**Exploring the Decline in Vietnamese Language Proficiency Among U.S.-Born Vietnamese Americans**

Introduction/Project Overview

As a Vietnamese born in the United States, I would consider myself somewhere between a beginner and intermediate fluency in the Vietnamese language. I have also interacted with other Vietnamese friends who are in a similar situation as me and have always wondered if there is a trend of second and third-generation Vietnamese Americans who are not fluent enough to even hold long, in-depth conversations with their relatives, family, or other friends who are fully fluent in the language.

To delve deeper into this issue, I aim to explore the following questions:

1. **Comparison to Other Languages:** how do Vietnamese Americans compare to other ethnic group Americans in regards to language fluency?
2. **Level of Education**: could there be other reasons such as lack of exposure to the language or educational resources that may be suppressing Vietnamese language development amongst young Vietnamese Americans children in grade school?

Data Overview

To address these questions, I will utilize data from the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), focusing on:

* **Language Spoken at Home**: This dataset provides insights into the languages individuals use in their households. There are 2 separate datasets, B160001and B160003 that addresses different aspects of language proficiency in different household type.
* **Demographic and Socioeconomic Profiles**: Detailed information on age, education, income, and employment status within the Vietnamese American population.

Note: the raw numbers in datasets are estimates but give a general idea of datasets. These datasets span over a 5-year period (2019-2023) and offers comprehensive and up-to-date information that will aid in analyzing language proficiency trends among Vietnamese Americans. All ages shown are ages 5 and up.

Data Methodology

1. **Data Cleaning**: Using Excel functions to remove any irrelevant columns, transpose rows that will help data computations in Excel, and handling other errors to the data.
2. **Data Transformation**: Using pivot tables in Excel, I will be pulling relevant data from the ACS datasets, focusing on variables related to language spoken at home, age, and education level.
3. **Analysis**:
   * **Comparing Different Language Groups**: Comparing Vietnamese group proficiency in English versus English proficiency amongst other language groups.
   * **Correlation Studies**: Examine relationships between language proficiency and factors such as education and gender.

Deliverables

1. **Documentation about the project**
2. **Comparison to Other Languages**: A single column table (from Pivot Charts) used to display the number of people in the U.S. that fall into the categories of speaking only English, speaking English very well, and speaking English less than very well—two separate tables for both speaking English very well and less than very well are created and only include the top 10 highest number of speakers fitting in the respective categories.
3. **Level of Education**: A bar graph (used from Pivot Charts) comparing school enrollment and educational attainment achieved among the Vietnamese community in the U.S. alongside the gender breakdown among these categories being analyzed.

Results & Insights

* Comparing those who speak Vietnamese to other 42 languages analyzed in the data, it ranks as number 8 among who speak very well English. Aside Spanish-speaking people surpassing all other language-speaking people in number, Chinese-speaking people have over a million more people that can speak English very well. Comparing to the number of Vietnamese people that speak English very well and less than very well, the number is roughly similar.
* A little over 36% of the Vietnamese population in the U.S. are enrolled in college or graduate school and that number has been trending upwards up to about 42.4% in 2023. Amongst comparing school enrollment by gender, the trend towards obtaining to college or graduate school has been slightly increasing from 2013 to 2023 for both male and female.
* In regard to earning what kind of degree/credential, about 49% of the Vietnamese population have attained at least some form or higher education credential (some college experience or higher).

Recommendations

**Expand Vietnamese Language Education Programs**

* Schools should offer Vietnamese language classes, similar to heritage language programs available for Spanish, Mandarin, and other languages.
* Vietnamese language courses at the high school and college level can help increase fluency.

**Community-Based Language & Cultural Initiatives**

* Support after-school Vietnamese language programs in Vietnamese American communities.
* Encourage Vietnamese cultural events, media, and bilingual storytelling to engage younger generations.

**Encourage Bilingual Households & Early Language Exposure**

* Parents should be encouraged to speak Vietnamese at home to maintain fluency among children.
* Bilingual education models (such as dual immersion) should be explored in Vietnamese American communities.

Through this analysis, I hope to bring light on factors contributing to the decline in Vietnamese language proficiency among U.S.-born Vietnamese Americans. There needs to be continued efforts to support the newer generations of Vietnamese Americans and other ethnic groups with dedicated language schools and programs that teach the Vietnamese language in population areas that have growth in Vietnamese communities. This holds true to other Americans and their own ethnic languages that may lack exposure from family or inadequate language education. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies to preserve linguistic heritage and promote (bi/multi)-lingualism within the Vietnamese community.

\*\* Correlation does NOT equal to causation

**References**

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