

Intrepid Travel Language Guides

Vietnamese Language Lesson Script

An: Hello! You want silk sir? Very nice, best quality!

Scott: Ummm.. just taking a break from the traffic!

An: Yes, you need to be quick in Hanoi – bikes rule the road!

Scott: They certainly do my friend, I'm glad I'm insured!

An: You want silk?

Scott: Actually, I'm looking for the Old Quarter

An: Look around, you have found it – this is Hang Gai – silk street – what are you looking for – you can find anything here, each street is dedicated to a different craft; silk, lacquer, silver, even tombstones!

Scott: Actually, I do need some gifts to take home.

An: You have come to the right place – silk is very popular and a good gift!

Scott: Ok, lets take a look then - faites vous parlez le français

An: oui, un peu – most Vietnamese speak a little French – but mostly we speak Vietnamese and now English is taught in all schools. You will find a few Vietnamese phrases will help you more than a few French ones!

Scott: But French seems so much easier than Vietnamese!

An: Yes, Vietnamese is difficult, we have many ways of saying the same thing, so the same word can mean different things depending on how you say it, like “ma” which can mean mother, rice, gravestone, horse or ghost! But, you should learn a few phrases in Vietnamese.

Scott: It sounds very difficult – could you teach me a little?

An: Ok, come, it is early there are not many customers around, I will show you some silk and teach you a few things.

Scott: I suppose I should buy Mum something nice – deal, some silk for some language!

An: Come, come. My name is An – in Vietnamese Tên tôi là An – Tiếng Việt gọi là An

Scott: Ok, so Tên tôi là Scott, How do I ask someone's name in Vietnamese?

An: Tên anh là gì?

Scott: So Tên anh là gì? Man, this shop is very narrow!

An: Yes, you will see that all shops in this quarter are very slim, many years ago the government taxed people on the width of the shop front to the marketplace so as you can see buildings became very long and very narrow – shop at the front, storage and home at the back. Here, lovely silk shirts, very beautiful, many sizes.

Scott: Yes they are nice – maybe that one. How do I say “I like that one”

An: Tôi thích cái đó

Scott: And, “I don't like that one”

An: Tôi không thích cái đó Here is another design, I have many colours in this one.

Scott: How do I say “How much”

An: Bao nhiêu Scott, you must always bargain in Vietnam, it is almost expected. Always be polite and try to use some of the Vietnamese I teach you, to say hello is chào you can also use this for goodbye.

Scott: chào

An: You should also know some numbers – this will help you with your bargaining.

Scott: Can you teach me 1-10?

An: một, hai, ba, bốn, năm, sáu, bảy, tám, chín, mười

Scott: một, hai, ba, bốn, năm, sáu, bảy, tám, chín, mười

An: Most shops will accept Dong or US dollars, so it is good to have some US dollars with you. Wait, I will get some ties to show you, they are very nice, many colours.

Scott: How do I say “too expensive”

An: In my shop I give you good price. But for other shops – you say đắt quá

Scott: Ok đắt quá. What about “Please say that slowly”

An: Làm ơn nói chậm. Please is xin làm ơn also thank you is cảm ơn and excuse me is xin lỗi

Scott: So, please xin làm ơn thank you cảm ơn excuse me xin lỗi

An: Yes... very good Tốt lắm

Scott: Hey what about 'no'

An: Not that you will need it in my shop, but không. Ok, so those shirts and this tie – what about some silk pants – very comfortable, good for travelling, here I show you

Scott: Speaking of travelling how do I say bus, train, taxi and boat?

An: Bus is xe buýt train is xe lửa. taxi is taxi and boat is thuyền. Don't forget you can also flag motorbikes or cyclos – these are cheaper than taxi's, but negotiate the fare before you get in!

Scott: What about ticket – for the train or bus

An: This is vé be careful of local transport though, I'm sorry to say that there is often a price for locals and one for foreigners.

Scott: That's the cost of being a tourist I suspect! What about some basic directions like "where is" and "which way to"

An: "Where is" ở đâu Which way lối nào

Scott: Ok, so ở đâu and lối nào

An: Yes, very good. So, silk shirts, some ties and some pants – which ones do you like?

Scott: Ummm those, but do you have larger sizes for me?

An: Of course – these are womens pants!

Scott: Good – I was beginning to get a weight complex!

An: Here are the mens pants. Have you tried pho in Hanoi?

Scott: So??

An: No, pho – noodle soup, you get it at the street stalls – it is very good – people in Hanoi have it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. You should try some – just sit down at one of the little stalls and ask for pho – you will be able to choose what meat you want. Very cheap and very tasty.

Scott: Sounds like I'm eating pho for the next few days! I'm only here for another few days before I travel up to Sapa. How do I say days – like today, tomorrow, yesterday and now?

An: Ok Hôm nay ngày mai hôm qua bây giờ Where are you staying in Sapa?

Scott: I've not booked anything yet, I thought I'd take a look around first, how do I say "have you a room" and "may I look"

An: That is a good idea, there are many good places to stay in Sapa, if you bargain a bit you will find a good place. "Have you a room" is Anh có phòng không and "May I see it" is Cho tôi xem được không

Scott: An, you have been very helpful and your silk is indeed very beautiful – I will take all of those and I have a few final translations I think I may need – particularly with the crazy traffic – police, hospital and doctor

An: Scott, follow the locals and you should not need these but just in case Cảnh sát police Bệnh viện is hospital and Bác sĩ is doctor.

Scott: An, can you translate two last things for me – they are going to sound a little strange but you just never know what situation you are going to be in ...the first is "stop thief" and the last thing I think I will need is "Don't shoot, those drugs aren't mine!"

An: You are a funny man Scott – I'm not sure what you are planning but I do hope you will never need these phrases Bắt đũa ăn cắp is "stop thief" and Đừng bắn, ma túy đó không phải của tôi is "don't shoot, those drugs aren't mine!"

Scott: So, Bắt đũa ăn cắp and Đừng bắn, ma túy đó không phải của tôi
An, you have been most helpful – thank you very much – I'm off to try some pho!

An: Scott, safe travels.