

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 it's 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?
I want to buy this
I need to change money
This one
Go to buy goods
Go to buy something
Go away quickly
I don't like this
Go home!
Go to school
It is raining
It is sunny
Waiter. My bill. (if younger)
With ice (if younger)
Without sugar
A little bit
Bread
Water
Water (spring water-drinking water)
Egg
Bird
Eat
This food is very delicious
Please bring me _____
Very cold
Hot
Friend
Sir
Madam
I am crazy
I work at the office
Walk (go by walking)
Today

One
Two
Three
Four
Five
Six
Seven
Eight
Nine
Ten

Bow neuw tee-en
Toy nooun moo-ah guy nie
Toy khan doy tee-en
guy nie
dee moo-ah wah
dee moo-ah doe
Sin my dee dee
Toy kung tick
Dee vay
dee hop
Choy mur
Choy nang
Em oy. Tin tee-en
co dah
kung dung
mote chute
buyg-mee
nook
nook su-way
trung
chim
aahn
come zut nawn
sin doo-ah tou _____
opp liegh
nong
Baan
Ong (if older)
Ba (if older)
Toy din-din kung-kung
Toy lam vick a van fahng
dee bow
hom nie

mote
high
baa
bone
nam
sal
by
tom
chin
moe-ooy