

Vietnamese Cultural Webinar



Introductions/background to project

- MSOICU
- Guest speakers:
 - Dr Chung Pham – Vietnamese Specialist, Locate International/ West Yorkshire Police
 - Quynh Nguyen – CEO, Vietnamese Family Partnership
 - Dr Seb Rumsby – Dept. of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology, University of Birmingham
- Reasoning behind the project
- Methodology
- Handouts

Reflection: Media references and narrative of the Vietnamese culture: How much are potential victims of trafficking aware of exploitation and the full risks involved of coming to the UK?

Intro & historical background

- Socialist Republic of Vietnam, one-party system: Communist Party, in power since end of Vietnam War in 1975 (Reunification of North and South Vietnam).
- 1.4 times bigger than UK in terms of area, population just under 100,000,000 - 16th most populated country.
- Dong currency, economy growing at around 5-6% per annum.
- French influence from colonisation within 19-20th centuries, Chinese influence - 1000-year control. 1940-5 - Japanese control of Vietnam.
- The communist movement.
- Nguyen Ai Quoc (commonly known as Hồ Chí Minh or Uncle Ho)
- Division of Vietnam, Vietnam War and reunification.
- Massive displacement and repressive policies.
- The Đổi Mới economic reforms 1980s
- Vietnamese boat people
- Post-war era



Greetings

- Friendly nature, showing an interest to support engagement.
- English as very difficult language to learn. Impact if migrate here, losing confidence, becoming isolated.
- The correct spelling and order of 1st, middle and family names, recording on police information systems.
- Tonal language, slightly different tone can completely change the meaning of phrases/sentences.
- Pronouns differ for age groups and genders:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ulWHuSSLJo>
- Handshake as sign of respect, may not appropriate for the first meeting – generally no touching on the initial meeting, hand gestures can be seen as disrespectful.
- Nguyen, pronounced ‘nuie~n’ or ‘wein’ <https://www.howtopronounce.com/nguyen>

| Family name | Middle name | First name | In full |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|
| Nguyen | Van | Minh | Nguyen Van Minh |
| Tran | Thi | Thao | Tran Thi Thao |

Greetings continued



- Xin chào – hello, (pronounced ‘sin chow’, reflection going down at the end)
- Cảm ơn – thank you (pronounced cam urn)
- Bạn tên là gì? – What is your name? for example ‘anh tên là gì (pronounced ban ten la zee)
- Chào bạn - welcome (when someone comes to meet you, or arrives in your office/place)
- Đừng lo lắng – Do not be worried (pronounced dung lo lang)
- Tạm biệt – Goodbye (pronounced tam be-et)
- Bạn bao nhiêu tuổi? – How old are you?
- Chúng tôi sẽ giúp bạn – We are here to help you
- Bạn chưa làm gì sai – You have not done anything wrong (pronounced ban cheu-uh lam zee sai)

Key cultural elements

- 54 ethnic groups, Kinh as largest - 85% of population. Easily trust, protect and build connections with those from same province/minority.
- Differences in dialects between North, Centre and South, still understand each other.
- Resilient and determined people, surviving hardship, enduring spirit - risk of exploitation, drudgery of working in a cannabis farm.
- More inclusive, family and community focused than in UK
- Heritage and respect for ancestors.
- Strong desire for a better life, pull factor to migrate.
- Street culture – ‘bia hơi’, importance on hospitality.
- Face-saving culture; hard to admit mistakes. Impact on those who migrate.
- Influences of Chinese culture, less so with French and American cultures.
- Authoritarian system
- Impact of technology, social media and globalisation.
- National pride in overcoming colonial rule and the Vietnam War.
- Afternoon napping
- ‘Yes’ does not mean ‘yes’ all the time

Taboo's/ prejudices

- Relatives into care homes, not providing for your parents, impact, pressure on children
- Accumulating debt, gambling
- Divorce as a result of adultery.
- Relationships outside marriage, especially for women. Lack of empathy for women who have been sexually abused, unlikely to disclose.
- Family members who are not successful
- Discussing Communism and the government
- LGBTQ+ prejudices
- Mental health
- Being involved in crime, concealing facts, Vietnamese saying: 'show something good, hide something bad.'
- Not removing your shoes when entering the home
- Handing something to someone, especially to the elderly.
- Pointing a finger.



Migration

- Home provinces: Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh (North-Central Vietnam)
- Extreme weather conditions, harsh environment, low job opportunities
- Huge inequalities in wealth, left behind, discriminated against – migration seen as only option
- Collective family choice, an investment; used to hardship, personal resilience.
- Migration destinations: Asia, Europe, UK; latter more risky but potentially more profitable
- Apply under a work visa to specific European country legally, then smuggled across Europe to destination.
- Element of trust in those travelled previously.
- Planned routes changing, risks may increase unexpectedly

[Media clip: The dark realities for Vietnamese smuggled into the UK](#)



Migration - continued

- Migration fuelled by massive debts. Pressure to succeed, repay family.
- Risks well known, accepted – long history. Not significant deterrent, not aware to full extent, optimism
- Recruited in nail bars, restaurants, or cannabis farms for low pay.
- UK as Illusion of wealth? Remittances
- Frugal life in UK, send more money home. National expectation to invest in homeland
- UK diaspora - up to 100,000 unofficial estimates (compared to 37,458 at the last UK census of 2021). Hackney, Southwark and Lewisham, Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester and Glasgow.
- Recent arrivals work for bosses from previous, more established Vietnamese migrant cohorts
- Middle-class students, genuine political asylum claims due to persecution



Family structure/gender dynamics

- Family kinship.
- Multi-generational living
- Heavily embedded gender roles
- Children's role taking care of elderly relatives – migration link
- Family tragedies, livelihoods are destroyed, increased family burden.
- The family structure and support enables those migrating to accept the risks. Emphasis on succeeding.
- Importance of how family is seen by others.
- Good citizen – may mean to provide wealth to your community and the nation; political layer of expectation.
- Eastern age includes extra 9 months in the womb. Can say that they are OLDER as well as younger.
- Vietnamese government starting to collect bioidentical data for those as young as 6 years old.
- Sister, auntie, uncle etc used for close connections, not necessarily related



Education

- Imperative for all children, males and females. Pressure to perform.
- The education system: primary (nursery and kindergarten), intermediate and secondary and higher education. Montessori approach developing.
- Public and private institutions. No single sex schools exist.
- Females in rural northern areas leaving education as early as 12 or 13 years old and many at 16.
- Educational attainment lower among some ethnic minorities in remote highland regions.
- Tuition fees. Debt bondage of parents and vulnerable to exploitation by loan sharks.
- Unequal educational opportunities due to costs, can be a factor in migration. Final year students targeted by brokers.
- Students sent to boarding school in the UK, going missing after 1st semester.
- Respect for those in higher education, professions such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and high-ranking officers in governmental organisations.
- Family pride in ability to send a child overseas
- Bribery and corruption not uncommon to obtain a step up the ladder.



Religion and festivals

- Multi-religious state with generally, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Confucianists and Taoists existing peacefully.
- Right to not follow religion protected in law, worshipping ancestors instead.
- Arrests of those interfering with politics, Catholic priests protested against the 2016 Formosa incident.
- Dynamic religious activity may be repressed or banned.
- Religious and community links more important to UK diaspora.
- Superstition, Buddhist monks receiving donations.
- Lunar New Year/Tết - end of January/start of February, extra time off work common, even for authorities, not good time for deployments.
- 30th April - Reunification Day
- 15th day of the 8th Lunar month – Trung Thu or Mid-Autumn Festival
- September 2nd – Independence Day.
- Bereavements – During Op Melrose, importance of showing respect and place for community to come together.



Food



- Important part of Vietnamese culture.
- Can be settled in UK for years without trying Western food, strong attachment
- Sharing of food, communal living, feeding each other as sign of affection.
- Meals as a focal part of the day, lunch from 11am until 2:30pm, up to 7 or 8 courses.
- Sourcing culturally appropriate food as a preventative factor to going missing.
- Renowned for dishes made from rice, noodles, fish, chicken, meat, fish stock and vegetables, including Bún Cha (pork with vermicelli noodles), Phở (rice noodles), Xoi (sticky rice), Miến (cellophane noodles) and Bánh đa cua (crab red noodles).
- Symbolic cakes for festivals: Bánh Trung thu (Moon Cake for Moonlight Festival), Bánh Chung (square cake of glutinous rice) and Bánh Giày (round rice cake) for Lunar New Year or Tết.
- One of world's largest coffee producers, use of sweetened condensed milk.

Interaction with authority

- Fear and intimidation, scepticism due to corruption, lack of trust.
- Freedom of speech and media very controlled.
- Distress and trauma if caught by authorities.
- Strong will to conform, can lead to corruption, paying way out of trouble. Leads to discrimination
- Deportation to Vietnam - fines for leaving illegally, increasing debt, vulnerability to re-trafficking.
- Deportation fear, links between UK Police, Home Office and Vietnamese Police, avoid reporting a crime.
- Trauma-informed and victim focus approach replaced with more offender focus amongst Vietnamese authorities: to punish as opposed to protect.
- 'Code of conduct' followed by Vietnamese communities in UK – not reporting employers.
- Migrants given instructions by traffickers and smugglers or families. Speaking with other parties - breaches agreement. Hierarchy plays a role. Scripted details.
- Initial contact vital, establishing identity, names, DOB, where they were born etc. Photo ID.
- Can state are OLDER and younger. Individuals looking older from working outside. Appearance drastically changed.
- Do not recognise victims of modern slavery or term 'trafficking', even if positive NRM, viewed as fault of victims for 'migrating illegally'. Support of Vietnamese Embassy can have status recognised.
- Op Melrose - huge fear around authorities/deportation. Religious community contacts vital. Communicate intentions to locate families as opposed to immigration status.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0010ldl/hunting-the-essex-lorry-killers>

Interaction with authority cont.

- Unlikely to become a “safe country” any time soon.
- Not party to international migration conventions, such as 1951 Refugee Convention.
- Human rights record is poor. Slow decision-making.
- “Joint” working opportunities can be limited. To be known as a country exporting criminality would bring national shame, Vietnamese authorities committed to collaboration. Contacting NCA’s Joint International Crime Centre can assist.
- Ask them the Lunar New Year animal when they were born.
- Vietnam authority’s database circa 2021/2022 of ID information
- Importance to explain Policing role with simple explanations of system and rights.
- Social class and linguistic differences between interpreter and victim. Phrases drastically different. One who is sympathetic to a migrants’ cause. Challenge paraphrasing.
- Unlikely to outwardly express their feelings, should not be misinterpreted as disengagement or not caring.

|  RAT |  OX |  TIGER |  CAT |  DRAGON |  SNAKE |  HORSE |  GOAT |  MONKEY |  ROOSTER |  DOG |  PIG |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| 1948 | 1949 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 | 1955 | 1956 | 1957 | 1958 | 1959 |
| 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 | 1965 | 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 |
| 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
| 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 |
| 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
| 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 |

Do's & Don'ts

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| Smile, be welcoming, gentle even tone of voice, say 'Xin chào' meaning hello/how are you. | Intimidate or scare, or be too serious, avoid hostile stances and tones |
| Attempt to put yourself in their shoes to assist with empathy and understanding, repeated reassurances may well be necessary. Advise you know the type of hardships or sacrifices they have likely experienced. | Do not go straight into an interview or ask about immigration status immediately, ensure checks on health, introductions and purpose of interview is understood first. Ask about family back home and where they are from instead |
| Try to pronounce their name or phrase correctly as a sign of respect. | Touch their shoulder (signifies bad luck) or their head (signifies a power imbalance) |
| Offer a drink of water, but closed containers to avoid suspicion, some food too – small gestures will assist with easing fear that may well exist. | Mistake lack of eye contact for untrustworthiness, Vietnamese are taught not to look authority in the eye. |
| Look out for physical and emotional signs of trauma – for example difficulty of memory recall, missing details. | Judge, challenge or make fun of what they might believe in regard to their religious beliefs or superstitions |
| Engage with community leaders as important partners in an investigation to support trust building. | Assume those working in a nail salon will wish or feel they have a need to speak out against their bosses, they may well consider their position fortuitous. |

Tip: Cue cards to introduce yourself, your role, contact details and how you can assist/what you want to speak to them about may help to alleviate some fears and be something they can take away and process when they feel more relaxed. Also put on MS Helpline number detailing this run by a charity and calls can be made anonymously.

Thank you for listening

Q&A Session

Scan the QR or
use link to join



<https://forms.office.com/e/2TOM8XEsE7?origin=lprLink>