

Re: intrinsic advantage of Latin alphabet over bopomofo (for Chinese)??

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On Mar 6, 12:41 am, "Dylan Sung" <dylanwhs.tsktsk...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

There is a slight advantage the Vietnamese have over Chinese Mandarin. If you compare the phonemes of Mandarin putonghua to Vietnamese, Vietnamese has a richer set of vowels, and endings compared to Mandarin. The standard Vietnamese language is transcribed to distinguish 6 tones. All in all, there are far greater numbers of distinguishable syllables in Vietnamese than there are in Mandarin. The success of quoc ngu may be because their language is rich in phonemes that Mandarin doesn't possess.

That's my experience, too. I've always heard people saying Chinese is monosyllabic, but that's just not very true. Vietnamese is so much more monosyllabic than Chinese, relatively speaking.

Another fact that helps Vietnamese is: it is a more colloquial language than Mandarin, with less baggage from written literature.

As for Vietnamese writing, I still don't like it much. Human parsing is hard. Graphical pattern correlations interfere with semantic correlations. The current solution is an OK solution, but I guess in theory there could be something better. See, in English you have all the prefixes/suffixes/conjugations that help to identify the grammatical function of a word and thus help to speed up reading, even just the length of a word helps to establish correlations. In Chinese you have other graphical elements. Japanese has three types of characters that strongly help to establish correlations. In written Vietnamese you have very little of these extra graphical devices (capitalization of the very first letter of proper nouns being one.) Tone categories are important correlations but they are assigned smaller graphical elements. Word boundaries are not obvious. All in all, Vietnamese is perhaps the language most difficult to parse and read efficiently, in my opinion. Especially when you get into non-colloquial text. All current Vietnamese input methods are cumbersome, too, by the way.

In short, I would not describe Vietnamese alphabetization as a success

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story. Bahasa, maybe. But not Vietnamese.

-- Ekki

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