

THE TAY-NUNG LANGUAGE IN CONTACT WITH THE VIETNAMESE.

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1. The Tay-Nung language in Vietnam.

Tay and Nung are two among 53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam. Because of the socio-historical reasons, they often live mixedly in the mountain areas of R.S of Vietnam. Nowadays, the ethnic mixture has become more and more prevailing in Vietnamese families, thus the linguistic life is here characterized by the growing bilingualism and multilingualism.

In accordance with the linguistic investigation made in North Vietnam, the Bo-y people frequently use the Tay language, while the Cao Lan and the Lu' are near to the Tay because they belong to the same linguistic family. The Giay language exists in the form of different dialects in contact with the Thai and the Tay.

Finally, the Tay and the Nung languages exist in the form of different dialects in contact with other languages. Both include a lot of dialects whose deter-

mination is not clear-cut. The mutual understanding between the different branches of Nung (Nung An, Nung Chao, Nung Loi, Nung Phan Slinh) is not always easy., especially if they live in the different regions. The Tay and the Nung peoples who live in the same place can easily understand each other. Therefore, some Vietnamese specialists think that there is a language common for Tay and Nung peoples. "Between the Tay and the Nung only exist the regional differences".¹ "It is possible to have a common language for the Tay and the Nung".² "The Tay and the Nung people share one language, that is the Tay-Nung language. Formerly, many linguists considered that this language belonged to the Tay-Thai branch, the Han-Thai line, the Han-Tang family. But a recent trend classifies it into the Austro-Asiatic family"³ but some authors still distinguish between the Tay and the Nung language.⁴ Nowadays the Tay-Nung language is used not only by the Tay and the Nung people but also by the other ethnic groups among them the viet (Kinh) - who live alternately in the multilingual areas. This language has a vigorous vitality thanks partly to its homogeneity. In general, the contiguity leads more to uniform than to the separation.

The Nung people often have a voice lower than the Tay. However, these differences are not a major hindrance to the intercourse. We can identify the dialectal differences in the following symmetrical laws:

The differences in the initial consonants:

Phonetic variants	For example	Equivalents in English
/ r - l - k /	ru ^h l ^h -lu ^h ò'n-slu ^h ò'n	house
/ + - t' - t /	sloong-thoong-toong	two
/ c - s - z /	ch ^h au - x ^h au - d ^h au	early
/ k - k' - g /	c ^h an-k ^h an-g ^h an	man
/ f - v - p' /	f ^h a - v ^h a - p ^h a	heaven
/ h - t' /	hua - thua	head
/ p - v /	p ^h u - v ^h u	mountain
/ t - t' /	t ^h ang - th ^h ang	way

The diphthongs in opposition to the simple vowels:

Opposition	For example	Equivalents in English
/ ʍʌ - ʍ /	slu'a - slu'	tiger
/ uo - u /	l ^h ua - l ^h u	daughter-in-law
/ ie - i /	khi ^h eng-khi ^h ng	wooden chopping block

- The alternation of basic vowels in a syllable:
/ e / - / ẽ / : t^hen - t^hem (short)

- Some dialects are characterized by the half-way tone (*). If it is not the case, this tone will be

replaced by the low-broke tone. Then, we have an homonymy, for example: na*(aunt) - nă (face).

The Tay-Nung language has a common vocabulary on the whole. But there are some lexical variants, for example:

Tay	Nung	Equiv. in English
pát	thủi	bowl
phất	chiu	chilli
phật	cún	boil
quang	phít	jar
tàng	lò	way

Nowadays, the Tay-Nung language is used not only in family but also in society. Being the most effective means of communication, it is used more and more in education and in mass media. Previously, it was used only in the traditional folk literature and art as lu'q'n, phong slu' of the Tay and sli of the Nung. Now it is used widely in local press and radio.

2. The Vietnamese language in the linguistic life of the Tay and the Nung people.

Side by side with their mother tongue, the Vietnamese language is prequently recognized as an official language. The romanized script was used to teach Vietnamese. The romanized script was first introduced in 17th century by European missionaries to propagate