

What do you know about the Vietnamese language?



The Vietnamese Language

1. What kind of alphabet does the current Vietnamese language have?
 - a. Chinese
 - b. Thai
 - c. Roman

The Vietnamese Language

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

Native Vietnamese	Chữ Nôm	Components
núi		山: meaning (mountain) 内: sound (núi)

+ **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. *ă, 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*)

Modern Vietnamese

Loan words

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), *tối* (stop), *quần sọt* (shorts), *sút banh* (shoot a ball), *đi sắm* (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, sông sê, sung sớng*

- ? 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)

hồi hộp (thrilled, excited)

hớn hờ (happy, pleased)

gia đình (family)

huấn luyện viên (athletic coach)

Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

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 (dấu)
- ▶ The tones
 - + Every syllable must have a tone
 - + Mid-level tone (thanh ngang) does not have a tonal accent mark (dấu)
 - + All other tones have marks

Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

► The six tones

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

Characteristics of the Vietnamese language (continued)

Example: *bà, tà, là, xà, thà*

4. Thanh hỏi (?) (the falling-rising tone): starts from a medium level, drops rather abruptly and finally rises to a higher level

Example: *bả, tả, lả, xả, thả*

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)

mả (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)