Center for Vietnamese Philosophy, Culture & Society

REVISIT VIETNAMESE FORMS OF ADDRESS

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Fox School of Business, 7th Floor, Alter Hall
Conducting Business in Vietnam: Vietnamese Language, Culture & Politics
September 29, 2015, MBA Common, Temple University
Self introduction

- Board member, *Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign*, 2005-present.
Self introduction...


- 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.


- *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 khoẻ không?” to your female friend, and “Ông có khoẻ không?” to your male friend.
“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 khỏe không?” or “Ông có khỏe không?”
- A simple reply would be “Tôi khỏe.” [I am fine].

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

- First person singular, “I”: ta, tôi, tao, qua, min, tó, 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”: mà, or mà, or mì “you, familiar/colloquial”.
- nguôi, bâu, bay,… are used in performing arts and poetry.
- Second person plural, “you”: chúng mà, chúng bay “you, familiar/colloquial”, ?chúng mì,
- các nguôi, *chúng nguôi, mà bâu, *chúng bâu,… now rare, are only used in performing arts.
Personal pronouns – 3rd

- Third person singular “she/he”:
  - nó “s/he, most popular, familiar”
  - hẩn is used today for “he”, but from time to time, “she”, esp. in some Central Vietnamese dialects
  - va, y, nghị, are archaic, and can be heard in poetry or in theaters
- ’họ “s/he”, archaic.
- Third person plural “they”: chúng nó or tục nó or bọn nó “they, familiar”
- ’chúng hẩn, tục hẩn or bọn hẩn “they, familiar”
三千字解音 Tam thiện tự

- 三千字解音 Tam Thiền 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 mão niên mạnh thu thương hoán tân san, by 金馬行余吳時任 Kim Mã Hành Dự Ngô Thị Nhậm. The woodblocks were kept by 富文堂藏板 Phú Văn Dương 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 tữ: con "child" (#5, 4a.2.5),
2. 孫: 邑 tông: cháu "grandchild" (#6, 4a.2.6),
3. 女: 嫩 nữ: gái "daughter" (#27, 4a.5.6)
4. 男: 偕 nam: giai "son" (#28, 4a.5.7)
5. 老: 窟 lão: già "old; elder" (#57, 4b.5.1)
6. 童: 雉 đồng: trẻ "kid" (#58, 4b.5.2)
7. 伯: 慈 bá: bác "older uncle" (#63, 4b.5.7),
8. 姨: 姨 di: dì "aunt on the mother side" (#64, 4b.5.8),
9. 婦: 嫂 phù: vợ "wife" (#103, 5b.1.5),
10. 夫: 夫 phu: chồng "husband" (#104, 5b.1.6),
11. 妹: 嫅 mươi: em "younger sister" (#133, 5b.5.7),
12. 姐: 姊 tị: chị "older sister" (#134, 6a.1.1),
Terms of relationship

13. 師: 柴 su: 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: 嬸 tậu: trì "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 thức: chú "younger uncle on the father side" (#346, 9a.1.3),
19. 嬸: 嬸 thắm: 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: 婦 the: vợ "wife" (#483, 10b.5.7),
Terms of relationship

22. 娄:侯 thiệp: hầu "concubine" (#484, 11a.1.1),
23. 婿:婿 té: rê "son in law" (#543, 11b.4.4),
24. 婿:妯 hôn: râu "daughter in-law" (#544, 11b.4.5),
25. 漢:_CHK hán: đầu "a guy" (#571, 12a.3.4),
26. 郎:払 lang: chàng "he (close friend)" (#572, 12a.3.5),
27. 母:媄 mãu: mẹ "mother" (#579, 12a.4.5),
28. 兒:昆 nhi: con "child" (#580, 12a.4.6),
29. 舅:舅 cưu: 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 nuống: nàng "she (close friend)" (#781, 15a.3.4),
32. 媵:媒 âu: mụ "she (elder)" (#782, 15a.3.5),
33. 翁:翁 ông: ông "grandfather" (#961, 17b.4.2),
34. 姬:妺 đêtes: cháu "grandchild" (#962, 17b.4.3),
35. 奴:侈於 nô: díra ố "servant" (#1154, 20b.1.6),
36. 僖:小童 đông: tiểu đông "young servant" (#1155, 20b.1.7),
37. 朋:伴 bamsung: bạn "friend" (#1560, 26a.4.6),
38. 父:吒 phụ: cha "father" (#1561, 26a.4.7),
39. 弟:妳 đệ: em "younger brother" (#1761, 29a.3.4),
40. 甥:妺 sanh: cháu "nephew" (#1762, 29a.3.5), 45a.1.4),
Terms of relationship

41. 婆:婆 bà: bà "grandma" (#1801, 29b.4.2),
42. 嫁:乳 nãi: vú "respected elder woman; wet nurse" (#1802, 29b.4.3),
43. 燹:翁補 gũi: ông bô "respected elder man; husband of wet nurse" (#1803, 29b.4.4),
44. 婼:嫫彘 mõ: mê dà "respected elder woman" (#1804, 29b.4.5),
45. 嫔:焷 tì: con đòi "female servant" (#2216, 35b.3.4),
46. 嫡:焠奇 dích: con cả "eldest son" (#2459, 39a.3.2),
47. 媼:嫫妯 lí: con râu "daughter in law" (#2460, 39a.3.3),
Terms of relationship

48. 媧: 昆姥 con: con gái "young lady" (#2682, 42a.5.1), 媧:
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 cáo: ông "elder" (#2871, 45a.2.1),
52. 賗: 嫁 chêu: làm chêu "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 khỏe không?” or “Anh có khỏe không?”
- And you will get a reply “Tôi khỏe.”

| — Chào chị.          | — Chào anh.          |
|— Chị có khỏe không? | — Anh có khỏe không? |
| — Tôi khỏe.          | — Tôi khỏe.          |
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.”.
Basic: nháp gia vấn huỳ

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

册固娈入家問諱

*Sách có chữ: “nháp gia vấn huỳ”

欺呐能沛技哼喭

*Khi nói nẵng phải kỹ kiêng kem...

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

- Nguyên 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 “¡y” after a term of family relationship, so that “anh ¡y” (he, male), “ch¡ ¡y” (she, female), “ông ¡y” (he, male), “bác ¡y” (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 “¡y” changes the tone of the previous word to hõi “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, thiệp, 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, mà, mi, người, bầu, bay,…
- Third person singular “she/he”: nó, hắn, va, y, nghi, họ
- Third person plural “they”: chúng nó, *chúng hắn,
• 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, Hoàng triều tân mạo niên mạn thu thương hoán tân san, by 金馬行余吳時任 Kim Mả Hành Dự Ngô Thì Nhậm. The woodblocks were kept by 富文堂藏板 Phú Văn Dương tàng bản.
• 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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Peter du Ponceau


Vô danh

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