

Center for Vietnamese Philosophy, Culture & Society

REVISIT VIETNAMESE FORMS OF ADDRESS

A presentation by Ngô Thanh Nhàn, *Nôm Studies*

Fox School of Business, 7th Floor, Alter Hall

Conducting Business in Vietnam: Vietnamese Language, Culture & Politics

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Self introduction

- ◎ Ngô Thanh Nhân, *Ph.D. Linguistics*, 1984, New York University.
- ◎ NYU Linguistic String Project, *Medical Language Processing*, 1984-present.
- ◎ Visiting fellow, *Nôm Studies*, Temple University Center for Vietnamese Philosophy, Culture & Society, 2006-present.
- ◎ Đàn Tranh artist, teacher at *Folk Arts – Cultural Treasures Charter School*, Philadelphia, 2009-present.
- ◎ Board member, *Mekong NYC*, Southeast Asian community organization, 2012-present.
- ◎ Board member, *Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign*, 2005-present.
- ◎ Board member, *Institute for Vietnamese Culture & Education*, 2001-present.

Self introduction...

- ◎ Ngô Thanh Nhân, President, *Vinamex Corporation*, 1984-1995, dba. *VINEXCO*, *Vietnam Arts & Crafts*, and *Vietnam Publications*.
- ◎ Major operations under the CFR Embargo: money transfer and freight forwarding of gift packages from Vietnamese Americans nationally to their relatives in Vietnam, under the supervision of OFAC (Office of Foreign Asset Control & Regulation).
- ◎ *Freight consolidator*: sole contracts with major Southeast Asian air and sea carriers from the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia to Vietnam one way.
- ◎ *Money transfer*: via the Vietnamese local offices of the Ministry of Health through US and French banks.
- ◎ *Publications* from Vietnam: newspapers, dictionaries, books, and artifacts under the 1988 Berman Amendment.

Personal pronouns

- Personal pronouns in Vietnamese include simple pronouns and terms of family and age relationship.
- Simple pronouns are not many, but social relation pronouns are many and quite complex.
- First exercise: I would like to divide the participants into two groups, each facing the other. We will just use “**Chào bà**” to your female partner, and “**Chào ông**” to your male partner. This is a common greeting that expresses respect for both genders in general.
- The next sentence “**Bà có khỏe không?**” to your female friend, and “**Ông có khỏe không?**” to your male friend.

Personal pronouns

- “**bà**” is also “you” to address your grandmother. And “**ông**” to address your grandfather. Now it is used as “you” in addressing to show respect to newly acquainted friend.
- On a podium, the Vietnamese speaker would say “**Thưa quý bà quý ông**” [Respected ladies and gentlemen]. “**quý**” [respected, precious] in this case implies plural.
- Personal pronouns in Vietnamese are genderless, and so colloquial, that terms of family relations have been extensively used, which are required within one's family and clan, to enrich social relations.

Personal pronouns

- In conversation, we usually start with
- “Chào bà” or “Chào ông”
- Followed immediately by “Bà có khoẻ không?” or “Ông có khoẻ không?”
- A simple reply would be “Tôi khoẻ.” [I am fine].

— Chào bà Bà có khoẻ không? — Tôi khoẻ.	— Chào ông. Ông có khoẻ không? — Tôi khoẻ.
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Personal pronouns – 1st

- First person singular, “I”: **ta**, **tôi**, **tao**, **qua**, **min**, **tớ**, **choa**,...
- Only “**tôi**” is an appropriate “I” today.
- “**ta**” is rarely used as “I”. It is not used in conversation. It is used in poetry, and performing arts.
- First person plural, “we”: **ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng tôi** “we, exclusive”, **chúng tao** “we, exclusive”, ...

Personal pronouns – 2nd

- Second person singular, “you”: *mày*, or *mày*, or *mi* “you, familiar/colloquial”.
- *ngươi*, *bậu*, *bay*,... are used in performing arts and poetry.
- Second person plural, “you”: *chúng mày*, *chúng bay* “you, familiar/colloquial”, *?chúng mi*,
- *các ngươi*, **chúng ngươi*, *mấy bậu*, **chúng bậu*,... now rare, are only used in performing arts.

Personal pronouns – 3rd

- Third person singular “she/he”:
- *nó* “s/he, most popular, familiar”
- *hắn* is used today for “he”, but from time to time, “she”, esp. in some Central Vietnamese dialects
- *va*, *y*, *nghe*, are archaic, and can be heard in poetry or in theaters
- *?họ* “s/he”, archaic.
- Third person plural “they”: *chúng nó* or *tụi nó* or *bọn nó* “they, familiar”,
- *?chúng hắn*, *tụi hắn* or *bọn hắn* “they, familiar”

三千字解音 Tam thiên tự

- 三千字解音 *Tam Thiên Tự Giải Âm* "Three Thousand Hán Ideograms in Vietnamese Tongue" was printed in the mid-autumn of 1831, 皇朝辛卯年孟秋上浣新刊 *Hoàng triều tân mảo niên mạnh thu thượng hoán tân san*, by 金馬行余吳時任 *Kim Mã Hành Dư Ngô Thì Nhậm*. The woodblocks were kept by 富文堂藏板 *Phú Văn Đường tàng bản*.
- This is one of the oldest textbooks for Hán-Nôm students. The surviving copies have suffered severe damage.
- There are about 52 terms of family relationship in Vietnam around the mid-19th Century. Most of them are still used today.

Terms of relationship

1. 子: 昆 *tử: con* "child" (#5, 4a.2.5),
2. 孫: 招 *tôn: cháu* "grandchild" (#6, 4a.2.6),
3. 女: 媯 *nữ: gái* "daughter" (#27, 4a.5.6)
4. 男: 偕 *nam: giai* "son" (#28, 4a.5.7)
5. 老: 隸 *lǎo: già* "old; elder" (#57, 4b.5.1)
6. 童: 雛 *đồng: trẻ* "kid" (#58, 4b.5.2)
7. 伯: 博 *bá: bác* "older uncle" (#63, 4b.5.7),
8. 姨: 姨 *di: dì* "aunt on the mother side" (#64, 4b.5.8),
9. 婦: 媵 *phụ: vợ* "wife" (#103, 5b.1.5),
10. 夫: □ *phu: chồng* "husband" (#104, 5b.1.6),
11. 妹: 媵 *muội: em* "younger sister" (#133, 5b.5.7),
12. 姐: 姊 *tỉ: chị* "older sister" (#134, 6a.1.1),

Terms of relationship

13. 師:柴 *sư: thầy* "teacher" (#229, 7a.4.5),
14. 友:伴 *hữu: bạn* "friend" (#230, 7a.4.6),
15. 兄:英 *huynh: anh* "older brother" (#313, 8b.1.5),
16. 嫂:姊 *tâu: trị* "elder brother's wife, older sister-in-law" (#314, 8b.1.6),
17. 哥:英 *kha: anh* "older brother" (#345, 9a.1.2),
18. 叔:注 *thúc: chú* "younger uncle on the father side" (#346, 9a.1.3),
19. 嬸:嬸 *thâm: thím* "younger brother's wife" (#391, 9b.2.6),
20. 姑:姑 *cô: cô* "aunt on the father side" (#392, 9b.2.7),
21. 妻:媼 *thê: vợ* "wife" (#483, 10b.5.7),

Terms of relationship

22. 妾:侯 *thiếp: hầu* "concubine" (#484, 11a.1.1),
23. 婿:婿 *té: rể* "son in law" (#543, 11b.4.4),
24. 婚:妯 *hôn: rêu* "daughter in-law" (#544, 11b.4.5),
25. 漢:彡 *hán: đũa* "a guy" (#571, 12a.3.4),
26. 郎:扌 *lang: chàng* "he (close friend)" (#572, 12a.3.5),
27. 母:媯 *mẫu: mẹ* "mother" (#579, 12a.4.5),
28. 兒:昆 *nhi: con* "child" (#580, 12a.4.6),
29. 舅:舅 *cữu: cậu* "(younger) uncle on the mother side" (#711, 12a.3.4),
30. 爺:翁 *gia: ông* "grandfather-aged elder" (#712, 12a.3.5),

Terms of relationship

31. 娘:娘 *nuong: nàng* "she (close friend)" (#781, 15a.3.4),
32. 媼:媼 *âu: cụ* "she (elder)" (#782, 15a.3.5),
33. 翁:翁 *ông: ông* "grandfather" (#961, 17b.4.2),
34. 姪:詔 *điệt: cháu* "grandchild" (#962, 17b.4.3),
35. 奴:侈於 *nô: đưa ở* "servant" (#1154, 20b.1.6),
36. 僮:小童 *đồng: tiểu đồng* "young servant" (#1155, 20b.1.7),
37. 朋:伴 *bằng: bạn* "friend" (#1560, 26a.4.6),
38. 父:吒 *phụ: cha* "father" (#1561, 26a.4.7),
39. 弟:媵 *đệ: em* "younger brother" (#1761, 29a.3.4),
40. 甥:詔 *sanh: cháu* "nephew" (#1762, 29a.3.5), 45a.1.4),

Terms of relationship

41. 婆:婆 *bà: bà* "grandma" (#1801, 29b.4.2),
42. 孀:乳 *nāi: vú* "respected elder woman; wet nurse" (#1802, 29b.4.3),
43. 翁:翁補 *gūi: ông bô* "respected elder man; husband of wet nurse" (#1803, 29b.4.4),
44. 姥:媪 *mô: mẹ dà* "respected elder woman" (#1804, 29b.4.5),
45. 婢:昆喙 *tì: con đòì* "female servant" (#2216, 35b.3.4),
46. 嫡:昆奇 *đích: con cả* "eldest son" (#2459, 39a.3.2),
47. 媪:昆妯 *lí: con râu* "daughter in law" (#2460, 39a.3.3),

Terms of relationship

48. 媳: 昆媽 *con: con gái* "young lady" (#2682, 42a.5.1), 媼:
荷妻 *mô: đàn ông* "?" (#2683, 42a.5.2),
49. 靠: 娘 *kháo: nương* "?" (#2867, 45a.1.4),
50. 耆: 老 *kỳ: lão* "old man" (#2870, 45a.1.7),
51. 耆: 翁 *câu: ông* "elder" (#2871, 45a.2.1),
52. 贅: 媾 *chúé: làm chúé* "to do son-in-law duty" (#2737,
45a.2.7),...

The above are taken from *Tam thiên tự giải dịch quốc ngữ*
“Three Thousand Ideograms, translated into Nôm and
romanized quốc ngữ” 1915.

Terms of relationship

- In general, all the above terms of family relationship can be used as second person singular, for “you”, with *tôi* “I”.
- For example, after a while, you may greet your friend as
- “Chào chị” for female friend (rather than “Chào bà”), or “Chào anh” for male friend (instead of “Chào ông”)
- Followed immediately by “Chị có khoẻ không?” or “Anh có khoẻ không?”
- And you will get a reply “Tôi khoẻ.”

— Chào chị. Chị có khoẻ không? — Tôi khoẻ.	— Chào anh. Anh có khoẻ không? — Tôi khoẻ.
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Terms of relationship

- If your relationship with your friend continues, you may have to change reference to yourself as “**anh**” for “I” (male) or “**chị**” for “I” (female), if you are older than your friend, and “**em**” for “I” if you're younger.
- The respect and age relations kick in.
- Most convenience for people older than you are, you can safely use “**bác**” (older uncle of your father side). Today, “**bác**” for “you” is popular for both male and female, vs. “**tôi**” for “I”.
- Thus, now you would greet “**Chào bác. Bác có khỏe không?**”, and you would get a reply “**Tôi khỏe.**”.

成泰丁未春

黎朝阮相公家訓歌

觀文堂藏板



R. 95
64

排歌咄 婦咄 混

撻卷冊、物、晒、齣、擬、係、少、歌、咄、妓、時、輒、
粉、輪、喻、極、筆、硯、拱、人、心、及、訶、天、理、帝、
因、從、且、錄、包、國、語、少、排、歌、咄、婦、咄、混、
啞、啞、湟、於、朱、坤、拯、賊、多、過、多、言、齒、帝、
啞、纏、落、美、苗、扯、挫、形、容、停、攜、檣、際、曉、
沒、放、仁、沛、適、中、淡、毀、淡、銀、拱、空、係、之、
欺、罅、蚰、涿、奚、疎、矧、啗、辱、牙、女、碾、典、騎、

Basic: nhập gia vấn huý

- Sheet 6, side A, 8th column from the right-hand-side contains two seven-syllable verses:

册固孳入家问諱

Sách cố chữ: “nhập gia vấn huý”

欺訥能沛技晾謙

Khi nói năng phải kỹ kiêng khem...

Wisdom from the Classics: “Entering into a family, first inquire the taboos,

When you speak, you have to be exact, careful and avoiding taboos.

Terms of relationship

- Nguyễn Trãi's advice is useful today. Before you change how you would address your friend as you have become closer, as him or her first how s/he would like to be addressed.
- Some elders prefer to be addressed as “anh” or “chi” while they may be more than 10 years older than you, ... and you may find yourself at odd with their children (who are about your age). But do not worry.

Terms of relationship

- In formal situation, you will address your friend by their title, esp. in executive or high administrative circles. For example, “**chào Chủ tịch nước Trương Tấn Sang**”, or “**Chào bác Chủ tịch**”.
- Vietnamese do not use last name when you address them in public. You may greet them as “**chào Bác Sang**” not “**chào Bác Trương**”.

Terms of relationship

- All terms of family relationship are common nouns. They follow the rule of grammar.
- For plural, “**chào các bác**”, “**chào các anh chị**”, ... with *các* as a plural particle.
- To make a third person, one adds “**ấy**” after a term of family relationship, so that “**anh ấy**” (he, male), “**chị ấy**” (she, female), “**ông ấy**” (he, male), “**bác ấy**” (s/he).
- Nguyễn Đình Hoà has a great example from the southern dialect, “**ông**” (you) vs. “**ông**” (he), “**bà**” (you) vs. **bà** (she), ... where the demonstrative particle “**ấy**” changes the tone of the previous word to *hỏi* “low rising tone”.

Personal pronouns

- “bà” is also “you” to address your grandmother. And “ông” to address your grandfather. Now it is used as “you” in addressing with respect newly acquainted friend.
- On a podium, the Vietnamese speaker would say “Thưa quý bà quý ông” [Respected ladies and gentlemen]. “quý” [respected, precious] in this case implies plural.
- Personal pronouns in Vietnamese are genderless, and so colloquial, that the Vietnamese use terms of family relations, which are required within each family, to enrich social relations.

Personal pronouns

- First person singular, “I”: **ta**, **tôi**, **tao**, **qua**, **min**, **tớ**, **choa**,...
- Only “tôi”
- First person plural, “we”: **ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng tôi** “we, exclusive”, **chúng tao** “we, exclusive”, ...

Personal pronouns

- First person singular, “I”: **ta**, **tôi**, **tao**, **thiếp**, **qua**, **min**, **tớ**, **choa**,...
- First person plural, “we”: **ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng ta** “we, inclusive”, **chúng tôi** “we, exclusive”, **chúng tao** “we, exclusive”, ...
- Second person singular, “you”: **mày**, **mày**, **mi**, **ngươi**, **bậu**, **bay**,...
- Second person plural, “you”: **chúng mày**, **chúng bay**, ***chúng mi**, **các ngươi**, ***chúng ngươi**, **mấy bậu**, ***chúng bậu**,...
- Third person singular “she/he”: **nó**, **hắn**, **va**, **y**, **ngủ**, ?**họ**
- Third person plural “they”: **chúng nó**, ?**chúng hắn**,

三千字解音 Tam thiên tự

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- This is one of the oldest textbooks for Hán-Nôm students. The surviving copies have suffered severe damage.
- Today, the *National Library of Vietnam* has 3 copies stored in its Hán-Nôm collection, with the catalogue id [R.193](#), [R.468](#) and [R.493](#). The *Institute of Hán Nôm Studies* has one copy, catalogue id [Nc 190](#).

Thank you...

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Vô danh

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