

# The Vietnamese Language Learning Framework

## Part One: Linguistics

Binh N. Ngo (Ngô Như Bình)  
Harvard University

### 1. Brief Survey of the Vietnamese Language Programs at U.S. Universities

According to the survey conducted by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, Vietnamese is currently offered at twenty-five universities and colleges in the USA<sup>1</sup>.

### 2. Teaching and Learning Vietnamese in the United States and the Teaching Materials<sup>2</sup>

Vietnamese was offered in the United States for the time as the Army Specialized Training Course, which was conducted by Prof. Murray B. Emeneau, a linguist, at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin at Madison between the summer of 1943 and the end of 1944. The materials used for teaching Vietnamese at these institutions were developed by Lý Đức Lâm, M.B. Emeneau and Diether von den Steinen. They were never published. However, Prof. M.B. Emeneau's work *Studies in Vietnamese (Annamese) Grammar*, based on the teaching materials, was the first book in English on Vietnamese linguistics; it was published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, in 1951.

If we do not count that course meant for the GIs during the World War II, then Cornell, Georgetown, Yale and Columbia were the first universities offering Vietnamese as an academic course in the 1950s. The course taught by Prof. Huỳnh Sanh Thông and Prof. R. B. Jones, Jr. with the assistance of a number of Vietnamese native speakers at Georgetown University in 1953-1954 on contract with the Department of State resulted in a well-organized textbook entitled *Introduction to Spoken Vietnamese* by R.B. Jones Jr. and Huỳnh Sanh Thông [Washington, DC:

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<sup>1</sup> URL: <http://carla.acad.umn.edu>

<sup>2</sup> A great deal of the information in this chapter was garnered from Prof. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà's paper *Teaching Vietnamese at the Tertiary Level in the USA* (unpublished) and through personal conversations with Prof. Nguyễn. I would like to express my deep gratitude for his generous permission to use his materials.

Since the course was offered to American diplomats assigned to South Vietnam, this textbook introduced the Saigon dialect.

Between 1953 and 1956 a few students enrolled in a Vietnamese language course offered in the Department of General and Comparative Linguistics at Columbia University. This course was taught by Prof. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà, who later published his textbook, *Speak Vietnamese*, in Saigon in 1957.

Around 1954, the U.S. Army Language School in Monterey, California (later renamed the Defense Language Institute) began to offer Vietnamese courses taught by L.C. Thompson who had completed a structural analysis of the Saigon dialect as his doctoral dissertation at Yale University. Dr. L.C. Thompson later continued his research on Vietnamese linguistics at the University of Washington, with the collaboration of the late Mr. Nguyễn Đức Hiệp who was a teacher and journalist. They co-authored a collection of graded texts, called *A Vietnamese Reader*. The same university press later published Dr. L.C. Thompson's book, *A Vietnamese Grammar*.

For a long time the State Department Foreign Service Institute has had excellent language programs designed for diplomats and foreign service officers. Its Vietnamese language program is among the longest-established and most consistent in the United States.

While a number of texts for teaching Vietnamese at the beginning level were published in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, there was great demand for materials for the intermediate and advanced levels. The late Dr. Nguyễn Đăng Liêm of the University of Hawai'i published two textbooks, *Intermediate Vietnamese* in two volumes, and *Advanced Vietnamese: A Culture Reader*, that helped fill the vacuum. At that time Prof. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà also published two textbooks, *Read Vietnamese* and *Colloquial Vietnamese*, for Vietnamese language instruction at the intermediate and advanced levels.

In the mid 1960s several Vietnamese language courses were offered at the University of Washington and the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The Vietnamese language program at the University of Manoa was run by Dr. Stephen O'Harrow and Dr. Nguyễn Đăng Liêm and became one of the most consistent Vietnamese language programs in the United States.

In the fall of 1969, the Center for Vietnamese Studies was established at Southern Illinois University with a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Prof. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà was the Associate Director of the Center from 1969 to 1972 and the Director from 1972 to 1990. He was also in charge of the Vietnamese language courses at the Center and responsible for the development and supervision of intensive summer courses in Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao.

Harvard University started its Vietnamese language program in 1971. Vietnamese has been continuously taught at Harvard since then. A Vietnamese language textbook was developed by Robert Quinn and entitled *Introductory Vietnamese*. This text was

The textbook *Intermediate Vietnamese* by F.E. Huffman and Trần Trọng Hải, based on the Saigon dialect, was published by the same Cornell University Press in 1980 and used at a number of universities where the second year of Vietnamese language instruction was offered. In the 1970s and 1980s several universities set up Vietnamese language programs, including the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. The Southeast Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) was founded in the 1980s and has made a great contribution to the teaching of Southeast Asian languages, including Vietnamese, to those who are interested in these languages but unable to take such language courses during the academic year.

Vietnamese studies was on the rise in the 1990s, and numerous universities began to offer Vietnamese consistently. Currently Vietnamese is taught at the University of Washington, the University of Oregon, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of California at San Diego, Arizona State University, the University of Michigan, Cornell University, Harvard University, and the University of Hawai'i. These universities are members of the Group of Universities for the Advancement of Vietnamese Abroad (GUAVA). In addition to the GUAVA members, Vietnamese is also officially offered by a number of other universities, including Yale University, California State University at San Francisco, and Texas University of Technology in Lubbock.

Several Vietnamese language textbooks were published in the 1990s, among them the following texts used to teach Vietnamese at the college level:

1. *Spoken Vietnamese for Beginners* by Nguyễn Long, Marybeth Clark and Nguyễn Bích Thuận. This text is accompanied by *Activities Manual Books* developed by Lê Phạm Thuý-Kim.
2. *Conversational Vietnamese* by Trần Hoài Bắc.
3. *Contemporary Vietnamese: An Intermediate Text* by Nguyễn Bích Thuận.
4. *Elementary Vietnamese* by Ngô Như Bình.
5. *Conversational Vietnamese: An Intermediate Text* by Lê Phạm Thuý-Kim and Nguyễn Kim-Oanh.

## References

1. M.B. Emeneau. *Studies in Vietnamese (Annamese) Grammar*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951.
2. R.B. Jones Jr. and Huỳnh Sanh Thông. *Introduction to Spoken Vietnamese*. Washington, DC: American Council of Learned Societies, 1957; revised edition 1960.
3. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà. *Speak Vietnamese*. Saigon, 1957 (revised Saigon edition 1963, which was reprinted in Tokyo, 1966).

4. L.C. Thompson and Nguyễn Đức Hiệp. *A Vietnamese Reader*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961.
5. L.C. Thompson. *A Vietnamese Grammar*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965; reprinted in 1987 as *A Vietnamese Reference Grammar*, Mon-Khmer Studies XIII-XIV. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984-1985.
6. Nguyễn Đăng Liêm. *Intermediate Vietnamese*. South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University Press, 1971.
7. Nguyễn Đăng Liêm. *Advanced Vietnamese: A Culture Reader*. South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University Press, 1974.
8. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà. *Read Vietnamese*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1966.
9. Nguyễn Đình-Hoà. *Colloquial Vietnamese*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974.
10. Robert Quinn. *Introductory Vietnamese*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972.
11. F.E. Huffman and Trần Trọng Hải. *Intermediate Vietnamese*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980.
12. Nguyễn Long, Marybeth Clark and Nguyễn Bích Thuận. *Spoken Vietnamese for Beginners*. De Kalb, IL: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Southeast Asian Language Series, Northern Illinois University, 1994.
13. Trần Hoài Bắc. *Conversational Vietnamese*. Tokyo: Tan Van/Mekong Center Publisher, 1996; second edition, 1999; third edition, 2002; fourth edition, 2005.
14. Nguyễn Bích Thuận, *Contemporary Vietnamese: An Intermediate Text*, Northern Illinois University Press, 1996.
15. Ngô Như Bình, *Elementary Vietnamese*, Charles E. Tuttle, 1999; revised edition, Charles E. Tuttle, 2003.
16. Lê Phạm Thúy-Kim and Nguyễn Kim-Oanh, *Conversational Vietnamese: An Intermediate Text*, University of Washington Press, 2001.

### 3. Some Theoretical Issues of the Vietnamese Language

#### 3.1. Overview

3.1.1. Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. It is spoken by 76 million people in Vietnam and approximately 2.5 million overseas Vietnamese in 79 countries, including the United States (1 million), France (350,000), Canada (300,000), Australia (300,000), Germany (100,000), Russia (100,000)<sup>3</sup>.

3.1.2. Vietnamese belongs to the group of Mon-Khmer languages in the Austroasiatic family of languages<sup>4</sup>. There are over 170 Austroasiatic languages, which are divided into three groups: *Mon-Khmer*, *Munda* and *Nicobarese*. The languages of the Mon-Khmer group, which is the largest one in the family, are spoken in Southeast Asia, in the countries between China and Indonesia. The Munda group of languages is spoken in the north-east of India, and the Nicobarese group of languages is found on the Nicobar Islands.

The Mon-Khmer group consists of three languages: *Vietnamese*, *Khmer* and *Mon* (or *Talaing*). Khmer is the official language of Cambodia, spoken by more than seven million people. Mon is spoken by half a million in some areas of Burma and Thailand.

Links between Vietnamese and the other members of this family of languages are not entirely clear. On the other hand, Vietnamese shares some similarities with the Tai languages, spoken in neighboring countries and by several ethnic minorities in Vietnam. For instance, both Vietnamese and Tai languages have tones, whereas Khmer is a non-tonal language. A number of similarities in vocabulary are also found between Vietnamese and Tai languages. This is the reason why some scholars relate Vietnamese to the Tai family.

#### 3.2. The Writing system

3.2.1. From 111 BC to 939 AD Vietnam was ruled by China, during which time Chinese was the official language used for administrative and educational purposes. Even after Vietnam gained independence from China in the tenth century, classical Chinese, which is called *chữ Hán* (Chinese script), was also widely used in Vietnam by the royal court and by Vietnamese scholars and poets in the educational system. This situation continued until the beginning of the twentieth century.

3.2.2. In the thirteenth century, some Vietnamese Buddhist scholars began to use a new writing system to create poems in Vietnamese. Many contemporary researchers in Vietnam suggest that this writing system appeared in the eleventh century, when Vietnam became a powerful feudal state. This writing system is called *chữ nôm*

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<sup>3</sup> According to the newspaper *Sài Gòn giải phóng*, September 25, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Nguyễn Đình-Hoà. 1990. *Vietnamese*, in *The World Major Languages*, edited by B. Comrie. Oxford University Press; Crystal, David. 1997. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press.



Generally speaking, the modern Vietnamese alphabet is a very regular writing system in which in most cases one letter (grapheme) represents one phoneme. There are, however, some irregularities which will be addressed in 3.4. Phonology.

### 3.3. Dialects

Vietnamese has three main dialects: northern, central and southern. The dialectal differences concern both the vocabulary and the phonetic system. However, Vietnamese everywhere understand each other despite these dialectal differences.

The Vietnamese language does not have a standard pronunciation. The Hanoi dialect represents the phonetic system of the language more fully than the other dialects. The Vietnamese language used in news broadcasts on the Vietnamese radio and television, and in Vietnamese books, newspapers and magazines is mostly based on the Hanoi dialect. The next most significant dialect is the dialect spoken in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), the biggest city in Vietnam and the most important political, economic and cultural center in South Vietnam.

### 3.4. Phonology

3.4.1. In the Vietnamese language, the *syllable* is the minimal meaningful unit that cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts. Each syllable consists of two mandatory components: a tone and a nuclear vowel; in addition, three optional components may be present: an initial consonant, a sound indicating the labialization (rounding of the lips) of the syllable, and a final consonant or semivowel. The structure of the Vietnamese syllable can be presented as follows:

T	O	N	E
INITIAL CONSONANT	LABIALIZATIO N	NUCLEAR VOWEL	FINAL CONSONANT/ SEMIVOWEL

The tone and the nuclear vowel are the compulsory constituents of the Vietnamese syllable. The initial consonant, labialization and final consonant/semivowel are not always obligatorily present.

3.4.2. Vietnamese is a tonal language in which changes of the pitch level and/or contour signal a change in meaning. The Hanoi dialect of Vietnamese has six tones: mid-level, low-falling, high-rising, low-falling-rising, high-rising broken and low-falling broken. Except for the mid-level tone, all the other tones are denoted by diacritics.

3.4.3. The Vietnamese phonetic system contains 23 *initial consonant* phonemes<sup>5</sup>: /b/, /f/ (ph), /v/, /m/, /t/, /d/ (đ), /t<sup>h</sup>/ (th), /s/ (x), /z/ (d), /n/, /l/, /ʈ/ (tr), /ʃ/ (s), /ʒ/ (gi, r), /ç/ (ch), /ɲ/ (nh), /k/ (c, k, q), /g/ (g), /χ/ (kh), /ŋ/ (ng), /h/, /p/, /r/<sup>6</sup> The possible Vietnamese consonants are represented in the following chart based on the place and manner of their production (articulation).

	PLACE	Labial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
MANNER							
Stop	Voiceless	p	t	ʈ	c	k	
Stop	Voiced	b	d				
Stop	Voiceless Aspirated		t <sup>h</sup>				
Fricative	Voiceless	f	s	ʃ		χ	h
Fricative	Voiced	v	z	ʒ		γ	
Nasal	Voiced	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral	Voiced		l				
Rolled	Voiced		r				

3.4.4. *Labialization* of the beginning of a syllable may occur in the syllables that do not contain the rounded vowels. The lips start rounding when the initial consonant (if any) is produced and finish rounding at the beginning of the production of the nuclear vowel.

Labialization is represented by the character *u* in syllables containing the close nuclear vowels *i, ê, o, â*: *huy* (the character *y* indicates the nuclear *i*), *thuê, thuở, khuấy*.

When labialization occurs in syllables with *e, a* and *ã* as nuclear vowels, it is represented by the character *o*: *khoẻ, nhòa, hoay*.

<sup>5</sup> A character or a combination of characters in the alphabet which represents a phoneme is put in the parentheses after the phoneme in the cases where the phoneme symbol and the character indicating it are different.

<sup>6</sup> The consonants p and r in the Hanoi dialect occur only in words borrowed from European languages; however, the consonant r occurs in some other dialects of Vietnamese.

When labialization occurs in syllables with /k/ as the initial consonant, it is represented by the character *u*, and the initial /k/ - by the character *q*: *quả*, *queo*, *quý*.

3.4.5. The Vietnamese language has eleven *nuclear monophthong vowels*<sup>7</sup>: /i/, /e/ (ê), /ɛ/ (e), /ɔ/ (o), /ə:/ (ơ), /ə/ (â), /a:/ (a), /a/ (ã), /u/, /o/ (ô), /ɔ/ (o) and three *nuclear diphthongs*: /ie/ (iê/ia), /ɔə/ (ơ/ơa), /uɔ/ (uô/ua). According to the part of the tongue that is raised, the monophthongs can be *front*: /i/, /e/, /ɛ/, *mid*: /ɔ/, /ə:/, /ə/, /a:/, /a/ and *back*: /u/, /o/, /ɔ/. They can be *high*: /i/, /ɔ/, /u/, *mid*: /e/, /ə:/, /ə/, /o/ and *low*: /ɛ/, /a:/, /a/, /ɔ/, depending on the extent to which the tongue rises in the direction of the palate. The lips are rounding when producing the three *rounded* vowels /u/, /o/, /ɔ/ and the diphthong /uɔ/. The nuclear vowels in Vietnamese are represented in the triangle on the basis of the part of the tongue that is raised and the position of the tongue toward the palate.

3.4.6. In Vietnamese there are six *final* consonants: /p/, /t/, /k/ (c/ch), /m/, /n/, /ŋ/ (ng/nh) and two final semivowels: /i/ (i/y), /u/ (o/u).

3.4.7. There are a number of graphemic/phonemic irregularities of the spelling rules in Vietnamese.

3.4.7.1. The initial phoneme /ɣ/ is denoted by the character *g* when it occurs before the mid and back nuclear vowels and by the combination of two characters *gh* before the front vowels, for instance: *gà*, *gù*, *ghi*.

3.4.7.2. The initial phoneme /ŋ/ is represented in the spelling system by the combination of two characters *ng* when it occurs before the mid and back nuclear vowels and by the combination of three characters *ngh* before the front vowels, for example: *ngà*, *ngù*, *nghi*. This inconsistency and the previous one can be explained by the influence of the mother tongues of the founders of the modern Vietnamese alphabet. Most of them were native speakers of the Romance languages where the character *g* does not indicate the consonant /g/ when occurring before the front vowels.

3.4.7.3. The phoneme /k/ is represented by the character *c* before the mid and back vowels, by the character *k* before the front vowels and by *qu* in a labialized syllable.

3.4.7.4. There are several hypotheses about the reasons why the character *đ* was created to represent the consonant phoneme /d/ and the character *đ* was used to denote the consonant phoneme /z/. The consonants /d/ and /z/ might have sounded in a different way four hundred years ago, or, they might have had specific features in the dialect(s) the European missionaries first had to deal with. These consonants in the contemporary Hanoi dialect are, however, very similar to the alveolar consonants /d/ and /z/ in many European languages. If the character *đ* represented the phoneme /d/

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<sup>7</sup> A character or a combination of characters in the alphabet which represents a phoneme is put in the parentheses after the phoneme in the cases where the phoneme symbol and the character indicating it are different.

- 3.4.7.5. As mentioned in 3.4.4., labialization is represented by the character *u* in syllables containing the close nuclear vowels /i/, /e/, /ə:/, /ə/, and by the character *o* before the open vowels /ɛ/, /a:/ and /a/. It would be consistent if the labialization were indicated by one character, for instance, character *w*, in all positions.
- 3.4.7.6. The short vowel /a/ is indicated by the character *ă* when followed by the final consonants /p/, /t/, /k/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/: *bắp, bắt, bắc, bắm, bắn, bắng*, and by *a* when followed by the final semivowels /i/ and /u/: *bay, báu*. It could be everywhere represented by *ă*, for instance, *bắi, bắo* or *bắu*, to avoid inconsistencies, but it is not.
- 3.4.7.7. The character *a* denotes not only the vowel /a:/ in all the positions, but also the short vowel /ɛ/ when this vowel occurs before the velar final consonants /k/ and /ŋ/ which are indicated by *ch* and *nh*: *ách, anh*.
- 3.4.7.8. The nuclear vowel /i/ may be represented by both the character *i* and the character *y*: *thi, ly*.
- 3.4.7.9. The final consonants /k/ and /ŋ/ are indicated by the characters *c* and *ng* respectively after the mid and back vowels and by the characters *ch* and *nh* after the front vowels: *các, cáng, cách, cánh*.
- 3.4.7.10. The final semivowel /u/ is denoted by the character *u* after all the vowels except the open vowels /ɛ/ (*e*) and /a:/ (*a*), after which it is indicated by the character *o*: *chịu, hừu, chèo, hào*.
- 3.4.7.11. The final semivowel /i/ is represented by the character *i* after the long vowels and by the character *y* after the short vowels: *mai, may, mới, mây*.

This is another inconsistency: the choice between the two characters *u* and *o* denoting the final semivowel /u/ is based on the feature openness/closeness of the nuclear vowels (in 3.4.7.10. *i* in *chịu* and *u* in *hừu* are the closest vowels among the front and mid vowels), whereas the principle of choosing *i* or *y* representing the final semivowel /i/ is the feature length/shortness (in 3.4.7.11. *a* in *mai*, *o* in *mới* are the long vowels, *a* in *may* and *â* in *mây* are the short vowels).

### 3.5. Morphology

- 3.5.1. Vietnamese belongs to the group of *isolating* languages where there are no inflectional endings and all the words are invariable. Grammatical relationships are expressed not by changing the internal structure of the words (the use of inflectional endings), but by the use of auxiliary words and word order. In this sense, the traditionally recognized inflectional morphology is not applicable to Vietnamese.

In Vietnamese each morpheme, which in phonetic respects in most cases is a syllable, tends to form a separate word. The number of morphemes within a word is 1.06<sup>8</sup>. Vietnamese is at the low end of both morphological scales, one of which measures the degree of fusion (*isolation - agglutinating - fusional*), while the other one indicates the degree of synthesis (*analytic - inflected - polysynthetic*).

3.5.2. The Vietnamese morpheme: Different points of view are described in detail in *Từ tiếng Việt* published by the Institute of Linguistics, National Center of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi in 1998.

3.5.3. Derivational morphology: word formation

There are three types of words in Vietnamese: simple (*từ đơn*), reduplicative (*từ láy*) and compound (*từ ghép*). In addition, Vietnamese has borrowed vocabulary from other languages, including Chinese, French and English.

3.5.3.1. Simple words

Most simple words in Vietnamese are monosyllabic. The number of polysyllabic simple words such as *bù nhìn* (scarecrow), *ếch ương* (frog), *mồ hôi* (sweat), *mà cả* (bargain) is relatively small.

3.5.3.2. Reduplicative words

Reduplication is a specific type of word-formation in Vietnamese, which is discussed in a large number of works (see section 6). Vietnamese is among the languages in the world which most frequently use reduplicatives. Learners should be taught reduplicatives from the beginning through the advanced levels of instruction.

3.5.3.3. Compounds

There are three types of compounds in Vietnamese.

1. Coordinate compounds are formed by two morphemes, neither of which modifies the other one, such as *quần áo* (cloths), *mua bán* (purchase and sell), *phải trái* (right and wrong).

2. Subordinate compounds are formed by two morphemes, one of which modifies the other one, such as *xe đạp* (bicycle), *xe máy* (motorbike), *xe hơi* (car), *xe lửa* (train), *khó tính* (be difficult to please), *khó chịu* (unbearable), *khó nghe* (be difficult to hear), *khó thương* (not be lovable), *trắng tinh* (immaculate), *trắng muốt* (pure white), *trắng phau* (very white), *trắng hếu* (very light, white, of skin), *nhà báo* (journalist), *nhà văn* (writer), *nhà thơ* (poet), *nhà doanh nghiệp* (businessman), *hội trưởng* (president of an association), *đội trưởng* (head of a group), *nhóm trưởng* (head of a group), *tổ trưởng* (head of a small group). Many morphemes in this type may be regarded as affixes.

3. Unlike the coordinate and subordinate compounds, isolated compounds do not form systems. Such compounds as *mè nheo* (bother with requests), *thieu thân* (May fly), *tai hông* (a part of bicycle) belong to the isolated type of compounds.

3.5.3.4. Vietnamese vocabulary includes a large number of borrowings from Chinese (about 70% of the vocabulary used in written Vietnamese was borrowed from classical

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<sup>8</sup> Greenberg, Joseph H. 1960. *A Quantitative Approach to the Morphological Typology of Language*. International Journal of American Linguistics 26.

#### 3.5.4. Word classes

Based on their notional definitions and grammatical behavior, Vietnamese words are traditionally classified into nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, numerals, classifiers, prepositions, conjunctions, particles and interjections. There are, however, many other classifications suggested by linguists in Vietnam, as well as in other countries. For instance, some linguists do not list classifiers as a separate class. In some classifications, many adjectives are treated as stative verbs. In many works, words classified as full words (thực từ) and empty words (hư từ) are then divided into subclasses. A number of linguists are reluctant to use the traditional terminology and suggest different terms for word classes in Vietnamese. For instance, L. Thompson only recognizes four classes: substantives, predicatives, focuses and particles.

### 4. Linguistic difficulties in learning Vietnamese<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.1. Stress and tones

4.1.1. One of the phonetic typological differences between Vietnamese and English is that Vietnamese is a syllable-timed language in which the rhythm appears to be fairly even, with each syllable giving the impression of having about the same duration and force as any other; English is a stress-timed language in which stressed syllables recur at intervals. Another key difference is that Vietnamese is a tone language in which the pitch levels are used to distinguish words; English is a non-tonal language.

Stress does not create interference for English-speaking learners studying Vietnamese if at the very beginning they are introduced to Vietnamese as a language in which words in a phrase or in a sentence are in most cases pronounced with the same duration and force. However, they should be careful with pauses in a sentence or in a phrase that should be placed properly, otherwise a misunderstanding may occur, for instance:

*Nhiều người nói / tiếng Ý hay lắm.* (Many people say Italian sounds very beautiful.) versus *Nhiều người / nói tiếng Ý hay lắm.* (There are many people who speak Italian very well.) That is, the two syllables of a two-syllable compound should be spoken together. At a higher level of the language structure, words in a phrase should be pronounced together with one another. It is a good idea to split a long sentence into phrases between which short pauses are made, whereas there should not be any pause between the syllables of a two-syllable word (a compound, a reduplicative etc.).

4.1.2. The six tones in Vietnamese cause a variety of difficulties for learners, both in producing and maintaining the tones in speech flow.

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<sup>9</sup> Ngô Như Bình. 1998. *Identifying and overcoming the difficulties in teaching Vietnamese to English-speaking beginners*. 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Vietnamese Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam. 1999, Journal of Linguistics, issue #3, Hanoi, Vietnam (in Vietnamese).

Linguists distinguish register tones and contour tones. The pitch of register tones hardly goes up and down during the production of a particular tone. In contrast, contour tones have more than one pitch.

The pitch pattern of the mid-level tone, called *thanh ngang* or *thanh không*, which is a register tone, does not change at all. This tone stays at a single pitch level. It seems easiest to produce but is in fact hardest to maintain at the same pitch. Learners' attention should be directed to the importance of keeping the same pitch of voice at all times when they pronounce words with the mid-level tone. In other words, all the words and syllables with the mid-level tone in a sentence should be pronounced at the same pitch, no matter how long the sentence is and how many words with other tones are inserted between them. For example: *Tôi ăn cơm.* (I am eating.) and *Tôi mời anh tối nay đến nhà tôi ăn cơm với gia đình tôi.* (I invite you to come over to my house for dinner with my family tonight.)

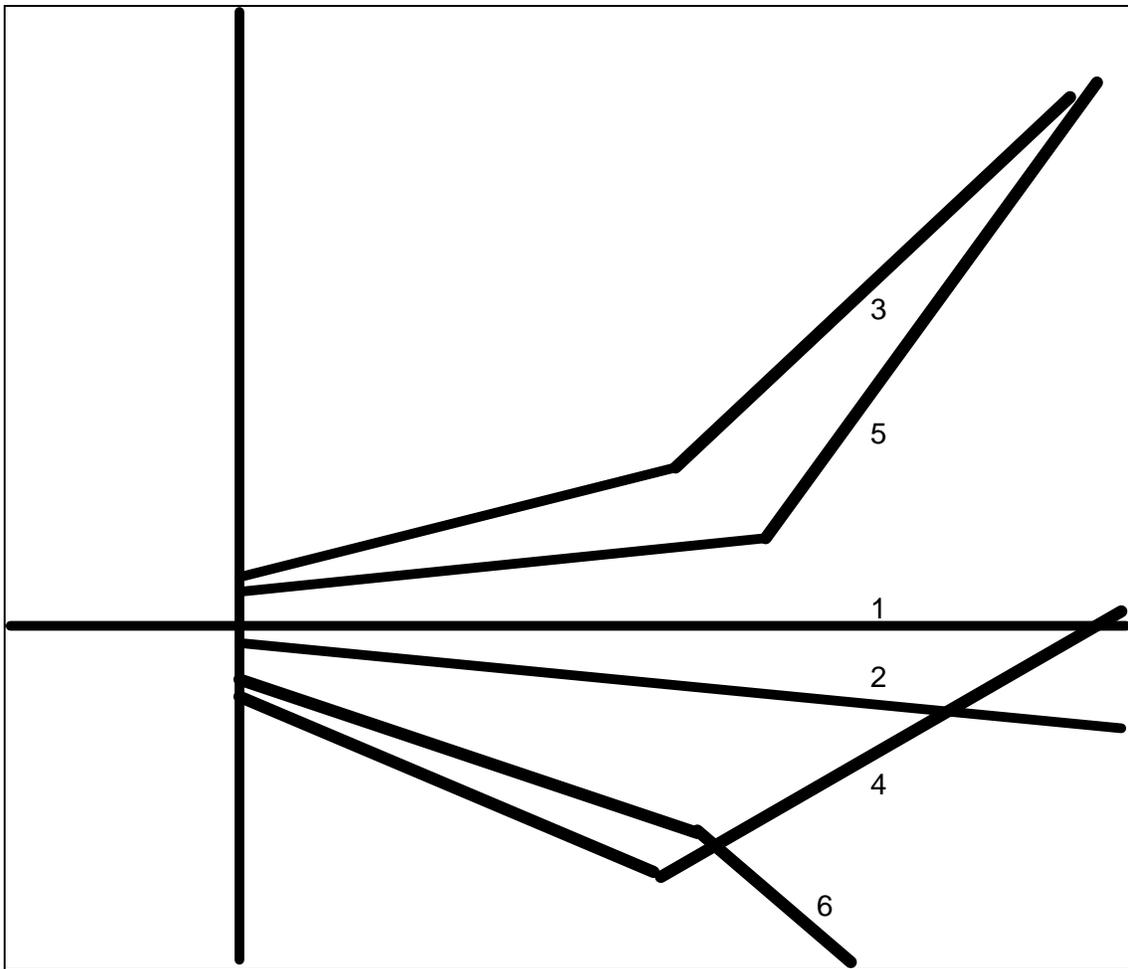
The pitch pattern of the low-falling (*thanh huyền*) tone does not vary significantly. The pitch pattern of the high-rising (*thanh sắc*) tone is more complex. This tone in syllables with no final or with the final semivowels /u/ and /i/ and with the nasal voiced final consonants /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ does not change its pitch very much. When a syllable ends in one of the three stop voiceless final consonants /p/, /t/ and /k/, the pitch rises sharply.<sup>10</sup> Generally speaking, these two tones should be produced at a low or high enough pitch in order to maintain contrast between the tones. Learners very often pronounce the mid-level tone at a lower pitch when it occurs before a word with the high-rising tone. For instance, they would say *Đấy là một nhà thờ lớn.* (That is a big church.) when they want to say *Đấy là một nhà thơ lớn.* (That is a famous poet.) (Notice that in the first example a low tone is indicated for the underlined word, whereas in the second example, the underlined word has the mid-level tone.)

The pitch patterns of the contour high-rising-broken (*thanh ngã*), low-falling-rising (*thanh hỏi*) and low-falling-broken (*thanh nặng*) tones change significantly. Additionally, the high-rising broken and the low-falling broken tones are accompanied by a glottal stop at the end. Although the two tones are hard to produce, they are easily recognizable in speech and are usually not mixed up with one another.

The following graphic of the Vietnamese tones with their pitch patterns and contours would be very useful to illustrate these principles to the learners.

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<sup>10</sup> Some researchers have suggested that the high-rising and the low-falling-broken tones in syllables with one of the final stop consonants /p/, /t/ and /k/ are, in fact, two independent tone phonemes. That is, the two words in each of the following pairs have the same final consonant, but differ from each other by the tones: *cám/cáp*, *cạm/cạp*, *bán/bát*, *bạn/bạt*, *láng/lác*, *lạng/lạc*. In that case, Vietnamese would have two more tones (eight instead of six), but the number of final consonants would reduce by three. There would be no more stop final consonants.



The Hanoi dialect of Vietnamese has six tones: 1) mid-level tone, 2) low-falling tone, 3) high-rising tone, 4) low-falling-rising tone, 5) high-rising broken tone, 6) low-falling broken tone.

- 4.1.3. In English, as in many other European languages, the intonation may function as the only means of distinguishing various types of sentences, for example: *He is coming.* versus *He is coming?* In Vietnamese intonation is rarely used as a way to form questions. If an assertive statement ends in a word with the high-rising tone, the voice should be raised at the end of the sentence, for example: *Hôm nay trời nóng lắm.* (It is really hot today.) On the other hand, if a question ends in a word with the low-falling tone, the voice should be lowered at the end of the question, for example: *Hôm nay trời nóng lắm à?* (Is it really hot today?) In many European languages the pitch of voice in an assertive statement is usually dropped at the end. In Vietnamese the meanings of the sentences *Ông ấy đi tu.* (He has become a Buddhist monk.) and *Ông ấy đi tù.* (He has been sent to prison.) are completely different. Learners' attention should be drawn to the fact that the Vietnamese language uses certain grammatical patterns for assertive, negative and interrogative statements. Intonation in Vietnamese is strictly restricted by the tones.

## 4.2. Sounds

4.2.1. The Vietnamese language has a complicated phonemic system. In addition, some characters in the romanized Vietnamese alphabet may be misleading to native speakers of languages with alphabets based on the Roman script, even though the modern Vietnamese writing system is relatively phonological in comparison to English or French. Learners should be first introduced to a sound and then to the character or combination of characters representing the sound, not vice versa.

4.2.2. The structure of the Vietnamese syllable is critical to understanding the function of a sound in a syllable and in a word, and students should be encouraged to memorize the spelling rules which are in most cases consistent with the sounds.

### 4.2.3. Initial consonants

Learners' attention should be focused on the following consonants that are very specific to English native speakers.

4.2.3.1. In English the unaspirated /t/ and the aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/ are the allophones of the phoneme /t/. The aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/ occurs at the beginning of a stressed syllable, the unaspirated /t/ in the other positions. In other words, they are in complementary distribution. For example, in the word *taskmaster*, the first consonant *t* is aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/, the second one is unaspirated /t/. The unaspirated /t/ and aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/ are different phonemes in Vietnamese that distinguish the meanings of words: *ta* (we) ≠ *tha* (to forgive), *tơ* (silk) ≠ *thơ* (poetry), *tr* (private) ≠ *thur* (letter). On the other hand, the Vietnamese aspirated consonant /t<sup>h</sup>/, which is indicated by the combination of the two characters *th*, should not be confused with the English consonants /θ/ and /ð/.

4.2.3.2. The voiceless consonant /t/ should not be mixed up with its voiced counterpart /d/: *ta* (we) ≠ *đà* (banyan tree), *tà* (evil) ≠ *đà* (momentum), *tá* (dozen) ≠ *đá* (to kick). In American English some words with the voiceless /t/ tend to be pronounced with the voiced /d/, for instance: *better*, *water*.

4.2.3.3. Learners should not confuse the three nasal consonants /n/, /ɲ/ and /ŋ/. The Vietnamese alveolar consonant /n/ is similar to the English /n/. The English consonant /ŋ/ occurs only at the end of a syllable, for example: *sang*, *long*, *thing*, *single*. The Vietnamese /ŋ/ functions both as an initial consonant, e.g. *ngà*, *nghe*, *ngủ*, and as a final consonant, e.g. *ngang*. The consonant /ɲ/ rarely occurs in English. Learners may have trouble producing the initial consonants /ɲ/ and /ŋ/. Their attention should be focused on the distinctive features of the consonants in terms of the place of articulation: /n/ is an alveolar consonant made with the contact of the tongue tip against the alveolar ridge, /ɲ/ is a palatal consonant produced with the back of the tongue rising toward the hard palate and touching it, /ŋ/ is a velar consonant, which is created with the blade of the tongue moving backwards and the back of the tongue contacting the velum.

4.2.3.4. The palatal consonant /c/ is another specific consonant in Vietnamese. In the production of this consonant the tongue tip is down near the back of the lower teeth and contact is made by the tongue blade against the hard palate. The combination of the characters *ch* represents the Vietnamese consonant /c/. The sound that represents /c/ should not be mixed up with the English consonant /tʃ/, e.g. Vietnamese *cha, chú, cho* versus English *char, choose, chop*.

#### 4.2.4. Vowels

When the vowel and final systems are introduced, the attention of learners should be directed to two essential characteristics of the Vietnamese vowels.

4.2.4.1. The difference between a rounded vowel and an unrounded vowel, and, accordingly, between a rounded syllable and an unrounded syllable, is critical. In English a rounded syllable may occasionally be pronounced as unrounded without changing the meaning of the word, e.g. the rounded syllable *on* in the sentence *The computer is on*. may have an element of the unrounded sound [ʌn]. This is impossible in Vietnamese. Some characters denoting the rounded vowels (*u, ô, o*) and unrounded vowels (*ư, ơ*) seem to be confusing, since the characters *ư* and *ơ* may be perceived as characters representing rounded vowels. Learners should be introduced to the sounds before seeing the characters. Minimal pairs containing the oppositions *ư/u, ơ/ô* and *ua(uơ)/ua(uô)* are very helpful, e.g. *thư* (letter)/*thu* (autumn), *cớ* (reason)/*cố* (make efforts), *mưa* (rain)/*mua* (buy), *mượn* (borrow)/*muộn* (late).

4.2.4.2. The final consonant following a vowel in some cases significantly changes the quality of the vowel. As a result, there are several specific types of syllables in Vietnamese.

4.2.4.2.1. When one of three rounded monophthong vowels /u/, /o/ and /ɔ/ is followed by one of two final consonants /ŋ/ or /k/, the rounding of the vowel does not start until the middle of the articulation, and the lips come together at the end of the articulation, e.g. *cung, công, cong, cúc, cốc, cộc*.

4.2.4.2.2. When one of the three front vowels occurs before the same final consonants /ŋ/ and /k/, they are produced shorter than when they precede the other finals or when they are not followed by any final. The vowel /ɛ/ is denoted by the character *a*, the final /ŋ/ is represented by *nh*, and *ch* indicates the final /k/, e.g. *kinh, kênh, canh, kịch, kệtch, cạch*. The production of *canh* as [kəp] and *cạch* as [kəc] should be avoided.

4.2.4.2.3. The "long" and "short" features of vowels are phonologically relevant in both English and Vietnamese. In Vietnamese there are only two pairs of vowels which differ from one another as long and short vowels: /a:/ ≠ /a/ and /ə:/ ≠ /ə/. The spelling rules should be introduced so that learners can recognize the short vowels in written texts and distinguish the short and long vowels when producing them. In addition, some exceptions should be highlighted in order to distinguish the short vowels from their long counterparts. For instance, the short vowel /a/ is represented by

:/ in *tai, cao*.

A picture of the organs of speech would be of great use, especially for those students who rely on visual information. The vowel triangle is very helpful in explaining many spelling rules, e.g. when labialization is denoted by the character *u* and when by the character *o*, or when the consonant /k/ is represented by the character *c* and when by the character *k*. (These rules are certainly inconsistencies of the Vietnamese alphabet which should be removed in the future.)

It is crucial for an instructor to be patient and consistent with the accuracy of learners' pronunciation, even if it means slow progress at the beginning. Attention must continue to be focused on accuracy of pronunciation at more advanced levels of Vietnamese when a learner has acquired more knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, otherwise a learner may lose the phonetic skills she/he learned at the beginning.

### 4.3. Grammar

#### 4.3.1. Morphology

Vietnamese morphology is not as complex as the morphology of inflected languages. When introducing Vietnamese morphology, an instructor should point out the following morphological issues.

4.3.1.1. Vietnamese has a number of tense markers. Unlike European languages in which a verb in a sentence must have a tense form (past, present or future), in Vietnamese a tense marker is usually left out if there is a time expression in the sentence or if the tense is clear from the context. In those cases a sentence with a tense marker may sound unnatural. For example, in order to convey the meaning of the question/answer *Why didn't you come to class yesterday?/I didn't come to class because I was sick.* learners would say *Vì sao hôm qua anh đã không đi học?/Hôm qua tôi đã không đi học vì tôi đã bị ốm. Đã* should be omitted in both question and answer. The time expression *hôm qua* makes the tense clear.

4.3.1.2. In English, aspect is a grammatical category referring to the way that the time denoted by the verb is regarded. English has two aspects: the progressive (or continuous) aspect (He *is teaching* French.) and the perfect aspect (He *has taught* French for ten years.) The meaning of aspect in Vietnamese is expressed by a group of words. Learners should be drilled on the use of a number of words indicating aspects like *vừa, mới, đang, liền, thì, rồi* etc. For example, they should recognize the difference between the two sentences *Tôi học tiếng Việt ba năm.* (I learned Vietnamese for three years.) and *Tôi học tiếng Việt ba năm rồi.* (I have learned Vietnamese for three years.) The position of the adverbial of time is critical for the use of the word *mới* in the sense of "just" *Anh ấy mới về tối qua.* (He just came back last night.) and in the sense of "not ... until..." *Tối qua anh ấy mới về.* (He did not come back until last night.)

4.3.1.3. In European languages most nouns used in a sentence take either the singular or the plural form. *Các* and *những* in Vietnamese not only have grammatical meanings but also have their own lexical meanings. In many instances, *các* or *những* is dropped when the context conveys the plural meaning. For example, *các* in the sentence *Các sinh viên lớp này học khá lắm.* should be left out. On the other hand, the use of *những* is significantly restricted by the context which suggests that only a certain number of the total possible number of people or things are referred to.

#### 4.3.2. Syntax

4.3.2.1. Vietnamese and English have the same basic SVO word order. Vietnamese is an isolating language in which the relationship between parts of a sentence is indicated by the word order and auxiliaries. As a result, word order is critical to convey the meaning of a sentence. Learners should focus their attention on the following points:

4.3.2.2. A word follows the noun it modifies (*sách mới, anh tôi, vấn đề đầu tiên, văn học Việt Nam hiện đại*), unlike English which has the reverse word order (*new book, my brother, first issue, modern Vietnamese literature*). The basic word order of noun phrases should be stressed:

Number/PlurMark	Classifier	Noun	Adjective	Pronoun
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4.3.2.3. In the basic structure SVP (Subject + Verb + (Subject) Predicative) the English copular verb *to be* is used to link 1) a noun to a noun, e.g., *My name is John.* 2) a pronoun to a noun, e.g., *He is my friend.* and 3) a noun or pronoun to an adjective, e.g., *The movie is good.* In Vietnamese the sentences of type 3) do not use the copular verb *là*, that is 1) *Tên tôi là John.* 2) *Anh ấy là bạn tôi.* and 3) *Bộ phim ấy \_\_\_\_\_ hay.*

4.3.2.4. In English, interrogative words (*who, what, which, how, where, when, why*) are placed at the beginning of a question. In Vietnamese, some interrogatives are placed at the beginning of questions (*vì sao, tại sao, sao*). Some others are put at the end of questions (*đâu, ở đâu*). For instance, *Vì sao chị không đồng ý với chúng tôi?* (*Why* do you disagree with us?); *Anh làm việc ở đâu?* (*Where* are you working?) The position of the interrogative words *ai, gì, nào* depends on their grammatical function in a sentence. Interrogative words with the meaning of time (*bao giờ, khi nào, ngày nào, hôm nào, lúc nào, thứ mấy, ngày bao nhiêu*) refer to the past tense when placed at the end of questions and indicate the present or future when put at the beginning. For instance, *Bao giờ anh ấy đến?* (*When* will he arrive?) vs. *Anh ấy đến bao giờ?* (*When* did he arrive?)

4.3.2.5. In interrogative sentences, Vietnamese native speakers distinguish the purpose and the reason by using different interrogative words, whereas the context identifies the purpose or the reason in English, for instance: *Anh đi đến đấy làm gì?* (*Why* do you go there? Literally: For what purpose do you go there?) vs. *Vì sao anh không muốn đi đến đấy?* (*Why* don't you want to go there?)

4.3.2.6. Some words have a position different from the position of English words with similar meanings and functions. For example: *đẹp hơn* vs. *more beautiful*, *Quyển sách này hay hơn quyển sách kia nhiều*. vs. *This book is much better than that one*. *Tháng sau tôi đi Việt Nam*. vs. *I am going to Vietnam next month*. Some words have different meanings when placed in different positions, for instance: *được nghỉ ba ngày* (to be allowed to take three days off) and *nghỉ được ba ngày* (to be able to take three days off).

4.3.2.7. The adverbs of degree *rất* and *lắm* are used without the adverb *nhiều* "much" when the verb conveys the meaning of feeling. The adverb *much* is necessary in English: *Tôi rất thích quyển sách này*. or: *Tôi thích quyển sách này lắm*. versus *I like the book very much*.

#### 4.4. Vocabulary

4.4.1. New words should be introduced in a context. When a new word appears, learners must memorize 1) the type of syllables to which the word belongs, 2) the tone with which it is pronounced and 3) its meaning in a sentence or a communicative situation.

4.4.2. Learners' attention should be drawn to the essential role of particles in Vietnamese. Drills on particles point out 1) their positions in a sentence (initial, final or in the middle of a sentence), 2) the type of sentences in which they appear (assertive statements, negations, questions or exclamations), 3) which particles receive sentence stress and which particles are pronounced lightly, 4) whether they are used in formal or informal speech.

4.4.3. Learners should be warned of potential interference of English, for example, *chờ ai, đợi ai* without the preposition *cho*, not *\*chờ cho ai, \*đợi cho ai* because of the English interference *to wait for someone*, or *Tôi đi làm bằng xe buýt*. (I take the bus to go to work.), not *\*Tôi lấy xe buýt đi làm*. English learners tend to use *cho* whenever they want to convey the English *for*, e.g. *Anh ấy làm việc \*cho năm tiếng liền không nghỉ*. instead of *Anh ấy làm việc năm tiếng liền không nghỉ*. (He worked for five hours without a break.) *Tôi đi bác sĩ \*cho khám sức khỏe*. instead of *Tôi đi bác sĩ khám sức khỏe*. (I went to see my doctor for a check-up.) *Cô ấy mua cái xe máy \*cho mười triệu đồng*. instead of *Cô ấy mua cái xe máy mười triệu đồng*. (She bought the motorbike for ten million dong.) *Tôi trả ba nghìn đồng \*cho vé*. instead of *Tôi trả ba nghìn đồng tiền vé*. (I paid three thousand dong for the ticket.) *Ông ấy đi bộ \*cho vài cây số*. instead of *Ông ấy đi bộ vài cây số*. (He walked for a couple of kilometers.)

4.4.4. The use of Vietnamese personal pronouns is not as complicated as it may initially appear. Vietnamese has few words which are personal pronouns by their lexical meanings (*tôi, mình, tao, mày, nó, hắn, họ, chúng*). The other personal pronouns are 1) kinship terms (*bố, mẹ, anh, chị, em*), 2) nouns denoting occupations (*giáo sư, bác sĩ*), 3) personal names (*Hùng, Mai, Thăng, Thủy*). Personal pronouns should be introduced in the context of the relationship between the speaker and the person she/he is talking to, their age and, in some cases, their social status.

The introduction of personal pronouns must be consistent with the system of kinship terms in a dialect. The kinship terms in the Hanoi and Saigon dialects are based on different principles. These principles can be introduced at a more advanced level. However, even beginning students do need to be taught to understand the relationships which the various pronouns and kinship terms convey.

## **5. Three levels of language proficiency: pedagogical goals, suggested topics and linguistic materials**

The pedagogical goals for each level are based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Vietnamese belongs to Group 3, which includes Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Tagalog, Thai and a number of other languages. Both the goals and the suggested topics and minimal amount of linguistic materials may vary and be added or reduced at different institutions to meet the circumstances of the individual program. At most universities where Vietnamese is taught, a Vietnamese class meets five hours a week which amounts to approximately 120 to 130 hours per academic year.

### ***5.1. Beginning level***

#### **5.1.1. Pedagogical goals**

At the end of a beginning course in Vietnamese, a learner should have achieved proficiency in the four skills of (1) speaking, (2) listening, (3) reading and (4) writing. That means, a learner should be able (1) to handle successfully a limited number of interactive, task-oriented and social situations, ask and answer questions, initiate and respond to simple statements and maintain face-to-face conversation; (2) to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned elements in a limited number of topics. Listening tasks pertain primarily to spontaneous face-to-face conversations; (3) to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically not complex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for instance, short news or advertisements from Vietnamese newspapers and magazines; (4) to meet a number of practical writing needs, to write short, simple letters. Content involves personal preferences, daily routine, everyday events and other topics related to personal experience.

#### **5.1.2. Suggested topics**

1) greetings, 2) introductions, 3) family, age, 4) language, nationality, 5) telling time, year, month, week, days of the week, date, 6) studies, 7) asking directions, 8) shopping, 9) health care, 10) ordering a meal in a restaurant and having a meal.

#### **5.1.3. Suggested linguistic materials**

##### **5.1.3.1. Vocabulary: about 1,500 words and expressions related to the topics.**

##### **5.1.3.2. Grammar and usage**

Patterns for assertive and negative statements, for questions: pattern S - V - O; không + verb and không phải + là; frame construction có + verb + không and có phải + là + không; Patterns không phải ... mà and chứ không ....

Question đã ... chưa.

Interrogatives ai, gì, nào, đâu, ở đâu, bao giờ, khi nào, vì sao, tại sao, sao, làm gì.

Cardinal and ordinal numbers. Plural markers các, những.

The use of của.

Adverbs of degree rất, lắm, quá, khá, hơi.

Comparison of adjectives.

Modal verbs có thể, không thể, cần, phải, nên, muốn.

Pronouns này, ấy, đó, kia, and adverbs đây, đấy, đó, kia.

Location terms trên, dưới, trong, ngoài, giữa, trước, sau.

Verbs of motion ra, đi, lại, lên, xuống, đến, tới, vào, qua, sang, về.

Tense markers đã, vừa, mới, đang, sẽ, sắp; mới in the sense of not ... until....

Time prepositions and conjunctions trước, trước khi, trong, trong khi, sau, sau khi, khi.

Classifiers cái, chiếc, quả, con, ngôi, tờ, quyển, cuốn, toà, bộ, cuộc, nền.

Active and passive voice. Different functions and meanings of the verbs được and bị.

Subordinate clauses of time, cause, condition, purpose, concession, noun clauses with rằng and là.

Particles ạ, đấy, thế, chứ, oi, hờ/hả, à.

The use of cả, tất cả, mọi, mỗi, từng.

Address system.

5.1.3.3. Introduction to word formation in Vietnamese: compound, affixation, reduplication and borrowing.

## ***5.2. Intermediate level***

### **5.2.1. Pedagogical goals**

At the end of an intermediate course in Vietnamese, a learner should be able (1) to converse with native speakers to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine work or school requirements; to handle with confidence, but not with facility, complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining and apologizing; to talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary; (2) to understand main ideas of connected discourse on a variety of topics; comprehension may be uneven due to a variety of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, among which topic familiarity is very prominent; (3) to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs, to get the main ideas and facts, but the reader may miss some details; (4) to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics; to write cohesive summaries and resumes, and to take notes.

### **5.2.2. Suggested topics**

1) preparation for a trip to Vietnam, 2) at the Nội Bài (or Tân Sơn Nhất) airport (Vietnamese immigration and customs regulations) , 3) renting an apartment (housing in a Vietnamese city), 4) traveling in Vietnam (Vietnamese geography), 5) weather in Vietnam, 6) at a Vietnamese university (educational system in Vietnam), 7) a trip to a historical site (Vietnamese history), 8) a job interview (Vietnamese economy, foreign investments), 9) theater (Vietnamese music), 10) museum (Vietnamese arts), 11)

### 5.2.3. Suggested linguistic materials

5.2.3.1. Vocabulary: about 2,500 words and expressions related to the topics.

#### 5.2.3.2. Grammar and usage

Relative clauses, relative pronouns (mà, người) and adverbs (nơi, khi).

Conditional clauses with đúng ra, lẽ ra, giá mà, giá như.

Clauses of result đến nỗi, đến mức độ.

Adjectives cả, tất cả, mọi, mỗi, từng, hàng, toàn, toàn bộ, toàn thể.

Mà, lại, mới with different meanings and functions.

Nổi, xuê, indicating a person's ability to do something.

Patterns không những ... mà còn ..., không những ... mà cả ..., không chỉ ... mà cả ...

...

Final particles mà, cơ mà, cơ chứ, mà lại, nhỉ, áy, đã, đấy, chứ, mới được, là được.

Emphatic particles những, có used before a number.

Modal verbs đành, đành phải, dám, không dám.

Adverbs with một cách.

Patterns càng ... càng ..., từng/đã từng, chưa từng, thế mà, nào ... áy/náy ..., nhờ ... thì ..., nhờ ... thì sao ..., thảo nào, sở dĩ ... là vì ..., dù ... đi chăng nữa.

5.2.3.3. More about compounds, reduplicatives and borrowings.

## ***5.3. Advanced level***

### 5.3.1. Pedagogical goals

At the end of an advanced course in Vietnamese, a learner should be able (1) to satisfy the requirements of a broad variety of everyday, school and work situations; to discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions and explain them in detail; (2) to understand the main ideas of most speech; to show an emerging awareness of culturally implied meanings beyond the surface meanings of the text but may fail to grasp sociocultural nuances of the message; (3) to follow essential points of written discourse in areas of special interest or knowledge; to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target-language culture; (4) to write about a variety of topics with significant precision and in detail; to write most social and informal business correspondence; to describe and narrate personal experiences fully but have difficulty supporting points of view in written discourse; to write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Some misuse of vocabulary may still be evident, and style may still be foreign.

### 5.3.2. Suggested materials

Authentic articles from Vietnamese language newspapers, magazines, journals.  
Vietnamese literature and poetry.

## 6. Useful reference works on Vietnamese linguistics

### 6.1. *Phonetics and phonology*

Đoàn Thiện Thuật, *Ngữ âm tiếng Việt*, Nhà xuất bản Đại học và trung học chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội, 1977.

Thompson, Laurence C., *A Vietnamese Reference Grammar*, Edited by Stephen O'Harrow, University of Hawai'i Press, 1984-1985.

### 6.2. *Lexicology and semantics*

Đỗ Hữu Châu, *Các bình diện của từ và từ tiếng Việt*, Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, 1997.

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