What do you know about the Vietnamese language?
1. What kind of alphabet does the current Vietnamese language have?
   a. Chinese
   b. Thai
   c. Roman
2. **How many tones does the Vietnamese language have?**
   
   a. 4
   
   b. 5
   
   c. 6
The Vietnamese Language

How many letters does the Vietnamese alphabet have?

a. 24
b. 29
c. 31
The Vietnamese Language

Which group of the following letters does not exist in the Vietnamese alphabet?

a. k, g, e
b. J, w, f
c. t, w, h
The Vietnamese Language

- National & official language of Vietnam

- Origin:
  - 3000 years ago: communities of Mon-Khmer and Tày people merged in the Northern Red River and Mã River Deltas
  - Two groups developed a shared language, known as Việt-Mường
  - The Vietnamese language
The writing system of the Vietnamese language

- Experienced three stages of development:
  - Chữ Hán: Chinese writing system (Chinese domination: 111 B.C. – 938 A.D. and long after that)
  - Chữ Nôm: Represents Vietnamese but uses Chinese characters, representing meaning and phonetics: Mid-13th century: A need for an indigenous writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native Vietnamese</th>
<th>Chữ Nôm</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>núi</td>
<td>山</td>
<td>meaning (mountain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>内</td>
<td>sound (núi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Chữ Quốc ngữ (modern Vietnamese writing system)
  - 17th century: evangelism - romanization of the Vietnamese language
  - Alexandre de Rhodes (French Jesuit missionary): inventor of Quốc Ngữ
  - Late 19th - mid-20th centuries: Quốc Ngữ became Vietnam’s national writing system
The Vietnamese Alphabet

- **12 vowel letters** (e.g. ã, â, ư, ê, ơ)
- **17 consonant letters** (e.g. đ)
- **11 consonant letter clusters** (e.g. ch, gh, kh, ngh)
- **27 diphthong letters** (e.g. ai, ao, iê, ôi, uâ)
- **17 triphthong letters** (e.g. iêu, oay, uai, uyê)
Loan words

Modern Vietnamese

Transforming foreign words into acceptable Vietnamese phonetic forms

- Vietnam: Chinese & French colonies: Vietnamese borrows numerous words from
  - **Chinese**: đại học, tiêu chuẩn, hải quan, bảo đảm, etc.
  - **French**: xà-bông (savon), cà-phê (café), cà-vạt (cravate), etc.

- Vietnamese also borrows from:
  - **English**: ti-vi (TV), top (stop), quần sọt (shorts), sút banh (shoot a ball), đi sợp (go shopping), etc.
  - **Japanese**: xu-si (sushi), ki-mô-nô (kimono), su-mô (shumo)
  - **Italian**: bi-dà (pizza)
  - **Korean**: kim chi 김치
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language

1. Dialectical

Consists of 3 main regional dialects: Bắc (northern), Trung (central), and Nam (southern)

+ Variations in lexicon

  a. lexicon: “eye glasses”
     - kính (north)
     - gương (central)
     - kiếng (south)
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

+ Variations in pronunciation:
  - The consonant /s/
  - /s/: central & southern Vietnamese
  - /x/: northern Vietnamese

  Example: sum sê, suông sê, sung sướng

  ? and ~: central & southern Vietnamese pronounce these tones the same

** Despite these variances, the Vietnamese language is universally intelligible throughout the country.
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

2. Monosyllabic

- **Each word has a syllable:** generally considered a monosyllabic language
  
  **Examples:** áo, chạy, tuần, đẹp

- **Compound words:** two or three words: polysyllabic (?):
  
  **Examples:** chậm chạp (slow)
    - hội hộp (thrilled, excited)
    - hôm hờ (happy, pleased)
    - gia đình (family)
    - huấn luyện viên (athletic coach)
3. Non-inflectional

- Vietnamese words do not change forms to express grammatical categories (gender, number, tense, case, or moods)
- no prefixes, no suffixes, no conjugation
- no third person or singular/plural agreement
- meaning relies primarily on quantifiers, time words, and context
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

Examples:

- **một người, ba người**  
  one person, three persons
- **tôi học, anh ấy học**  
  I study, he studies
- **tôi đang học, tôi đã học**  
  I am studying, I studied
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

4. Tonal

+ Vietnamese: a tonal language
+ A change in pitch levels (tones) causes a change in the lexical meanings of the word
+ 6 tones represented by 5 tonal accent marks (ederland)

▶ The tones
+ Every syllable must have a tone
+ Mid-level tone (thanh ngang) does not have a tonal accent mark (ederland)
+ All other tones have marks
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

1. **Thanh ngang** (the mid-level tone): high pitch in northern & southern dialects and medium in central dialect

   Example: ba, ta, la, xa, tha

2. **Thanh sắc (’)** (the high-rising tone): starts at a high level and ends at a relatively lower level

   Example: bá, tá, lá, xá, thá

3. **Thanh huyền (´)** (the low-falling tone): starts from a medium level and ends at a relatively lower level
4. Thanh hỏi (?) (the falling-rising tone): starts from a medium level, drops rather abruptly and finally rises to a higher level
Example: bà, tà, là, xà, thà

5. Thanh ngã (~) (the high-rising broken tone): starts high and ends at a relatively high level.
Example: bã, tã, lã, xã, thã

6. Thanh nặng (.) (the low falling glottalized tone): starts low and ends at a lower level.
Example: bạ, tạ, lạ, xạ, thạ
Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

Examples that demonstrate how a tonal change can significantly change the meaning of a word:

- **thanh ngang** (mid-level)  \( ma \) (ghost)
- **thanh sắc** (rising)  \( má \) (cheek)
- **thanh huyền** (falling)  \( mà \) (but)
- **thanh hỏi** (falling-rising)  \( mà \) (tomb)
- **thanh ngã** (high broken)  \( mã \) (horse)
- **thanh nặng** (low falling)  \( mạ \) (young rice plant)
Some common expressions

- **Xin chào** (Hello/goodbye)
- **Cám ơn** (Thank you)
- **Xin lỗi** (I’m sorry/Excuse me)