

# LANGUAGE

## LANGUAGES

- The people of Vietnam speak Vietnamese as a native language. In its early history, Vietnamese writing used Chinese characters. In the 13th century, the Vietnamese developed their own set of characters called Chữ nôm.
- During the French colonial period, Quốc ngữ, the romanized Vietnamese alphabet used for spoken Vietnamese, which was developed in 17th century by Jesuit Alexandre De Rhodes and several other Catholic missionaries, became popular and replaced the Chinese characters (chữ nôm), which had been the unofficial written form used for centuries.
- Various other languages are spoken by several minority groups in Vietnam. The most common of these are Tày, Mường, Khmer, Chinese, Nùng, and H'Mông.
- Foreign languages: English, French, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean..., which are taught at schools and foreign language centers.
- The most popular foreign language: English and Chinese, which can be found easily on street billboards, hotels, restaurants and menus in big cities such as Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh and growing tourist places such as Da Nang or Nha Trang.
- The most popular languages for tourist guides: English, Chinese, French, Russian and Japanese.

## DIALECTS

Vietnamese is spoken differently depending on geographic location. Each region and province has its distinct dialect. Even though grammatical differences are negligible, Vietnamese varies greatly in tone, accents and even vocabulary. The Hanoi accent is considered the “standard” Vietnamese.

## TONES

The Vietnamese language has a reputation for being fiendishly difficult to master. With each syllable, there are six different tones that can be used, which change the definition and it often makes it difficult for foreigners to pick up the language. The 6 tones of Vietnamese are:

- Normal level:** ma (ghost)
- High rising:** má (mother, used in the South)
- Low falling:** mà (but)
- Dipping- rising:** mả (tomb)
- High rising glottalized:** mã (horse)
- Low glottalized:** mạ (young rice plant)

## COMMON PHRASES

Hello	Xin chào	How much is it?	Bao nhiêu vậy?
Goodbye	Tạm biệt	Yes	Vâng (North)/Dạ (South)
Thank you	Cám ơn	No	Không
I (don't) understand	Tôi (không) hiểu	Do you speak English?	Bạn có nói tiếng Anh không?
I understand	Tôi hiểu	Sorry	Xin lỗi