



ЯЗЫКОВАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ  
LANGUAGE SITUATION

УДК 81'27

DOI:10.37892/2713-2951-8-20-9-27

**SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF THE BRU- VAN KIEU LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT:  
USAGE AND SPEAKERS' ATTITUDES<sup>1</sup>**

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*This paper presents a sociolinguistic study on the current use of language and script among the Bru- Van Kieu people in Vietnam, as well as their attitudes and aspirations towards the preservation of their ethnic language and script. The findings indicate a high level of bilingualism (Bru- Van Kieu-Vietnamese) among the Bru- Van Kieu community. Most Bru- Van Kieu individuals can use both their mother tongue and Vietnamese in daily communication, and they exhibit a strong loyalty towards their language. However, due to the increasing number of Bru- Van Kieu families who choose to speak only Vietnamese with their children, the Bru- Van Kieu language may face decline in the near future without timely intervention. Additionally, the teaching of the Bru- Van Kieu language cannot be highly effective as long as there are two existing scripts; thus, there is a need to promptly establish a unified script for the Bru- Van Kieu people. This situation is considered to have elements of writing conflict, observed among some ethnic minorities in Vietnam who have more than one writing system, such as the Hmong, Co Tu, Raglai, Cham, and Thai people in Vietnam.*

*The content in the discussion section of the article serves as a basis for the Vietnamese government to take measures to enhance the effectiveness of the use of the Bru- Van Kieu language and script, contributing to the sustainable development of the country.*

**Keywords:** Bru- Van Kieu language, language proficiency, attitudes towards mother tongue, Bru- Van Kieu script choice

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<sup>1</sup> This study is part of a national-level project titled "Synthesize research results and propose recommendations to the Government and relevant agencies on urgent issues for the preservation and promotion of the role and identity of minority languages and scripts," with the project code ĐТĐL.XH – 06/19, conducted from 2019 to 2022. This national-level project has two main objectives:

First Objective

- Synthesize, distill, generalize, and elevate research results on urgent issues regarding minority languages from other projects.
- Propose a scientific basis for formulating the Party and State's policies on minority languages and scripts to preserve and promote the role of minority languages and scripts, contributing to the sustainable development of the country.
- Make specific recommendations to the Government and relevant agencies to prepare for the construction of the Language Law (regarding minority languages).

Second Objective

- Summarize the results of the ministerial-level task "Investigate and research the traditional scripts of Vietnam's minority groups" carried out by the Institutes under the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences from 2000 to 2005, along with other related tasks.
- Survey the current situation, attitudes, and aspirations of ethnic minorities regarding the use of their languages and scripts to propose policies, laws, and solutions for urgent and long-term issues in the use, improvement, and development of scripts for minority languages to suit the linguistic context, attitudes, and aspirations of ethnic minorities, and to match the socio-economic conditions of localities and the country.

The article "Sociolinguistic analysis of Bru-Van Kieu Language and Script: Usage, Attitudes, and Aspirations of the Bru-Van Kieu People" pertains to the second objective of the project.



## СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ЯЗЫКА И ПИСЬМЕННОСТИ БРУ- ВАН КЬЮ: ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКА И УСТАНОВКИ ГОВОРЯЩИХ

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*В статье представлено социолингвистическое исследование современного использования языка и письменности среди говорящих на языке бру-ван кью во Вьетнаме, а также их установки и стремления к сохранению своего этнического языка и письменности. Результаты исследования указывают на высокий уровень двуязычия (бру-ван кью и вьетнамский язык) среди общности бру-ван кью. Большинство говорящих на бру-ван кью могут использовать в общении как свой родной язык, так и вьетнамский в повседневном общении, и они демонстрируют высокую языковую лояльность. Однако из-за растущего числа семей бру-ван кью, которые предпочитают говорить со своими детьми только на вьетнамском языке, язык бру-ван кью может стать исчезающим языком в ближайшем будущем без своевременного вмешательства. Кроме того, преподавание языка бру-ван кью не может быть высокоэффективным в связи с наличием двух видов письменности; таким образом, необходимо оперативно создать единую письменность для народа бру-ван кью. Считается, что есть элементы конфликта в отношении существующей письменности, наблюдаемые среди некоторых этнических меньшинств во Вьетнаме, которые имеют более одной системы письма, таких как хмонг, ко ту, раглай, чам и тайцы во Вьетнаме.*

*Содержание статьи послужит основой для принятия правительством Вьетнама мер по повышению эффективности использования языка и письменности бру-ван кью, способствуя устойчивому развитию страны.*

**Ключевые слова:** язык бру-ван кью, владение языком, отношение к родному языку, выбор письменности бру-ван кью

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.2. The Bru People and the Bru Language

##### 1.2.1. The Bru People

According to researcher Vuong Huu Le, “The Bru ethnic group in Vietnam consists of four groups: Van Kieu, Tri, Khua, and Mang Coong, with a total population of about 32,000 people; if we include other Bru groups (with different names) residing in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia, the total number of Bru speakers reaches about 50,000” [Vuong Huu Le 1996: 13].

In Quang Tri province, the Bru people are concentrated in Huong Hoa district (the largest concentration), Cam Lo, Trieu Phong, and Gio Linh. In Quang Binh province, the Bru people live in Le Ninh, Tuyen Hoa, and Bo Trach. Before 1975, about 2,000 Bru people migrated to Krong Pak district, Dak Lak.

Based on the results of the 2019 Population Census, the Bru-Vân Kiều population in Vietnam is 94,598, comprising 47,301 males and 47,297 females. This group represents 0.1% of the national population. The Bru-Vân Kiều are the 22nd largest ethnic group and the 21st largest minority group in Vietnam.

### 1.2.2. The Bru Language and Script

#### a) The Bru Language

The Bru language (also known as Bru- Van Kieu) belongs to the Austroasiatic language family, the Mon-Khmer group, and the Katuic branch (including languages such as Co Tu, Pa Co, Bru, and several other smaller languages). The Bru language is classified under the Western Katuic branch (differing from Co Tu and Pa Co, which belong to the Eastern Katuic branch). According to Vuong Huu Le, the vocabulary similarity rate between the Bru and Pa Co languages is very high, reaching 74% [Vuong Huu Le 1997: 14].

Additionally, Vuong Huu Le notes that the Bru language retains common characteristics of Mon-Khmer languages, including:

- Fixed stress on the final syllable of words;
- A very rich vowel system, with the Bru language being one of the languages with the most vowels in the world;
- The phenomenon of tone distinction;
- The presence of prefixes and infixes, but no suffixes;
- Many reduplicative forms, with subtle distinctions in meaning;
- Numerous classifiers;
- Syntactic features such as the object following the verb, the possessive following the possessor, adjectives following nouns, and position words appearing at the end of phrases [Vuong Huu Le 1997: 14].

In the Vietnam-Soviet (later Vietnam-Russia) cooperation program on the study of the languages of ethnic minorities in Vietnam, initiated by Hoang Tue and Vadim M. Solntsev in 1979 and 1981, several surveys were conducted to explore the origins and typological features of these languages and to preserve endangered languages. A total of 30 languages were surveyed across all three regions of Vietnam, including the neighboring languages of the Binh Tri Thien region, such as Ta Ôi, A Ream, Bru-Van Kieu, and Ruc. Specialized studies on languages like Muong, La Ha, Pu Peo, Xinh Mun, Ca Tu, Ruc, and Co Lao were published (in Russian) [Nguyen Van Hiep 2015, 2024a]. Specifically, for the Bru language, a monograph by Hoang Van Ma and Ta Van Thong titled *Tiếng Bru – Vân Kiều* (Bru-Van Kieu Language) was published by the Social Sciences Publishing House in 1998. This is the most comprehensive work, thoroughly describing various aspects such as vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and the position of the Bru-Van Kieu language. However, the book does not include a dedicated section on the writing system; the Bru Van Kieu script is only mentioned in the context of presenting materials and does not address the existence of the Bru-Van Kieu script variant in the Bible.



## b) The Bru Script

American linguists created the Bru script based from the foundation of the Latin alphabet, initially serving missionary purposes. In 1986, linguists from the Institute of Linguistics, in collaboration with lecturers from Hue University, improved this script and began compiling teaching materials and a Bru dictionary. According to Vuong Huu Le, who participated in this revision process, the differences between the two scripts are minor, as seen in: “1) in words where the main syllable has an initial palatal sound (ch-, nh-, y-), the nasal final of the auxiliary syllable is always written as n- (instead of nh-); 2) additional initial consonants were included: sh- (corresponding to thr- in the American authors’ system), kht-, phl-, g-“ [Vuong Huu Le 1997: 15].

Some foreign scholars have made notable contributions to the study of the Bru language, but primarily focusing on phonology, parts of speech, and noun phrases [Miller, Carolyn P. 1964; Miller, John D. 1964, 1967, Phillips R, L. John and Carolyn Miller 1976, A.N. Barulin and A.Iu. Efimov 1985]. However, there has been no sociolinguistic research on usage, attitudes, and aspirations of the Bru- Van Kieu People in Vietnam.

## 2. Research Methods and Scope

### 2.1. Research Methods

**Field Research Method:** To collect data, the project team members conducted a field research in Huong Son and Huong Hiep communes, Da Krong district, Quang Tri province, where many Bru- Van Kieu people live. The survey questionnaire, designed with 66 questions, served as a guide for the investigators working with informants. A total of 300 questionnaires were collected from surveys conducted in Huong Son and Huong Hiep communes, Da Krong district, Quang Tri province.

**In-depth Interviews:** The project conducted interviews with Mr. Ho Hanh, a Bru- Van Kieu teacher in Da Krong district, and Mr. Ho Xuan Long, a Bru- Van Kieu teacher in Khe Sanh district. These two intellectuals have participated in compiling textbooks and teaching the Bru- Van Kieu language locally. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to clarify the information obtained through the survey and uncover issues not addressed by the questionnaire. Additionally, the interviews aimed to gather informants' evaluations on contentious issues.

**Scientific Seminars:** A seminar was organized at the district level, inviting local leaders (especially leaders of education, culture, and ethnic affairs departments, principals of ethnic boarding schools, ethnic teachers, intellectuals, and reputable individuals) to gather additional opinions and recommendations regarding policies and regulations on the use of ethnic languages and scripts.



Some information about the Bru- Van Kieu informants:

+ Gender Structure: Among the 300 surveyed informants, 131 were male (43.7 %) and 169 were female (56.3%), showing a relatively balanced gender structure.

+ Age Structure: Of the 300 informants, 76 were aged 18 to 35 (25.3 %); 209 were aged 36 to 55 (69.7 %); and 15 were over 55 years old (5 %), indicating that the majority of informants were aged 36 to 55.

+ Education Level: Among the 300 surveyed informants, 84 were illiterate (28 %); 30 attended literacy classes (10 %); 73 had primary education (24.3 %); 78 had secondary education (26 %); 22 had high school education (7.3 %); and 13 had college or university education (4.3 %), reflecting the current educational status of the Bru- Van Kieu people.

+ Occupational Structure: 255 out of 300 informants were engaged in agriculture (85 %), 24 were workers (8 %), 4 were civil servants (1.3 %), and 5 were small-scale traders (1.7 %). The remaining informants were involved in other occupations such as housework or teaching. This structure accurately reflects the fact that the majority of the Bru- Van Kieu people are primarily engaged in agriculture, with a small percentage working in government agencies.

Overall, the structure of the informants based on age, gender, education level, and occupation, ensures the representativeness of the collected sample.

The survey data was processed using SPSS software.

## **2.2. Scope of Research:**

1. General issues regarding the language and script of the Bru- Van Kieu people.
2. The usage, language proficiency, and language attitudes of the Bru- Van Kieu people towards their language and script.
3. The desires and aspirations of the Bru- Van Kieu people and local leaders regarding the preservation and development of the Bru- Van Kieu language and script.
4. The issue of the existence of two Bru- Van Kieu scripts: one used for compiling teaching materials and the other used in the Bible, still utilized by the Bru- Van Kieu community practicing Protestantism.

## **3. Research Findings**

### **3.1. Linguistic proficiency of the Bru-Van Kieu People**

The linguistic proficiency of the Bru-Van Kieu people was examined using the question, "What languages can you speak?"

The statistical results are as follows:

Table 1.

Language Proficiency of the Bru-Van Kieu People

<b>Language</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Bru-Van Kieu	300 (100 %)	0 (0 %)
Vietnamese	300 (100 %)	0 (0 %)
Other (Paco)	3 (1 %)	297 (99 %)
Foreign languages	0	0

Table 1 indicates that, with respect to their mother tongue, 100 % of the surveyed Bru-Van Kieu individuals speak Bru-Van Kieu. Similarly, 100 % of them speak Vietnamese. Additionally, a very small number of Bru-Van Kieu individuals can speak other languages (3 respondents, or 1 %). None of the surveyed Bru-Van Kieu individuals are proficient in any foreign languages.

Overall, in terms of linguistic proficiency, it can be concluded that the majority of the Bru-Van Kieu population in Quang Tri province are bilingual, speaking both Bru-Van Kieu and Vietnamese. A very small number can speak three languages. The survey results indicate that bilingualism in Bru-Van Kieu and Vietnamese is the most prevalent among the Bru-Van Kieu community, while multilingualism is negligible.

When evaluating language proficiency in terms of the mother tongue (Bru-Van Kieu), Vietnamese, and other ethnic languages (if known), the survey results are as follows:

Table 2.

Language Proficiency Levels of the Bru-Van Kieu People  
(Comparison between mother Language and other Languages)

<b>Language</b>	<b>Most proficient</b>	<b>Second most proficient</b>	<b>Third most proficient</b>	<b>Least proficient</b>
Bru-Van Kieu	300	0	0	0
Vietnamese	11	270	18	1
Other ethnic languages	0	0	3	0

Based on the common linguistic proficiency scale in Table 2, we developed five levels of linguistic proficiency, ranked in ascending order:

Level 1: Can say a few simple sentences such as greetings and introductions but does not understand others.

Level 2: Can understand and answer simple questions such as name, age, and hometown.

Level 3: Can give directions to strangers.

Level 4: Can describe life, family, and work in detail.

Level 5: Can argue and debate.

The statistical results for the Bru- Van Kieu people’s linguistic proficiency in Vietnamese and other ethnic languages, according to the five-level scale, are as follows:

Table 3.

Five Levels of Language Proficiency among the Bru-Van Kieu People

Language	Level 5	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Bru- Van Kieu	298	0	0	2	0
Vietnamese	83	105	40	65	7
Other ethnic languages	0	0	3	0	0

**Table 3** indicates that the Bru- Van Kieu people are most proficient in their mother tongue, with 298 out of 300 respondents indicating they can argue in Bru- Van Kieu. Vietnamese proficiency is also relatively high, with 83 out of 300 people being able to debate and 105 out of 300 people able to discuss their lives in Vietnamese. For other ethnic languages, the majority of the Bru-Van Kieu people are at level 3, meaning they can give directions to strangers.

These results align with the previous evaluation of the highest proficiency levels in different languages. Overall, the Bru-Van Kieu people exhibit high proficiency in both Bru-Van Kieu and Vietnamese. A few demonstrate low proficiency in other ethnic languages.

Regarding literacy skills in Bru-Van Kieu and other minority scripts, the survey results are as follows (with literacy/non-literacy rates for Vietnamese script, Bru Van Kieu script, and other minority scripts, respectively):

Table 4.

Literacy skills of the Bru-Van Kieu People

Script	Literate	Illiterate
Bru-Van Kieu	47 (15,7 %)	253 (84,3 %)
Vietnamese	185 (61,7 %)	115 (38,3 %)
Other ethnic scripts	0	300 (100 %)

Among those who are literate, the survey examined where they learned to read and write:

Table 5.

Literacy Learning Environment

Place of learning	Vietnamese	Bru-Van Kieu
At home	1/185 (0,54 %)	22/47 (46,81 %)
At school	180/185 (97,29 %)	7/47 (14,89 %)
Elsewhere	4/185 (2,16%)	18/47 (38,30%)

As shown in Table 4 and Table 5 the majority of the Bru-Van Kieu people are literate in Vietnamese, with 185 out of 300 people (61.7 %), most of whom acquired literacy in school (180 out of 185, 97.29 %). The literacy rate in Bru-Van Kieu is relatively low, at 15.7 %, with most learning to

read and write at home (22 out of 47, or 46.81%); a very small number acquired literacy at school (7 out of 47, or 14.89%).

### 3.2. Language and Script Usage

To investigate the language and script usage among the Bru-Van Kieu people in Quang Tri province, the research team conducted a comprehensive survey across various contexts:

- Language use within the family
- Language use in communication with neighbors
- Language use in communication with individuals from other ethnic groups
- Language use in business interactions
- Language use during parent-teacher meetings at schools
- Language use in village and commune meetings
- Language use in religious and belief-related activities
- Language use at workplaces

The processed and statistically analyzed data are as follows:

Language Usage Statistics

Table 6.

Language and Script Usage in Different Contexts

Language/Context	Bru-Van Kieu		Vietnamese		Other ethnicity	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
Parents	300	100,00	2	0,67		
Spouse	299	99,67	4	1,33		
Children	299	99,67	44	14,67		
Neighbors	298	99,33	8	2,67		
At the market	292	97,33	167	55,67	3	1,00
Communicating with other ethnicities	52	17,33	284	94,67	3	1,00
Worship	300	100,00	4	1,33		
Daily writing	3	1,62	185	100,00		
Village meetings	194	67,13	187	64,71		
Commune meetings	6	35,29	17	100,00		
Parent-teacher meetings	75	42,37	172	97,18		
Co-workers of the same ethnicity	40	100,00	9	22,50		
Co-workers of other ethnicities	3	7,50	40	100,00	3	7,50



In examining the use of language within the family, the research team assessed language use in communication with parents, spouses, and children. Table 6 indicates that in interactions with family members, the Bru-Van Kieu people predominantly use their mother tongue, with usage rates ranging from 99.67 % to 100 %. Specifically, communication with the older generation (parents) is almost exclusively conducted in Bru-Van Kieu (300/300 respondents), whereas only 2/300 individuals (0.67 %) use Vietnamese. Interactions with children reveal a significant increase in bilingualism, with 44/300 individuals (14.67 %) using Vietnamese. Although this rate is not particularly high, it signifies an upward trend across generations.

It is evident that within family interactions, the trend of using Vietnamese inversely correlates with the use of Bru-Van Kieu. Specifically, the Bru-Van Kieu people tend to use Vietnamese most frequently with their children and least frequently with their parents, while the opposite trend is observed for the use of Bru-Van Kieu. Notably, there are no instances of using other ethnic languages to communicate with parents.

Regarding communication with neighbors, the survey results show that the Bru-Van Kieu primarily use their mother tongue, with a usage rate of 99.33 %.

In contrast to the relatively homogeneous ethnic composition of family and neighborhood interactions, the market represents a multilingual communication environment. This is reflected in the actual language usage at the market, where 292/300 individuals (97.33 %) use Bru-Van Kieu, 167/300 (55.67 %) use Vietnamese (there is overlap: some use both), and 3/300 (1 %) use other ethnic languages. Outside the contexts of family and neighborhood, the market environment demonstrates a dominance of Vietnamese.

When communicating with individuals from other ethnic groups, the majority use Vietnamese (284/300 individuals, 94.67 %). A smaller number use Bru-Van Kieu (17.33 %), and very few (1 %) use other ethnic languages (there is also overlap: some use both, or even more than two).

Worship activities, which are distinctive in preserving cultural heritage, see 100% of the surveyed Bru-Van Kieu people using their mother tongue. Only 1.33 % mix Vietnamese with their mother tongue during worship.

For daily writing, out of 300 respondents, 185 are literate in Vietnamese, including 47 who are literate in both Bru-Van Kieu and Vietnamese. Among the literate respondents, 100 % use Vietnamese for daily writing, with a very small number (3/185, 1.62 %) mixing their mother tongue with Vietnamese. This indicates the prevalence of Vietnamese for writing due to its convenience and widespread use for everyday needs such as study and work. This rate is consistent with the literacy rate recorded above (185/300 respondents, 61.67 %).

In meetings at the village and commune levels or parent-teacher meetings at schools, the trend is predominantly to use Vietnamese for communication and exchange:

– Village meetings: Out of 300 respondents, 289 participated in village meetings. Of these, 194/289 (67.13 %) use their mother tongue, and 187/289 (64.71 %) use Vietnamese. This shows a trend of using both languages interchangeably in village meetings.

– (Note: In this case, there is also overlap: some people use both their native language and Vietnamese, meaning they switch between their native language and Vietnamese at different times)

– Commune meetings: Out of 300 respondents, only 17 participated in commune meetings. Of these, 6/17 (35.29 %) use their mother tongue, and 17/17 (100 %) use Vietnamese. Although the number of participants in commune meetings is low, it provides some insight into the general language use at the commune level.

– Parent-teacher meetings: Out of 300 respondents, 177 participated in parent-teacher meetings. Of these, 75/177 (42.37 %) use their mother tongue, and 172/177 (97.18 %) use Vietnamese. Thus, communication in parent-teacher meetings follows a similar trend to other meetings, with Vietnamese being the primary language and the mother tongue used intermittently.

However, there are clear differences in language use between different meeting environments. Specifically, the use of Vietnamese increases from village meetings (80.28 %) to commune meetings (94.34 %) and to parent-teacher meetings (97.91%). Conversely, the use of Bru-Van Kieu decreases from village meetings (58.82 %) to commune meetings (22.01 %) and to parent-teacher meetings (17.99 %). In all meetings, the use of other ethnic languages is minimal.

In communication with colleagues at the workplace, 40/300 respondents interact with colleagues (including workers, merchants, teachers, etc.):

– With colleagues of the same ethnicity: Communication in the mother tongue is absolute (40/40), with some mixing of Vietnamese (9/40, 22.5 %).

– With colleagues of other ethnicities: Due to language differences, 100 % use Vietnamese. There are 3/40 individuals who mix Bru-Van Kieu but only use simple, commonly understood words. Additionally, 3/40 individuals (7.5 %) use other ethnic languages.

These results confirm that the ethnic composition of colleagues significantly affects the language used.

Overall, the survey on language use among the Bru-Van Kieu people in Quang Tri province shows a clear functional division between Bru-Van Kieu and Vietnamese. Within family communication, the ethnic community (including village meetings) and worship, the Bru-Van Kieu primarily use their mother tongue. In contrast, in broader community contexts, Vietnamese is used as the common means of communication among different ethnic groups.

### 4.3. Attitude Towards Language and Script

The measurement of language attitudes was conducted by assessing the satisfaction levels of native speakers with the Bru-Van Kieu language and script, as well as understanding the community's perception of the necessity of maintaining their language across various aspects of daily life.

Among the 300 participants surveyed, 185 were literate in the common script (i.e., Vietnamese script), including 47 who were literate in both the Bru-Van Kieu script and the common script. To evaluate the satisfaction with the Bru-Van Kieu script among the Bru-Van Kieu people in Quang Tri province, we posed a direct question: "Are you satisfied with your ethnic script?" The results were as follows:

Table 7.

Satisfaction Levels with the Bru-Vân Kiêu Script

	Yes	No	Don't know
Satisfaction with the Bru-Van Kieu script	93 (31 %)	57 (19 %)	150 (50 %)

Table 7 shows that 150 out of 300 respondents (50 %) expressed dissatisfaction with the Bru-Van Kieu script due to their unfamiliarity with it, precluding them from making an informed evaluation. Of the remaining respondents, 93 (31 %) expressed satisfaction, although 46 of these were not previously acquainted with the script, basing their satisfaction on the belief that the script represents their cultural heritage. Additionally, 57 respondents (19 %) were dissatisfied. This suggests that the majority of the Bru-Van Kieu people have not been exposed to the Bru-Van Kieu script and therefore lack a basis for evaluation. Those who expressed satisfaction typically did so from a subjective perspective, viewing it as a cultural heritage rather than assessing its scientific or practical attributes.

Regarding literacy in their native script, with 84.3% of respondents unable to read or write it, participants were asked if they would attend classes to learn it if offered in their locality. The results were as follows:

Table 8.

Willingness to Learn the Bru Script

	Yes	Yes, if time allows	No/Unlikely
Willingness to attend classes if offered locally	133 (44,3 %)	71 (23,7 %)	93 (32 %)

Table 8 reveals that the majority of participants expressed a desire to learn, with 133 out of 300 (44.3 %) willing to attend classes. Another 23.7% would attend if they had the time. The remaining 32%

would not attend, with a few already familiar with the Bru-Van Kieu script or unable to attend due to age-related constraints.

For those wishing to learn, the primary motivation cited was to preserve their traditional culture and maintain their ethnic identity. On the contrary, those not interested cited reasons such as gender, age, time constraints, or existing knowledge of the script.

The survey indicates that the younger generation speaks their native language relatively well (69.3 %). Regarding the desire to speak, read, and write their native language, the results are as follows:

Table 9.

The Need for Literacy in the Bru Script

	Yes	No	Difficult to say
Necessity to know the native script	298 (99,3 %)	2 (0,7 %)	0
Need to read in their native script	287 (95,67 %)	2 (0,67 %)	11 (3,66 %)
Need to speak their native language	275 (91,67 %)	4 (1,33 %)	21 (7 %)

As shown in Table 9, the majority of Bru-Van Kieu respondents believe it is essential to know how to speak, read, and write their native language to preserve their cultural identity and better understand their heritage.

When asked whether learning the common language or the Bru-Van Kieu language was more important, the results were as follows:

Table 10.

Assessment of the Importance of the Native Language and Other Languages

	Yes	Not sure	No	Don't know
Is learning Vietnamese more important than learning your native language?	157 (52,3%)	48 (16%)	92 (30,7%)	3 (1%)
Is learning other ethnic languages more important than learning your own language?	3 (1%)	1 (0,3%)	287 (95,7%)	9 (3%)
Is learning foreign languages more important than learning your own language?	16 (5,3%)	28 (9,3%)	218 (72,7%)	38 (12,7%)

Table 10 reveals that most respondents do not prioritize learning other ethnic languages or foreign languages over their own. The majority believe that learning their native language is crucial for preserving their cultural heritage, although a small percentage sees the importance of learning foreign languages for integration and development.

Regarding the necessity of having television programs in their native language, the results were as follows:

Table 11.

## Need for Television Programs in the Native Language

	Yes	Not sure	No	Don't know
Need for TV programs in native language?	291 (97 %)	1 (0,3 %)	5 (1,7 %)	3 (1 %)

Table 11 shows that most respondents desire Bru-Van Kieu language programs on television, with only a small fraction expressing uncertainty or indifference, primarily due to lack of access to television or time constraints.

Regarding the importance of preserving their language and script, the survey results are as follows:

Table 12.

## Opinions of the Bru-Van Kieu People on the Preservation of Their Language and Writing System

Opinion on the necessity of a script to preserve culture and language	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Don't know
Need a script to preserve cultural heritage	300 (100%)			
Need a script to preserve the language	300 (100%)			
Need to teach the native language in schools	280 (93,33%)			20 6,67%
Need to use the native language alongside Vietnamese in primary education	211 (70,33%)			89 (29,67%)

Table 12 indicates that 100% of respondents agree that having a script is crucial for preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage. They also support the inclusion of their native language in school curricula and its use alongside Vietnamese in primary education, which is seen as a positive sign for the preservation of the Bru-Van Kieu language and script. At the same time, they acknowledge that Vietnamese is the primary language for work, integration, and development.

In summary, these analyses demonstrate the significant role of cultural and social factors in language proficiency, usage, and attitudes.



## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Dissemination of the Bru-Van Kieu language through mass media

In regions inhabited by the Bru-Van Kieu people, mass media, such as television (and radio broadcasts) in the Bru-Van Kieu language, have garnered significant attention. However, similar to other ethnic minorities, these media outlets require modernization and improvements to be more engaging and appealing to the local population. Specifically, television and radio programs should not merely replicate Vietnamese language programs but should be richer and more engaging. For instance, there should be entertainment programs, production guidance, and local community-related information in the Bru-Van Kieu language. In summary, the general direction should be to create unique programs rather than replicating Vietnamese language broadcasts ([Nguyen Huu Hoanh, Nguyen Van Khang, Bui Thị Minh Yến, 2012]. Additionally, the effectiveness of the broadcast schedule should be considered, as unsuitable broadcast times would result in low viewership or listenership due to the differing daily routines of the Bru-Van Kieu compared to the Vietnamese population.

Another issue to consider is that while the listening and speaking skills of the Bru-Van Kieu people are good, their reading and writing skills in the Bru-Van Kieu script are limited (30.3% can read, 15.7% can write). Therefore, the use of the Bru-Van Kieu script should be encouraged more in daily life. Given the rich folk literature of the Bru-Van Kieu, it is necessary to compile and publish works such as songs and poems to create an ecosystem that supports learning and maintaining the Bru-Van Kieu script.

### 5.2 Teaching and learning the Bru-Van Kieu language and script

The teaching and learning of the Bru-Van Kieu mother tongue have yielded numerous positive results, with increasing interest from the local population. Based on feedback from survey participants and discussions with local leaders, it is evident that schools are the most effective venues for enhancing Bru-Van Kieu language skills. According to the new general education program (since 2018), eight ethnic minority languages have been selected for textbook compilation and optional teaching from grades 1 to 12. Local leaders and Bru-Van Kieu intellectual representatives should undertake practical activities and policies to encourage both teachers and students, regularly organizing Bru-Van Kieu language contests or cultural club activities to provide opportunities for students to learn and improve their language skills.

Regarding support policies, teachers involved in teaching the Bru-Van Kieu language should receive additional allowances and regular training to enhance their language skills and update teaching methods to make learning more engaging for students. There should also be priority policies for preserving and promoting the Bru-Van Kieu language. For instance, agencies in the mountainous

districts of Quang Tri and Quang Binh, where the Bru-Van Kieu people reside, should prioritize recruiting individuals proficient in the Bru-Van Kieu language with corresponding certificates.

### **5.3 Promoting Vietnamese in the Bru-Vân Kiều Community**

The 2013 Constitution affirms Vietnamese as the national language. Therefore, learning Vietnamese is essential for the Bru-Van Kieu people. Our survey in Da Krong indicates that Vietnamese is crucial for daily communication, and thus teaching and promoting Vietnamese are necessary to facilitate cultural exchange and knowledge dissemination among ethnic groups. In reality, some Bru-Van Kieu individuals can only speak but not read or write Vietnamese. This poses a challenge: if too much emphasis is placed on preserving the mother tongue, ethnic minorities might lose opportunities to learn Vietnamese.

It is evident that the Bru-Van Kieu in the mountainous districts of Quang Tri and Quang Binh are a multilingual community. Besides their mother tongue, they can speak Vietnamese and other languages. However, the most important form of communication is Bru-Van Kieu –Vietnamese bilingualism. This is advantageous for the economic, cultural, and social development of the Bru-Van Kieu community. Nonetheless, our surveys and in-depth interviews reveal that over time, the prominence of Vietnamese is overshadowing Bru-Van Kieu. Specifically, the Bru-Van Kieu language is used only in certain contexts, mainly within the ethnic community: at home, in the village, and in religious and spiritual practices. Beyond these contexts, Vietnamese plays a more prominent role in communication.

In-depth interviews indicate that many Bru-Van Kieu parents now use Vietnamese to communicate with their children to help them learn it better. This trend, observed in other ethnic minority languages, has both positive and negative aspects.

Our surveys indicate that the Bru-Van Kieu people's proficiency in both their mother tongue and Vietnamese is relatively good, despite a modest number of individuals literate in the Bru-Van Kieu script. This warrants further attention in the future. We believe that promoting the Bru-Van Kieu script is crucial for preserving and enhancing the role of the Bru-Van Kieu language in the sustainable development of the country in general, and of Quang Tri, Quang Binh, and the Bru-Vân Kiều community in particular.

### **5.4 Choosing the Bru-Van Kieu Script**

Statistics show that 33 out of 53 ethnic minorities in Vietnam have their scripts, with some having more than one [Nguyen Huu Hoanh, 2013; Nguyen Van Hiep, 2023a, 2023b]. For those with multiple scripts, the issue is which one to choose and what factors influence that choice. Although the

improved Bru-Van Kieu script developed by Vietnamese linguists does not differ significantly from the script developed by American authors [Vuong Huu Le, 1997: 15], in-depth interviews with Bru-Van Kieu teacher Ho Xuan Long in Khe Sanh reveal that the coexistence of both scripts is undeniable.

In a widely recognized study, Unseth (2005: 22) identifies four factors influencing script choice. In this section, we analyze these factors and compare them to the choice of the Bru-Van Kieu script in Vietnam.

Firstly, a community might choose a particular script to mark their identity, distinguishing themselves from other groups. In other words, script choice is a way to affirm the group's identity, often linked to a "glorious" past (Unseth, 2005: 23).

The group's identity can be part of national culture or closely tied to people of the same ethnicity and language, even if they live abroad (Unseth, 2005: 23). The non-Protestant Bru-Van Kieu communities may choose the recently developed Bru-Van Kieu script to mark their group, associated with positive memories of the Revolution and President Ho Chi Minh, as the Revolution liberated ethnic groups in Vietnam, giving them the status of free citizens in an independent country. However, the Protestant Bru-Van Kieu community in Vietnam might choose the script used in the Bible to connect with the Protestant Bru-Van Kieu community. According to Ho Xuan Long, some Bru-Van Kieu Protestants migrated to the Central Highlands and Krong Pak district and used only the Bru-Van Kieu script in the Bible. In Quang Tri, the number of Bru-Van Kieu people familiar with the Bible's Bru-Van Kieu script is higher than those familiar with the improved script.

Secondly, a community might choose a script to distance themselves from another group. This desire for separation can be influenced by factors such as ethnic pride, religion, and political autonomy [Unseth, 2005: 24]. We believe that the Protestant Bru-Van Kieu community might choose the Bible's script for religious reasons, perhaps to distance themselves from non-Protestant Bru-Van Kieu people.

Thirdly, factors related to broader-scale development can also influence script choice [Unseth, 2005: 27]. This is a practical factor. For example, in Vietnam, some non-Protestant Hmong people choose to learn the international Hmong script due to its practical advantages [Nguyen Van Hiep, 2023c]. The ecosystem of international Hmong script publications (films, songs with subtitles, social media, and Google Translate) leads many Hmong people to choose it for personal and community development rather than emotional, spiritual, or political reasons. They simply want to learn the international Hmong script to enhance their knowledge, expand interactions, develop businesses, and for entertainment. Unseth (2005) suggests that the availability of printing technology can influence script choice based on interaction needs with other groups.

For the two types of Bru-Van Kieu scripts in Vietnam, the availability of printing technology is not clearly reflected, as the improved Bru-Van Kieu script is mainly printed in teaching materials with



limited distribution for certification classes. The Bible's Bru-Van Kieu script is prevalent among the Protestant Bru-Van Kieu community. However, due to Ministry of Home Affairs policies allowing ethnic minority languages in civil service exams, some people choose the improved script.

Fourthly, a community might choose a script based on its linguistic features. That is, they evaluate whether a script accurately represents the vowels, consonants, and tones of their language [Unseth, 2005: 28]. Although the Bru-Van Kieu community members are not linguists, they have native intuition. According to Ho Xuan Long, despite improvements, the revised script is not more widely known than the American-developed script in the Bible. Unfortunately, there is a lack of extensive academic research comparing the features of the American and Vietnamese Bru-Van Kieu scripts. This situation also reflects a script conflict in a less serious matter, seen in some ethnic minorities in Vietnam with multiple scripts, such as the Hmong, Co Tu, Raglai, Cham, and Thai [Nguyen Van Hiep, 2023a, 2023b, 2024b].

## 5. Conclusion

The findings from the survey on language use and attitudes among the Bru-Van Kieu community lead to several important conclusions:

First, the level of bilingualism (Bru-Van Kieu -Vietnamese) within the Bru-Van Kieu community is notably high. A majority of Bru-Van Kieu individuals demonstrate proficiency in both their native language and Vietnamese, utilizing both languages in their daily interactions.

Second, the data reveals a strong degree of linguistic loyalty among the Bru-Van Kieu people in Da Krong. Nevertheless, the increasing tendency among Bru-Van Kieu families to exclusively communicate in Vietnamese with their children presents a significant risk. Without timely and appropriate policy interventions, there is a foreseeable threat to the preservation of the Bru-Van Kieu language, which may face potential decline in the near future.

Third, the efficacy of teaching the Bru-Van Kieu language is compromised by the existence of two separate writing systems. To enhance the effectiveness of language education and ensure the preservation of the Bru-Van Kieu language, it is imperative to develop a unified writing system for the community.

The conclusions outlined above also serve as recommendations for language policy makers in Vietnam.

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Для цитирования: *Ван Хьен Нгуен* Социолингвистический анализ языка и письменности Бру-ван Кью: использование и установки говорящих // Социолингвистика. 2024. № 4 (20). С. 9–27. DOI:10.37892/2713-2951-420-9-27

For citation: *Nguyen Van Hiep* Sociolinguistic analyses of the Bru-van Kieu language and script: usage and speakers' attitudes // Sociolinguistics. 2024. No. 4 (20). Pp. 9–27. (In Russ.) DOI:10.37892/2713-2951-4-20-9-27

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

The article was submitted 18.06.2024;  
approved after reviewing 23.10.2024;  
accepted for publication 07.12.2024.