



VIETNAMESE PHONEMIC INVENTORY

Please remember that dialectal differences exist for each language and should be considered when using the phonemic charts.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d t ^h		t	c	k g	
Nasal	m			n			ɲ	ŋ	
Trill				r					
Tap or Flap									
Fricative		f v		s z	ʃ ʒ			x	h
Affricate									
Glides (Approximant)							j	w	
Liquid (Lateral Approximant)				l					

Additional sounds not found on the chart: /kʰ/ and /ŋm/.

Reference:

Cheng, L. (1991). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students* (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

Hwa-Froelich, D., Hodson, B. W., & Edwards, H. T. (2002). Characteristics of Vietnamese phonology. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 11, 264–273.



Facts on Vietnamese Phonology

- There are three major dialects of Vietnamese that are geographical in nature: northern, central, and southern.¹
- Vietnamese is a tonal language. Each syllable has a tone and each tone changes the semantics of a word. Vietnamese tones include the following:²
 - level,
 - breathing rising,
 - breathing falling,
 - falling–rising,
 - creaky rising (low rising), and
 - low falling (low constricted).
- There are no consonant clusters.³
- Words are primarily monosyllabic, although some multisyllabic words exist.⁴
- There are six consonants used in final position: /p/, /t/, /k/, /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/.⁵
- Phonemes in English that are not found in Vietnamese are as follows:
 - /θ/, /ð/, /tʃ/, and /dʒ/.
- A number of dialectal variations exist in Vietnamese. The following phonemes only occur in some dialects:⁶
 - /z/—Northern dialect,
 - /j/—Central and Southern dialects,
 - /ʃ/—Central and Southern dialects,
 - /j/—Central and Southern dialects, and
 - /r/.

¹ Hwa-Froelich, D., Hodson, B. W., & Edwards, H. T. (2002). Characteristics of Vietnamese phonology. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 11, 264–273.

² Cheng, L. (1991). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students* (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Hwa-Froelich, D., Hodson, B. W., & Edwards, H. T. (2002). Characteristics of Vietnamese phonology. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 11, 264–273.

⁵ Cheng, L. (1991). *Assessing Asian language performance: Guidelines for evaluating limited-English proficient students* (2nd ed.). Oceanside, CA: Academic Communication Associates.

⁶ *Ibid.*