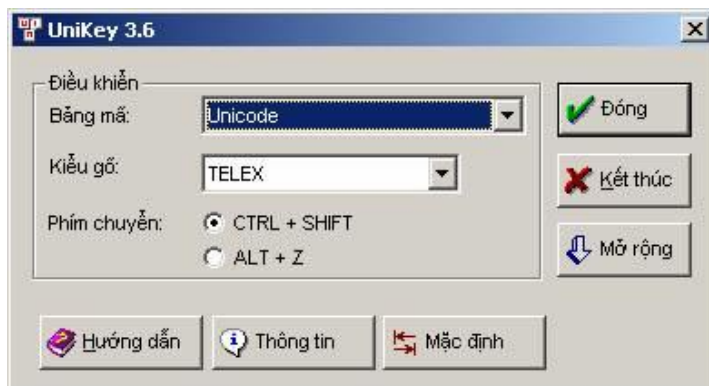**TYPING VIETNAMESE WITH UNICODE FONT**

It is recommended that you use a *Vietnamese keyboard* or *keyboard driver* for the task. Despite its name, it is not hardware: it is a small program that sits in your OS and converts your keystrokes into Vietnamese characters. Unikey. Its advantages are:
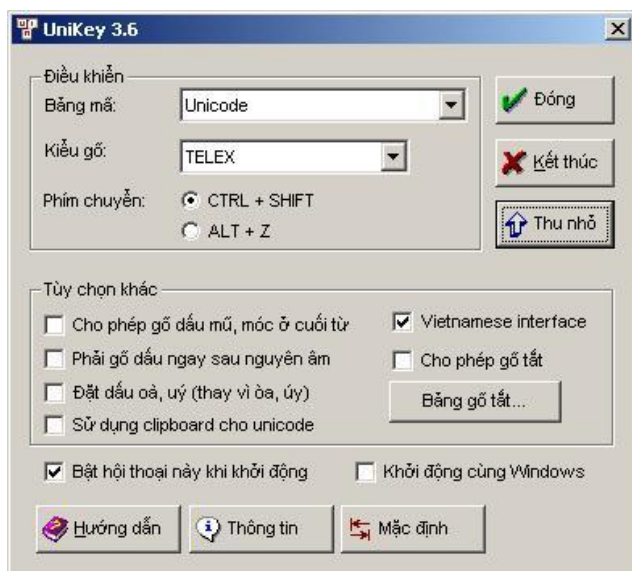
- It's *free*.
- It's just a download away: for NT/2000/XP, for 95/98/MEor for Linux.
- Installation is simple: just unzip it and it is ready to go.
- It sits on the taskbar. This makes it easy to switch between "English" mode and "Vietnamese" mode: just click on the icon on the taskbar.
- The user interface actually provides for English speakers, which makes it easier to understand.
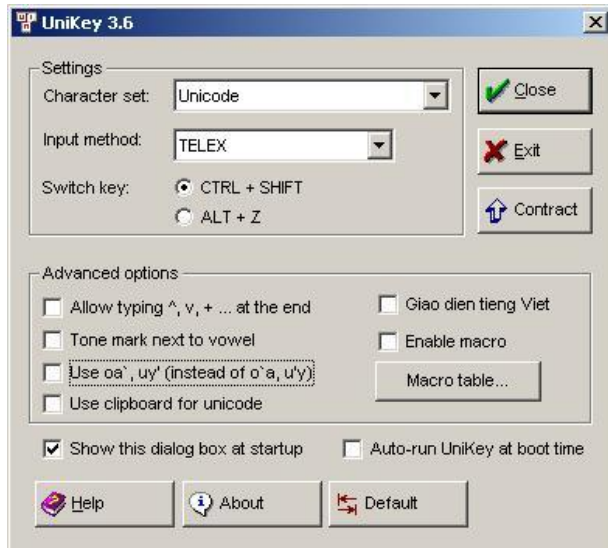
Setup

1. When you start up **Unikey**, you see the following dialogue:

What does it all mean? Fortunately, you can find out what is happening by clicking on the "Mở rộng" button. "Mở rộng" means expand, and that's what you need to do.

Uncheck the checkbox with "Vietnamese interface". The whole interface will turn into English:

- I recommend you always set the "**Character Set" to Unicode - always**. A character set is basically how characters like "ư" and "a" are represented as numbers that computers can handle. The Microsoft Office programs are set to handle Unicode by default. Unicode is an international standard, so you can't go much wrong with it.

- The "Input method" is what keystrokes will form a character like "ư". I prefer TELEX, but I will give instructions for using Unikey with VNI as well. See the next section for instructions.

- Advanced options: uncheck them all. Especially uncheck the "Use oa', uy' (instead of o'a, u'y)". This is an irritating preset that doesn't allow you to write "hoà"; instead it always comes out as "hòa". You don't want that.

- There's also the "Help" button - which provides you "Help" in Vietnamese. If you understand Vietnamese, it's nice to look at. If you don't, it's not of much assistance.

- Finally, there's "Auto-run UniKey at boot time". If it's your machine, I see no problem with it. If it's someone else's, then I advise against it.

2. Then click on "Close". The program will now sit on the taskbar - unobtrusive, yet available. If you see a big "**V**":

That means that it is set up to enter Vietnamese. But if you want to enter pure English, just click on the "V" and you will see an "E" instead:

It's easy to toggle from one to another: left-click on the letter. And if you want to turn off the program altogether: right-click on the letter, and on the resulting menu, click "exit".

Okay, now that it is running: what do you do? Reading the next section will help...

Input Methods

The idea of a keyboard driver is that it makes it easy to enter desired characters using the keyboard you have. **UniKey** doesn't even assume you have the "Alt" or "Ctrl" buttons. Instead, you press a combination of letters that tend to follow the following order:

- If you want characters without diacritics, like "a", "b", or "c", then type them.

- If you want characters with diacritics but no tone markers, then type the combination. For example "dd" in TELEX will create a "đ", and "ow" will create a "ơ".

- Always add the tone afterwards.

The following table gives the combinations for all the Vietnamese characters in lower case. If you want upper case, then use upper case letters instead. For example, "DD" in TELEX will create "Đ", and so on. Here are the tables:

Desired letter	TELEX	VNI
â	Type "aa"	Type "a6"
ă	Type "aw"	Type "a8"
đ	Type "dd"	Type "d9"
ê	Type "ee"	Type "e6"
ô	Type "oo"	Type "o6"
ơ	Type "ow"	Type "o7"
ư	Type "w" or "uw"	Type "u7"
Add a "dấu Sắc"	Type a "s"	Type "1"
Add a "dấu Huyền"	Type a "f"	Type "2"
Add a "dấu Hỏi"	Type a "r"	Type "3"
Add a "dấu Ngã"	Type a "x"	Type "4"

Add a "dấu Nặng"	Type a "j"	Type "5"
Remove tone	Type a "z"	Type "0"

To understand this, here are some examples:

To Type	TELEX	VNI
Hai Bà Trưng	Type "Hai Baf Trwng"	"Hai Ba1 Tru7ng"
Tiếng Việt	Type "Tieesng Vieejt"	Type "Tie61ng Vie65t"
ĐƯỜNG	Type "DDWOWFNG"	Type "D9U7O72NG"

Yes, it all seems a little tedious to learn. So choose one of the methods, and practice. You may need a good motivation to do this. My motivations were (a) learning Vietnamese, and (b) typing up my notes from the Vietnamese class we had last year.

Conclusion

What I've tried to do here is provide you with a little tutorial for those unfamiliar with Vietnamese, and also unfamiliar with computers. Now, *practice*. However, you may still encounter difficulties. For example:

- You are trying to enter Vietnamese in a font that does not have Vietnamese characters. For example, fonts like "Georgia" and "Garamond" do not support them. That's a shame. **For the time being, stick with "Arial", "Times New Roman", "Tahoma" and "Courier New".** There are others.

- There's one problem that you might have with Excel. You enter a Vietnamese word in a cell. You try to enter another word in another cell. Then the "Auto-complete" feature tries to guess what you are entering, and make a mess of it. Solve this by turning "Auto-complete" off.

- Finally, the program you are using might not support UNICODE at all, and cannot even understand what you are typing. For example, the main interface for the popular editor HTML-Kit cannot handle it. Fortunately, there are very few programs that do not support UNICODE.

Source: Adapted from http://wxnet.net/viet/uni.htm