A Number of Issues Regarding Writing System for Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

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Abstract: In Vietnam, there is diversity in the writing systems of different ethnic groups with various characteristics, with 34/53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam each having their own scripts, some ethnic groups use more than one script. Decision No.153/CP promulgated by the Prime Minister on 20th August, 1969 (amended by the Council of Ministers on 22nd February, 1980) *"Refer to construct, improve and apply the ethnic minorities writing systems"*, has played a big role in this process. It paved the way for the scripts in the locals and mountainous ethnicity to be reconstructed and improved, which created opportunities to build writing systems, to affirm the role of ethnic minorities scripts in preserving the languages, culture identities of ethnicities. However, today we can see an inconsistent situation of building the scripts, so a competitive situation may affect national unity and we lack an examination about writing systems' quality, which may pose a risk of wasting natural and material resources, lacking unity in constructing ethnic minorities writing systems. A new decision to build and approve greater plans, and later, law of language, should be promulgated. A subcommittee for minor ethnic languages and scripts should also be established.

1. Introduction of ethnic minorities writing systems in Vietnam

In Vietnam, there is diversity in the writing systems of different ethnic groups with various characteristics. Statistical research of Nguyễn Hữu Hoành, Nguyễn Văn Lợi, Tạ Văn Thông (2013) indicated 32 ethnic communities' writing systems within 53 ethnic groups specifically in the table below:

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No.	Ethnic groups	Writing system
1	Tày	Nôm script (based on Chinese characters), Latin
2	Thái	Pali-Sanskrit, Latin
3	Hoa	Ideographic
4	Khmer	Pali-Sanskrit
5	Nùng	Nôm script (based on Chinese characters), Latin
6	H'mong	Latin
7	Gia Rai	Latin
8	Ê - Đê	Latin
9	Ba na	Latin
10	Chăm	Pali-Sanskrit, Arabic, Latin
11	Xơ Đăng	Latin
12	Hrê	Latin
13	Cơ Ho	Latin
14	Raglai	Latin
15	Mnông	Latin
16	Xtiêng	Latin
17	Bru-Vân Kiều	Latin
18	Cơ Tu	Latin
19	Lô Lô	Ideographic
20	Gié Triêng	Latin

21	Tà Ôi	Latin
22	Mạ	Latin
23	Co	Latin
24	Chơ Ro	Latin
25	Chu Ru	Latin
26	Lào	Pali-Sanskrit
27	Lự	Pali-Sanskrit
28	Dao	Nôm script (based on Chinese characters),
29	Sán Chay	Nôm script (based on Chinese characters),
30	Ngái	Ideographic
31	Sán Dìu	Ideographic
32	Mường	Latin

According to Nguyễn Hữu Hoành, Nguyễn Văn Lợi, Tạ Văn Thông (2013), by that time, there were 32/53 (60,37%) ethnic communities with their own writing systems (more than one script in some ethnic groups, such as the Thái whose writing system includes eight forms, the Hmông whose writing system includes two, the Cơ Tu whose writing system includes two...). In 2016 the Mường people in Hòa Bình started to use the Mường script, and by 2021, the Hà Nhì people in Lai Châu began to use the Hà Nhì script for the first time. The similarities of the two writing systems are they both use Latin script and they were constructed by the Institute of Linguistics. In 2023, 34 out of the 53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam have their own scripts[1].

Categorizations of ethnic minorities writing systems in Vietnam

+ Categorizing by scripts of ethnic minorities writing systems in Vietnam

There are four main script form categorizations in Vietnam:

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[1] In this article, we refer to the names listed in the "List of ethnic groups in Vietnam" (according to Decision No.121/TCTK-PPCD dated 2nd March, 1979, by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam).

Pali-Sanskrit form: Cham Akha Thrah letters, Thai letters, Khmer letters, Lao letters and Lu letters. Cham Akha Thrah letters and Khmer letters originate from Brahmi letters of South Asia. Alphabets such as Thái, Lào and Lự all have their foundations from the Khmer writing system.

Arabic form: Cham Jawi letters and Chăm Ba-ni letters.

Ideographic form: Chinese letters (Han), Nôm Tày letters, Nùng, Dao, Sán Chay, Ngái and Lô Lô alphabets that originated from Yi letters of China.

Latin form: including Tày - Nùng Latin, Thái Latin, Chăm Latin, Hmông, Gia Rai, Ê Đê, Ba Na, Xê Đăng, Hrê, Cơ Ho, Raglai, Mnông, Xtieng, Bru-Vân Kiều, Cơ Tu, Lô Lô, Gié Triêng, Tà Ôi, Mạ, Co, Chơ Ro, Chu Ru and Mường letters.

+ Categorizing by the history of ethnic minorities writing system in Vietnam

Following the history of ethnic minorities' writing systems, they are divided into two types: old-established scripts known as traditional writing and modern writing.

Traditional writing was born in the 19th century, including scripts such as Sán Dìu, Ngái, Sán Chay, Dao, Lự, Lào, Lô Lô, Chăm, Nùng, Khmer and Tày.

Modern writing was not born until the late 19th century to the 20th century, including scripts such as Tày - Nùng Latin, Thái Latin, Hmông, Gia Rai, Ê Đê, Ba na, Xê Đăng, Hrê, Cơ Ho, Raglai, Mnông, Xtiêng, Bru-Vân Kiều, Cơ Tu, Lô Lô, Gié Triêng, Tà Ôi, Mạ, Co, Chơ Ro, Chu Ru, the latest are Mường script (2016) and Hà Nhì script (2021).

2. Historical contextualization of Decision No.53/CP and its amendment

The circumstances of the Vietnamese language have witnessed a lot of changes since 1975. Decision No.153/CP "*Building, improving and using writing system of ethnic minority peoples*", which was promulgated in the North by the Council of Government on 20th August, 1969, should be amended because of changes of language situation in Vietnam. Supplement of the policy was needed to meet reality requirements, specifically as ethnic minorities writing systems. On 22nd February, 1980, the Council of Government issued Decision No.53/CP *"Refer to conduct policy of writing systems of ethnic minority peoples"*. The Decision paved the way for the scripts in the locals and mountainous ethnicity to be reconstructed and improved.

The policy of Communist Party and Government of Vietnam for ethnic people in general is coherent with the policy on the communication, writing systems of ethnic minorities particularly after 1975. However, several adjustments of Decision No.53/CP can be seen as follows:

Ethnic minorities that has not had a writing system are supported to build their system from Latin letters.

Ethnic minorities that has had a traditional writing system, if accommodation is requested, there will be supported in the construction based on Latin letters.

In order to teach and enhance not only writing system of ethnic minorities but also the universal writing form as easy, brief, appropriate for ethnic people and the Kinh people that want to learn ethnic writing forms, novel establishment or improvement in the ethnic writings of vowel clusters is needed to be coherent with the universal writing of vowel clusters.

While the usage of the updated writing systems is common, traditional ethnic writing systems and national repositories are under exploitation and preservation.

Provincial People's Committees, following instructions of the mentioned departments, are in response:

a. To rely on practical status, requests and desires of provincial ethnic minorities to propose specific policy in the area and set plans to implement the decision for departments, stratum;

b. To decide courses of action for improving and constructing the provincial ethnic writing systems.

3. Developments of Decision No.53/CP in reconstructing and improving ethnic minorities writing system in Vietnam

3.1. Developing writing systems based on Latin script

According the statistics of Đoàn Văn Phúc's research (2021), writing systems based on Latin scripts had been constructed since Decision No.53/CP:

+ Cơ Tu script (in Quảng Nam) was constructed in the period of 2002-2004 by a group of researchers of the Institute of Linguistics (Nguyễn Văn Lợi, Tạ Văn Thông, Nguyễn Hữu Hoành, etc.).

+ Mường script (in Hòa Bình): In the mid-1990s (1994-1995) of 20th century, authors of the Institute of Linguistics and Bùi Chỉ created the first script of Mường-script-project in order to compose Mường language books. In 2015, Nguyễn Văn Khang's group of the Institute of Linguistics and Mường intellectuals constructed the Mường script. In 2016, Hòa Bình province recognized the writing system with the Decision.

+ Co script (in Quảng Nam) was constructed by researchers of the Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia.

+ Chăm Hroi script in Phú Yên was constructed by Ka Sô Liễng, former Deputy Director of the Department of Culture and Information of Bình Định province, and a Chăm Hroi folk culture artist. He had used Latin script to develop the Chăm Hroi system for his people since 1998. However, the basic writing system was not completed until 2010.

+ Chăm Hroi script in Bình Định was established by the researcher group *"Constructing and accomplishing writing systems, composing books that teach and enhance Ba na Kriem, Hrê, Chăm Hroi language in Bình Định"*. The script was implemented by the cooperation between the Institute of Linguistics and the Department of Science and Technology of Bình Định province (2004-2006).

+ Ba Na Kriem script credits also went to the researcher group *"Constructing and accomplishing writing systems, composing books that teach and enhance Ba na Kriem, Hrê, Chăm Hroi language in Bình Định"*. The script was executed by the cooperation between the Institute of Linguistics and the Department of Science and Technology of Bình Định province. Moreover, Ba Na intellectuals in Vĩnh Thạnh district actively participated in the writing system establishment.

+ Hrê script: that was established by the researchers group as well *"Constructing and accomplishing writing systems, composing books that teach and enhance Ba Na Kriem, Hrê, Chăm Hroi language in Bình Định"*, and executed by the cooperation between the Institute of Linguistics and the Department of Science and Technology of Bình Định province (2004-2006). Furthermore, Hrê intellectuals in An Lao district actively participated in the writing system establishment.

+ Bho-noong script (in Phước Sơn, Quảng Nam) was constructed by a group of Bùi Đăng Bình, Institute of Linguistics in the period of 2006-2007.

+ Raglai script in Khánh Hòa were constructed by a group of Kinh researcher (Trần Vũ) and Raglai in the period of 1993-1995. Furthermore, Raglai script in Ninh Thuận was established by a group of researchers from the Institute of Linguistics in the period 1998-2000. In the early years of 21st century, Mấu Thị Bích Phanh, a Raglai intellectual in Bắc Ái district also participated in building the script. In August 2019, the People's Committee of Ninh Thuận province officially recognized the writing system.

+ Mnông script in Đắk Lắk and Đăk Nông

In 2005, the script was constructed by the researchers of Institute of Social Science Hồ Chí Minh City (the Institute of Sustainable Development in Southern Vietnam at present). In 2007, the People's Committee of Đắk Nông province recognized the writing system in the area.

+ Hà Nhì script (in Lai Châu) was established by the researcher of Institute of Linguistics (2019-2021)

Not only the construction of developing writing systems based on Latin script in various ethnicities, there were also improvement, adjustments in the existing systems that are

closely linked to vowel clusters of the universal system known as the national language. Although Decision No.53/CP did not mention rationality of the related orientation, it is assumed that there is a "connection" between the universal system and ethnic minorities systems, in order to enhance, commemorate easily and reproduce the printing efficiently. Đoàn Văn Phúc (2021) reported the writing systems that had been adjusted, improved since Decision No.53/CP as follows:

- Amendment of ethnic minorities writing system in Gia Lai-Kon Tum:

Gia Lai-Kon Tum was the first province improving the Latin script of ethnic minorities since Decision No.53/CP. In accordance with the practical needs of documentary utilizing, composing and printing in order to universalize and teach the scripts of ethnic minorities in the province, on 28th October, 1981, the provincial People's Committee applied Decision No.03/QD-UB that refers to *"Publish the script composition of ethnic writing systems"*. Đoàn Văn Phúc reported that the Decision had changed most of ethnic minorities writing systems in the province, increased coordination between reality and printing quality, published documentaries which were about ethnic minorities writing systems used to be outdated in not only local areas but also nationwide.

- Amendment of Cơ Ho writing system:

Since 1982, the officers of Institute of Linguistics and Cơ Ho intellectuals has been conducting research in finding solutions to the ethnic writing system improvement based on Cơ Ho writing form that the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) had progressed the study before 1975. On 14th January, 1983, People's Committee of Lâm Đồng province applied Decision No.20/QD-UD "Publish solutions to amend Cơ Ho writing system".

- Amendment, improvement of Pacoh writing system:

The Pacoh system (in Thừa Thiên Huế province) was constructed and used for printing leaflets at zone A in order to campaign Pacoh, Tà Ôi supporters before 1975. In the period of 1983 - 1985, during the scientific cooperation with Science and Technical Committee of Bình Trị Thiên province, the Institute of Linguistics applied amendment to the number of letters in Pacoh writing system in order to compose *Pakoh - Taoih Language Book* (1986) and universalize the system.

- Improvement of Bru - Vân Kiều writing system:

Đoàn Văn Phúc reported that in the period of 1983-1985, the officers of Institute of Linguistics and the officers of Faculty of Literature, Huế General University amended several signs of Bru - Vân Kiều writing form in order to compose *Bru - Vân Kiều Language Book* and universalize the system to officers, citizens in Bình Trị Thiên province. However, at present, no decision of Pacoh, Bru - Vân Kiều systems amendment nor improvement that was printed in the two books (1986) is applied in the area.

- Gia Rai writing system amendment:

Based on suggestions of Gia Rai, Ba Na intellectuals and the results of the Conference that proposed Gia Rai, Ba Na scripts amendment was held by the provincial Department of Education and Training. In 2011, Gia Lai province reverted to the previous version of the Gia Rai writing system existing before 1981 (in fact, Gia Rai script had been changed, added in 1945) with Decision No.30/2011/QD-UBND on 28th October, 2011 of provincial People's Committee in Gia Lai - Kon Tum province (exact 30 years after Decision No.03/QD-UB of the People's Committee) *"Refer to publish writing system and phonetic, vowel clusters systems in Gia Rai language; writing system and phonetic, vowel clusters systems in Ba Na language"*.

  - Amendment of Ba Na writing system

Additionally, in Decision No.30/2011/QD-UBND on 28th October, 2011 of People's Committee in Gia Lai province *"Refer to publish writing system and phonetic, vowel clusters systems in Gia Rai language; writing system and phonetic, vowel clusters systems in Ba Na language"*. Furthermore, specific laws and resolutions to the reverting to the previous version of Gia Rai writing system were mentioned.

- Chu Ru writing system in Lâm Đồng

On 10th April, 2007, People's Committee in Lâm Đồng province applied Decision No.15/2007/QD-UBND of Chu Ru writing system. Article 1 of the Decision affirms: *"Solutions to Chu Ru writing system were researched, constructed by the collection of Việt - Chu Ru Dictionary editorial Board and Chu Ru intellectuals"*. However, in fact the system was an update of Chu Ru writing system that was established by Summer Institute of Linguistics before 1975 and composed books to teach elementary students in Tuyên Đức (now Lâm Đồng) province. Đoàn Văn Phúc argued that it was the improved, amended version of the Chu Ru system.

3.2. Traditional writing systems of ethnic minorities and archives of antiquarian books under consistent preservation and exploitation

A number of ethnic minorities in Vietnam had traditional ethnic writing systems and archives of antiquarian books. Additionally, Decision No.53/CP accelerates to research, exploit and preserve them. In the period of 2002-2005, some direct under units of Vietnam Academy of Social Science (previously, it was National Centre of Social Science and Humanities), including Institute of Linguistics, Institute of Sino-Nom Studies, Institute of Ethnology, Vietnam Museum of Ethnology cooperated in the topic implementation "Research investigation of traditional writing systems in Vietnam" (2002-2005). Through collecting documents in traditional writings, the topic researchers studied on historical origin, structural features of traditional writings; investigated solutions to preserve, interpret traditional writing documents; investigated encryption to

ethnic minorities traditional writing, and described existence and usage of the systems, therefore proposed resolutions to pressing matters such as ethnic minorities language, writing systems in Vietnam.

Authors focused on Hán writing form - Hán Square shaped writing form (China) as well as Sanskrit writing form - originated in India. The results as follows:

- Collection of documents in ethnic minorities writing systems

- Research of historical origin, structural features: the characters and phonetic value of the characters, principles of writing, pronouncing, and principles of utilizing traditional writing documents.

- Organization of preserving, interpreting and universalizing the writing systems and documents of ethnic minority traditional scripts.

- Initial research of encryption to the traditional scripts.

Especially, a number of scripts of the Lự, the Ngái and Lai Pao script of the Thái had been detected, such as:

- There had been no documentary script of the Lự in Vietnam before. First documents were found asserting that: the Lự migrated from Yúnnán (China) to Vietnam many years ago, now still preserving their traditional writing system. It is possible to conclude the traditional documentaries with the writing formality.

- The Ngái that lives in Cao Bằng used to be considered as a Tày local; there had been no documentary script of the Ngái so far. Results in collecting showed that: The Ngái had their own script, possibly at the time the Mạc ruled Cao Bằng during their feud; the script is in square shape, similar to not only Nôm script but also Nôm Tày, Choang script.

- The Lai Pao is a Thái group, lives at the upstream of Lam river (Nghệ An). Lai Pao script is a variant of Thái script. Nowadays only a few documents in Lai Pao script are left.

3.3. The power of issuing writing system for ethnic minority

The act of authorizing provincial People's Committees in Decision No.53/CP is that:

"a. According to present status of the province, requests and desires of ethnic minorities in the province, propose specific policy for the province and construct strategy to guide provincial departments, orders completing the decision;

b. Decide solutions to improve or reconstruct the ethnic minorities writing systems in the province".

The act of authorizing creates opportunities for the province to actively propose solutions depend on the present status to improve or reconstruct ethnic minorities writing systems, and respond promptly to requests and desires of the ethnic compatriots in the province. From the constructing script perspective, the decision of making

dialects as foundation to build the system, the authorization avoids the issue of choosing an unrepresentative dialect to build the foundation for groups who reside in many provinces, and have different dialects. The issue may cause disadvantages in recognizing, accepting the system with the people of different dialects. Hmông writing system is facing this problem. In fact, today in many areas where the Hmông lives, education of their system (Vietnamese-Hmông script) deals with difficulties. The first cause is the number of Hmông groups in Vietnam, making the differences in dialect, therefore the solution to phonology, that inherently built on phonetic standards of the Hmông Hoa (*Hmoob Lees*) in Sa Pa - Lào Cai province (although some phonemes of other Hmông groups were added) still made no sense in applying the system to the others. During the process of the topic implementation, we received numerous opinions that Hmông Hoa language in Sa Pa, Lào Cai was not a universal language for the Hmông but White Hmông language was audible of all types, which became the Hmông's approval.

4. Issues of Decision No.53/CP regarding the implementation of constructing writing systems for ethnic minorities in Vietnam

4.1. On the positive side

Primarily, it is undeniable that the decision created opportunities to build writing systems, to affirm the role of ethnic minorities' scripts in preserving the languages, culture identities of ethnicities: "*Language and writing of every ethnic minority in Vietnam are a treasure of that group as well as national cultural material*". The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1992, article 5 regulated: "*Ethnicities' rights to use their own language, writing systems, preserve ethnic cultural identities and promote the beauty of their traditions, customs and cultures*". Amended Law and supplements of the Law on Education in 2009, section 7(2) emphasized: "*The Government facilitates the capability of ethnic minorities to learn their languages, writing systems in order to encourage preserving and promoting ethnic cultural identities, support ethnic students in enhancing knowledge taught in school and other educational facilities*".

Before Decision No.53/CP, the matter of constructing ethnic writing systems was Government's authority. For example, the system of the Hmông based on Latin script, in accordance with the establishment of Decree No.206/CP approved by the Government of Vietnam in 1961. However, the system built based on Hmông language in Sa Pa was not a universal Hmông alternative, thus it caused the disadvantages of application, efficiency for

other Hmông people with a variety of approaches in pronunciation and vocabulary. Because of the improvement of Decision No.53/CP on reconstructing the system, it is undoubtedly accepted by the locals.

The decision creates opportunities for provincial ethnicities to build their writing systems actively, considers their practical needs and cautions against building the systems not based on their phonological foundation.

Moreover, the decision encourages the locals to implement the policy in order to contribute to the preserving and promoting their characters, their cultural identities through the acts of constructing, improving, utilizing their writing systems and the act of institutionalizing the future of the languages so that the locals can organize and compose their method books, mother-tongue education. There are classes such as language classes for the local officers, civil servants, armed forces, mother-tongue education for the elementary students, writing classes for the locals. The decision has pushed local acts of constructing, improving their writing systems for more than 40 years.

4.2. On the challenge perspective

- *First*, an inconsistent situation of building the scripts:

A number of inconsistencies in construction and application possibilities can be seen. For example, Thái groups living in different provinces in Vietnam, fundamentally, each province may have their decisions on building and utilizing their local scripts. In fact, there were 8 Thái scripts, with different writing forms. During the selection of composing the ethnic script textbooks (optional subject) of new Literature courses (2018), Thái scripts in particular, the Ministry of Education and Training received many official dispatches requesting their scripts to be selected. In order to deal with the problem, the Institute of Linguistics cooperated with the Department of Ethnic Minorities Education, the Ministry of Education and Training and organized a scientific workshop in order to select the most suitable script that is common for every Thái group. A universal script can overcome the problem of choosing a script for the textbooks composition in the new Literature courses (2018). Thái Sơn La script (Thái Đen) was the foundation of the universal script, including added signs in different local areas.

- *Secondly*, a competitive jeopardy may affect national unity.

The condition of differences in constructing and recognizing ethnic minorities writing systems in a province that conflicts the systems of other areas, may affect national unity because of rivalry.

- *Thirdly,* an examination about writing systems' quality.

In order to build a writing system, academic comprehension of Phonetics and Phonology and phonological system analysis (phonemic orthography) are required, moreover, the knowledge of writing forms, script writing experience to register the Unicode on the Internet. These are the challenges to local ability on building ethnic minorities writing systems, if there was a mistake in inspection, it would lead to some defects like the previous systems.

- *Fourthly*, a risk of wasting natural and material resources, lacking unity in constructing ethnic minorities writing systems

On one side of the issue, a squandering may occur, for example, Hòa Bình province has built and applied the writing system for their Mường groups since 2016, but if the Mường in other areas such as Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Thái Nguyên… also established their own systems, it could cause a waste in investment and increasing division in building ethnic minorities writing system.

5. Challenges between minor ethnic writing scripts in Vietnam's modern day society: the case of Cơ Tu

There are a number of challenges among Hmông minor ethnic groups with more than one script, which needs to be addressed.

5.1. On the two sets of Cơ Tu scripts in Vietnam

Currently, there are two Cơ Tu scripts that are used in Vietnam. One script used in Quảng Nam (locations such as Tây Giang, Nam Giang, Đông Giang, in which Tây Giang is the most populated area for Cơ Tu people), originated from Bh'riu Liec, a local politician and teacher. Another script created by the Institute of Linguistics is taught in classrooms from 1st grade to 6th grade. It is used in Cơ Tu area around Thừa Thiên Huế, mainly in A Lưới and Nam Đông.

Both scripts utilize Latin letters. Due to the debate between these two scripts, we want to further compare the two Cơ Tu scripts used in Quảng Nam and Thừa Thiên-Huế.

5.1.1. On the Cơ Tu script by Bh'riu Liec

Bh'riu Liec, an officer in Tây Giang, was concerned about preserving the language of his community. After years of collecting, searching, systematically organizing vocabulary units and identifying meanings, he came up with the book "Cơ Tu Common Language

Dictionary - Kinh and Cơ Tu's village culture" with the hope for Cơ Tu people to learn the language to keep preserving and continue it in the future.

After the dictionary was put in use and accepted by the community of Cơ Tu in Tay Giang, Bh'riu Liec kept improving his work. Most importantly, he wants to unify the way Cơ Tu is called because there are so many ways of writing, such as Cơ Tu, Co Tu, Ca Tu, Co-Tu… There is a need to unify the writing system to create identification documents for the Cơ Tu community. In a book on learning new Cơ Tu published in 2018 (Pra Cotu: Cotu Language, Writers Publishing Group), he chooses "Cơtu " as the official term. Bh'riu Liec also made adjustments to some letter usages, wherein the Cơ Tu script differs from the Quốc ngữ script (script of Vietnam) in 2 consonants (z, j), 3 final consonants (h, l, r) occurring after vowels (ah, ol, ur), 4 letter combinations representing double vowels (oo, oơ, ơơ, êê), 5 long vowels (aa, ii, uu, ưư, ôô), and 20 consonant cluster combinations (bh, bhl, đh, zr, dz...).

5.1.2. On the Cơ Tu script created by the Institute of Linguistics

In 1998, two members of the Institute of Linguistics, Nguyễn Hữu Hoành and Nguyễn Văn Lợi, proposed the book "Cơ Tu Language", and shortly after that, the Institute of Science and Technology in Quảng Nam hired them to create a writing script for Cơ Tu in Quảng Nam, while also working on the Vietnamese - Cơ Tu dictionary and a book on learning the language.

From the research on the Cơ Tu script used before 1975 and the script used by the Institute of Education in Quảng Nam - Đà Nẵng in textbooks in 1986, Nguyễn Hữu Hoành (2009) had a critical article "Opinions on a solution to change Cơ Tu script".

The author shows some positive notes while also points out drawbacks in the Cơ Tu script being used as follows:

It has all the drawbacks of the national script.

There are many illogical instances: there is a lack of correlation between the phonetic system and writing system, since the people who created it did not have the skills to perform phonological analysis.

The author suggests creating a Cơ Tu script has these requirements:

Each phonemic is represented by a letter.

The script should reflect the tight relationship between phonemics.

It should use the national script as a base foundation.

Changing Cơ Tu should take into account the relationship with related minorities group, such as Bru, Pa Cô - Tà Ôi.

Changing the Cơ Tu script should consider the current state of science technology, especially in printing and publishing. (Nguyễn Hữu Hoành 2009: 52-58).

Working under these guidelines, since 2005, the Department of Science and Technology in Quảng Nam has been cooperating with the Institute of Linguistics to create a Cơ Tu script and utilize this script in books such as: Cơ Tu Language, Cơ Tu Grammar, Vietnamese - Cơ Tu Dictionary, Cơ Tu - Vietnamese.

However, since the government of Quảng Nam has not issued an official document acknowledging the Cơ Tu script created by the Institute of Linguistics, it creates a huge obstacle, even though the proposal for this script has been approved. Not until 2016 did the administration of Thừa Thiên Huế acknowledge this script and put it in textbooks on Cơ Tu from the 1st grade to 6th grade in certain locations, with the sponsorship of the Faro Foundation (Norway).

5.2. Suggestions on the selection of Cơ Tu script

Research on the current state of using Cơ Tu and the views of Cơ Tu people show that the bilingual state (Cơ Tu- Vietnamese) of Cơ Tu people remains good, and the Cơ Tu language is safe from extinction. Most Cơ Tu people can use Vietnamese and their native language in everyday communication.

However, in the world where two Cơ Tu script are co-existing, we propose some recommendations:

First of all, "influential" factors in the selection of Cơ Tu scripts should be addressed.

As we previously explained, there are two current Cơ Tu scripts being used at the same time by the people of Cơ Tu in Quảng Nam (in Tây Giang, Nam Giang, Đông Giang district), one script created by Bh'riu Liec, a Cơ Tu educator, based on the script used during the American war, and another script built by the Institute of Linguistics, based on the order of the Department of Science and Technology in Quảng Nam.

In terms of science, the script created by the Institute of Linguistics is logical since it was created by people who were trained in linguistics and are very experienced. But why is this script not being used as the unique Cơ Tu script?

The script by the Institute of Linguistics only has one upside in its scientific and logical nature.

The script created by Bh'riu Liec has some issues to be addressed:

Bh'riu Liec used to be a very educated Cơ Tu man who took pride in his heritage, with a dream to show Cơ Tu language and culture to the outside. Well - educated people always hold a strong influence on minor ethnic communities. As a result, he has political influence and a close connection to the people of Cơ Tu, as he himself is one. When Bh'riu Liec promotes his script to Cơ Tu people, the administration of Quảng Nam may feel reluctantly to acknowledge and put the script created by the Institute of Linguistics into use.

In addition to his political powers and a strong bond to the Cơ Tu people, his script is seen as the successor to the script that was used during the revolution and was part of propaganda documents utilized to fight America, therefore gaining the power of tradition, being associated to the "glory" past like Unseth (2005) has point out as a decisive factor in the selection of script.

Meanwhile, with real results and research, the administration in Thừa Thiên Huế has no trouble selecting the script created by the Institute of Linguistics as the official one.

Secondly, the Cơ Tu script in education, creating dictionaries, and grammar books should be unified.

There is a need for a science conference to be held for people who helped create these two scripts, as well as local leaders and people who influence the community to work on a unified Cơ Tu script based on the foundation that the Institute of Linguistics laid with its script. During a conference in Tây Giang district, we were asked by local leaders on how to create a unified script, which can gain authorization from the government and put in the education program at schools. Previously, at a year-end conference in 2021 in Quảng Nam, regarding Cơ Tu education, there was an agreement to create a unified script for Cơ Tu people: Quảng Nam has three districts: Đông Giang, Nam Giang, Tây Giang; Thừa Thiên Huế has two districts: A Lưới and Nam Đông, they all wanted to create an unified script that can be used in education, design curriculum, and write grammar books.

6. Conclusion

After analyzing the advantages and existing issues in implementing Decision No.53/CP on developing scripts for ethnic minorities in Vietnam, especially the four risks of the potential 'homogenization' disaster, risks of competition affecting ethnic unity, risks of wastefulness, and doubts about the quality of script sets, we would like to propose the following recommendations:

Firstly, and also the most important suggestion, we believe that the language situation in Vietnam has greatly changed, and along with society (in combination with the development of finance and technology in the 4.0 era), there is a need for a decision that meets the demand of reality. It is time to hold a national conference to analyze the situation and deeply discuss issues regarding scripts for ethnic groups. There are two crucial problems: the first one being that it there is a need to build and approve greater plans, not only to judge but also to make important decisions, such as Decision No.53/CP; secondly, this conference should address the voice of minority ethnic groups the entire country. Due

to the political system in Vietnam, the government is the most appropriate to host this conference, which will lead to law documents that enforce the government's view towards minority ethnic languages, especially appropriate scripts, creating potential opportunities for the preservation of these languages, developing values and chances for minority ethnic groups to prove themselves in the age of technology.

Secondly, and very urgently, we need to conduct research, develop and promulgate Language Laws, in which there are articles regarding language, and scripts for minor ethnic groups in Vietnam, to guarantee the language right for minor ethnic groups in a diverse country with multiple languages.

Thirdly, there is a need to establish a subcommittee for minor ethnic languages and scripts. The mission of this subcommittee is to provide counseling for local leaders and government offices, especially when rules regarding minority ethnic languages and scripts are enforced. The structure of this subcommittee must have a presence from leaders of several Institutes and local government officials who are directly involved in planning of minor ethnic language development. In this subcommittee, it is important that there are representatives from the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs of Vietnam, and the Institute of Linguistics.

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