

DOCUMENTATION OF BÌNH TRỊ THIÊN DIALECT AND THE PROCESS OF THE SPIRANTISATION OF THE STOPS IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

Ph. D. Vo Xuan Trang

Institute of Social Sciences in Hochiminh City

Abstract: Dialectological data from the Bình Trị Thiên region show fairly regular correspondences between word-initial consonants and their counterparts in Standard Vietnamese. As a rule, a Bình Trị Thiên obstruent corresponds to a Standard Vietnamese fricative. All the dialects of Bình Trị Thiên show the following correspondences: b - v, d - z, c - j, k - γ. In some dialects of the region, the obstruents which correspond to fricatives are palatalized, and thus we have b^j - v; d^j - z; c^j - j; k^j - γ. These data make it reasonable enough to represent the process of spirantisation of old Vietnamese obstruents in the following way: p > b > b^j > v/j (z); t > d > d^j > z; c > c^j > z (j).

Keywords: Dialectological data, correspondences, palatalized, Standard Vietnamese, spirantisation

1. PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM :

1. Documentation

The research of the history of the Vietnamese language may be based upon many sources of different data : Documentation on various languages genetically related to the Vietnamese language (Mường, Chứt, Tha Vưng, Thái and Môn Khơ-me languages), documentation on the writings (demotic script, *quốc ngữ* "national language") script and documentation on the dialects of the Vietnamese language.

Based upon the documentation of various relative languages it is possible to locate the old origins of the Vietnamese language through many different phases of development. The dependence on the Vietnamese letters may help us understand further the Vietnamese language in the later periods when the demotic script and the *Quốc ngữ* appeared.

Based upon the documentation of the dialects, we may find some rules and process of development within the Vietnamese language.

The two former sources of documentation have been much exploited for a long time by many people. The researchers have not paid enough attention to the source of documentation on the dialects.

1.2 Areas of Vietnamese dialects :

The Vietnamese language actually has many dialects. The researchers took a great interest in the matter of partition of dialects in the Vietnamese language but have not so far reached an agreement on the quantity of the dialects as well as the limits and the name of the dialects.

According to my study, the Vietnamese language can be divided into three areas of dialects (but not three dialects).

Area of North dialects includes cities and provinces from Ninh Bình towards the North.

Area of Central dialects includes the provinces of Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên Huế.

Area of South dialects includes the provinces and cities from Đà Nẵng towards the South.

Each area of dialects may include many different dialects.

Area of Central dialects includes three dialects : Thanh Hóa, Nghệ Tĩnh, Bình Trị Thiên.

The special characteristics of the areas of dialects as described by many people still preserve a lot of ancient elements of the Vietnamese language. If the ancient features would be recognized as special characteristics of the area of central dialect, the center of this area of dialect is then the province of Quảng Bình and a part of the Northern part of Quảng Trị province. However, Thanh Hóa still bears a great deal of the transition elements from the area of North and central dialects while Thừa Thiên Huế remains a place where transition elements of the area of Central and South dialects are still in existence.

Therefore, the role of Bình Trị Thiên dialect, especially the subdialects in the North of Bình Trị Thiên, is very important vis-à-vis the area of the central dialects. The ancient features of the area of central dialects have been highly recognized.

1.3 Role of central dialects :

Among the areas of dialects of the Vietnamese language, the area of the central dialects plays a very great role in the study of the history of the Vietnamese language. By making an assessment of the position and the importance of the area of the central dialect in the study of the history of the Vietnamese language, H. Maspéro wrote: “The comparison between the North language and that of the South being the same group appeared to be less interesting. The comparison of these two dialects with the dialect of the Northern Central part (that’s to say the central dialects - VXT) became more and more important. Unluckily it was not yet completed” (Maspéro H. *et al*, 1992).

Making an assessment of the ancient nature of the area of central dialects, Nguyen Kim Than wrote: “This is the speech of an old area. It was not homogeneous (may be considered as having many dialects and retaining many facts of phonology, lexicology of the old (even very old) times.” (Nguyễn Kim Thân, *et al*, 1982).

Professor Nguyễn Tài Cẩn also said : “Studying dialects is necessary if you wish to understand correctly the history of the Vietnamese language as well as to embark on a right direction in the standardization of the Vietnamese language. In particular, among the dialects, Bình Trị Thiên dialect contained specially important aspects that attracted the attention of the circle of scientists at home and abroad and we expect the results of the new researches... (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, *et al*, 1997)

The opinions above asserted the role and the position of the area of the central dialects, specially Bình Trị Thiên dialect, with regard to the research on the history of the Vietnamese language.

2. DOCUMENTATION ON THE BÌNH TRỊ THIÊN DIALECT AND THE PROCESS OF SPIRANTISATION OF THE STOPS IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

2.1 Data from the other languages :

Based upon various sources of different documentations, the researchers of the history of the Vietnamese language also said that the Vietnamese language presented the process of spirantisation of the stops. However, each author has his own hypothesis about the process of formation of fricative in the Vietnamese language.

The documents used by the authors to determine the process of spirantisation of stops in the Vietnamese language are chiefly such outside documents of the Vietnamese language as: Tha Vung, Chut, Muong languages, ect... Therefore, various processes of change happened inside the Vietnamese language hasn't been appropriately paid much attention by the authors.

The documentation on the dialect of Bình Trị Thiên may bring about further clarifications to the process of change from stop to fricative in the Vietnamese language.

2.2 Data from Vietnamese :

The comparison of the Bình Trị Thiên dialect with the standard Vietnamese may show a regular correspondence between the stop of Bình Trị Thiên and the fricative of the standard Vietnamese.

Correspondence [b-v]:

Comparison :

Bình Trị Thiên dialect	Standard Vietnamese language
bo	vò “washing the rice”
bui	vui “happy”
bun	vun “full”
bụ	vú “breast”
bội	vối “leaf of cleistocalyx operculatus (roxb)”
bai	vai “shoulder”

50 words representing the correspondence [b-v] in the various subdialect of Bình Trị Thiên gathered.

Correspondence [d-z] (National language Quốc ngữ : đ - d)

Comparison :

Bình Trị Thiên dialect	Standard Vietnamese language
đa	da “skin”
đai	dai “flexible”
đái	dái “testicle”
điều	diều “kite”
đưới	dưới “below”
đày	dày “thick”

59 words are actually gathered representing the correspondence [d - z] in the subdialects of Bình Trị Thiên. Bình Trị Thiên words having the sound [d] (written in đ) only correspond with standard words having the sound [z] (written in d)

Correspondence [c - j] (National language Quốc ngữ ch - gi)

Comparison :

Bình Trị Thiên dialect	Standard Vietnamese language	
chàn	giàn	“pergola”
chán	gián	“cockroach”
chên	giền	“amaranth”
chốc	giấc	“sleep”
chờng	giường	“bed”
chận	giận	“angry”

37 words are gathered in the subdialect of Bình Trị Thiên representing the correspondence [c - j]. Words of Bình Trị Thiên having the sound [c] (written in **ch**) only correspond with the standard words having the sound [j] (written in **gi**).

The documentation of the correspondences [d- z] and [c-j] between the dialect of Bình Trị Thiên and the standard Vietnamese language remained a reliable basis to solve the problem of theography and distinction of **d/gi**. This is a really difficult question to be solved in the Vietnamese language.

Correspondence [k-γ] (National language Quốc ngữ c - g, k-gh) :

Comparison :

Bình Trị Thiên dialect	Standard Vietnamese language	
ca	gà	“chicken”
cài	gài	“lock”
cắt	gặt	“reap”
cây	gai	“thorn”
kén	ghẻ	“scabies”
kế	ghế	“chair”
kiên	ghê	“set sb’s teeth on edge”

60 words are gathered representing the correspondence [k - γ] among subdialects of Bình Trị Thiên. Words of Bình Trị Thiên written in “c” correspond with the standard words written in “g”. Words of Bình Trị Thiên in “k” correspond with the words of the standard language written in “gh”.

2.3 Other correspondences :

A number of subdialects spoken in the Northern part of Bình Trị Thiên still keep regular correspondence between the palatalized stops of Bình Trị Thiên with the fricatives of the standard language.

There are some correspondences b^j-v , d^j-z , c^j-j , $k^j-\gamma$ in the subdialects while there are not correspondences $[b - v]$, $[d - z]$, $[c - j]$, $[k - \gamma]$ as state above. The difference in these two categories of correspondence lies down in the fact that while a number of subdialects of Bình Trị Thiên used the stops b , d , c , k a number of other subdialects used the palatalized stops of b^j , d^j , c^j , k^j and all corresponding with the words having the fricatives of the standard Vietnamese language being written : v , d , gi , g (gh).

Correspondence $[b^j - v]$ having 34 words of Bình Trị Thiên corresponding with 34 words of the standard Vietnamese language.

Correspondence $[d^j - z]$, there are 76 words.

Correspondence $[c^j - j]$, there are 53 words.

Correspondence $[k^j - \gamma]$; there are 63 words.

2.4 Initial consonant $[p]$ in Bình Trị Thiên dialect:

The modern Vietnamese language has only the final consonant $[p]$ and have not initial consonant $[p]$. In Bình Trị Thiên, there is a subdialect that has the consonant $[p]$ as the initial consonant corresponding with the initial consonant $[v]$ of standard Vietnamese language. That is the Pháp Khê subdialect of Quảng Phương hamlet, Quảng Trạch district, Quảng Bình province located 2km away from Ba Đồn town in the North West. The residents in Pháp Khê village are descendants of the Vietnamese who came to resettle themselves here from Hải Dương province about the eleventh century (Lý dynasty).

The initial consonant $[p]$ of the Pháp Khê subdialect only corresponds with the consonant $[v]$ of the standard Vietnamese language and has actually 34 pairs of corresponding words.

Comparison :

Pháp Khê subdialect	Standard Vietnamese language
pá	vá “mending cloth”
pai	vai “shoulder”
pải	vải “material, cloth”
pầy	vầy “scales”
pót	vót “sharpen”
pừa	vừa “enough”

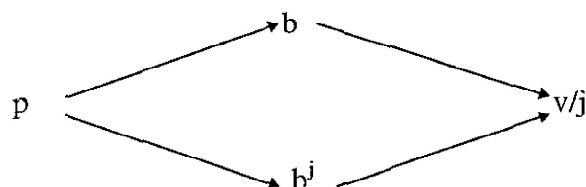
The initial consonants $[p]$ of the Pháp Khê subdialect still corresponds with the initial consonant $[b]$ or the initial consonant $[b^j]$ of other subdialects in Bình Trị Thiên.

Comparison :

Pháp Kệ subdialect

Other subdialects
in Bình Trị Thiên

Standard Vietnamese
language



In the Pháp Kệ and other subdialects of Bình Trị Thiên, there are 21 words that were found representing the above correspondences.

2.5 The process of spirantisation of stops in the Vietnamese language :

The correspondences 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 prove that the fricatives of the standard Vietnamese language have connections with the palatalized stops of Bình Trị Thiên. Is that the result of the two processes of voicing and spirantisation of the Vietnamese language? Based upon the above correspondences, it is possible to establish a common chart about the correspondence between the voiceless, voiced stops, palatalized voiced stops and the fricatives of the standard Vietnamese language as follows:

1.	t	>	d	>	d ^j	>	z
	p	>	b	>	b ^j	>	v/j
2.	k	>			k ^j	>	γ
	c	>			c ^j	>	j

The linguists often began with the process of change of the medial stops of the various languages belonging to the group of Proto Việt Mường while conducting the researches on the formation of the fricatives in the Vietnamese language.

According to N.K Sokolopskaja: “The change of voiced labial and the voiced apicals into spirants began very long time ago (earlier than *p > b, *t > d) and has a relatively long period of time” and “that the development of the initial consonants [*b], [*d] in the Vietnamese language can be set as follows: in the initial phase, [*b] and [*d] were palatalized and changed into [b^j] and [d^j] respectively. Later, their development was different in Vietnamese dialects.

a. Keeping [b^j] and [d^j] (in a number of Vietnamese subdialects spoken in the South).

b. Increasing of the palatalization and spirantisation and changing b^j > j; d^j > j (subdialects spoken in the south and central of Vietnam).

c. The increase the spirantisation weakens the features of palatalization and changes $b^j > v$, $d^j > z$ (Hanoi and a number of other subdialects spoken in the North). As for the apical [$*j$] and guttural [$*g$] they become, among the majority of the Vietnamese dialects, spirants $*j > z/j$; $*g > \gamma$ and not affricatives at all (Sokolopskaja, *et al*, 1976)

It is possible to summarize the explanations given by the authors about the following process of formation of the fricatives in the Vietnamese language:

b	>	b^j	>	v / j
d	>	d^j	>	z / j
j			>	z / j
g			>	γ

N.K. Sokolopskaja, in her explanations, did not exploit appropriately the facts of Bình Trị Thiên dialect.

According to M. Ferlus :

After having conducted the research on the correspondences between the monosyllable of Vietnamese language and double syllable words having the medial stops in the Tha Vung language M. Ferlus came to the conclusion: “the voiced v, d, gi, g, gh were formed by the spirantisation of the stops in the medial position and becoming the initial syllables after the presyllables were fallen down” (Ferlus, *et al*, 1981). The author gave a few examples such as cku - gấu, tpah - vắ, kpah - vắ etc.... Moreover, the author also showed a diagram of the change of the stops from Proto Việt Mường to the modern Vietnamese language. But the diagram provided by the author did not fully reflect the processes of consequent change in the Vietnamese language through the documentation of Bình Trị Thiên dialect.

If we compare Chứt, Nguồn with the subdialects of Bình Trị Thiên, it is possible to clearly see the process of essential change from the media stops into the fricatives in the Vietnamese language as follows:

Medial stops	Chứt language	Nguồn language	Pháp Khê subdialect	Bình Trị Thiên dialect	A number of subdialect in the North part of Bình Trị Thiên	Standard Vietnamese language
* p	kpāl	păn ⁴	păj ⁴	băj ⁴	b'ăj ⁴	vắ “scale”
	tpuj	puj ²	puj ¹	buj ¹	b'uj ¹	vui “happy”
* t	ktal	tan ⁵	daj ⁵	daj ⁵	d'aj ⁵	dái “testicle”
	ptol	toj ⁵	doj ⁵	doj ⁵	d'oj ⁵	dối “to tell a lie”
* c	kcɣŋ	cɣŋ ²	cɣŋ ²	cɣŋ ²	c'ɣŋ ²	giường “bed”
	kcal	can ⁵	caj ⁵	caj ⁵	c'aj ⁵	giại “bamboo screen”
* k	ikāl	kăn ⁵	kăj ⁵	kăj ⁵	k'ăj ⁵	gáy “(of cock) crow”
	cku	ku ⁶	ku ⁶	ku ⁶	k'u ⁶	gấu “bear”

The above data prove that, after deletion of the presyllable, the medial stops became the initials of the monosyllable in the Vietnamese language (like Pháp Kệ subdialect) and the Nguồn language.

As for the labials / p / and gutturals / t /, it is possible to confirm that process of voicing $p > b$; $t > d$ happened before the process of palatalization in all [b, d, c, k].

According to Trần Trí Dõi :

Trần Trí Dõi did not accept the explanations given by N.K Skolopskaja and said that explanations given by M. Ferlus are more logical. The author discovered that only unvoiced medial stops were not spiranted while the voice medial stops, were not spiranted but invoiced (Trần Trí Dõi, *et al*, 1982).

From my point of view :

The discoveries made by M. Ferlus become important because they can determine the beginning point of the process of change from the medial stops into Vietnamese fricatives. Based upon this point as well as the documentation of Chứt, Nguồn languages and Bình Trị Thiên subdialects, it is possible to assume that the process of change from the medial stops of Việt Mường to the fricatives in the standard Vietnamese language is presented as follows (Võ Xuân Trang, *et al*, 1997):

MEDIAL STOP	DELETION OF PRESYLLABLE	VOICING	PALATALIZATION	SPIRANTISATION
* p →	p →	b →	b ^J →	v
* t →	t →	d →	d ^J →	z (d)
* c →	c →		c ^J →	z (gi)
* k →	k →		k ^J →	γ

Example :

tpuj →	puj ¹ →	buj ¹ →	b ^J uj ¹ →	vui “happy”
ktal →	tan ⁵ →	daj ⁵ →	d ^J aj ⁵ →	dái “testicle”
kcγη →	cγη ² →		c ^J γη ² →	giường “bed”
ikăl →	kăj ⁵ →		k ^J ăj ⁵ →	gáy “cock warble”

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