

A Clinician's Guide to Vietnamese Language and Culture



http://at-communication.com/upload/Image/Vietnam_3W1M_DX-News.jpg



Vietnam

Location: Vietnam is located in Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin, and South China Sea, alongside China, Laos, and Cambodia.

Capital: Hanoi

Ethnic Make-up: Vietnamese 85%-90%, Chinese, Hmong, Thai, Khmer, Cham, various mountain groups

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>

Demography and Worldwide Distribution

Demography:

- Fertility rate: 1.91 children born/woman (2011 est.)
- Birth rate: 17.07 births/1,000 population (2011 est.)
- Deaths: 5.96 deaths/1,000 population (2011)
- Population in the USA-

Table 1. Total and Vietnamese Foreign-Born Populations, 1960 to 2006

Year	Foreign born	Vietnamese born		
		Rank ^(a)	Share of all foreign born	Number
1960	9,738,091	N	N	N
1970	9,619,302	N	N	N
1980	14,079,906	12	1.6%	231,120
1990	19,797,316	9	2.7%	543,262
2000	31,107,889	5	3.2%	988,174
2006	37,547,315	5	3.0%	1,117,800

Notes: ^a Rank refers to the position of the Vietnamese born relative to other immigrant groups in terms of size of the population residing in the United States in a given census year. N indicates that data is unavailable.

Source: Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; data for 2006 from the American Community Survey 2006. Data for earlier decades from Gibson, Campbell and Emily Lennon, US Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1999.

Available online.

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=691>

Top 10 Cities in the U.S. Where Vietnamese is Spoken:

- San Jose, CA
- Garden Grove, CA
- Houston, TX
- San Diego, CA
- Westminster, CA

- Los Angeles, CA
- Santa Anna, CA
- Seattle, WA
- Philadelphia, PA
- New York, NY

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._cities_with_large_Vietnamese_American_populations

Areas of the United States where Vietnamese is spoken:



Countries where Vietnamese is spoken:

- Kampuchea (Cambodia)
- Thailand
- Laos
- United States
- Hong Kong
- England
- Germany
- France
- Pacific Islands
- Canada
- Australia

Number of Speakers in the World:

67 million; of this 65 million reside in Vietnam.

Culture & Traditions:

Religions

Buddhist, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Christian (predominantly Roman Catholic, some protestant), indigenous beliefs and Muslim

(<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>)

Holidays:

- **Tet (New Year):** celebrated over a period of three days, celebrated in late January or February
 - Activities include: gathering together as a family to repay debts, ask for forgiveness of wrongs done, prayers of thankfulness for being together.
- **January 27:** Anniversary of the treaty that ended with the withdraw of American troops
- **March 29:** Withdraw of American troops
- **September 2:** Establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam

Dos and Don'ts

- ✓ Avoid public displays of affection with a member of the opposite sex.
- ✓ Do not touch someone's head.
- ✓ Pass items with both hands.
- ✓ Do not point with your finger - use your hand.
- ✓ Do not stand with your hands on your hips.
- ✓ Do not cross your arms on your chest.
- ✓ Do not pass anything over someone's head.
- ✓ Do not touch anyone on the shoulder.
- ✓ Do not touch a member of the opposite sex.
- ✓ Shorts should only be worn at the beach.

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>

Food

Rice is the main portion of the meal which is mostly consumed in three meals per day. Usually several dishes are made and placed on a tray for everyone to sit around and serve over their rice. Common foods accompanying the rice are leafy vegetables, sautéed vegetables, tofu, a seafood-based broth, small bowls of sauce to dip their food, and a variety of pork, fish, or meat dishes. Another common practice is the serving of tea in small cups to guests.

<http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Vietnam.html>



* Picture of tea set found at: <http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://1.bp.blogspot.com/>

* Picture of Vietnamese meal time found at:

http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5045/5239974689_45cc7e4186.jpg

Dining Etiquette

- ✓ If invited to a Vietnamese home:
- ✓ Bring fruit, sweets, flowers, fruit, or incense.
- ✓ Gifts should be wrapped in colorful paper.
- ✓ Do not give handkerchiefs, anything black, yellow flowers or chrysanthemums.

Table Manners

- ✓ Wait to be shown where to sit.
- ✓ The oldest person should sit first.
- ✓ Pass dishes with both hands.
- ✓ The most common utensils are chopsticks and a flat spoon.
- ✓ Chopsticks should be placed on the table or a chopstick rest after every few mouthfuls or when breaking to drink or speak.
- ✓ People hold bowls close to their faces.
- ✓ Hold the spoon in your left hand while eating soup.
- ✓ Meals are typically served family-style.
- ✓ Try to finish everything on your plate.
- ✓ When you are finished eating, rest your chopsticks on top of your rice bowl.
- ✓ Cover your mouth when using a toothpick.

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>

Clothing

Clothing styles range depending on which area of Vietnam they live in and consisted of muted colors and light fabrics such as silk and cotton. Northern women became more affiliated with the *ao tu than* or “four-part dress” when Vietnam expanded southward and was emerged with different regions. This style was worn by commoner women dating back from the 12th century to early the 20th century and has endured in the Vietnamese culture. The most common and widely-recognized costume is the *ao dai*, which consists of a long dress with two slits, one on each side, and worn over silk pants. It is now used on special occasions such as weddings and funeral. Some traditional clothing styles have been influenced or substituted by modern influences.



Ao Dai in 1943



Ao Dai Present Day



* Photos of Ao Dai were found at:

<http://www.vietnamtravelblog.net/culture-tradition/282/ao-dai-vietnamese-traditional-dress-vietnam-beautiful-things>

* Photo to left of *ao tu than* was found at: <http://vietnam-country.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ao-tu-than-2.jpeg>

The Family

- ✓ Vietnamese life revolves around the family.
- ✓ The Vietnamese family consists of the nuclear as well as the extended family.
- ✓ It is not uncommon for three generations to be living together under one roof.
- ✓ In Confucian tradition, the father is the head of the family and it is his responsibility to provide food, clothing and shelter and make important decisions.
- ✓ Within the same tradition it is believed that after someone dies their spirit lives on. Descendants will "worship" their ancestors to ensure their good favor. On the anniversary of a person's death, ceremonies are held in their memory. They are also remembered during certain lunar festivals and souls are consulted prior to important decisions or occasions such as a birth or a wedding.

(<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>)

Healthcare

Healthcare was very limited to the people of Vietnam in the 1970s. Vietnamese did not seek medical care unless their condition became critical. Factors to this avoidance were cost, language differences, fear, and wanting to save "face" by not disclosing information. Their views towards death may not be similar to those of Americans with the Western paradigm of preventative care. However, some Vietnamese may now be part of both traditional or alternative healers and western medicine.

Speech Sound Disorders

Speech and language disorders, intellectual disabilities, and cleft lip/palate are not seen as a disability and are believed to be caused by the child's nature, laziness, stubbornness, and fate. Instead only deaf, blind, and physical handicapped individuals are seen as having a disability. In this case, there are no services for children with speech and language disabilities. Fewer than 10 individuals living in Vietnam are speech therapists.

Education

Children who are deaf, blind, and physically handicapped qualify for special education services, while those with speech and language disorders do not and are instead mingled in the general education classroom with no individualized support. Also, Vietnamese parents view teachers as people with authority in schooling and therefore do not interfere out of respect. This lack of initiative on the parent's behalf may be seen as incompetence or a lack of involvement.

A study that interviewed Southern Asian families found that they listed respect, social acceptance, obeying authoritative people, working hard, and attaining higher education as educational goals where as a Head Start Staff listed independence, self-esteem, and age-

appropriate goals as educational goals. In the same study, parents who when strict disciplined failed to improve child's success conformed to the idea that their child's incapability was fate. <http://www.multicsd.org/doku.php?id=vietnam>

Superstitions of a Newborn Baby

Newborn babies should not be praised so that the attention would not bring about demons and ghosts. Idioms are used to say the baby is cute or special such as “trôm vía” (steal soul). According to Buddhist traditions, on the morning of the newborns 30th day of life, a 1 month celebration is done to officially inform the ancestors of their new family member and ask that the baby be protected. Sacrifices are offered to the gods so that they too will take care of the baby. Family members and friends are also invited to see the newborn and offer baby gifts as well as their prayers for the baby's healthy life.

Nonverbal Communication

Respect is the foundation of interpersonal relationships in Vietnamese society and is conveyed by avoiding eye contact with people of a higher status, staying quiet, and smiling. Eye contact when speaking to people of higher status can be viewed as a challenge or an expression of deep passion. Smiling can be used as an expression for an apology. It is a proper response to most situations and can be substituted for expressions like “I'm sorry, thank you, and hi.” A smile is also a common response to a compliment, but will deny it if a verbal response is provided. Compliments given by Vietnamese do not expect a verbal “thank you” as their culture views verbal responses of appreciation are seen as a lack of modesty.

The Meaning of Some Patterns of Vietnamese Non-verbal Communication

Nonverbal Patterns	Meaning in Vietnamese Culture
<i>Nodding</i>	Greeting; affirmative reply; agreement.
<i>Shaking one's head</i>	Negative reply; disagreement.
<i>Bowing</i>	Greeting; great respect.
<i>Touching child's head</i>	Not appreciated, but not offensive.
<i>Avoiding eye contact.</i>	Showing respect to people senior in age or status or of the opposite sex.
<i>Winking.</i>	Not decent, especially when directed at people of the opposite sex.
<i>Frowning</i>	Showing frustration. anger. or worry.
<i>Pouting.</i>	Disdain.
<i>Smiling.</i>	Agreement; embarrassment; disbelief; mild

	disagreement; appreciation; apology.
<i>Shaking hands.</i>	Friendly greeting between men (but not the elderly); not customary between women or between a man and a woman; acceptable between a Vietnamese woman and non-Vietnamese man.
<i>Palm of right hand out, fingers moving up and down several times.</i>	"Come here." Not used to people senior in age or status.
<i>Middle finger crossing over forefinger or forefinger crossing over middle finger with the other fingers closed over the palm.</i>	Obscene gesture.
<i>Middle finger pointing, other fingers closed.</i>	No meaning.
<i>Thumb down, other fingers closed.</i>	No meaning.
<i>Thumb upright, other fingers closed.</i>	No meaning.
<i>Forefinger and top of thumb meet to form circle, other fingers upright.</i>	"Zero." Poor quality.
<i>Palm of right hand facing oneself, forefinger crooked and moving back and forth.</i>	Offensive to adults; threatening to children.
<i>Holding hands with or putting an arm over the shoulder of a person of the same sex.</i>	Friendly gesture, no sexual connotation
<i>Holding hands with or putting an arm over the shoulder of a person of the opposite sex.</i>	Not usually done in public.
<i>Crossing arms.</i>	Sign of respect.
<i>Placing one or both hands in the pockets or on the hips while talking.</i>	Arrogance, lack of respect.
<i>Patting a person's back, especially those senior in age</i>	Disrespect.

<i>or status.</i>	
<i>Pointing to other people while talking.</i>	Disrespect, threatening.
<i>Whistling at performers.</i>	Displeasure.
<i>Putting one's feet on a table or sitting on a desk while talking.</i>	Rude.

<http://www.vietnam-culture.com/articles-55-6/Non-verbal-communication.aspx>)

History of the Language:

- Originated from the Austro-Asiatic family
- Easternmost of the 150 languages derived from this linguistic family
- Families of Vietnamese language include: Muong-Vietnamese subgroup of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austro-Asiatic language family. (Encyclopedia)
- Descendants of this family, speaking various languages derived from it, are scattered in an inland from Central India around the Bay of Bengal into Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, then southward through Kampuchea (Cambodia) to the Malay Peninsula of Malaysia and westward to the Nicobar Islands northwest of the Indonesian island of Sumatra.
- Dialects include: 1) Northern (Hanoi), 2) Central (Hue), and 3) Southern (Ho Chi Minh City formerly Saigon)

Linguistic Features:

One of the few Asian languages whose writing system is based on the Latin alphabet

Table 1: Consonants

		Labial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	Voiceless	p	t	tr	ch	c/k/q	
	Voiceless aspirated			th			
	Voiced	b	d				
Fricatives	Voiceless	ph	x		s	kh	h
	Voiced	v	d	r	gi	g/gh	
Nasals		m	n		nh	ng/ngh	
Lateral			l				
Glides		o/u			y/i		

Table 2: Vowels

	Front	Central	Back	
			Unrounded	Rounded
High	i/y		ɯ	ɯ̹
High-Mid	ê		ɔ	ô
Low-Mid	e		â	o
Low		ă a		

Table 3: Six Tones of Vietnamese

Tone	Example	Gloss
Level	ma	“Ghost”
Rising	má	“cheek; Mom”
Falling	mà	“but”
Dipping-Rising	mả	“tomb, grave”
Creaky	mã	“horse”
Constricted	mạ	“rice seedling”

Demonstration of Tones:

<http://youtu.be/NEMP8JCL-HQ>

Vietnamese Influenced English

-Phonology:

- No consonant blends, or adding vowels between two consonants
- Only /p/, /t/, /k/, /m/, /n/, and “ng” occur as final consonants
- Final consonant omission

-Morphology:

- Nouns and verbs not inflected
- Categories of number, gender, case and tense expressed by means of function words and word order.
- Terms of relationship are used as personal pronouns
Ex.) Bo-con= father-child, father refers to himself as “bo”, child refers to the father as “bo”
- Words are generally monosyllabic, however reduplication is important
Ex.) nam-nam= “year after year”

-Syntax:

- Basic word order= SVO
- In noun phrases most modifiers follow the nouns they modify
- Numbers proceed nouns
- Final particles convey speaker’s attitude, assumptions, and presumptions
- Plurals are not used in Vietnamese

-Semantics:

- Many words are taken from other languages including Chinese, English, and French

-Pragmatics:

- Pronouns used to maintain interpersonal relationships and social distance
- Respect and disrespect demonstrated through use of pronouns

***A Note About the Tonal Nature of the Language/Influence on English:**

The Vietnamese language uses a variety of pitches, also known as “tones” to differentiate between several meanings of word. Unlike English, differences in pitch are used to express emphasis or inferences. For example, a rising tone usually implies a question or surprised reaction. Native English speakers have grown up listening to a variety of pronunciations and can usually make up a verbal expression used by someone with a distinct accent. Since Vietnamese is

usually only spoken in Vietnam, these listeners are hardly exposed to other dialects and cannot derive mangled versions of their language.

<http://www.haivenu-vietnam.com/vietnam-culture-language.htm>

Listen to Vietnamese influenced English:

<http://accent.gmu.edu/>

Videos

<http://youtu.be/z1I7L5iy9g> -overview

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQilLt7bquE>-translation

<http://youtu.be/xLAmc8FZoz4>- food

Restaurants in the Area:

Pho King Restaurant (512) 491-7585 1021 E Parmer Ln, Austin, TX ; phokingtx.com

Kim Phung Chinese and Vietnamese Restaurant (512) 451-2464 7601 N Lamar Blvd, #1, Austin, TX; www.kplamar.com...

Pho Van (512) 832-5595 8557 Research Blvd, #120, Austin, TX

Hao Hao (512) 447-8121 1901 W William Cannon Dr, Austin, TX; www.haohoaustin.com...

Sunflower Vietnamese (512) 339-7860 8557 Research Blvd, Austin, TX

T & N Cafe (512) 899-9233 6705 W Highway 290, #606, Austin, TX

Pho Hoang (512) 339-6002 2521 Rutland Dr, #400, Austin, TX

Triumph Cafe (512) 343-1875 3808 Spicewood Springs Rd, Austin, TX

Pho Saigon Noodle House (512) 821-1022 10901 N Lamar Blvd, #108, Austin, TX

Bilingual Vietnamese Speech-Language Pathologists

- **Vietnamese Accent Reduction Classes -**
<http://www.relaxandspeak.com/vietnameseaccentclass.html>
- Charlotte A. Ducote, PHD; SLP in New Orleans; one of the founders of the Trinh foundation
- Giang Pham, MA CCC-SLP Department of Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Her research interests are bilingualism, language acquisition, and language disorders, particularly in Vietnamese- speaking populations.

*In the link below is a website that contains information on speech therapy in Vietnam to include the names of speech therapists, doctors, and hospitals promoting speech therapy.

<http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/vietnam.htm>

Assessments Available:

Assessing Asian Language Performance, 2nd edition

K-12th grade; includes a resource book in English with info about Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, and other languages.

Bilingual Classroom Communication Profile

4-11 years; can be used with speakers of any language; used to help teachers distinguish communication differences from disorders in functionally and structured aspects of communication.

Bilingual Language Proficiency Questionnaire

3+ years; primarily used for English and Spanish, can contact company for Vietnamese edition. Parent interview questionnaire is used to describe child's development in the areas of articulation, language, voice, fluency, and pragmatics. It aids in distinguishing typical from atypical development.

Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT)

5+ years; norm-referenced, assesses bilingual's overall verbal ability.

Bilingual Vocabulary Assessment Measure

3+ years; informally assesses expressive vocabulary through labeling common nouns; a separate record form is available for Vietnamese.

<http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/practice/multicultural/EvalToolsforDiversePops.pdf>

Speech-Language Therapy Resources:

Therapy Resources from the 2009 ASHA Convention

http://www.asha.org/Events/convention/handouts/2009/2246_Ducote_Charlotte_2.htm

A Speech-Language Pathologist in Vietnam

<http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2001/011211/vietnam.htm>

Research Articles:

Pham, G., Kohnert, K., & Mann, D. (2011). Addressing clinician-client mismatch: a preliminary intervention study with a bilingual vietnamese-english pre-schooler. *Language Speech Hear Serv Sch*, Retrieved from www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21616987

Pickering, M., McAllister, L. (2000). A conceptual framework for linking and guiding domestic cross-cultural and international practice in speech-language pathology. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 2(2), Retrieved from <http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.3109/14417040008996794>

Pham, G., Kohnert, K. (2010). Sentence interpretation by typically developing vietnamese-english bilingual children. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 31(3), Retrieved from <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=7792927&jid=APS&volumeId=31&issueId=03&aid=7792925>

Global Organizations

- The Trinh Foundation http://www.trinhfoundation.org/index_files/Page931.htm
- Viet Nam Laryngectomy: humanitarian project – help with rehabilitation post laryngectomy <http://www.vietnamlarynx.org/home.html>

Reference Page:

- Bowen, C. (2010, March 23). *Speech therapy in vietnam*. Retrieved from Speech therapy in vietnam. (2010, March 23). Retrieved from <http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/vietnam.htm>
- Central Intelligence Agency, (2011). *The world factbook* (ISSN 1553-8133). Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html>
- Directory of speech-language pathology assessment instruments. (2007). *American Speech-Language Hearing Association*, Retrieved from <http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/practice/multicultural/EvalToolsforDiversePops.pdf>
- Garry, Jane, & Rubino, Carl. (Ed.). (2001). *Facts about the world's languages: an encyclopedia of the world's major languages, past and present*. New York & Dublin: A New England Publishing Associates Book.
- Howard, M. & Micheau, D.(2007). *Multicultural topics in csd*. Retrieved from <http://www.multicsd.org/doku.php?id=vietnam>
- Kwintessential*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/vietnam.html>
- List of U.S. cities with large vietnamese american populations*. (2011, July 4). Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._cities_with_large_Vietnamese_American_populations
- Malarney, S.K. (2008). *Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/Vietnam.htm>
- Terrazas, A. (2008, August). *U.s. in focus: vietnamese immigrants in the united states*. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=691>

Vietnamese non-verbal communication. (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.vietnam-culture.com/articles-55-6/Non-verbal-communication.aspx>