

What type of (H)mong will our descendants learn?

By Dr. Chô LY

Ph.D. of Linguistics, Assistant Lecturer
CRILLASH, University of French Guiana, France

This paper will discuss the (H)mong language issue. The author has led field researches about (H)mong as it is spoken by (H)mong teenagers in the four main countries where (H)mong have fled: Australia, French Guiana, France and the United States. The results show some French (H)mong almost incapable of speaking their mother tongue and some American (H)mong who mix (H)mong and English in a language they call “*(H)monglish*” while linguists call it an important code-switching. The same phenomenon but at a lower level was observed in Australia. Only French Guianese (H)mong seemed to have maintained a certain quality in their speech. The author will not present these results because he has already presented them several times at other conferences. He will refer to those results and data collected from field observations to propose a reflection on the future of the (H)mong language. French (H)mong are close to abandoning their original language and the other (H)mong of the Diaspora are following the same path. Everywhere the author has conducted his field research, (H)mong parents have confessed their fear of their kids not being able to speak their language anymore in a few decades. Beyond this language dilemma is another major problem that the (H)mong will have to face in the next decade: the loss of identity. Finally, a solution to preserve the (H)mong language will be briefly proposed.