

SOME BASIC VIETNAMESE GRAMMAR FOR FOREIGNERS STUDYING VIETNAMESE IN VIETNAM

Le Van Hau

University of Cuu Long, Vietnam

Email: levanhau@mku.edu.vn

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2025.1067>

Received: 16 July 2025/Published: 21 August 2025

ABSTRACT

Vietnam is a developing country in many fields. Cultural and linguistic exchange is a matter of concern. Many countries come to Vietnam to learn Vietnamese for language exchange and communication. However, in terms of grammar, there are many factors that need to be researched and deepened. Grammar is a very important part of any language in any country in the world. In Vietnamese as well, to be able to use it clearly, coherently, and easily understood by the communication object, a certain grammatical structure is required. For Vietnamese grammar, an important point that cannot be ignored is understanding the sentence structure. Although each language has its own characteristics, Vietnamese has similarities in sentence structure construction. The article focuses mainly on grammatical structure, tones, personal pronouns and basic tenses in Vietnamese.

Keywords: Basic Vietnamese grammar, foreigners learning Vietnamese.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese is a monosyllabic language, so syllables are pronounced separately. Therefore, Vietnamese has words with one syllable such as "sach", "po"... but there are many words that are made up of two syllables such as "vuoi vui", "hac phuc", "chat chat"... Therefore, foreigners who want to learn Vietnamese to pronounce well must first pronounce each syllable and each group of syllables well. For example, "con on" must clearly pronounce "toi" and "muon". For foreigners who are just learning, they should speak slowly, clearly, each syllable, then speak faster and faster, and they will form a habit and pronounce clearly and well. The same goes for sentence structure, which is very important. When you pronounce correctly and write the sentence correctly, the grammar will be written correctly. This shows that pronunciation is very important in Vietnamese because if you say one word incorrectly, Vietnamese people will not understand, while if you say the grammar incorrectly, Vietnamese people can still understand. When learning Vietnamese, the most difficult thing for foreigners is the tones or punctuation marks such as: sharp, question, falling, heavy, hanging, horizontal. Vietnamese is one of the languages with the most tones in the world. When pronouncing the tones incorrectly, it will lead to different meanings.

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The researcher focuses on grammar, sentence structure, tones, and syllables based on the basic Vietnamese language foundation. This helps Vietnamese learners to learn more easily, pronounce better, have correct grammar, and clearly distinguish tones in Vietnamese.

3. SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The researcher uses the method of analysis on the corpus of sentences and words in Vietnamese. From there, it helps foreigners have a comprehensive view of sentences and words to use grammar correctly with the function of sentence components. The researcher uses the method of statistics and classification of personal pronouns and punctuation marks. From there, it helps learners clearly distinguish punctuation marks, which are singular and plural pronouns.

4. RESEARCH CONTENT

4.1 Sentence structure – Basic Vietnamese grammar

Sentence structure in Vietnamese is one of the most basic grammar that you need to learn when you first start learning Vietnamese. In fact, the sentence structure will be quite difficult if analyzed carefully in many cases, but basically, the sentence structure will have a structure quite similar to English, which is subject + verb + (object) + (adverb) and has the sentence components of topic, complement, and interjection.

Note:

- In a sentence, adverbs can appear at the beginning or end of the sentence. In some cases, sentences do not necessarily have to have adverbs.
- The object here can be one person or many people, things, phenomena.

For example:

- I go to school.

I	As a subject. In Vietnamese there are many ways to say “I”. You can find out in the section on personal pronouns.
Go	Is a verb. In Vietnamese, only action words are considered verbs.
Study	As Object. Indicates an activity

- I love you, Mom

(In which: “I” is the subject; “love” is the verb; and “mother” is the object).

- My father goes to work at the factory and usually comes home every evening.

(In which: “My father” is the subject; “goes to work” is the verb and “and usually comes home every evening” is considered an adverb).

4.2 Personal pronouns

The pronouns in Vietnamese are very rich and diverse. They include the following word classes:

- Personal pronouns: I, Tao, May, It, He...
- Nouns indicating kinship relationships: Mr., Mrs., Father, Mother, Uncle, Aunt, Brother, Sister, Brother, Sister, Child, Grandchild... In Vietnamese grammar, personal pronouns include 3 main persons: First person, Second person and Third person.

In which:

- First person: includes the pronoun used to refer to oneself.
- Second person: used to refer to the person being spoken to.

- Third person: refers to people who do not participate in the communication but are mentioned in the communication to refer to people or things.

Below are some personal pronouns, the author has listed:

Level	Singular	Many
1	I (when speaking to a peer or partner)	We are
	I (used when talking to close friends)	We/Us
	You (If you are a little younger than the listener)	We/Us
2	You (If the person is the same age as you)	You
	He (If the person is a little older than you and is male)	He
	You (If the person is a little younger than you)	She
3	She/Her (If the person being referred to is female)	They/Them/People
	He (If the person being referred to is male)	
	She (If the person in question is a little younger than you)	

Punctuation marks in Vietnamese have many functions, helping sentences to be complete, have many expressive values, and show the emotions of the speaker and listener. In addition, punctuation marks show the connection of sentences together into a coherent paragraph, forming a complete grammar in Vietnamese.

In addition, there are many other personal pronouns divided by gender, age and relationship between the listener and the speaker.

For example:

- I love you very much (The speaker is a young grandchild addressing his grandmother)
- Are you well? (The person being asked is male and the same age as the speaker's father)
- She is very beautiful (The person being referred to is female) is mentioned in communication to refer to people or things.

4.3. Basic tenses in Vietnamese

4.3.1. Present

With the present tense structure in Vietnamese, we will combine it with adverbs indicating time in the present such as: "Now", "now", "today", "tomorrow", "yesterday", "this morning", "this afternoon", "tonight", ...

This usage is applied to things and events that are happening at the time of speaking or around the time of speaking.

Structure:

- Subject + is + object.
- Adverb indicating the present + subject + object.

For example:

- I am working.

- My child is currently a medical student.
- I am in a meeting now.

The simple present tense (English: Simple present or Present simple) is a tense in modern English. This tense describes a general, general action that is repeated many times or an obvious truth or an action that takes place in the present time. It is called simple because the structure consists of a single word (such as write or writes), different from other present tenses such as the present continuous tense (is writing) and the present perfect tense (has written). For subjects I/You/We/They, the verb when using this tense will be in the infinitive form, not conjugated. On the contrary, for subjects in the third person singular such as She/He/It, the verb is conjugated by adding the suffix -s or -es at the end of the verb. The suffix -es is used with words ending in "o", "ch", "sh", "x", "s", "z". For verbs ending in "y" preceded by a consonant, change the "y" to "i" and then add the suffix "es".

4.3.2. Past

To express what happened in the past, we just need to add the word “had” before the verb or add adverbs indicating past time in the sentence.

Reference structure:

Subject + had + verb + (object) + (adverb)

Example:

- Yesterday I did two homeworks
- My sister went on a trip yesterday.

Describes an action or state that happened at a certain time in the past. The action or state may have ended completely or may still continue to the present.

For example:

- She had dinner at 7 o'clock.
- When I found out the truth, I was shocked.
- I have studied Vietnamese for 2 years.

Describes an action in the past but the time of occurrence is unknown, the result of that action has an impact on the present.

For example:

- I have finished all my homework, so now I can watch TV.
- He has lost his wallet.

Describes an action that has happened many times from the past to the present.

For example:

- You have watched this movie 5 times.
- We have been here many times.

Describes an action that has just happened not long ago.

For example:

- I just saw him in that store.
- I just saw this movie yesterday

4.3.3. Future

For the future tense in Vietnamese, Vietnamese people often use the word “shall” before the verb or add future adverbs “Tomorrow”, “Next year”, ... to describe events and phenomena that will happen in the future.

- We will travel tomorrow.
- I will try my best for the next test.
- Thanh will visit me tomorrow afternoon.

- Today, my mother didn't go to the gym.
- I have never drunk alcohol.
- I don't like you.
- He is a very good person.
- I haven't done my homework.

5. CONCLUSION

Grammar is a very important component in Vietnamese. To write correctly and understand the meaning correctly, grammar must have a tight sentence arrangement, clear and easy-to-understand language, and limit the use of words with multiple meanings to avoid misinterpretation of sentences. In addition, grammar structure must be mastered as a certain formula, from which when writing sentences, forming sentences will become more coherent and make the recipient more comfortable and relaxed in communication.

REFERENCES

- [1] Huu Dat - Le Thi Nhung. (2023), Vietnamese for Foreigners, Literature Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- [2] Various authors. (2022), Basic Vietnamese, Thoi Dai Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- [3] Nguyen Van Hue. (2007), Vietnamese Textbook for Foreigners, Education Publishing House, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- [4] Le Thi Hiep. (2018), Vietnamese for Foreigners, The Gioi Publishing House, Vietnam.
- [5] Doan Tien Luc - Tran Thi Hong Lieu - Hoang Kim Ngoc - Ngo Bich Thu - Pham Thi Thu Giang. (2024), Vietnamese 1 2 3, The Gioi Publishing House, Hanoi, Vietnam