

VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE PRIMER FOR THE STUDENT

I have attempted to compile some of my notes on trying to learn Vietnamese. They are only a **PHONETIC** representation of what the phrase or word **SOUNDS LIKE TO ME** and I cannot guarantee that it sounds the same to everyone. The actual written Vietnamese word, with the special characters, is way beyond me at this point. Even at that, what I include here might be pronounced differently by different readers. So Beware.

WARNING: Vietnamese is a highly tonal, inflected language. With just the right (or wrong) rising or lowering of the vocal tone and emphasis, a word can drastically alter its meaning. And with such alteration, the entire context of a statement can shift from a polite greeting to a crude statement about someone's genitals! This is not an exaggeration. Therefore, be forewarned that things are not always as easy as they appear.

And, don't forget – **I DO NOT** know how to speak Vietnamese... Otherwise I wouldn't have needed to write these notes for myself. I give them to you only as some quick sort of reference aid for the totally lost student who needs to know how to interpret some Vietnamese phrases and names.

I apologize for any embarrassment or insult I might cause to those who "really know" the language. Like I say, this is just the way **I HEAR IT**. I suspect I'll hear promptly from anyone who I cause a problem with.

With this introduction, let me share with you some of the useful words and phrases that I've run into.

VIETNAMESE PRIMER

Before I get started into the actual vocabulary part, people have cautioned me over time that I should spend time up-front with the concept of addressing others. That's exactly correct, but is **ALMOST** a separate topic unto its own.

Here are a few pointers:

- You choose the form of addressing someone based mainly on age:
- You need to be pretty accurate in your estimates of age.
- Failure to get this correct can be a cause of embarrassment for both you and the party you are talking to.

Here are a few simplified rules for general guidance (again, these are phonetic pronunciations):

- The term "em" is used for anyone of either sex who is significantly younger than you;
- If you addressed a woman as old as or older than you as "em" it would really be offensive.
- A woman of teenage age should be addressed as "chi" (chee) and an older or a married woman as "ba".
- "ang" should only be used for men of teenage years or younger.

- “Owng” is a better way to address older men. Using “anh” would be like saying “hey you” to your grandfather.

I	toy
We	chung-ta
You	Dependent on age=em,ang,chee,ba,owng.
Hello (generic)	Sin chow
Goodbye	Tom bee it
I'll see you again	hen gawp lie
Thank you	Caam uhrn
Thank you very much	Caam uhrn neow
Don't mention it (You're welcome)	Kong kawchi
Excuse me	Sin loi
Please	sin
Yes	Caw/or/Za
No	Kung
What is your name	Em ten zee (to female)
What is your name	Ang ten zee (to males)
My name is _____	Toy ten _____
How are you?	Em coh quay kong (to females)
How are you?	Ang coh quay kong (to males)
Thank you. I am fine.	Caam urhn. Toy quay.
I am happy	toy zet voo-ey
I am happy to see you (male/female/etc)	toy zet voo-ey gawp lie (ang/em/etc)
I am happy to meet you (male/female/etc)	toy zet voo-ey gawp (ang/em/etc)
What time is it	Myza
What time do we leave	Myza chung ta dee
When do we arrive	Myza chung ta den
Where do we go now	Beza chung ta de dow
Where are we	Chung ta uuh-oh
I don't understand	Toy kung hey-oh
I don't know the Vietnamese language	Toy kung bee-it tieng viet
I have to piss	Toy dee die
I am hungry	Toy doy
I am thirsty	Toy caht
Stop! (harsh command=halt!)	Zung Lie
I need a doctor	Toy khan baak' see
I am sick	Toy kung quay
I feel tired	Toy med
Oh! Dear me!	Choy oy
I want	toy moo-un
I need	toy kaan
I would like	toy tick
I must	toy fie
What is this?	Die zee day
What is that?	Die zee kee-ah
I want to take a picture.	Toy chop eye'ng

How much does this cost?	Bow neuw tee-en
I want to buy this	Toy noon moo-ah guy nie
I need to change money	Toy khan doy tee-en
This one	guy nie
Go to buy goods	dee moo-ah wah
Go to buy something	dee moo-ah doe
Go away quickly	Sin my dee dee
I don't like this	Toy kung tick
Go home!	Dee vay
Go to school	dee hop
It is raining	Choy mur
It is sunny	Choy nang
Waiter. My bill. (if younger)	Em oy. Tin tee-en
With ice (if younger)	co dah
Without sugar	kung dung
A little bit	mote chute
Bread	buyg-mee
Water	nook
Water (spring water-drinking water)	nook su-way
Egg	trung
Bird	chim
Eat	aahn
This food is very delicious	come zut nawn
Please bring me _____	sin doo-ah tou _____
Very cold	opp liegh
Hot	nong
Friend	Baan
Sir	Ong (if older)
Madam	Ba (if older)
I am crazy	Toy din-din kung-kung
I work at the office	Toy lam vick a van fahng
Walk (go by walking)	dee bow
Today	hom nie
One	mote
Two	high
Three	baa
Four	bone
Five	nam
Six	sal
Seven	by
Eight	tom
Nine	chin
Ten	moe-ooy