

# A STUDY ON DIFFERENT KINDS OF QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH WITH REFERENCE TO VIETNAMESE

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**Summary :** According to “Language and Culture” by Clair Kramersch (2000) , Language is a means of conveying the community’s cultural identity. The language is considered a valuable data source to study the culture, history of ethnic groups and communities. It is not easy to understand the difference between English and Vietnamese question because it represents two unique cultures. Question is one of the necessary types of sentences in learning a language or in everyday communication. Usually, people use questions to check information. In some cases, asking questions is not only for information but also for greeting. Although the questions in English and Vietnamese are quite similar, there are still differences. This study investigates the classification, structure, and intonation of questions in English and Vietnamese. As Mehrabian (1972) has pointed out, in the communication process, speech is 7% effective, much lower than tone (38%); Therefore, the same questioning content, but depending on the circumstances / culture of each region, users have different voice tones up and down.

**Keywords:** Question, classification, structure ,and intonation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the sixteenth century, learning foreign languages, especially English, has always been the most globally popular, especially in Vietnam. However, mastering a foreign language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is not easy. In any language or any skill, Questions play a crucial role in a conversation. They are necessary types of sentences in language learning and communication. We cannot communicate without asking questions. It is a way of exchanging information and knowledge. Sometimes, the question is a greeting or sarcasm.

This article aims to explore the differences in form and structure between Vietnamese and English questions so

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that learners can master their knowledge. Besides, it also shows the difference in tone in questions between English - Vietnamese, not only reacting to the emotions/state of the questioner but also cultural differences.

The author hopes to help Vietnamese people, especially students, access English more efficiently by comparing English and Vietnamese questions. Therefore, Vietnamese people learning English can understand more about the types of questions in English and Vietnamese, thereby mastering English question types. Additionally, this article also provides some recommendations for English language learning and teaching.

This essay consists of five main parts:

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1. Introduction
2. The definition of questions.
3. The classification of questions.
4. The difference of structure grammar and intonation in four types of questions in English and Vietnamese.
5. Recommendations & Conclusion.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1. Theoretical background

#### 2.1.1. Definition of questions

Before comparing the differences in English and Vietnamese questions, it is essential to understand its definition.

The Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary published in 2020 says:

“Question is a sentence, phrase, and word that asks for information; a task or request for information that is intended to test your knowledge or understanding”.

For example: Do you like black or red?  
What do you do in the morning?

Besides, questions are some type of sentences to seek pieces of information, the end of the question is usually a question mark (?) (Betty Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Indeed, questions play a significant role in language learning. Whether it is an English question or a Vietnamese question, it is a question type to ask about something and always end with a (?). The questions are often raised or down at the end of a sentence to express the speaker's feelings directly. Understanding what a question definition is is one way to understand the research topic better.

#### 2.1.2. Types of the question in English and Vietnamese

According to “Đặc điểm của câu hỏi tiếng Anh: Đối chiếu với tiếng Việt” by Nguyen Dang Suu (2010), there are four main kinds of question.

\* Yes/No questions (Câu hỏi Có - Không)

*Ex: Are they studying together?*

*Có phải họ đang học/ nghiên cứu cùng nhau không?*

\*Tag – questions (Câu hỏi đuôi)

*Ex: He is a student, isn't he?*

*Anh ấy là học sinh, có phải không?*

\*WH – questions (Câu hỏi nghi vấn/ Câu hỏi có từ để hỏi)

*Ex: what happened?*

*Chuyện gì đã xảy ra vậy?*

\*Alternative question (Câu hỏi lựa chọn)

*Ex: Do you want coffee or tea?*

*Em muốn cà phê hay trà nào?*

#### a. Yes/No questions

Grammatical Structures:

In English, Yes/No questions must use auxiliary verbs “be, have, do” which reversed to the beginning of a question. They always begin with one of the words above and the answer can be ‘yes’, ‘no’, or repeat the question. In the question, when the auxiliary verb is reversed to the beginning of the sentence, the main verb is always in the infinitive form

Auxiliary verbs + S + V/N/ADJ ?

*Ex: Do you eat rice?*

However, Yes/No questions are like narrative but it be added modal particles “à”, “hả”, “ạ”... or some pairs of adverb “có...không” in Vietnamese

*Ex: Anh có ăn cơm không ạ?*

\*Tense in English and Vietnamese questions.

In English, asking questions must pay attention to how to use it properly.

There are 12 Basic English Tenses. Every action that occurs in the present, past and future has at least 4 different expressions

+ Present simple Tense, Present Continuous Tense, Present Perfect Tense,

Present Perfect Continuous Tense.

+ Past Simple Tense, Past Continuous Tense, Past Perfect Tense, Past Perfect Continuous Tense.

+ Future Simple Tense, Future Continuous, Future Perfect Tense, Future Perfect Continuous Tense.

In Vietnamese, because there is no effect of tense, Vietnamese is simpler including using “đã “ with actions occurring in the past, “đang “ with actions in the present, and “sẽ “ with actions in the future.

Ex : Em đã học tiếng anh được ba năm rồi hả?

Have you learned English for 3 years?

Look at the above example we can see, in Vietnamese, đã is used to ask about learning English time in the past. In English, an act of learning English for 3 years is in present perfect tense because the asker wanting to ask if you have been studying English for 3 years and you are still studying now. If the question is simple past tense, it means asking about you has been studying English for 3 years but is no longer studying now. Indeed, it has a great effect on the meaning of the question.

Intonation:

There is a rising intonation at the end of the sentence in English and Vietnamese. However, modal particles can be emphasized or skimmed depending on the case. Each word is used flexibly to show respect for adults or friendliness in Vietnam.

### **b. Tag – questions**

Grammatical Structures:

According to EIU Language Center For A Better Opportunity Panpage (2016) : “ A tag question is a small question at the end of the statement . Question tags

are used when asking for agreement or confirmation”.

In English, adding an interrogative fragment at the end of a statement to turn it into a question or check that the statement is correct or not.

### **A positive statement + A negative question tag**

*Ex : He is studying English, isn't he?*

### **A negative statement + A positive statement**

*Ex : You didn't happy, do you?*

In Vietnamese, the structure are like narrative, but at the same time use modal particles “có phải không”, “có đúng không”

*Ex: Cô ấy là một cô gái đẹp , có phải không?*

Intonation :

Ifraising intonation , English speakers are not sure and want to know the answer. They are falling intonation if they are sure of the answer.

In Vietnam, the tone of voice is moderate, the gentle voice to ask questions or raise the voice with a loud tone that carries the meaning of reprimand.

### **c. WH – questions**

Grammatical Structures:

WH- Questions is a type of question begins with ‘who’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘what’, ‘why’, or ‘how’.

In English, When question words are the subject of the sentence, there will be no anagrams. Word order will be like a narrative.

Ex: Who can do it?

When question words are the object, the object, or the adverb, there will always be the anagram of the female head and the auxiliary verb.

*Ex: What are you doing?*

In the Vietnamese language, using questionable words to inquire. There are “*ai*”, “*cái gì*”, “*ở đâu*”, “*khi nào*”,... can be the subject or object or object in the sentence.

*Ex: Bạn đang làm cái gì thế?*

*Khi nào anh về?*

\* In both English and Vietnamese, question words can be question

*Ex : what? : cái gì thế, có chuyện gì thế, xảy ra chuyện gì vậy...*

#### **Intonation :**

Intonation falls at the end of the wh-English question sentence. In Vietnam, intonation can be flexibly up and down depending on the speaker’s circumstances and emotions.

#### **d. Alternative question**

Grammatical Structures:

According to Richard Nordquist, Grammar and Composition Expert, an alternative question is a type of question (or interrogative) that offers the listener a closed choice between two or more answers.

A question of choice in English is like a normal question, but there are additional options, and between choice words with “*or*”

When the asker wants to ask a choice question, we have to give 2 or 3 options to the listener. For this type of question, the respondent needs to give an option, which can be one of the things the asker suggested or something else we want.

*Ex1 :-Do you like coffee or tea?*

Chrysanthemum tea

- *Quý cô muốn dùng café hay trà ạ?*

*Cho tôi trà hoa cúc nhé.*

*Ex2:-Do you like coffee or tea?*

Avocado smoothie.

- *Quý cô muốn dùng cà phê hay trà ạ?*

*Cho tôi sinh tố bơ nhé!*

However, the conjunctions “*hay, hoặc là, hay là*” are added between two words, two phrases, or two clauses to choose Vietnam’s options.

*Bạn thích café hay trà?*

#### **Intonation :**

In English, raising the voice in the noun before the preposition “*or*” and the down in the noun after “*or*”

In Vietnamese, the intonation in question usually goes up, and the voice is always high at the end “*... không?*”, “*... chưa?*”, “*...hả?*”. Some words are often skim, read lightly “*... à*”, “*...nhỉ?*”, “*...gì?*”

In many cases, these words are also emphasized to express the sarcasm or appreciation attitude of the questioner.

The difference between English and Vietnamese questions

#### **Grammatical Structures :**

1. English questions often have to reverse the verbs to the beginning of the sentence. However, Vietnamese questions are usually the structure of a narrative sentence including modal particles “*à*”, “*hả*”, “*ạ*”, “*có phải không*”, “*có đúng không*”... or some pairs of the adverb “*có...không*”...and end with (?).

2. WH- Questions in English are usually at the beginning of a sentence, while they can be at the beginning, end of a sentence, or in the middle of a Vietnamese sentence.

3. 12 basic tenses in English need to be used flexibly in each situation while in Vietnamese only need 3 words including “*đã*”, “*đang*”, “*sẽ*” to describe the difference between past, present, and future, respectively.

Intonation:

Although intonation is subjective, depending on each individual, both

English and Vietnamese still have basic rules of pronunciation to express what the speaker wants to mention or emphasize accurately.

Because English is an intonation language, questions in English are expressed more clearly than in Vietnamese.

Vietnamese is a tonal language, so attention is paid to tones including grave-lowering (\\), acute-angry (/), smooth-rising (?), chesty-raised (~), chesty-heavy (.), level (-) and changing in pitch levels make a change in the lexical meanings of the word (An HMM-based Vietnamese speech synthesis system, 2009). Therefore, the intonation in Vietnamese questions is always different from English.

Several recommendations

1. Vietnamese English teachers need to have a deep understanding of English and Vietnamese in general and questions in English and Vietnamese in particular. Especially, intonation is part of a less taught skill in school and needs lessons that connect more with students. In Vietnam, the self-study spirit is not high, so that teachers will be the primary transmitters of knowledge to students. Therefore, teachers need to prepare their lessons carefully before going to class.

2. English learners need to have a more serious attitude towards learning. We can create our native environment by joining English language clubs at school or in the area. Learning a foreign

language is very good, but it is not so to forget our mother tongue. We need to cultivate both languages to core values in the integration.

### CONCLUSION

Research on questions is an exciting topic. The questions are not merely an essential type of sentence in learning languages and communication, but it also represents the unique cultural features of the peoples of Anglo-American-Vietnamese.

Comparing English questions to Vietnamese questions - our mother tongue is not a topic covered by many authors, but this is a perfect topic. It is also really vital to point out the difference between English and Vietnamese questions. Through the above article, we can see the type of questions is defined when it is a question used to confirm/find information and ends with a (?). On the article, in English and Vietnamese questions, this essay is divided into four main categories: Yes/No questions, Tag - questions, WH -questions, Alternative question. Each question type has features of grammatical structure and intonation. On that basis, the paper also gives some recommendations on learning and teaching English to Vietnamese people.

Hopefully, Vietnamese students can be more confident when asking and answering questions from teachers and foreigners. Besides, students can find themselves more effective in learning./.

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## NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ CÁC LOẠI CÂU HỎI TRONG TIẾNG ANH VỚI THAM CHIẾU TRONG TIẾNG VIỆT

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**Tóm tắt:** Theo cuốn “Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa” của Clair Kramersch (2000), ngôn ngữ là phương tiện truyền tải bản sắc văn hóa của cộng đồng. Ngôn ngữ được coi là nguồn dữ liệu quý giá để nghiên cứu văn hóa, lịch sử của các tộc người và cộng đồng. Không dễ để hiểu được sự khác biệt giữa câu hỏi tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt vì nó đại diện cho hai nền văn hóa khác biệt. Câu hỏi là một trong những dạng câu cần thiết trong việc học ngoại ngữ hoặc trong giao tiếp hàng ngày. Thông thường, mọi người sử dụng câu hỏi để kiểm tra thông tin. Trong một số trường hợp, đặt câu hỏi không chỉ để cung cấp thông tin mà còn để chào hỏi. Mặc dù câu hỏi bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt khá giống nhau nhưng vẫn có sự khác biệt. Nghiên cứu này nghiên cứu sự phân loại, cấu trúc và ngữ điệu của các câu hỏi bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt. Như Mehrabian (1972) đã chỉ ra, trong quá trình giao tiếp, giọng nói đạt hiệu quả 7%, thấp hơn nhiều so với giọng điệu (38%); Vì vậy, cùng một nội dung câu hỏi nhưng tùy vào hoàn cảnh / văn hóa từng vùng miền mà người nói lên giọng hoặc xuống giọng.

**Từ khóa:** Câu hỏi, phân loại, cấu trúc, ngữ điệu.