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# Complete Vietnamese

Dana Healy



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# 1

## Rất hân hạnh được gặp cô I am very pleased to meet you

In this unit you will learn

- *How to greet someone*
- *How to introduce yourself and say where you are from*
- *How to form simple sentences and ask simple questions*

### Hội thoại hàng ngày *Everyday conversation*

David is a journalist. He arrived in Vietnam two months ago. He is learning Vietnamese and hopes to write a travel book about Vietnam. He has already made a few friends in Vietnam. He has just bumped into Nam in the street.

- Nam** À! Anh David! Chào anh!  
**David** Chào anh Nam!  
**Nam** Lâu rồi không gặp anh. Dạo này anh có khỏe không?  
**David** Cảm ơn. Tôi khỏe. Còn anh?  
**Nam** Cảm ơn. Tôi bình thường. À, xin lỗi. Tôi xin giới thiệu với anh, đây là Liên, bạn tôi.  
**David** Chào cô! Tên tôi là David. Rất hân hạnh được gặp cô.  
**Liên** Chào anh! Anh là người Mỹ, phải không?  
**David** Không phải. Tôi là người Anh.  
**Nam** Tôi khát quá! Chúng ta đi uống cà phê đi!

TR 2

**chào** *hello, to greet*  
**anh** *older brother (here: you)*  
**lâu (bao lâu?)** *long (how long?)*  
**rồi** *already*  
**không** *no, not*  
**gặp** *to meet*  
**đạo này** *these days*  
**khỏe** *healthy, strong (here: well, all right)*  
**Đạo này anh có khỏe không?** *How are things these days?*  
**cảm ơn** *thank you*  
**tôi** *I*  
**Còn anh?** *And what about you?*  
**bình thường** *normal, usual*  
**xin lỗi** *excuse me*  
**giới thiệu** *to introduce*  
**với** *with*  
**đây** *here, this*  
**là** *to be*  
**cô** *Miss*  
**bạn (bạn tôi)** *friend (my friend)*  
**tên (tên tôi)** *name (my name)*  
**rất** *very*  
**hân hạnh** *pleased*  
**Rất hân hạnh được gặp cô.** *I am very pleased to meet you (Miss).*  
**người Mỹ** *American*  
**Anh là người Mỹ, phải không?** *You are American, aren't you?*  
**không phải** *no*  
**người Anh** *English*  
**khát** *to be thirsty*  
**quá** *very*  
**uống** *to drink*  
**đi** *to go*  
**cà phê** *coffee*  
**Chúng ta đi uống cà phê đi!** *Let's go and have some coffee!*  
*(Let's go and drink some coffee)*

---

## Activities

### 1 True or false?

- a Liên và Nam gặp David.
- b Cô Liên là người Việt Nam.
- c David là người Mỹ.
- d Dạo này David khỏe.
- e Nam giới thiệu Liên.
- f Nam khát quá.

### 2 Try to fill in the missing sentences in the following conversation:

- a Chào anh!  
Chào cô!  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cảm ơn. Tôi khỏe. \_\_\_\_\_  
Cảm ơn. Tôi bình thường.
- b Chào bà!  
Chào ông!  
Xin giới thiệu với bà, đây là ông Green.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Translate into Vietnamese:

- a *Hello Mark! How are you?*  
*I am all right, thank you. What about you?*  
*I am well, thank you.*
- b *Allow me to introduce you to Mr Hai.*  
*I am very pleased to meet you, Mr Hai. My name is David.*  
*David McDonald.*
- c *Excuse me, are you American?*  
*No, I am English.*

## Terms of personal address

Vietnamese use terms denoting family relationships (kinship terms) when addressing each other (even when talking to a person to whom they are not related). In effect, they replace personal pronouns. The system is rather complicated and the choice of the correct expression depends on many things such as sex, age, social status, the family



relationship, the relationship between the speaker and the person he or she is addressing or the overall degree of intimacy between them.

It is very difficult for foreigners always to be sure which term to use and you will need a little bit more experience to get it right. However, it is possible to use Vietnamese effectively with a limited number of kinship terms, the most common of which are:

**anh** (literally, it means *older brother*; use it when addressing a young male; less formal)

**chị** (*older sister*, female equivalent of **anh**; less formal)

**em** (literally, it means *younger sibling* – brother or sister; use it when addressing children, both male and female, or anybody a lot younger than you are)

**ông** (means *grandfather*; use it when addressing an older man, can be translated as *Mr* or *Sir*, formal, respectful)

**bà** (means *grandmother*; use it when addressing a married woman or a woman much older than you are, formal, respectful)

**cô** (can be translated as *Miss*)

## Greeting

The Vietnamese greet each other using the word **chào** to *greet*. This is followed by either a name or a kinship term (or both). However, if you use **chào** only, it will be considered not very polite. For example:

<b>Chào Liên!</b>	<i>Hello Liên!</i>
<b>Chào cô!</b>	<i>Hello Miss!</i>
<b>Chào ông!</b>	<i>Hello Mister!</i>

**Chào** means both *hello* and *goodbye* and therefore the above examples also mean *Goodbye Liên!*, *Goodbye Miss!*, *Goodbye Mister!*

There are no Vietnamese equivalents for English *Good morning*, *Good evening*, *Good afternoon*, etc. and **chào** can be used at any time of the day.

## Insight

The easiest way to greet somebody in Vietnamese is to say **Xin chào!** This way you avoid having to go through a daunting process of trying to decide which kinship term to use and still be polite. You can also greet a group of people in this way without having to choose the correct kinship term for each individual in the group. Later on, when you get to know a person better, you will find it easier to select the appropriate form of address.

## Grammatical points

A word of encouragement before you begin!

You are entering the exciting world of Vietnamese grammar. You will be pleased to hear that Vietnamese grammar is relatively simple (with the emphasis on relatively, which is just as well, given the difficulty of Vietnamese pronunciation). Vietnamese is an isolating language, which means that the words do not change according to cases, they do not take any endings. Words are put together like a mosaic. Each grammatical category has its special grammatical particle (or particles) that is simply added to the sentence. Word order is crucial and each of the grammatical particles has a strictly determined position in a sentence.

### 1 Tôi là / am

A simple statement in Vietnamese is not very different from a simple sentence in English. It follows the logical word order of subject–verb–object. In the following sentences the subject is joined to the object by the copula **là to be**.

Tôi là nhà báo. *I am a journalist.*  
(I) (to be) (journalist)

Đây là ông Hùng. *This is Mr Hùng.*  
(This, here) (to be) (Mr Hùng)

Cô Liên là người Việt Nam. *Miss Liên is Vietnamese.*  
(Miss Liên) (to be) (Vietnamese)

Đây là bạn tôi. *This is my friend.*  
Tên tôi là David. *My name is David.*

## 2 Tôi không phải là *I am not*

Negation in Vietnamese is formed using the negative particle **không** *no, not*. It precedes the verb being negated. In sentences with **là**, **không** is used in combination with **phải**.

Tôi không phải là nhà báo. *I am not a journalist.*  
Đây không phải là bạn tôi. *This is not my friend.*  
Cô Liên không phải là người Việt Nam. *Miss Liên is not Vietnamese.*  
Tên tôi không phải là David. *My name is not David.*

## 3 Questions

There are several ways of creating a question in Vietnamese. One of the easiest questions is an affirmative question. Let's imagine you want to make sure and ask *This is Mr Hung, isn't it?*

In Vietnamese you say

**Đây là ông Hùng, phải không?**

And similarly

**Cô Liên là người Việt Nam,  
phải không?**

*Miss Liên is Vietnamese,  
isn't she?*

As you can see, this type of question has the tag phrase **phải không** (or **có phải không**) at the end.

### Insight

It is easy to forget that negative sentences and questions with **là** (*to be*) use **không phải** instead of just **không**. Don't make this mistake.

## 4 Nationality

Stating your nationality is very simple in Vietnamese. The word **người** (*person*) is used followed by the country's name:

<b>người Anh</b>	<i>English</i>
<b>người Việt Nam</b>	<i>Vietnamese</i>
<b>người Pháp</b>	<i>French</i>
<b>người Mỹ</b>	<i>American</i>
<b>người Đức</b>	<i>German</i>
<b>người Trung Quốc</b>	<i>Chinese</i>
<b>người Nhật (Nhật Bản)</b>	<i>Japanese</i>
<b>người Thái Lan</b>	<i>Thai</i>
<b>người Ca-na-đa</b>	<i>Canadian</i>

When you want to ask someone *Which country are you from?* you ask:

<b>Anh/Chị</b>	<b>là</b>	<b>người</b>	<b>nước</b>	<b>nào?</b>
<i>(You)</i>	<i>(to be)</i>	<i>(person)</i>	<i>(country)</i>	<i>(which)</i>

## Hội thoại 2 *Conversation 2*

You should now be able to understand the following conversation between Bình and Mark.

TR 2, 1.26

**Bình** Chào anh.  
**Mark** Chào chị. Tôi là Mark. Còn chị, tên chị là gì?  
**Bình** Tên tôi là Bình. Rất hân hạnh được gặp anh.  
**Mark** Tôi cũng rất hân hạnh được gặp chị. Đây là Peter, bạn tôi.  
**Bình** Chào anh Peter.  
**Peter** Chào chị Bình.  
**Bình** Anh là người nước nào?  
**Peter** Tôi là người Anh.  
**Bình** Và anh Mark? Anh cũng là người Anh, phải không?  
**Mark** Không, tôi không phải là người Anh như Peter, tôi là người Ca-na-đa.

QUICK VOCAB

**tên chị** *your name* (addressing a woman)  
**gì?** *what?*  
**cũng** *also*  
**và** *and*  
**như** *like, such as*

## Exercises

- 1 Introduce the following people to Mr Howard:
  - a *Mr Hoang, your friend*
  - b *Miss Lan, she is Vietnamese*
  - c *Mr Herbert, he is German*
  - d *Miss Sato, she is Japanese*
  - e *Mrs Douglas, she is American*

2 Look at the example, then create questions from the following sentences:

**Chị Sato là người Nhật.**

**– Chị Sato là người Nhật, phải không?**

- a Cô Lan là người Việt Nam.
- b Ông Hà là người Trung Quốc.
- c Ông Green là người Anh.
- d Bà Robinson là người Mỹ.
- e Tên chị là Tuyết.
- f Anh Pronvit là người Thái.
- g Đây là bà Mai.

3 Give Vietnamese equivalents:

*Is Kurt German?*

*This is Mr Brown, isn't it?*

*Is Miss Sato Japanese?*

*Is Mr Chang Chinese?*

*Ralf is German, isn't he?*

*Mr Chang is Japanese, isn't he?*

*Is this David?*

4 Answer these questions, using the following example:

**Đây là ông Khoa, phải không? (ông Hà)**

**Không, đây không phải là ông Khoa, đây là ông Hà.**

- a **Chị Loan là người Trung Quốc, phải không?  
(người Việt Nam)**
- b **Đây là anh Mark, phải không? (Richard)**
- c **Gerard là người Đức, phải không? (người Pháp)**
- d **Anh Nam là người Anh, phải không? (người Ca-na-đa)**
- e **Đây là chị Hoa, phải không? (chị Nguyệt)**

5 Ask what nationality the following people are and reply, using the country of origin suggested in brackets:

**Bình (Việt Nam)**

**Bình là người nước nào? Bình là người Việt Nam.**

Maurice (Pháp)  
Peter (Ca-na-đa)  
Pornvit (Thái Lan)  
Ulrich (Đức)  
Natasha (Nga)  
Minh (Việt Nam)

**6** Give Vietnamese equivalents:

- a** *Hello, I am Helen.*  
*Hello, my name is Hoa. I am very pleased to meet you. You are American, aren't you?*  
*No, I am English.*
- b** *Excuse me, where are you from?*  
*I am German. And what about you? Where are you from?*  
*I am French.*
- c** *Oh, hello, Jane!*  
*Hello Nam!*  
*How are you?*  
*I am fine, thank you. And what about you?*  
*I am also all right.*
- d** *Excuse me, you are Mr Howard, aren't you?*  
*Yes, I am Mr Howard.*  
*My name is John, John Francis. I am very pleased to meet you.*

**7** Fill in the missing diacritics (accents):

**Đây là anh Nam. Anh Nam là người nước nào? Anh Nam là người Việt Nam. Dao này chị Hoa có khỏe không? Cảm ơn, tôi bình thường. Chào anh. Rất hân hạnh được gặp anh. Anh là người Mỹ phải không. Tôi không phải là người Mỹ, tôi là người Anh.**

## SUMMARY

At the end of the first unit, you should be able to do the following:

- 1 Handle basic greetings and introductions  
**Chào anh! Anh có khỏe không?**  
**Cám ơn chị, tôi khỏe.**  
**Tôi rất vui được gặp anh.**  
**Xin giới thiệu với anh, đây là ông Chung.**  
**Tên tôi là Peter.**  
**Tên chị là gì?**
- 2 State your nationality and ask about other people's nationality.  
For example:  
**Nhà báo Tuấn là người nước nào?**  
**Tôi là người Nhật nhưng bạn tôi là người Pháp.**  
**Chị Lan là người Việt Nam.**  
**Cô Mai không phải là người Trung Quốc.**  
**Bạn tôi không phải là người Nhật, bạn tôi là người Đức.**
- 3 Create simple Vietnamese sentences and negative versions of them:  
**Anh Hùng là sinh viên.**  
**Bà Mai là bác sĩ nhưng chị Đào không phải là bác sĩ.**  
**Chị Tuyết là bạn tôi.**  
**Tên tôi không phải là David.**  
**Đây không phải là khách sạn.**