Therefore, further studies should continue investigating integrated handwriting instruction in different educational contexts and grade levels.

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