

V I E T N A M E S E
BASIC COURSE

GRAMMAR & CULTURAL NOTES

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PREFACE

The GRAMMAR & CULTURAL NOTES contained in this booklet have been written to explain in a brief and descriptive manner the various points of difficulty relating to grammar and culture, which students in the Vietnamese Basic Course usually encounter when studying the dialogs or practicing the structural drills contained in Volumes I-VII. An index is provided on pages 79-81 to help the reader find quickly what he is looking for.

LESSON 1

Grammar Notes

Pronouns

1st person: tôi: I, me

2nd person: ông: you (man)

bà: you (married woman)

cô: you (single woman)

The presence of a second personal pronoun is essential in greetings and in expressing appreciation.

e.g.: Chào ông: Hello (to you, Sir)

Chào cô: Hello (to you, Miss)

Cám ơn bà: Thank you, Madam.

Culture Notes

"Không dám" literally means "not daring" and is used to express due modesty and politeness (in greetings and showing appreciation).

e.g.: Chào cô: Hello (Miss)

Không dám ,

Chào bà: Hello (Madam)

Cám ơn ông: Thank you, Sir.

Không dám: You are welcome (literal translation: I do not dare to accept your thanks)

LESSON 2

Grammar Notes

Indefinite interrogative
particles: đâu, gì, etc.

Individual Vietnamese words are often used in different ways while retaining their basic meanings necessitating on the part of the Westerner the understanding of the basic meaning of each word and a certain flexibility when translating the words in given sentences. Such is the case with a small group of important words we shall term "indefinite interrogative particles". These words, which carry either an interrogative or a non-interrogative sense depending on the context, include đâu, gì, nào, ai, and mấy, bao nhiêu, bao giờ.

1. Interrogative

Ông đi <u>đâu</u> ?	<u>Where</u> are you going?
Ông học <u>gì</u> ?	<u>What</u> are you studying?
Ông là <u>ai</u> ?	<u>Who</u> are you?
Ông đọc sách <u>nào</u> ?	<u>Which</u> book are you reading?
Ông có <u>mấy</u> cái bút?	<u>How many</u> pens do you have?

2. Non-interrogative

Tôi không biết ông đi <u>đâu</u> .	I don't know <u>where</u> you are going.
Tôi không hiểu ông nói <u>gì</u> .	I don't understand <u>what</u> you are saying.
Tôi không biết ông là <u>ai</u> .	I don't know <u>who</u> you are.

Note that when location is implied, ở is often used, meaning to be located at.

ex.: Ông học tiếng Việt ở đâu?

Where did you study Vietnamese?

Culture Notes

Polite particles: thưa and xin

1. "Thưa" + 2nd personal pronoun is used when one asks or answers a question.

Thưa ông, ông học gì?

Sir, what are you studying?

Thưa bà, tôi học tiếng Việt.

Madam, I'm studying Vietnamese.

2. "Xin" + 2nd personal pronoun is used when one politely requests or asks for something.

Tôi xin giới thiệu ông Jones.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Jones.

Xin ông cho biết tên.

Please tell me your name. (See lesson 6)

Tôi xin ông ấy một cái đồng hồ.

I ask him for a watch.

LESSON 3

Grammar Notes

A. Note the difference between the following two sentences.

1. Ông học tiếng Việt được bao lâu?

How long did you study Vietnamese?

2. Ông (đã) học tiếng Việt được bao lâu rồi?

How long have you been studying Vietnamese?

Sentence #1 denotes an action which has been completed whereas sentence #2 refers to an act begun in the past and continued in the present. Observe that "đã" is optional and that the time of continuation is left indefinite.

B. The position of "bao giờ" "when"

1. At the beginning of a question, "bao giờ" denotes future.

Bao giờ ông đi?

When will you go? When are you going?

2. At the end of a question, "bao giờ" denotes past.

Ông đi bao giờ?

When did you go?

C. Cardinal Numbers

1. For 15, notice that "năm" becomes "lăm".

2. For 25, 35, 45, etc. up to 95, the 5 becomes either "lăm" or "nhăm".

3. For 21, 31, 41, etc. up to 91 notice that "một" becomes "mốt".

Culture Notes

Xin lỗi + 2nd personal pronoun

To use this Vietnamese equivalent of "excuse me", remember that the appropriate second personal pronoun should not be omitted:

Xin lỗi ông.

Excuse me, Sir.

Xin lỗi bà.

Excuse me, Madam.

Xin lỗi cô.

Excuse me, Miss.

LESSON 4

Grammar Notes

1. "Vậy thì" and "thế thì" both mean "that being the case", or "then", and are used interchangeably.

Vậy thì mai tôi sẽ đi. - I'll go tomorrow, then.

Thế thì mai tôi sẽ đi. - I'll go tomorrow, then.

2. "Nhiều lắm" "very much, very many, a lot of". These two words are used together in that order when there is no noun to modify, but when there is a noun observe how they split.

Ông ấy ăn nhiều lắm. - He eats a lot.

Ông ấy ăn nhiều cơm lắm. - He eats a lot of rice.

Culture Notes

"Đi bộ" means "to walk", but refers to the "means" and not the manner. When using "đi bộ" one should think of it as "to go on foot".

Tôi đi bộ đi làm. (chứ không đi xe)

I walk to work. (not going by car)

-versus:

Anh ấy đi nhanh lắm.

He walks very fast. (how he walks)

LESSON 5

Culture Notes

1. The word "phút", "minute," is often omitted in daily conversation, unless the number of minutes is not divisible by five, such as 7, 16, 18, etc.

Tám giờ mười. 08:10

Chín giờ bảy phút. 09:07

2. When "rưỡi" "30 minutes," is used, the word "giờ" "hour" is often omitted.

Bảy rưỡi. 7:30

Hai rưỡi. 2:30

LESSON 6

Grammar Notes

1. "Xin" literally means to "beg for something" (1), usually a permission (2).

1) Tôi xin ông ấy một quyển sách.

I ask him for a book.

Tôi sẽ xin mượn cái xe của cô ấy.

I will ask to borrow her car.

2) Cô Huệ xin đi Hà nội với bà Hiều.

Miss Huệ asks to go to Hanoi with Mrs. Hiều.

LESSON 7

Grammar Notes

1. "Thấy" means "just happen to see", without any prearrangement.

Tôi thấy ông Huệ ở sứ quán Mỹ.

I saw (just happen to) Mr. Huệ at the American embassy.

2. Gặp means to "meet, to see someone at a set, prearranged time or place." Mutual agreement is essential.

Tôi sẽ gặp ông lúc 10 giờ.

I will see you at 10:00.

Chúng ta sẽ gặp nhau ở hiệu ăn.

We'll meet at the restaurant.

LESSON 8

Grammar Notes

"Verb + được" means to "be able to, capable of" (in this lesson). Note the position of được, which is after the verb (either right after the verb or after the direct object).

1. Tôi không mua được.

I can't buy (it).

2. Tôi không nói tiếng Việt được.

I can't speak Vietnamese.

or: Tôi không nói được tiếng Việt.

When "được" precedes the verb, it means "to be permitted to" or "may". Keep in mind that it is often thought of as, and translated in, the passive voice (2 and 3).

1. Tôi không được nói tiếng Anh trong lớp.

I'm not allowed to speak English in class.

2. Tôi được thưởng.

I was awarded.

3. Tôi được bác sĩ chữa hôm qua.

I was treated by a doctor yesterday.

Also, keep in mind that "được" often carries a favorable connotation; the subject is able to, is privileged to, is allowed to, gains, gets, etc. We shall learn the opposite connotation later.

LESSON 9

Grammar Notes

1. "Nào" often indicates a choice of certain items from among a larger group, and accordingly, it is frequently translated as "any" or in some cases, "any...whatsoever". When combined with "cũng," "equally, also, likewise, etc.," it can be thought of and translated as "every" or "each and every".

Ngày nào tôi cũng đi học.

Every day I go to school.

Sinh viên nào cũng muốn học.

Every student wants to study.

For emphasis, the word "hết" "all", is used and placed at the end of the sentence.

Người nào cũng thích ăn hiệu hết.

Everybody likes to eat out (in a restaurant).

Every single person likes to eat out.

2. "Mới" is used here as a conjunction to mean "not until".

Observe the following sentences.

(1) Ngày mai tôi mới về Việt Nam.

I will not return to VN until tomorrow.

(2) Sinh viên học xong mới được nghỉ.

The students must finish studying; only then may they rest.

or: The students are not allowed to rest until they finish studying.

In (2), "mới" indicates that the second action not only follows the first, but it is also conditional upon it. The correct translation should be "not until then" or "only then".

3. "Verb + hộ" denotes "help or assistance." It has the characteristic of a modal auxiliary verb. Therefore, it is usually used with a verb.

Bán hộ tôi cái xe này.

(Please) sell this car for me.

Xin ông hỏi hộ xem ông ấy có biết không.

Please find out if he knows (it).

Lit.: Please ask (for me) to see if he knows.

LESSON 10

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

"Lâu quá mới" gặp lại anh chị.

It's been a long time since we last saw you.

Culture Notes

Note the following two sentences which essentially say the same thing, but are different in essence.

1. Chúng tôi chỉ có hai cháu thôi.

We have only two children.

2. Chúng tôi mới được hai cháu thôi.

We have only two children so far.

Sentence #1 states the fact, more or less, while sentence #2, however, expresses the idea of their having two children, but they are wishing for or expecting more.

LESSON 11

Grammar Notes

Prohibitive đừng

"Đừng", a negative imperative particle, is used when telling someone "not" to do something and can be preceded by a pronoun.

Đừng ở một mình!

Don't live by yourself!

or: Ông đừng ở một mình!

Culture Notes

1. "Bác" literally means "uncle or aunt" who is older than one's father. Therefore we only use this term instead of ông or bà when we are actually related, have known each other for a long time, or, though less frequent, when we subtly imply we want to be friendly. "Bác" is also used to refer to people of our parents' age.
2. In a loose translation, you find that both "xin lỗi ông, and xin phép ông" are translated as "excuse me". But "xin lỗi ông" implies "I beg your pardon" or "excuse me" while "xin phép ông" implies "I ask for your permission".

LESSON 12

Grammar Notes

When you command or tell someone to do something, use the the imperative particle "đi" and place it at the end of the sentence.

Học đi!

Study!

Học tiếng Việt đi!

Study Vietnamese!

LESSON 13

Grammar Notes

In this lesson "thử" "to try," is used as a modal auxiliary verb which is always preceded by the main verb(s).

Tôi muốn uống thử bia 33.

I want to try beer 33.

Tôi muốn lái thử xe của ông.

I want to try your car.

LESSON 14

Grammar Notes

Observe the following two sentences:

1. Tôi có năm cái chai.

I have five bottles.

2. Tôi có năm chai.

I have five bottles (of something).

The first sentence means five empty bottles and the second sentence indicates five bottles of something, but not empty.

The difference is the classifier "cái".

LESSON 15

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Họ lấy bao nhiêu một giờ?

How much do they charge for an hour?

Họ không lấy bao nhiêu đâu!

They do not charge too much!

LESSON 16

Grammar Notes

The usage of lại, after the main verb, is rather difficult because of its irregularity and flexibility. Usually "verb + lại" means to do something again or re-do something.

Tôi viết lại cái thư này.

I am rewriting this letter.

Tôi đọc lại quyển sách này.

I'm reading this book again.

But sometimes, with certain verbs, one must rely on the context for accurate translation. Because whatever is being redone is not necessarily the same thing that was done before. (p. 182, Volume 2)

Bao giờ ông đi dạy lại?

When are you going back to teach (again)?

Bao giờ anh đi học lại?

Where are you going back to school?

LESSON 17

Grammar Notes

1. "thay," when used as a main verb means "to replace" something with something else.

Lốp xe này cũ anh phải thay đi.

This tire is old, you must replace it.

But, when "thay" is used with another verb, it means to take "someone's" place to do something, to substitute (for someone).

Cô Lan ốm nên tôi dạy thay.

Miss Lan is sick, so I am teaching in her place.

or: Miss Lan is sick and I am substituting for her.

2. "thế" and "vậy" both mean in "that" manner, in "such" manner, when they are preceded by a verb. Thế and vậy frequently occur in combination with the word như.

Đừng làm thế (vậy).

Don't do that. (Lit.: Don't do it in that manner.)

Tôi cũng nghĩ vậy.

I think so too. (Lit.: I also think in that way.)

or: Đừng làm như thế.

Tôi cũng nghĩ như vậy.

LESSON 18

Culture Notes

"Nó" is "he, she, or it." When referring to people of your age or social position, it becomes a disrespectful term. However, it is perfectly acceptable to use "nó" to refer to animals, children of your own, or the younger members of your family."

1. Nó cùng làm một sở với tôi.

He (she) works in the same office with me.

2. Bình ắc quy hỏng hả? Thay nó đi!

Your battery is dead? Replace it!

3. Tôi đánh chó vì nó hư!

I hit the dog because he (she, it) was naughty.

4. Mình à, hôm qua con Lan nó có nhớ mua cà phê không?

Honey, did Lan remember to buy coffee yesterday?

5. Tôi gọi em tôi và bảo nó làm cơm.

I called my (younger) sister and told her to fix dinner.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

đắt kinh khủng! - terribly expensive!

LESSON 19

Grammar Notes

Observe the position of "cả" in the following examples:

"Cả † noun
pronoun"

Cả ngày - all day

Cả tháng - the whole week

Differentiate that from the following pattern:

...không...cả - not...at all

Subject † negative marker † verb...cả.

Tôi không làm gì cả.

I am not doing anything.

Tôi không đi đâu cả.

I am not going anywhere.

Tôi không muốn nói với ai cả.

I do not want to talk to anyone.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

đi xin việc - to go and apply for a job

LESSON 20

Culture Notes

1. When we wish somebody something, we use the verb chúc.

Tôi chúc ông nhiều may mắn.

I wish you lots of luck.

Do not use chúc in wishing yourself as in the case of "I wish I were". In this case "ước" is used instead.

2. "He or she" in Vietnamese is "ông ây, bà ây, cô ây" or "ông ta, bà ta, cô ta". But "ta" often insinuates a light touch of disdain, mocking, or a slight sneer.

LESSON 21

Grammar Notes

- A. "Đang + verb" means "to be in the process of doing something" but it is usually used to emphasize that action is taking place as in example (1), or to indicate that two actions took place simultaneously (2).

1. Mời ông dùng gà quay.

Please have some roast chicken.

Cám ơn ông, tôi đang ăn.

Thank you, I am eating it.

2. Tôi đang học thì ông ấy vào.

He walked in while I was studying.

Tôi đang ăn thì nó đánh tôi.

He hit me while I was eating.

Compare the above sentences with the following examples in which "đang" is not necessary.

1. Ông đi đâu đây?

Where are you going there?

2. Tôi đi học.

I am going to school.

"Đang + verb" is usually not used to mark present tense, but rather to emphasize the action which is taking place. Keep in mind also that "tôi đi" can be translated as "I go", "I am going", or "I do go". When đang is used in the past it is not used in combination with "đã".

Hôm qua tôi đang ngủ thì máy bay đến thả bom.

I was sleeping yesterday when the plane came and
dropped bombs.

B. Note that "là cùng" "at most" is placed at the end of the
sentence.

Ông ta có mười mĩ kim là cùng.

He has ten dollars at most.

LESSON 22

Grammar Notes

"À" is a question marker usually conveying primarily the "mood, the attitude, of the speaker," in this case a mild surprise.

Anh vẫn chưa lấy vợ à?

Oh! Are you still a bachelor?

Cô vẫn ở nhà à?

Oh! Are you still home?

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Theo tôi biết thì ông ấy không có nhà.

As far as I know, he is not at home.

Theo tôi hiểu thì quyển tự vị đó không tốt.

In my understanding, that dictionary is not a good one.

LESSON 23

Culture Notes

"Tôn" means "to cost," but implies maintenance, up-keep, service when having things made or done.

Sống ở California tôn lắm.

It costs a lot to live in California.

Mở một hiệu ăn tôn lắm.

It costs a lot to open a restaurant.

Chơi xe này tôn lắm.

It costs a lot to operate this car.

Notice the following case in which "tôn" cannot be used to translate the verb "cost". A and B are talking about the dress B bought.

A: How much did it cost?

B: Oh! It cost only a dollar.

LESSON 24

Culture Notes

The English word "nice" can mean different things to different people. But in Vietnamese, when we say "ông tử tề quá" we mean just one thing: you are very kind.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

cuộc bộ

-

to go on foot

LESSON 25

Grammar Notes

To denote a mishap, an unpleasant experience, the word phải is added to the main verb.

Tôi dẫm phải chông ngâm.

I stepped on a concealed spike.

Tôi ăn phải thịt bò ôi.

I ate some stale beef.

Culture Notes

1. In Vietnamese, the word "đi" means to "help someone to walk when he is physically incapacitated due to illness, injury, etc."
2. "Ngâm" usually means "being submerged or being under the ground (below ground level)."

tàu ngâm	-	submarine
chông ngâm	-	punji sticks planted below ground level
hầm ngâm	-	dug-out

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

cầm máu	-	to stop the bleeding
sang máu	-	blood transfusion

LESSON 26

Grammar Notes

The preposition "vào" means either "at" or "into" and is used with a noun or personal pronoun to show its relation to some other word or words in the sentence.

Nó đánh vào đầu tôi.

He hit me on the head.

Nó ném quyển sách vào mặt cô ấy.

He threw the book at her face.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. Q: Anh có việc gì không?

Are you hurt?

A: Tôi không việc gì cả?

No, I am fine.

2. Không việc gì đến ông.

It's none of your business.

LESSON 27

Grammar Notes

A. Rơi is an intransitive verb and takes no direct object.

Tôi bắn máy bay F-4 và nó rơi.

I shot the F-4 and it fell.

Tôi trông thấy hai máy bay rơi xuống bể.

I saw two planes falling into the sea.

B. Làm rơi or đánh rơi is a transitive verb and takes a direct object.

Tôi làm rơi cái bát.

I dropped the bowl.

Tôi không biết tôi đánh rơi ví ở đâu.

I don't know where I dropped my wallet.

LESSON 28

Culture Notes

"Chúng and chúng nó" are derogatory terms for "they" or "them" commonly used to refer to hoodlums, gangsters, and the enemy.

LESSON 29

Grammar Notes

Post position particle với

"Với" here means "along with or in the company of."

Cho tôi đi với!

Let me come / go along.

Đề tôi học với!

Let me study with (you).

Culture Notes

A. The difference between "cho tôi đi với" and "đề tôi đi với" is very subtle even though they are translated as "let me go too" or "let me go with you". The first sentence implies asking for permission or approval, while the second sentence implies asking on equal terms.

B. "Hẹn" can be used either as a verb to "mean an engagement or as a noun to mean the appointment itself."

Tôi có hẹn lúc 2 giờ.

I have a two o'clock engagement.

Họ hẹn nhau ở nhà anh Lâm.

They rendez-vous at Lam's place.

LESSON 30

Grammar Notes

"Là" and "rằng" in Vietnamese usually are filling up words which are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence, but which herald the subsequent clause. Their English equivalent is the expletive that.

Tôi biết là ông ấy nói thật.

I know that he speaks the truth.

Cô ấy muốn nói rằng anh nên cởi mở hơn.

She wants to say that you should be more open.

Rằng and là here are actually superfluous and redundant because the meaning is complete without them. In modern formal prose, rằng is usually used to introduce direct or indirect quotations.

LESSON 31

Grammar Notes

"Đấy chứ" at the end of a question invites corroborative answers.

Cô Lan đẹp đấy chứ?

Miss Lan is beautiful, isn't she?

Here "đấy" is an emphatic particle. "Chứ" is a form of question marker. When you ask someone a question using chứ you obviously want the listener to agree with you.

Culture Notes

"Thấy" means either "to feel, to find, or to seem."

Tôi thấy mệt quá.

I feel very tired.

Tôi thấy làm việc này khó lắm.

I find it is difficult to do this job.

Tôi thấy ông ấy hơi yếu.

He seems a little weak.

"Thấy" used mainly as second head (unclear model or complete sentence) in sequential phrases referring to perception via one of the physical senses.

Tôi nghe thấy tiếng giáo sư.

I hear the voice of the teacher.

Trông thấy tôi ông ấy mừng quá.

He is very pleased to see me.

Tôi ngửi thấy mùi cà-phê.

I smell the aroma of coffee.

LESSON 33

Grammar Notes

A. "Khỏi" means "out of" or "away from" and is followed by a noun of location.

Cô ấy ra khỏi phòng.

She walks out of the room.

Dân làng đi tản khỏi vùng Huế.

The villagers are evacuated away from Hue.

B. "Mưa" means to "rain" and like its English counterpart, it is governed by the impersonal pronoun "trời or giời" (heaven, sky, or it, when it refers to weather).

Giời mưa. - It's raining.

Giời nóng. - It's hot

Giời đánh! - Heaven struck!

C. "Làm lụt", to flood is a transitive verb that takes a direct object.

Nước lên làm lụt cả vùng.

The water rose and flooded the entire area.

LESSON 34

Grammar Notes

- A. The following formula will help you use "...thì đến..." "out of" correctly. Don't let its English equivalent confuse you. Thì đến must be placed between two nouns or personal pronouns.

Năm cái máy phát thanh thì đến ba cái bị hỏng.

Out of five radio transmitters, three are out of order.

Năm ông thì đến ba ông mù chữ.

Out of five men, three are illiterate.

- B. The verb "cuốn...đi", "to carry away (water, wind)" takes a direct object, and đi must be placed after that direct object.

Nước cuốn cả nhà đi rồi.

The water carried the house away.

Gió cuốn thuyền đi rồi.

The wind carried the boat away.

Culture Notes

"Xấu" when used to "describe people, animals, and things" does not mean "bad" in character or personality, but "ugly in appearance".

Cái xe này xấu. - This car is ugly.

Cô ấy xấu. - She's ugly.

LESSON 35

Grammar Notes

Bị versus Được

"bị!" "suffer, undergo," be affected adversely by some action, state, or factor

"được!" "receive, get, be benefited by, affected favorably by" some action, state, or factor, be permitted

1. Nhà tôi bị đổi đi Việt-nam.

My husband was transferred to Viet Nam.

2. Nhà tôi được đi Việt-nam.

Sentence #2 conveys the desirability, the benefit the subject receives.

Note: Keep in mind that an important way in which Vietnamese verbs differ from English verbs is that they do not in themselves imply a clear notion of "mood" in the grammatical sense. In English a (transitive) verb must be either active or passive. Such distinction is unnecessary in Vietnamese. The relationship between subject and object of the verb is generally clear from the context and, if it is not, there are ways in which it can be made clear. But, you will find out that in the vast majority of Vietnamese sentences, such clarifying devices are not used. Through constant reading and exposure to the language, you will get the feel of it.

LESSON 36

Grammar Notes

Plural Marker Những

Observe the following two sentences.

Ong mang theo gì?

What did you bring with you?

Ong mang theo những gì?

What did you bring with you?

To answer sentence number two, you should name at least two things.

LESSON 37

Grammar Notes

"Chìm," "to sink," takes no direct object.

Thuyền chìm.

The boat sinks.

Tôi bắn thuyền đó và nửa giờ sau thuyền đó chìm.

I shot the boat and half an hour later it sank.

Ông ấy cứ chìm vì không biết bơi.

He keeps sinking because he does not know how to swim.

Idiomatic Usage

cứ bao lâu lại?

how often...?

Cứ bao lâu lại tiêm trừ tả?

How often does one get a cholera shot?

LESSON 38

Grammar Notes

- A. Observe the position of "...mới...mà...đã..." just... and...already in relation to other words in the following sentence.

Tôi mới gặp cô ấy mà tôi đã không thích rồi.

I just met her and already I don't like her.

mới + verb...mà...đã + verb predicate adjective

- B. "Chẳng" and "không" are synonyms

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

- | | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Chậm như sên! | - | Slow as a snail! |
| 2. Khó như quỷ! | - | It's devilishly hard! |

LESSON 39

Grammar Notes

"Cứ...là..." means "just". "Là" is followed by a subordinate clause.

Cứ cho nó tiền là nó đi ngay.

Just give him the money, and he'll go right away.

Anh cứ gọi là nó đến ngay.

Just call him and he'll come right away.

Culture Notes

The friendly and informal yes is ừ, used among friends and people of the same age and position. It is also the "yes" used by parents and superiors when talking to children or inferiors. The reverse is unacceptable.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. ngủ kỹ | - | to sleep soundly, like a log |
| 2. Nói là làm. or,
Nói gì là làm cái đó. | - | Once I said it, I will do it. |

LESSON 40

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. Có thể thôi à?

Is that all?

2. Không lấy gì làm ngon lắm.

(the food) is not that good.

3. Thế thì hay biết mấy!

How great that would be!

Culture Notes

"Giá" and "nếu" are synonyms and both mean "if". "Giá" is more on the hypothetical side.

Nếu tôi có tiền thì tôi đi.

If I have the money, I will go.

Giá tôi không phải làm thì tôi đi với anh.

If I had not had to work, I would have gone with you.

or: (I wish) I didn't have to work so I could go with you.

LESSON 41

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Thê cũng phải. | - | It's the right thing to... |
| Làm thê cũng phải. | - | It's the right thing <u>to do</u> . |
| 2. Xâu hết sức | - | extremely ugly |
| 3. Tôi sẽ cố hết sức. | - | I will do my best. |

LESSON 42

Grammar Notes

1. "Mất" and "bị mất" have the same meaning.
2. "Đánh mất" and "làm mất" are used interchangeably, and take a direct object.

Observe the following sentences:

Tôi mất hai quyển sách.

I lost two books.

Here mất implies somebody took or stole the books.

Tôi làm mất hai quyển sách.

I lost two books.

Here làm mất implies the loss was caused by the subject's carelessness.

LESSON 43

Grammar Notes

A. "Là ít" means "at least", and is placed at the end of the sentence.

Họ có năm con là ít.

They have at least five children.

B. "Đấy thôi" is ending particle meaning "simply" or "merely".

Cô ấy nói vậy vì không hiểu anh đấy thôi.

She said that merely because she does not understand you.

Culture Notes

thì thầm - to whisper, to gossip

We use this verb only to denote rumors, talks exchanged privately and discreetly.

Họ thì thầm là ông tỉnh trưởng biên thủ công quỹ.

They're whispering (gossiping) about the province chief's embezzlement of public funds.

Họ thì thầm là bà ta ly dị chồng.

They're gossiping about her divorce.

LESSON 45

Culture Notes

A person who is cục is not only hot-tempered, but has the tendency to be physically violent; he hits people when he gets mad!

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Ăn đòn and ôm đòn are slang. Use them conservatively and only in an informal situation. They both mean to get a good beating.

Nếu muốn ăn đòn thì cứ làm.

If you don't mind a good beating, then go ahead and do it.

LESSON 46

Culture Notes

1. When the Chinese Han dynasty invaded Vietnam in the year 111 B.C., they referred to the northern part of the conquered territory as Giao Chỉ. This term is seldom used now except for historical references.
2. "Rủ" and "mời" both mean "to invite", but the latter is more formal, while the first is casual, frequently used among close friends.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Ông ấy mê con gái VN kinh khủng.

He's terribly fond of Vietnamese girls.

Mê thì lấy luôn.

If you're that crazy about her (him), then marry her (him).

LESSON 47

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Nói thì dễ, làm thì khó.

It is easier said than done.

Nói là một chuyện, có làm được hay không là một chuyện khác.

To say it is one thing, to be able to do it or not is something else.

LESSON 48

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Đôi khi ông ấy chẳng hiểu gì hết.

Sometimes he doesn't understand a thing.

Ông đi đâu tôi đi đó.

I will go wherever you go.

Ông làm sao tôi làm vậy.

I will do what(ever) you do.

LESSON 49

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Ghé lại nhà tôi chơi nhé.

Stop by my place, okay?

Muôn là được.

Where there's a will, there's a way.

LESSON 50

Culture Notes

1. "Chúng mình," "we," refers to members of the same group in which the spirit of camaraderie is apparent.

Chúng mình đi với nhau chứ.

We'll go together, right?

2. "Thằng" is a disrespectful term for "he" but can be used among close friends of the male sex.

Nhớ bảo cả thằng Hiếu nữa nhé.

Remember to tell Hiếu, too, okay?

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. Chẳng biết đường lối nào mà lãn.
(I) have no idea of what's happening.
2. Họ lập gia đình rồi.
They are already married.

LESSON 53

Grammar Notes

Word Usage

- A. "Đỡ" means to "feel better," referring to the state of health.

Hôm qua tôi mệt quá, hôm nay tôi đỡ nhiều.

I was so tired yesterday; today I feel much better.

- B. When "Đỡ" is followed by an adjective, generally unpleasant to the subject, it should be translated as to "lessen or to be less!"

Hôm nay đỡ lạnh.

It is less cold today.

Uống cho đỡ khát.

Drink it to lessen your thirst.

LESSON 54

Grammar Notes

To ask about the past, "bao giờ," "when," must be positioned at the end of the question.

Ong tòng quân bao giờ?

When did you join the service?

Compare this with bao giờ positioned at the beginning of a question to ask about the future.

Bao giờ anh đi?

When will you leave?

LESSON 55

Grammar Notes

To express the idea of "one by one" the phrase "từng..môt" is used. Here "môt" is optional, but in daily usage it is frequently used.

Họ đi từng người môt.

They left one by one.

Họ đi từng toán môt.

They go in groups (group by group.)

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. nghỉ lại to stop over
Chúng ta sẽ nghỉ lại đây tối nay.
We will stop here tonight.
2. ngủ lại to stay overnight
Chúng ta sẽ ngủ lại ở trại lính.
We'll stay overnight on post.

LESSON 56

Grammar Notes

Ending particle kia mà or cơ mà is used to denote that what one sees is not quite what one expected. As such, it is the natural sequence of "tôi tưởng," I thought:

Tôi tưởng anh đi với cô ấy kia mà.

I thought you had gone with her.

Họ có nhiều máy bay chiến đấu lắm cơ mà.

(I thought) they had many fighters.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

bỏ...nửa chừng leave some thing half done

Anh ta bỏ học nửa chừng.

He quits school half-way.

Grammar Notes

- A. There are two ways of saying 10, 20, 30, etc. One is "mười, hai mươi, ba mươi," etc., and the other is "một chục, hai chục, ba chục," etc. "Chục" is a unit of ten.
- B. "Riêng" often means "alone," "privately," or expresses the idea of separateness.

Tôi thích ở riêng.

I like to live separately (on my own.)

"Riêng tôi" is the equivalent of "For my part":

Riêng tôi, tôi đã làm được một nửa.

For my part, I have finished half the work.

- C. "Ra sao" or "thì sao" means "how about" or "what about" and must be positioned at the end of the question.

Công việc của anh ra sao?

How about your job?

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

chạm súng	to engage in fighting
chạm địch	to encounter the enemy

Grammar Notes

The idea of "how can" is expressed with "làm sao... được".
Được must be positioned at the end of the clause.

Nếu anh không giảng làm sao nó hiểu được?

If you do not explain, how can he understand?

Culture Notes

"Lòng" literally means intestine of all types of animals.
But when used in relation to people, it means heart or feelings.

Chinh phục lòng dân.

To win the people's heart.

Hiểu sao được lòng tôi?

How can my feelings be understood?

LESSON 59

Grammar Note

- A. "Chứ gì", ending particle, is used as a question marker to mean "isn't that right?"

Anh không học bài chứ gì?

You didn't study, isn't that right?

- B. When we do not want to assert too much authority in telling someone to do something, we use the word hãy.

It hints more encouragement than commanding.

Nếu muốn đi thì hãy cố gắng học đi.

If you want to go, then study hard.

Hãy ăn đã.

Let's eat first.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Muôn làm gì thì làm.

Do whatever you want.

Đi đâu thì đi.

Go wherever you wish.

LESSON 60

Culture Note

"A" is an ending particle denoting politeness. It can be used either with questions or answers.

Thưa ông, mấy giờ ông rảnh a?

Sir, when will you be free?

Tôi có năm đồng a.

I have five "đồng."

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

Tôi thích đi đây đi đó.

I like to go here and there.

Grammar Notes

Word Usage

- A. "An-nấp" means to "hide oneself." An intransitive verb, it takes no direct object.

Việt cộng ân nấp ở khu này.

The VC are hiding in this area.

- B. "Ém" means to "hide something." A transitive verb, it takes a direct object.

Ém vụ đó đi cho rồi.

Let's (hide) not talk about that incident.

- C. "Thì cứ" plus a verb means "go ahead and..." or "just."

Thì cứ làm cái này đã.

Go ahead and do this first.

Thì cứ để ông ấy đi.

Just let him go.

LESSON 65

Grammar Note

"Chạm vào" or "chạm phải" means to "accidentally touch something or someone."

Xe díp chạm phải mìn trên đường số 1.

The jeep touched a mine on route 1.

(Touched here can be translated as "ran over")

Compare the above example with:

đừng sờ; don't touch;

LESSON 67

Grammar Note

- A. "Xem xem" or "xem...xem" means "to look and see" or "to look and find out."

Anh đến đó xem xem có gì xảy ra.

Go there (to look) and see what's going on.

- B. Verb plus "mất", ending particle is used for emphasis, meaning completely, totally.

Tôi quên mất số điện thoại của cô ấy.

I completely forgot her phone number.

Grammar Note

- A. When a noun is used with "gì mà...thế" (noun † gì mà...thế), it should be translated as "what kind of † noun † is it that is..."

Xe gì mà xấu thế?

What an ugly car! (Lit.: What kind of car is it that is so ugly?)

Sinh viên gì mà lười thế!

What a lazy student!

- B. Intensive pronoun: chính.

Sometimes it is also called emphatic pronoun. Its English equivalent is "myself," "himself," etc., as in "I myself gave it to him." or "Let him decide it himself."

Chính tôi đã ra lệnh cho ông ấy.

I myself gave him the order.

Culture Note

"Lũ" is a derogatory term for "group" often referring to animals. When used to refer to people, it should be translated as "gang" or "mob."

Một lũ tay sai.

A gang of lackeys.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. Một tay súng xuất sắc.

A sharp shooter.

2. Giỏi một cây.

To be best at something, to be number one.

Ông ấy nói tiếng Việt giỏi một cây.

He is number one in speaking Vietnamese.

3. Cho nó một trận.

Give him a good beating.

4. Mặc (kệ) tôi.

Leave me alone.

LESSON 70

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. When talking about medicine, "viên" means "tablet,"
"pill."

Cho tôi hai viên át-pi-rin nhé.

Give me two aspirin tablets, will you?

"Viên" is also a classifier for "bullets, bricks, round things such as meat balls, etc."

Ta có 200 viên đại bác.

We have 200 cannon rounds.

Ta cần hàng nghìn viên gạch.

We need thousands of bricks.

Tôi làm 30 viên thịt để ăn với spaghetti.

I made 30 meat balls for a spaghetti dish.

2. Ham mê tửu sắc.

To indulge one's self with
wine and women.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

1. To use "...nào...này đều" correctly, you should know the following formula:

noun or pronoun † nào † noun or pronoun này...

Hiệu nào hiệu này đều đóng cửa chủ nhật.

Every store is closed on Sunday.

2. "Đứng lại" means to stop but usually refers to vehicles.

Tôi phải đứng xe lại để họ khám.

I had to stop (the car) for inspection.

Compare that with:

Đứng lại không tôi bắn.

(Stop) Halt or I'll shoot.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3. nã đạn vào đồn | fire fiercely into the camp |
| chạy bán sống bán chết | to run for one's life |

LESSON 74

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

A. In Vietnamese there are many verbs that mean "to wear." Know the following:

1. mặc quần áo to wear clothes
2. đi bít tất (tay) to wear socks (gloves)
3. đi giầy to wear shoes
4. thắt ca-vát to wear a tie
5. thắt thắt lưng to wear a belt
6. đeo kính to wear glasses
7. đeo đồng hồ to wear a watch
8. đeo nữ trang to wear jewelery

B. Hình dáng cô ấy thế nào?

What does she look like?

Grammar Notes

- A. "Cả...lần..." means "both...and..." In some cases, cả is optional, but usually you find them accompanying each other.

Ông ta bỏ cả vợ lần con.

He left both his wife and children.

Quân địch bỏ cả đồn lần lương thực.

The enemy left both their camp and provisions.

Differentiate the above case from:

cả hai	both
cả ba	all three
cả bốn	all four

- B. "Verb + khỏi" means "out of" or "away from," suggesting location.

Tôi muốn ra khỏi đây.

I want to get out of here.

Mới ra khỏi nhà.

Just got out of the house.

LESSON 79

Grammar Notes

- A. "Đốt" means to set afire. A transitive verb, đốt takes a direct object.

Bọn chúng đốt nhà rồi bỏ chạy.

They burnt the houses, then fled.

- B. "Cháy" is to burn. An intransitive verb, "cháy" takes no direct object.

Tôi đốt nhà và nhà cháy.

I set fire to the house and it burns.

Idioms and Idiomatic Usage

"Mò ra" means to "sneak out." However, among intimate friends, "mò ra, mò vào," as well as "mò đến" (to come to) are often used.

Mò đến đây làm gì vậy?

Why are you coming here?

LESSON 81

Grammar Note

"Trúng" is usually used as an adverb, with a verb preceding it.

Tôi bắn trúng đầu nó.

I hit (by shooting at him) his head.

"Trúng" means to be on target.

rơi trúng to fall on target

ném trúng to throw right on target

LESSON 87

Word Usage

1. Xảo quyệt crafty, untrustworthy
Âm mưu xảo quyệt của địch.
Crafty schemes of the enemy.

2. Hòng to hope (derogatory)
Đừng hòng Don't hold your breath!

LESSON 89

Word Usage

"Nổi" must be preceded by a verb meaning "to be capable of" or "to be able to."

Tôi không làm nổi việc đó.

I can't do that job (It is beyond my ability).

Rượu mạnh quá tôi không uống nổi.

The liquor is too strong; I can't drink it.

Note: "Nổi" by itself is "to float" or "floating."

Tôi có thể nổi trong hai giờ.

I can float (in water) for two hours.

Lá khô nổi trên mặt hồ.

The dry leaves are floating in the lake.

Word Usage

"Gãy" or "bị gãy" is "to be broken."

Tôi bị gãy tay.

My arm is broken.

Cái ghế gãy đâu?

Where's the broken chair?

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