INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PRESERVATION A CASE STUDY IN THE MALAYU CHAM LANGUAGES IN VIETNAM

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Summary: Every ethnic group's language is established and developed for a long time in the historical process. Language is a unique symbol of nation, it is also a cultural identity and cultural heritage aims to transfer the experiences and knowledge through ethnic generations. Indigenous languages conservation issues in the world have been becoming knock the alarm when there have about 2,500 languages in approximate 6,900 languages which are being used around in the world. They are in endangered of disappearing (UNESCO, 2010). India is currently the top of the list of countries in the world where they have many endangered languages when most of 196 endangered languages are counted in this country. In Vietnam, there are 54 different ethnic languages, which are established and developed throughout the history. Some of them are well-developed and formal language, such as Vietnamese language, and some are minority languages which have been used in the community to become minority languages.

Cham language is the indigenous language in Vietnam but now it becomes only one of the minority languages. However, in the history, the Cham writing was appeared on stone stele such as Dong Yen Chau, Tra Kieu in the fourth century. It was considered as the first language in this region that wrote on the stone. It affirmed that the Cham people used it to express the ideas and communicate daily for a long time. Due to many reasons and influenced by history, Cham population are now just over 100 thousand people, therefore the Cham language is facing endangered and they are at risk of deformation for various reasons.

This paper aims to introduce some specific features of information technology in Cham language heritage conservation in Vietnam. Research for Cham writing conservation is conducted through electronic website to promote Champa royal documents such as electronic dictionaries, fonts and Cham keyboards, to store the voice of Cham language in the form of audio files, and to teach Cham language using multimedia tools.

Using information technology to preserve heritage language has been used in many countries and brings significant efficiencies. Information and technology help to store and transmit the information fast, wide and accurately. Using information technologies to preserve the Cham language heritage is not only theoretically significant but also has practical significance conservation of heritage languages of ethnic groups in the development process.

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