

Patterns of polite expressions in Vietnamese

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Abstract

This research investigates the patterns of Vietnamese polite expressions – in particular, the impact on it of any foreign language such as English – during the transition period when the Doi Moi Policy started to be implemented. The research was conducted in Ha Noi (North), Hue (Central) and Ho Chi Minh City (South) – representing the three regions in an attempt to capture the whole picture of Vietnamese politeness and to compare the similarities and differences. Investigation was also done in Udonthani Province – one of the biggest and oldest Vietnamese overseas communities – to represent the Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand so as to arrive at a comparison as to the existence, if any, of change after long years of migration from the motherland. The research indicates that: [a] seniority by status (occupation) and age are the most important features for using expressions of politeness; [b] the degree of full polite forms reduces when communicating with persons of equal status and/or with a subordinate; [c] female uses more polite particles than male; [d] in the North, the way of using polite patterns are more constant than in the Central and the South; [e] there is such a thing as dialectal identity in which there are some dialectal features such as pronouns and final particles that differ from region to region; [f] the new generation uses more English words than the old generation; [g] in the case of Udonthani province, where many Vietnamese have settled for more than 50 years now, there is not much change in their polite patterns. Overall, the research shows that polite expressions have gradually changed more than other utterances even though the society has widely been opened to the global milieu. Yet, any foreign language such as English does not affect Vietnamese politeness during the transitional period, but it is affected a little bit by cross-cultural influence from the West.

1. Introduction

This study reports the result of a socio-linguistic survey of polite speech forms in Vietnamese, comparing and contrasting three main dialect areas - Northern Vietnamese: Ha Noi dialect, Central Vietnamese: Hue dialect, and Southern Vietnamese: Ho Chi Minh City dialect - and to some extent the speech of an expatriate community living in Udonthani province, Thailand.

Vietnam implemented the policy of Doi Moi or ‘Openness.’ One consequence is an inflow of foreign visitors and investors. While the teaching and use of English has greatly improved since then, the majority of Vietnamese are still not able to speak English well. Therefore, it is still necessary for foreigners who want to be able to communicate with local Vietnamese people

well, to learn the language. This includes the polite forms of speech, which are especially indicative of language proficiency for speakers.

It is therefore particularly important that we document and analyse contemporary Vietnamese politeness strategies. The results have practical relevance for Applied Linguistics, as well as inherent value for fields such as Pragmatics and Ethnolinguistics.

2. What is politeness?

Why do politeness strategies involve speech? According to Brown and Levinson, (1987:1) “Politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers’ ‘face’ ”. Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that ‘self-esteem’ in public or in private situations. Usually one tries to avoid embarrassing the other person, or making them feel uncomfortable. Face Threatening Acts (FTA’s) are acts that infringe on the hearer’s need to maintain his/her esteem, and be respected. Politeness strategies are developed for the main purpose of dealing with these FTA’s.

There are two kinds of politeness derived from Erving Goffman’s concept of face as described by Brown and Levinson (1987):

Negative politeness: Makes a request less infringing. There is a greater use of indirect speech acts.

Positive politeness: Seeks to establish a positive relationship between parties; respects a person’s need to be liked and understood. Direct speech acts, swearing and flouting Grice’s maxims can be considered aspects of positive politeness.

Grice (1975) proposes that participants in conversation understand the following general ‘Cooperative Principle’ (CP) to be in force: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” This superordinate principle comprises the following subordinate rules or “maxims.”

- I. Maxims of Quantity:
 - 1) Make your contribution as informative as is required
 - 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- II. Maxims of Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 - 1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- III. Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

IV. Maxims of Manner: Be perspicuous.

- 1) Avoid obscurity of expression
- 2) Avoid ambiguity
- 3) Be brief
- 4) Be orderly

3. Data collection

This study uses the theories of pragmatics, sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics for data collection and analysis.

The data is collected by questionnaires, observation, participation and interviews in Hanoi (North), Hue (Central) and Ho Chi Minh City (South), Vietnam. The questionnaire is a self-report in which the respondents are requested to write down how they greet according to the hypothetical social situations.

The data is collected by using questionnaires from approximately 300 respondents. The target respondents are sampled from different age groups (20-35, 36-50 and 51+), gender (male, female) and occupation (government officials, trades people and students). The questions are designed to discover how the respondents use politeness speech acts, i.e. greeting, leave-taking, introducing, thanking, refusals, requests, complaints, compliments, apologies and disagreement with seniors, equals and junior addressees. According to the data, age and occupation are the significant factors which determine politeness, even more clearly than gender. A different level of education does not affect the linguistic politeness. Therefore, it is not a significant factor and is not analyzed in this research.

3.1 Greeting

The 3 groups of respondents, government, tradespeople and student groups, were asked how they would greet seniors, juniors and equals, and they responded with 20 polite greeting patterns as follows:

To seniors

The first 12 polite patterns are used with seniors. Details of usage are divided according to dialects and occupation as follows:

The 3 groups using the 3 Vietnamese dialects of Ha Noi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City use the same 2 patterns to seniors, but in Ha Noi dialect they are used more as a title than as an NP object when compared to HCMC as shown in (A1) and (A2).

(A1) V. chào ‘greet’ + NP (kinship term/name) + (polite particle ạ).

(A2) NP subj. + V. chào ‘greet’ + NP obj. + (polite part ạ)

The 3 groups in Ho Chi Minh City use different patterns in (A3). With seniors HCMC people use, as a kin term, **con** ‘child’ for addressing oneself as an NP subj. instead of using the word **cháu** ‘niece, nephew, grandchild.’

(A3) NP subj. + V. xin ‘beg’/V. kính ‘respect’ + V. chào ‘greet’ + NP obj. + (polite part ạ)

The 3 groups in HCMC, Hue and the government official group in Ha Noi use the polite pattern as in (A4).

(A4) Polite word Dạ ‘Yes’ + NP subj. + (V. xin ‘beg’) + V chào ‘greet’ + NP obj. + (polite part ạ)

All 3 groups in Ha Noi and in HCMC, students and tradespeople in Hue use this pattern to seniors as in (A5). HCMC speech uses **Dạ** as an initial polite word more than in Ha Noi speech.

(A5) (Polite word Dạ ‘Yes’) + (Polite word thưa ‘Dear sir’) + NP (kin term) + (V. xin ‘beg’) + V. chào ‘greet’ + NP obj. + (polite part ạ).

All 3 groups in Ha Noi and HCMC use the same pattern as in (A6).

(A6) V. Xin ‘beg’ + V. chào ‘greet’ + (NP obj.) + (polite part ạ)

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, HCMC and tradespeople in Hue use the pattern in (A7).

(A7) Greeting expression + health question

Government officials in Ha Noi and HCMC, tradespeople in Hue use the pattern in (A8).

(A8) Greeting expression + activity question

All 3 groups in Ha Noi use the patterns in (A9) and (A10).

(A9) Greeting expression + health question + activity question

(A10) Greeting sentence + comments

Students in Ho Chi Minh City use the pattern in (A11) to senior people.

(A11) Question about activity

All 3 groups in Ha Noi use the pattern in (A12) to address senior people.

(A12) NP kinship term/name + (polite part a)

Table 1. Summarized co-occurrence of the greeting patterns to seniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (A1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A3)	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A4)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Pattern (A5)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Pattern (A6)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A7)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Pattern (A8)	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-
	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Pattern (A9)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A10)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (A11)	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Pattern (A12)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓

To equals

There are 3 polite patterns used with equals as the following details:

All 3 groups in Ha Noi and Hue, and tradespeople use this pattern. In HCMC, government officials and tradespeople use it to address equals as in (A13).

(A13) Question about activity

In Ha Noi, three groups use the pattern in (A14) to address equals. In Hue, students use it to address equals. In HCMC, government officials use it to address juniors.

(A14) V. chào ‘greet’

In Ho Chi Minh City, tradespeople and students use the pattern in (A15) to equals.

(A15) English greeting: Hi!/Hello!/Exclamation Ê! + (Question)

Table 2. Summarized co-occurrence of the greeting patterns to equals

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (A13)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-
	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern (A14)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
			✓	✓		
Pattern (A15)	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓

To juniors

The 5 polite patterns are used with juniors as in the following details:

In HCMC, government officials use the pattern in (A16) to address juniors.

(A16) Question about activity

In HCMC, tradespeople and government officials use the pattern in (A17) to address juniors. It is a foreign way mixing Vietnamese and English words for greeting the junior.

(A17) V. chào ‘greet’

In HCMC, government officials and students use the pattern in (A18) to address junior people.

(A18) NP kinship term/name + (polite part a)

Government officials in Ha Noi use the pattern in (A19) to address juniors. Tradespeople and students in HCMC use it also.

(A19) English greeting: Hi!/Hello!/Exclamation Ê! + (Question)

All 3 groups in Ha Noi and HCMC use the pattern in (A20).

(A20) Gestures: smile/ bow the head + (question/ greeting expression)

Table 3. Summarized co-occurrence of the greeting patterns to juniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (A16)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
Pattern (A17)	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Pattern (A18)	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Pattern (A19)	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓
	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Pattern (A20)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples:

(1) Chào anh.
greet you
“Hello.”

(2) Con xin chào bác ạ.
child beg greet uncle polite part
“I’d like to greet you, sir.”

Con ‘child’ in (2) is used only in the Southern dialect to seniors, not parents.

Age and sex are found not to be the most significant factors in politeness use. There are, however, some interesting points which show some differences among the different age-groups and the two sexes as follows:

(i) In Ha Noi and Hue speech, both males and females in the age group 20-35 years often use the polite particle **ạ** in addressing seniors more than the other two age groups 36-50 and 51+. In Ha Noi, when greeting a friend, both males and females use the words **Hi!** or **Hello!**. Females use more body language than males, such as smiling or nodding the head, instead of just greeting with words.

In Ho Chi Minh City speech, more females than males use the more polite particle **ạ** when addressing seniors. Only females use the English greeting word **Hi!**. Females use more body language than males. More males than females use the more polite word **Đạ** at the start of a greeting.

(ii) In Ha Noi speech, more females than males, in the age group 40-45 years, use the polite particle **ạ** when addressing seniors. The style of male greetings varies from the above pattern such as when using the English greeting word “Hello”, or asking about health, such as the greeting pattern i.e. **khoẻ không?** “Are you doing well?”. Females use more mild particles such as **à, nhé** when speaking to friends or juniors, while males do not use these particles in this pattern, for example:

- (3) Con chào bác. Bác có khoẻ không?
 child greet uncle uncle Q strong Q
 “I’d like to greet uncle. How are you?”

In Ho Chi Minh City speech, more females than males use the polite particle **ạ** when addressing seniors. Males use particles such as **nhé, hả** when addressing juniors, whereas females do not use them.

In comparison to males, females in the 51+ age group in all three cities, use the more polite particle **ạ** when addressing seniors.

These results corroborate the study of Brown and Levinson (1987:30) that women are more polite than men.

3.2 Leave-taking

The 3 groups of respondents: government, tradespeople and students were asked how they would say good-bye to seniors, juniors and equals. There are 14 polite patterns for leave-taking as follows:

To seniors

The 9 polite patterns used with seniors are as follows:

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, HCMC and student group in Hue address seniors using the pattern in (B1).

- (B1) Clause 1: (NP) + VP xin phép ‘ask permission’ + (NP object),
 Clause 2: NP subject + V. về ‘return’ + (polite particle)

Government officials in Ha Noi and all 3 groups in Hue use the pattern in (B2).

- (B2) (Thưa + title)/(Dạ) + (first person pron.=Em) + xin phép (đi về)
 + (polite particle)

Tradespeople in Ha Noi and government officials in HCMC use the pattern in (B3).

- (B3) Clause 1: (NP subj.) + chào ‘greet’ + NP obj.
 Clause 2: (Xin phép + NP obj.)
 Clause 3: NP (subj.) + V. về ‘return’ + (AdvP) + (Part)

Government and student groups in HCMC use one of the following patterns in (B4).

- (B4) V. xin ‘beg’ + V. chào ‘hello’ + NP obj.
 V. xin ‘beg’ + NP phép ‘permission’ + NP obj
 V. xin ‘beg’ + V. tạm biệt ‘good-bye’

(The last pattern is a foreign way which was not used in traditional way).

The Government group in HCMC and students in Hue use the pattern in (B5).

- (B5) VP xin phép ‘ask permission’ + Clause + (body language)

Tradespeople in HCMC address seniors as the pattern in (B6).

- (B6) VP xin phép ‘ask permission’ + Clause + (body language)
 Clause 1: NP (subj.) + V xin ‘beg’ + V chào ‘hello’ + NP obj.
 Clause 2: NP (subj.) + V

The Student group in HCMC address senior people using the pattern in (B7).

- (B7) (Vocative) + NP subj. + V + (AdvP) + Part

The Government officials in Ha Noi use the pattern in (B8) with seniors.

- (B8) (Kính chào ‘respectfully greet’) + wishing the senior good health

All 3 groups in 3 cities address seniors using the pattern in (B9).

- (B9) Chào + (NP obj.) + (Part) + (verb) + (clause)

Table 4. Summarized co-occurrence of the leave-taking patterns to seniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (B1)	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Pattern (B2)	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Pattern (B3)	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
Pattern (B4)	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Pattern (B5)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Pattern (B6)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern (B7)	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Pattern (B8)	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Pattern (B9)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Example:

- (4) Cháu xin phép bác. Cháu về ạ.
 grandson beg permission uncle grandson return part
 “I’d like to ask permission to take leave.”

To equals

The 4 polite patterns used with the juniors are detailed below.

Tradespeople and government officials in HCMC and students in Hue use the pattern in (C1) with equals and juniors. It is remarkable that Hue students start the Vietnamese sentence with the English word **Bye** and HCMC speakers add the English word **Bye-bye** at the end of the Vietnamese sentence, which is not found in Ha Noi:

- (C1) (Bye/Vocative) + (NP subj.) + V. về ‘return’ + (Part.) + (NP obj.) + (Bye-bye)

Tradespeople in HCMC address equals with the pattern in (C2).

- (C2) (Body language + Bye-bye)/ Tạm biệt ‘Good-bye’

Students in Hue use the pattern in (C3) with equals.

- (C3) Tạm biệt ‘Good-bye’

Government officials in HCMC and students in Hue address equals and juniors with the pattern in (C4).

- (C4) Thôi ‘enough’ + AdvP + clause 1 + clause 2

The word Thôi ‘enough’ conveys a desire to interrupt the conversation and asks for permission indirectly to leave politely.

Table 5. Summarized co-occurrence of the leave-taking patterns to equals

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern(C1)	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-
	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Pattern (C2)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern(C3)	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Pattern(C4)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
	-	✓	-	-	-	✓

To juniors

There is only one polite pattern used with juniors as follows:

(D1) Clause 1: Cause + Clause 2: Reason (V.về/ tạm biệt)

Table 6. Summarized co-occurrence of the leave-taking patterns to juniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (D1)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-

Example:

- (5) Chào tạm biệt.
Greet take leave
“May I take my leave.”

Nodding the head is a way to say good-bye to juniors. There are some different dialectal final particles such as: **nghe, nha** which are used in Hue; **nghe, nha** are used in HCMC and **nhé** is the most popular in Ha Noi and common in the other 2 cities. These final particles convey softness of speech and intimacy.

Age and gender affect the politeness patterns with appropriate manners which accompany the speech as follows:

In Ha Noi, females in the age group 20-35 years, may or may not bow the head (with a smile) when saying good-bye to the teacher, as well as males. Females use the word **Đạ** ‘yes’ at the beginning of the sentence for expressing the degree of politeness and respect to the teacher while males do not.

In Hue, both males and females in the age 20-35 year age-group use the polite word **Đạ** ‘yes’, **Đạ thưa** ‘Yes sir’ to senior people.

In Ha Noi, both males and females in the 36-50 years age-group express appropriate good manners by nodding the head or shaking hands with seniors. It is noticeable that females use the exclamation word **Thôi** ‘that’s enough’ at the beginning of the sentence in order to end the conversation and say good-bye whereas males do not.

In HCMC, females in the 36-50 year age-group use the polite particle **ạ** and nodding head body language with speech whereas males do not.

In Ha Noi, both males and females in the 51+ years age-group say good-bye to the house owner by bending the head and saying good-bye, or

either. Women and men (either senior or junior to the owner) may shake hands with the owner as well.

In Udonthani, females who are 50+ also use the final particle **ạ** when greeting, whereas males do not.

3.3 Introductions

When asked how they would introduce Mr. Hai to senior, equal and junior people, the introduction patterns with juniors and equals are simpler in terms of structure and pronouns. There are 11 polite patterns of introductions, as follows:

To seniors

Four polite patterns are used with seniors as in the following details.

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, Hue and HCMC introduced Mr. Hai to seniors with the pattern in (E1).

(E1) (Polite particle) + (Respectful vocative) + đây là ‘this is’ + NP obj. + (Part) + NP modifier

All 3 group in all 3 cities use the pattern in (E2) with seniors.

(E2) (Greeting expression)/(Respectful vocative + NP) + (NP + V. xin ‘beg’) + V. giới thiệu ‘introduce’ + đây là ‘this is’ + name + modifier

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, Hue and HCMC use the pattern in (E3) with senior people.

(E3) (Greeting expression) + vocative + NP + đây là ‘this is’ + name + modifier (Vocative can be simple as Name + *oi* or respectful vocative *Thưa* + NP).

Tradespeople in HCMC used this pattern to introduce Mr. Hai to senior people. The first clause contains a greeting verb. The second clause is asking permission from the senior to introduce the speaker’s friend. The third clause is the introductory clause as in (E4).

(E4) Clause 1: V. xin ‘beg’ + chào ‘greet’ + NP obj.
 Clause 2: V. xin ‘beg’ + NP phép ‘permission’ + được ‘able’ + V. giới thiệu ‘introduce’.
 Clause 3: Đây là ‘this is’ + name

Table 7. Summarized co-occurrence of the introduction patterns to seniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (E1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (E2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (E3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (E4)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-

Example:

- (6) Thừa bác, Đây là bạn cháu.
 dear uncle this be friend nephew
 “My uncle, sir, This is my friend.”

To equals

Two polite patterns are used with equals as in the following details.

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, Hue and HCMC introduced Mr. Hai to equals as in (F1).

- (F1) (Polite particle) + (Respectful vocative) + đây là ‘this is’ + NP obj. + (Part) + NP modifier

All 3 group in all 3 cities use the pattern with equals as in (F2).

- (F2) (Greeting expression)/(Respectful vocative + NP) + (NP + V. xin ‘beg’) + V. giới thiệu ‘introduce’ + đây là ‘this is’ + name + modifier

Table 8. Summarized co-occurrence of the leave-taking patterns to equals

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (F1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (F2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To juniors

The 5 polite patterns are used with juniors as in the following details.

Tradespeople and government officials in Ha Noi use this pattern to introduce Mr. Hai to junior people. The speaker emphasizes the good characteristics of Hai to the listener as in (G1).

(G1) Clause: Qualification of that person (+ NP + polite particle)

Government officials in HCMC use the following pattern with juniors as in (G2).

(G2) Clause 1: Đây là ‘this is’ + NP obj. +
Clause 2: question/imperative Clause

Student group in HCMC use the pattern in (G3) with juniors.

(G3) NP + Part or NP+NP as the introductory pattern with junior people

Student group in HCMC use the pattern in (G4) with junior people.

(G4) NP + Clause

Government officials in Ha Noi use the pattern in (G5) with juniors.

(G5) Question (asking whether the listener knows Mr. Hai) + Status of the introduced person

Table 9. Summarized co-occurrence of the introduction patterns to juniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (G1)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
Pattern (G2)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
Pattern (G3)	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Pattern (G4)	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Pattern (G5)	✓	-	-	✓	-	-

In Ha Noi, Hue and HCMC, females in the 20-35 years age-group use the words **Thưa** ‘dear’, **Đạ thưa** ‘Yes, dear’ to start the introductory sentence, more than males. But these two words can be used by both sexes. This shows respect for the senior person in terms of age and status. It is a marker of esteem.

Males in the 36-50 years age-group use the word **Thưa** ‘dear’ more often than females. This shows respect for status as well as age.

Females in the 51+ years age-group use the words **Thưa** ‘dear’, **Đạ** ‘Yes’ more than males. This shows respect for the status (if the speaker is older than the boss) and/or for age (if the boss is older than the speaker).

3.4 *Thanking*

The 3 groups were asked how they would thank seniors, juniors and equals when they received fruit from them. There are 11 polite patterns as follows:

To seniors

Seven polite patterns are used with seniors as in the following details.

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the pattern in (H1) with seniors.

(H1) (NP subj.) + (V. xin ‘beg’) + V. cảm ơn ‘thank you’ + NP obj.
+ (AdvP. of Degree) + (Part)

Tradespeople in HCMC use the pattern in (H2) with seniors.

(H2) V. xin ‘beg’ + V Cảm ơn ‘thank’ + NP obj. + clause

Tradespeople in HCMC use the pattern in (H3) with seniors.

(H3) Exclamation + excused clause

All 3 group in HCMC and Hue use the pattern in (H4) with seniors.

(H4) A thanking clause 1 + a surprised/impressive/excused clause2

Students in HCMC use the pattern in (H5) with seniors.

(H5) Exclamation + compliment clause + surprised clause

Tradespeople and government officials in Ha Noi use the pattern in (H6) with seniors.

(H6) (Polite Part) + (NP subj.) + V. cảm ơn ‘thank you’ + impressive clause/compliment clause

The 3 groups in Ha Noi and Hue use the pattern in (H7) with seniors.

(H7) Sentimental expressions: there are a few verbs expressing sentiment such as quan tâm ‘concern’, chu đáo ‘considerate’, khách sáo ‘formal and not close’, cẩn thận ‘be careful’.

Table 10. Summarized co-occurrence of the thanking patterns to seniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (H1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (H2)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern (H3)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern (H4)	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (H5)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pattern (H6)	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
Pattern (H7)	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓

It is notable that in all 3 cities, people use the verb **xin** ‘beg’ instead of the verb **cảm ơn** ‘thank you’ with intimate people as in the following example.

Example:

- (7) Quí hoá quá! Chị xin nhé.
 very nice very sister beg Part)
 AdvP AdvP NP V Part
 “It’s very nice. Let me beg.”

Prohibiting the junior from buying anything for the senior is not serious but the senior may feel uneasy to receive fruit from young visitors or it may demonstrate consideration of the senior for the junior. Appreciating the junior is like a compliment.

To equals

The 3 polite patterns used with equals are in the following details.

Tradespeople and students in HCMC joke with equals such as “Why do you bring such little fruit?” Moreover, they use the pattern in (I1).

- (I1) Clause 1: Cảm ơn ‘thank you’ + Clause 2: to express satisfaction with the taste of the fruit

Tradespeople in HCMC use the pattern in (I2) with equals.

- (I2) Clause 1: Vietnamese verb phrase: Cảm ơn nhiều ‘thank you very much’ + Clause 2: English verb phrase: Thank you very much.

The 3 groups in Ha Noi and Hue use the pattern in (I3) with equals.

- (I3) Sentimental expressions: there are a few verbs expressing sentiment such as *quan tâm* ‘concern’, *chu đáo* ‘considerate’, *khách sáo* ‘formal and not close’, *cẩn thận* ‘be careful’.

Table 11. Summarized co-occurrence of the thanking patterns to equals

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (I1)	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓
Pattern (I2)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Pattern (I3)	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓

To juniors

There is only one pattern used with juniors as follows:

- (J1) Clause 1: thanking + Clause 2: prohibition or appreciation

Government officials and students in HCMC use the following pattern with juniors.

Table 12. Summarized co-occurrence of the thanking patterns to juniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (J1)	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓

Example:

- (8) *Bác quan tâm đến cháu quá!*
 uncle concern to nephew very
 “You are concerned for me very much.”

In general, the response for thanking is **Không có gì**. ‘It doesn’t matter’ or **Không dám**. ‘Do not dare to accept (your thanking me since my action is so tiny)’.

In terms of age and gender, there are some interesting features which differ according to different ages and sex, as follows:

In all 3 cities, females in the 20-35 years age-group express more sentiment than males when thanking senior people by using the expressions in 8 above.

In all 3 cities, females and males in the 36-50 years age-group express sentiment in the thanking sentence.

In Ha Noi, males in the 51+ years age-group use the word **Vâng** ‘yes’ before the thanking sentence. Males do not express much sentiment when thanking seniors, unlike females. In Hue and HCMC, males also express sentiment in the thanking sentence as well as females.

In Udonthani, the respondents do not use sentiment in the thanking sentence.

3.5 Refusals

The 3 groups when asked how they would politely refuse to open a door to seniors, juniors and equals, replied with 6 patterns as follows:

To seniors

All 3 groups in Ha Noi, HCMC and Hue use the pattern in (K1) with senior people.

- (K1) Clause 1: (Polite Part) + (NP subj.) + xin lỗi ‘excuse’ + (NP obj.)
 Clause 2: Refuse/reason
 (The first clause conveys excuse and the second clause conveys refusal or reason.)

In all 3 cities, tradespeople and students in Ha Noi and Hue use the pattern in (K2) using the verb **thông cảm** ‘sympathize’ with reason rather than direct refusal to seniors.

- (K2) (NP subj.) + (polite Part: thưa ‘dear, sir’) + NP + V. thông cảm ‘sympathize’ + Clause: Reason
 (In this case, the first clause conveys an excuse indirectly without using the verb xin lỗi ‘excuse’.)

Table 13. Summarized co-occurrence of the refusal patterns to seniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (K1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (K2)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓

To equals

Tradespeople and students in Ha Noi and Hue use the pattern in (L1) using the verb **thông cảm** ‘sympathize’ with reason rather than direct refusal to equals.

- (L1) (NP subj.) + (polite Part: thưa ‘dear, sir’) + NP + V. thông cảm ‘sympathize’ + Clause: Reason
(In this case, the first clause conveys an excuse indirectly without using the verb xin lỗi ‘excuse’.)

In all 3 cities, tradespeople and government officials use the pattern in (L2) with equals:

- (L2) Cause (The speaker is busy.)-Reason (S/he cannot help.) or Reason (You have to be patient.)-Cause (The door is out of order).

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the pattern in (L3) with equals.

- (L3) Refusal sentence

Table 14. Summarized co-occurrence of the refusal patterns to equals

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (L1)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Pattern (L2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Pattern (L3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To juniors

There is only one pattern used with juniors as follows:

Tradespeople and students in Ha Noi and Hue use the pattern in (M1) using the verb **thông cảm** ‘sympathize’ with reason rather than direct refusal to juniors.

- (M1) (NP subj.) + (polite Part: thưa ‘dear, sir’) + NP + V. thông cảm ‘sympathize’ + Clause: Reason

Table 15. Summarized co-occurrence of the refusal patterns to juniors

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (M1)	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓

Example:

- (9) Cháu xin lỗi, cháu không làm được.
Niece/nephew excuse niece/nephew not do able
“I am sorry. I cannot do.”
- (10) Em xin lỗi thầy. Em không thể giúp
young sib excuse teacher young sib not able help
thầy mở được.
teacher open able
“Pardon me. I may not be able to help you open the door.”

In terms of age and gender, there are some interesting features which differ according to age and sex, as follows:

In Ha Noi, males in the age group 20-35 years who are unable to help but suggest seniors request other persons to help, whereas in HCMC, females do so.

In HCMC, males in the age group 36-50 years who cannot help offer no further suggestions to a senior whereas females advise to look for the help of others.

In Ha Noi, both males and females in the age group 51+ years who cannot help, do not propose other ways of helping. In HCMC, it males cannot help they will request other people to help.

In Udonthani province, both males and females in the age group 51+ years who cannot help, advise the senior to request the help of other people.

3.6 Requests

The 3 groups were asked how they would request to borrow some money from a senior person and gave their response according to the 3 patterns that follow:

All 3 groups in Ha Noi and Hue, and students and government officials in HCMC use this pattern with seniors, juniors and equals as in (N1).

(N1) Reason + Question ‘được không (ạ)?’

Only the question type **được không (ạ)?** ‘can I (sir)?’ is found from the data. There is the verb **có thể** ‘be able to’ which makes the request softer and gives a choice to the senior listener;

All 3 groups in 3 cities use the direct question for borrowing money from senior, junior and equal people. There are the verbs **vay** ‘to lend’, **mượn** ‘to borrow’ in the question; (N2) Question?

All 3 groups in 3 cities use the two affirmative sentences conveying reason and request or purpose pattern with senior, junior and equal people as in: (N3) Reason + Request/purpose

Table 16. Summarized co-occurrence of the request patterns to senior, junior and equal people

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (N1)	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Pattern (N2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (N3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Example:

- (11) Thưa bác, cháu có thể mượn bác được không?
 dear uncle nephew be able borrow uncle able Q
 “Dear uncle, could I borrow money?”

There are several polite verbs used for requests: **xin** ‘please’, **làm ơn** ‘do a favour’, **làm phiền** ‘bother’, **mong** ‘expect’, **nhờ** ‘ask’, **giúp** ‘help’ and **vui lòng** ‘be pleased’.

In terms of occupation, age and sex, there are some interesting differences as follows:

In all 3 cities, females in the age group 20-35 years use question for a mild request more than males. Students in Hue and HCMC use several vocative starts to the sentence to get the senior’s attraction such as: **Thưa bác, Bác ơi, Dạ bác, Dạ thưa bác** ‘Uncle sir’.

In Ha Noi, females in the age group 36-50 years use the question as a mild request more than males. Tradespeople in HCMC use a vocative polite phrase such as **Kính chào bác** [lit: Hello uncle respectfully], **Bác** + name ‘uncle + name’ before starting the request affirmative complex sentence for borrowing some money. The respondents in this age group express gratitude to the senior if s/he lends him/her some money.

In Ha Noi, both males and females in the age group 51+ years use the question with the same frequency, but males in Ha Noi use the respectful word **Thưa** ‘dear’ at the beginning of the sentence whereas females do not.

In Udonthani, both males and females in the age group 51+ years start the request with **Thưa, Dạ thưa** ‘dear sir’.

3.7 Complaints

The three groups were asked how they would complain about the unbearable weather to seniors, juniors and equals and responded as follows:

In Ha Noi, there is no data on complaining about bad weather to seniors. In Hue and HCMC, all 3 groups use the following patterns complaining to seniors, juniors and equals, but to juniors and equals, there is no starting vocative politeness:

- (P1) Declarative sentence conveys the opinion of the speaker or complaint to the listener
- (P2) Question: ask opinion of the listener with the question words: có...không? ‘is it?’, phải không ‘is it correct?’

In HCMC, government officials use the following pattern with juniors and equals:

- (P3) Question: ask how bearable it is + Declarative: the speaker’s opinion about the weather

In HCMC, tradespeople use the following pattern to senior and junior people:

- (P4) Greeting sentence + the weather + the speaker’s information related to such weather.

According to the data, people hate the hot weather more than the cold because, in summer, it is hot and damp which causes people to get tired. There are some words from the data mentioning hot weather or the result of hot weather such as **nóng** ‘hot’, **nóng nực** ‘oppressively hot’ **oi bức** ‘muggy’, **xấu** ‘bad’, **chán** ‘be tired of’, **không được tốt** ‘not well’, **nực** ‘hot’, **u ám** ‘sombre’, **tệ** ‘bad’, **chết người ta** ‘kill people’, **ngột ngạt** ‘suffocate’, **khắc nghiệt** ‘severe’, **thất thường** ‘abnormal’, **khó chịu** ‘uncomfortable’, **mệt mỏi** ‘tired’, **ghét** ‘hate’, **đau hết cả đầu** ‘headache’, **sợ** ‘afraid’, **chóng mặt** ‘dizzy’.

Table 17. Summarized co-occurrence of the complaint patterns to senior, junior and equal people

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (P1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (P2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (P3)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-
Pattern (P4)	-	-	✓	-	✓	-

Example:

- (12) Hôm nay thời tiết khó chịu quá. Bạn có
 today weather unbearable very friend Q
 thấy thế không?
 feel so Q
 “Today the weather is very unbearable. Do you feel so?”

The polite patterns of complaints about the bad weather are similar in all three groups. Only some details related to the use of pronouns differ according to seniority or familiarity between the speaker and listener.

In terms of age and sex, there are some interesting points as follows:

In all 3 cities, females in the age group 20-35 years complain by asking questions **không?** ‘yes-no question’, or **sao?** ‘how?’, whereas males use questions less. Males use the respectful word **Đạ** ‘yes’ to start the complaint and end with the polite particle **ạ** with seniors.

In all 3 cities, females in the age group 36-50 years use yes-no question **không?** in complaints while males do not.

In all 3 cities, both males and females in the 51+ years age-group complain the same way.

3.8 Compliments

The situation given asked how government officials, students and tradespeople compliment seniors, juniors and equals who have worked well. There are 4 patterns as follows:

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the same pattern:

(Q1) Declarative sentences-praise the senior, junior and equal.

To praise directly is the most popular by using various praising patterns with the following words such as **tốt** ‘good’, **đáng khen** ‘be worthy to be praised’, **đáng khâm phục** ‘be worthy to be admired’, **khá** ‘getting better’, **có chất lượng** ‘qualify’, **xứng đáng** ‘deserve’, **niệt tình và cố gắng** ‘enthusiasm and try’, **tuyệt vời** ‘wonderful’, **tích cực** ‘active’, **xuất sắc** ‘outstanding’, **khen thưởng** ‘reward’, **siêu** ‘extraordinary’, **giỏi** ‘good’, **hay** ‘good’, **khâm phục** ‘great admire’, **xuất sắc** ‘outstanding’, **xứng đáng** ‘worthy’, **khéo** ‘skiful’, **được** ‘win’, **cảm phục** ‘feel admiration for’, **ngưỡng mộ** ‘feel respect and admiration for’, for example:

Example:

- (13) Anh thật đáng khâm phục.
 old bro true be worthy admire
 “You are admirable.”

All 3 groups in 3 cities use the following pattern:

- (Q2) Congratulations with the verb chúc (mừng) ‘congratulate’.

In Hue and HCMC, tradespeople and students use the following pattern:

- (Q3) Clause 1: thanking + Clause 2: compliment

In HCMC, government officials use the following pattern:

- (Q4) Question: express surprise that the work has finished +
 Declarative: compliment.

Table 18. Summarized co-occurrence of the compliment patterns to senior, junior and equal people

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (Q1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (Q2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (Q3)	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Pattern (Q4)	-	-	✓	✓	-	-

In HCMC, students use the impossible conditional clause to compliment senior people.

In HCMC, students use the English word O.K. as a compliment word by mixing with Vietnamese particle to junior as in:

Example:

- (14) OK đấy.
 o.k. that
 “That’s o.k.”

It is noticeable that students in Ho Chi Minh City have started using English words mixed with Vietnamese in their speech.

In terms of occupation, age and gender, in Ha Noi, there are some interesting points as follows:

In Ha Noi, both females and males in the age group 20-35 years use similar patterns. It was noted that some young respondents do not know how to compliment seniors. They gave the response in the questionnaires that they “Do not say anything.” In HCMC, the young generation dares to express their ideas to seniors including use of more varieties of compliment including English words mixed with Vietnamese words in a sentence.

In Ha Noi, females in the age group 36-50 years use more familiar terms to address the boss such as **sếp**=chef, whereas males do not. Females use the slang **siêu** ‘super’ with the boss which conveys familiarity, whereas males do not. Females use the polite particle **ạ** with the boss, whereas males do not. In Hue, students use the slang **siêu** ‘super’ to compliment friends.

In Ha Noi, males in the age group 51+ years express praise in slightly longer sentences than females. Apart from compliment, females want to learn from seniors, whereas males do not. But in HCMC, tradespeople want to learn from friends.

In Undornthani, seniors compliment other senior people directly.

3.9 Apologies

The respondents were asked how the speaker apologizes to seniors, juniors and equals when they step on his/her foot. There are two patterns.

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the same pattern with seniors, juniors and equals as follows:

(R1) First clause:[(Polite word **Đạ**) + (NP Subj.) + V. xin lỗi ‘excuse’ + (NP obj.) + (Polite part **ạ**)], Second clause: + (NPsubj.+NEG+V.+NP **ý** ‘intention’).

There are two clauses in this pattern. The first and second clauses can be juxtaposed or either one can be obligatory or optional. All three groups use the two clauses as juxtaposed clauses or only the first clause or only the second clause. In the second clause, negation can be a negative word **không** ‘not’+verb or a Sino-Vietnamese verb **vô ý** ‘thoughtless’ without any preceding negative word.

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the same pattern with seniors, juniors and equals as follows:

(R2) First clause: (Excl.) + (Polite word **Đạ**) + (NP Subj.)+V. xin lỗi ‘excuse’+ (Polite Part **ạ**), Second clause: + (NP subj.+ Yes-No question **có...không?** + (Part)/Negative question

Table 19. Summarized co-occurrence of the apologetic patterns to senior, junior and equal people

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (R1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (R2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In HCMC, friends use the English word **Sorry** combined with the Vietnamese question, **Bạn không sao chứ?** “Are you alright?”.

In Ha Noi, in addition to the word **xin lỗi** ‘excuse’, there are other words to express forgiveness, i.e. **tha, thứ** ‘forgiveness’, **lỡ** ‘be so inadvertent as to’.

Example:

- (15) Dạ, cháu xin lỗi ạ! Cháu không cố ý.
 Yes nephew excuse part. Nephew not intend
 “Excuse me sir, I didn’t intend (to do so).”

In terms of age and sex, there are some interesting points as follows:

In Ha Noi, males in the 20-35 years age-group use the respectful word **Dạ** ‘Yes’ preceding the excuse sentence whereas females do not. Both males and females use the exclamation word **Ôi!** ‘Alas!’. Females ask the senior how s/he is, more than males. In HCMC, both males and females use the adverb phrase **thành thật** ‘sincere’ preceding the verb.

In all 3 cities, both males and females in the 36-50 years age group use more exclamation words i.e. **Ôi!** ‘Alas!’, **Ôi chết!** ‘Alas die!’, **Thôi chết!** ‘Die!’ which convey the lack of intention to step on the senior’s foot.

In Ha Noi, males in the age group 51+ years use short excuses patterns. Females use familiar words when addressing the boss whereas males do not. Females, apart from the excuse, ask how the boss is, whereas males do not. Females use the exclamation word **Ôi chết!** ‘Alas die’ whereas males do not.

In Udonthani, females use polite particles, more than males do.

3.10 Disagreements

The three groups were asked how they would politely disagree with the ideas of seniors. There are 2 patterns as follows:

All 3 groups in all 3 cities use the following pattern to senior, junior and equal pattern:

(S1) (Excuse) + Declarative sentence suggesting a better way instead

There are ways of disagreeing: comparison with the ideas or actions of others using a word showing uncertainty such as: **có lẽ** ‘perhaps’ or **xem lại** ‘consider again’.

Seniority is still important in Vietnamese society so the way to express indirect disagreement is relevant to the concept of negative politeness according to Brown and Levinson.

All 3 groups in 3 cities use the following pattern:

(S2) (**xin lỗi** ‘excuse’) + Negative sentence which shows direct disagreement of the speaker to senior people, junior and equal people.

However, if the speakers want to disagree directly, they start with the polite word **xin lỗi** ‘excuse’ which shows politeness and softens the disagreement.

Table 20. Summarized co-occurrence of the disagreement patterns to senior, junior and equal people

Polite patterns	Ha Noi	Hue	HCMC	government officials	trades people	students
Pattern (S1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pattern (S2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Examples:

(16) Xin lỗi, em có ý kiến hơi khác.
 excuse young sib have opinion rather different
 “Excuse me. I have rather different idea.”

(17) Con có ý kiến như thế này.
 child have opinion like this
 “I have an opinion like this.”

According to the data, the students, including the working people in HCMC, have come from various provinces to study and work there such as from Ha Noi, Quang Ngai, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Binh Dinh, Quang Nam, Quang Tri, Hue, Can Tho, Quang Ngai, Ca Mau. This shows the dynamic nature of the Vietnamese people to move from the provinces to Ho Chi Minh City which is the biggest city in Vietnam. This is less common in Ha Noi and Hue. According to the questionnaires, some local people in Hue and HCMC still use their dialects when responding to the questionnaires which reflect the Vietnamese language policy whereby local people have the right to use their own language or dialect.

It is noticeable that the overseas Vietnamese in Udonthani province, Thailand, use a more simple style of sentence than in Vietnam.

4. Polite behavior

Vietnamese cultural politeness related to polite language use was collected by interviews, observation, and participation as well as from some documents.

4.1 The manners of greeting and leave-taking

Parents teach their children from childhood to know how to greet grandparents and adults by folding their arms across their chest while greeting. This behaviour is suitable for children since they are naughty. Folding their arms forces them to behave and be controlled. Otherwise they may fidget. Subordinates have to respect their superiors. Nowadays, this lesson depends on each family, but when the children grow up, this disciplined manner may not be so strict anymore.

When guests visit the house, children should greet the guests using kinship terms according to their age or how their parents have told them to address the guests. The children, especially girls, have to help the parents prepare hot water, tea, fruit, candy, etc. for receiving guests. The children should not participate in the conversation of the parents and guests. They should remove themselves. Whenever the children have their friend(s) visit the house, the parents may talk to the friend(s) for a while, then leave them together.

In society, when Vietnamese meet each other, they greet in Vietnamese or address each other using kinship terms. Men who have not seen each other for a long time, greet and shake hands as well.

Foreigners who meet Vietnamese for the first time, shake hands on introduction and on good-bye as well. Shaking hands should be performed standing not sitting. The senior offers his hand to the junior and the junior takes the hand. It is forbidden to use the left hand. The junior should bend his/her head down a bit and incline a bit towards the senior while shaking his hand. They should keep eye contact with each other. Hugging loosely between a Vietnamese man and a foreign woman is acceptable when they are intimate. This manner is not very popular between Vietnamese except among the family members.

If Vietnamese meet each other often, such as in the office, or at school, the junior should bow their head to the senior while greeting or leave-taking.

If the interlocutors are in a hurry, a simple raising or waving of the hand greeting is acceptable.

4.2 *Tone of voice*

Talking loudly is impolite, but in daily life, many Vietnamese people speak very loudly like they are quarrelling or shouting out to others. In some cases, of course, raising the voice does mean the start of a quarrel. Many youths, both boys and girls also speak or shout loudly in the street. This suggests that in their family, their parents may not have paid much attention to teach them or did not know that this manner is impolite. The tone of voice used depends on the distance and the environment around the speakers, but the polite way is to speak only loudly enough for each interlocutor to hear the other. The tone of voice should be soft.

4.3 *Eye contact*

Eye contact is important especially when greeting and talking to each other. But when inferiors (children) have to listen to the senior's instructions at home, children may have to bow their heads in order to show they are paying attention to the senior's teaching. In general, avoiding eye contact means the interlocutors do not have a good relationship. Some respondents mentioned that eye contact is not as important as participation in the conversation. Even when the interlocutors do not have much eye contact, if they are participating in the discussion, then this is acceptable.

4.4 *Ways of giving and thanking*

A gift is given according to the occasion, i.e. wedding, Tet (New Year's Festival), birthday, or giving souvenirs or fruit when visiting someone. The Vietnamese do not open the present in front of the giver if it is wrapped as in some other Southeast Asian countries. Northerners do not thank each other by saying **cảm ơn** 'thank you', but say **Tôi xin** which means 'I beg' which is more intimate. They rarely say thank you in daily life but they express their thanks with their eyes or manner, i.e. bowing. If they say thanks too often, it will suggest insincerity. Nowadays, however, western influence effects the ways of thanking and many people are likely to say **cảm ơn** 'thank you' to foreigners.

Nowadays, giving money on a special occasion is popular.

5. **Summary:**

According to the concepts of politeness mentioned at the beginning, the Vietnamese patterns of polite speech correlate with Grice's Maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner.

The Vietnamese use kinship terms as real kinship terms with their relatives and as the pseudo-kinship terms with people in society such as **Thưa bác/ cô/ chú** ‘Dear uncle/ father’s younger sister/ father’s younger brother’ rather than using official terms such as **Thưa sếp, ông chủ** ‘Boss sir’. Normally, the Vietnamese use kinship for expressing politeness, therefore, kinship is an identity of polite expressions, especially for age-kinship (kinship based on the age of hearer). Tradespeople and Government officials are strongly influenced by foreign behavior since they have more chances to be in contact with foreigners. Furthermore their polite expressions may be more concerned with the social level of the hearer than the hearers’ age.

The politeness system actually follows age, but occupation seems to be more important nowadays in Vietnamese society as it modernizes. The use of a loud voice by the speaker can change polite patterns into impolite patterns easily, so soft and medium tones reflect politeness better.

The patterns of politeness are full forms or formal forms when used with seniors, whereas the degree of full polite forms may be reduced when used with equals and juniors. Females use more polite particles than males. In the North, the way of using polite patterns is more conservative than in the Central regions and the South. The noun **Đồng chí** ‘comrade’, reflects Communist influence which can be used as first, second and third pronouns, used in formal or colloquial speech. It has been found to be used only in the North, which is the center of government now, but not in the Central and the South. There are some dialectal features such as pronouns and final particles which differ from region to region. Some English words are used by the new generation, rather than the older generation, but not many.

Comparing the politeness patterns in Thailand (Udonthani Province) where Vietnamese have been settled for more than 50 years, there is not much change from the polite patterns in Vietnam. This shows that politeness expressions are rather eternal, with only some changes noted in the data related to use by the young-age group which is influenced by English. The politeness expressions have changed the least. The more senior the listener is, the more polite terms are used with them.

Polite behavior, such as how to greet and say good-bye, tone of voice and eye contact are non-verbal features which custom requires should be expressed appropriately together with the polite verbal patterns. Politeness can facilitate successful communication and friendship.

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