

# SOME COMPARISONS BETWEEN BRITISH AND VIETNAMESE GREETING CULTURE

Supervisor: M.A Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa

Student: Nguyen Thi Hoai Thanh

English university class course 50B

***Tóm tắt:** Chào hỏi là cách tạo ấn tượng đầu tiên trong bất kỳ cuộc giao tiếp nào. Tuy nhiên, "Sự khác nhau về ngôn ngữ đã dẫn đến sự khác nhau trong cách nhìn nhận cuộc sống"(Federico Fellini ). Nét khác biệt đó cũng tạo nên nét khác biệt trong cách chào hỏi. Điều này được thể hiện rõ nhất ở hai nền văn hóa phương Đông và phương Tây. Trong bài nghiên cứu này, tôi tập trung nghiên cứu và so sánh văn hóa chào hỏi ở hai quốc gia đại diện của hai nền văn hóa trên là nước Anh và Việt Nam. Bài nghiên cứu của tôi sẽ góp phần giúp đọc giả, đặc biệt là những người học ngôn ngữ Anh tìm ra cách phù hợp nhất để có thể chào với người Anh trong từng tình huống cụ thể.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Greeting is the best way to make impression in communications of any cultures. Our conversations are successful or not successful thanks to the greeting. We can say that greetings play important role in communication. So, What is greeting? According to two linguistics Schegloff and Sacks (1973), "greeting is as a speech event including of two parts side by side serial and sequential such as Greeting- Greeting or Greeting- request for information" and Ebswoth , Boman (1996) stated that "greeting is among the first speed acts that are learning by children in their native language"... etc.

Nowadays, with trend of integration and globalization and the development of English, the distance of all countries and citizens in all the world become closer. People in the world can study, communicate together without any barrier. We can't deny that people use English as their communicative language.

In Vietnam, there are a lot of Foreign companies and projects to investigate in our country. Therefore; Vietnamese has more chance to communicate with foreigners, and English is also more common in all aspects of Vietnamese. However; the cultural disagreement is the biggest barriers for the Western people as well as Vietnamese when communicating together. Sometimes, it makes them shocked and embarrassed. for English learners, understanding about British communication culture is very important. Because it not only servers their study but also their future job. In fact, in order to understand deeply about British communication culture is not easy.

In process of the study, all English major students as well as I often have some mistakes in communication with British people. It really makes us feel confused, and British people are also uncomfortable.

To overcome this status, Tran Thi Bich Hanh in Ho Chi Minh City University of Pedagogy, and Pham Nguyen Thanh Tam Ho Chi Minh City University of Education focused on this aspects, But their paper did not mention to the gestures as well as slang in Vietnamese greeting. I decide to continue to develop this topic “some comparisons between Vietnamese and British greeting culture” to make this topic more perfect.

## **2. CONTENT**

### **2.1. British and Vietnamese Greetings**

#### **2.1.1. British greetings**

- "There are many ways to greet people in Britain. Generally greeting is varies to situation from casual or friendly to very formal" (Denis Oliver, conversational languages.

Firstly, I would like to mention to greeting phrase on the time of day. In this way, people greet each other by using greeting phrase of time such as: Good morning/ Morning + title/ first name, Good afternoon + title/ first name, Good evening/ Evening + title/ first name, Hello", "Hi", "How are you?", Merry Christmas, Happy New Year; Happy birthday... How do you do?/ Hello/ nice to meet you!...

**For example:** (Mary and her boy friend go to Nancy' birthday in the evening. Let's their conservation).

*Marry: Happy your birthday, Nancy.*

*This is my boy friend , Tom.*

*Nancy: Thank so much. Nice to meet you, Tom*

*Tom: Nice to meet you! Nancy*

- Considering to the above example, we see that Marry use the phrase "*Happy your birthday*" to congratulate and greet in Nancy ' birthday. And Nancy uses phrase "*Nice to meet you*" to greet Tom for the first meeting.

Secondly, I'd like to introduce Greeting phrases on formal and informal situations. Formal situation is used when the speakers and listeners meet each other for the first time, they use formal greeting just like the introductory greeting above. “How do you do?” Or “Good morning/ Good afternoon/ Good evening, nice to meet you, glad to meet you, ... And Informal situation

is used when the speakers and the listeners have known each other before, they can use informal greetings to greet each other such as: “Hello”, “Hi”, “How have you been?”, “How’s thing? ...

**For example:** (Jim meet his classmate in class, he greet. Let's listen his phrase)

*Jim: Hi, Tom*

*Tom: Hey!*

- Looking at this conversation, we see that in the informal situation ( class). Jim and Tom use the phrase "hi", "hey" to greet each other.

*The slangy phrase in British greeting is the third way in British greeting.* This way is often used in informal situation of British people, especially the British teenage often use slangy phrase in greeting such as: "Hey" and "What's Up?" "Hey, there," "What's up? "Howdy”, “hiya”, “yo”, “ g'day” and "How's it goin'

**For example:** ( Sandy and her friend meet together on the run, they greet ...)

*Sandy: Hey! Jin*

*Jin: What's up?*

Beside above ways, British also use gestures in greeting such as: Shaking hands, embracing, kissing on the hand, kissing on the cheek, putting hand up and greeting. Each gesture has different usages in each relationship.

**For example:** For the people who have close relationship, British often greet by kissing on the cheek, or in business meeting, British often greet by shaking hands...

### **2.1.2. Vietnamese greeting**

According to Tran Thi Bich Hanh (Vietnamese and British greeting, (2010)), depending on the presence of expressed verbs, we can divide Vietnamese greetings into two types: direct greetings and indirect greetings. Besides, Vietnamese people especially respect to social order, so greetings can be classified due to hierarchical order (age, participants and social status). And basic on reality situation, we can assert that Vietnamese also uses gestures and some slang phrase in greeting.

Firstly, I would like to focus on direct and indirect greetings in Vietnam. Direct greetings might be identified through the use of Austin's terms, especially some verbs of performative: “chào”, “kính chào”, “chào mừng”, “xin chào.” These verbs perform their functions in direct and literal manners. Some common forms could be used for direct greetings:

"Xin chào + listener!": Ex: " Xin chào anh!"

"Chào + listener!" Ex: " Chào Lan!"

“Chào + listener + ạ!” Ex:" Chào chị ạ !"

“Speaker + chào + listener!” Ex: "Cháu chào bác!"

“Speaker + chào + listener + ạ!” Ex: " Con chào mẹ ạ!"

Secondly, I'd like to talk about Vietnamese indirect greetings. This way is used in the forms of other speech acts such as interrogation, request, invitation, compliment, congratulation.....For greetings by using questions, Vietnamese often use any question to greet everybody. There are four main kind of questions is used in this way.

- Asking about work: “Thế nào, công việc vẫn bình thường chứ hả?” or “ mọi việc tốt cả chứ anh bạn”
- "Asking about health: " dạo này khỏe không bạn?"...
- Asking about the on-going action (private actions): " Bác đi chợ ạ?" , Cháu học bài à?".....
- Asking about family: " gia đình bạn dạo này thế nào rồi?"..

For Greetings by using exclamation, Vietnamese often greet with happiness or surprise as well as intonation and gesture when the speaker sees the listener after a quite long time.

**For example:**

Ôi! Có phải thầy không?”

“Kìa! Em Hương”

“Ah! Bố về!

For greetings by using compliments, This polite greeting is used to support and maintain the relationship between participants.

**For example:**

“Ê! Dày mới à?”

“Đi đâu mà đẹp thế?”

"Dạo này xinh thế?"

For greeting by using congratulations, it is used when the speaker has known about the listener's good news or success before.

**For example:**

"Chúc mừng cháu đã thi đỗ đại học!"

"Chúc sinh nhật vui vẻ!"...

For greetings by using invitations, the performative verb "mời" is often used in this way.

**For example:**

*"Cháu mời bác ăn cơm với gia đình cháu!"...*

Depending on the order of society and family is the second way to greet in Viet Nam. There are three kinds of situations in this way of Vietnamese greeting.

Greeting to senior partner is the first situation, It is used for a person who is younger or lower position has to greet first to show the respect to the person in higher position; intensifier "ạ" and "ạ" should be used.

**For example:**

*"ạ, em chào xếp!"*

*"Cháu chào bà ạ!"...*

Greeting to junior partner is the second situation. A junior greets first then a senior can response by smiling, nodding or using simple re- greeting.

**For example:**

Cháu: Cháu chào bác ạ!

Bác: ( gật đầu)

Greeting to equal partners is the last situation. A simple and informal kinds of greeting can be used in this situation.

**For example:**

*Lan: chào Tùng, đi đâu đó*

*Tùng: ừ, cậu đi làm à .*

Beside direct and indirect greetings Vietnamese also use gestures and slang phrases in Vietnam, For the **gestures**, Vietnamese use some simple gesture in greetings: smiling, nodding , bowing, standing up, prostration, winking .... and for Slang phrase: Some slang phrases also use in Vietnamese greetings, Especially for young people. Some slang phrases such as: "Ê", " này", "chào" ...

## **2.2. Comparison between British and Vietnamese greeting.**

I would like to support some similarities and differences to help everybody understand more about Vietnamese and British greetings culture clearly.

In the first part, I would like to give some similarities between Vietnamese and British greeting culture. In my mind, Vietnamese and British have similar attitudes in greetings: British as well as Vietnamese people are very friendly, polite when greeting. And both of them express respected attitude to the listeners. Besides Both of them have trend of using indirect question in greetings. Finally, British as well as Vietnamese often shake hand each other to greet, especially in business communication.

In the last part, I'd like to focus on the differences between Vietnamese and British greeting culture. The first difference is in each situation of British and Vietnamese greeting. The below table will show clearly the difference.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>
<b>1. Greetings on the run:</b> This situation happens between two people who have close relationship. They meet each other and just say a few words because they don't have a lot of times to chat.	In this situation, we can see that British people use very simple, short information to greet everybody.	Vietnamese people use personal pronoun and use private activities to greet.

<p><b>2. Speedy greetings:</b></p> <p>This greeting often starts and ends conversation quickly to do other things.</p>	<p>British people do not use much information in greeting.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people use and ask more about specific information.</p>
<p><b>3. The chat:</b></p> <p>This kind of greeting is similar to speedy greeting but people exchange some much more information and often stop with a problem which they are concerning</p>	<p>British people often ask about unexpected things.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people usually use this greeting to say or end about something .</p>
<p><b>4. The long greeting</b></p> <p>It is often used to warm up the relationship of two people when they meet each other after a long time.</p>	<p>British people often use gestures in greeting such as: kissing, embracing ..., and ask about health and necessary information.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people usually replace the greeting by question or invitation. Moreover, their greeting seems more formal.</p>
<p>5. The intimate greetings: Two people know each other very well. So, they can use non-verbal communication to greet each other.</p>	<p>Both of English and Vietnamese often use gestures to greet. But, British people often use them to inform some things.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people often use them to make jokes and drag everybody .</p>

<p><b>6. The introductory greeting:</b> It occurs between two strangers.</p>	<p>British people tend to make acquainted with some question about some things in the party.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people tend to ask about some people in the party.</p>
<p><b>7. The all- business greeting</b> This greeting is often used for business relationship, it is often very informal.</p>	<p>In this situation British and Vietnamese people often go straight to the problem.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people seem to be friendlier.</p>
<p><b>8. The re-greeting:</b> This greeting relates to people who meet each other many times during a day</p>	<p>British people use the short utterance to greet.</p>	<p>Vietnamese people often use body language (nodding, smiling...) to greet in this situation.</p>

The second difference is in topic, common questions and expressing emotion of British and Vietnamese greetings. For the topic British often use some topic about food, weather, music, sport...ect while Vietnamese often mentions about private activities such as money, job, family, friend. Lover...etc. For common question British people often use some common questions about health to greet people in daily life such as: “how are you?”, “how are you been?”, “Howa ya doing?”... And they greet with these questions any time of day, while Vietnamese people only use them to greet people who have not met for along time and they often use some common question about family, children...to greet. For the expressing emotion Vietnamese rarely express emotion, feeling to others in greeting while British often express their feeling in greeting. For example, when two British friends meet together, they greet by kissing. However, It never happens to two Vietnamese friends.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Through out making comparing between British and Vietnamese Greeting, we can see that Vietnamese and English greetings have a lot of the differences.

From this study, I would like to raise people's awareness about British and Vietnamese greeting. Furthermore, I'd like to emphasize that teachers should pay attention to not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural one to provide our students with useful knowledge in their job in the future. I think that it is not easy for student to understand clearly about British greeting. Therefore, the helping of teacher is very necessary for them. I suggest that English teacher should use different material about different greeting in order to help students aware of second language. Besides, teachers should also find relevant materials to support student have useful knowledge about greeting. Especially, in British and Vietnamese greeting. Next, teachers should make condition for students to communicate with foreigners more often. Lastly, I also suggest teachers should give more exercises relate to greeting culture to help student fluent about greeting.

We can see that we are living in an mordern period. It is not difficult to know any thing we need. Therefore, I suggest that student should self- search on inetnet , books, newspapers to understand more about British and Vietnamese greetings. Besides, they should communicate with foreigners more to aware of their greetings in each situations. Finally, students should aware of whether or not guestures are suitable in Vietnamses greetings.

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