Phonological variations and changes due to language contact: a case study of consonants in four Kuai-Kui (Suai) dialects[*]

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Abstract

Phonological variations and changes in the four modern Kuai-Kui dialects spoken in different linguistic settings are different. Ban Sangkae Kui, which has been in contact with the other Kui groups and Khmer has retained almost all of the Proto-Kuai consonants. Ban Chomphra Kui, which has been in contact with the other Kui groups and Khmer then Lao and Thai have finals -c, -ɲ, and -r with two variants, i.e., [-c]~[-k], [-ɲ]~[-n], and [-r]~[-l]. Ban Samrong Kuai which has been in contact with Lao has lost initial r- and finals -c, -ɲ, and -r. Ban Phonphueng, which has been in contact with the other Kuai groups and Lao, which was originally Kuai, has retained initial r- with two variants [r-]~[l-], but has lost finals -c, -ɲ, and -r. These variations and change phenomena indicate the influences of other languages spoken in the same area.

1. Introduction

Kuai-Kui, which is generally called "Suai" by outsiders, is a language in the West Katuic branch of the Mon-Khmer language family. (Thomas and Headley 1970, Diffloth 1989, Smith 1981, Theraphan 2001 in Thai). Kuai-Kui is a register language with two lexically contrastive phonation types, clear voice versus breathy voice. The Kuai-Kui language has two dialects, i.e. Kuai and Kui.

Languages spoken in the same geographical area are likely to share typological features, even though they may be related only remotely or not at all (Lehiste 1988:59). Two languages are considered being in contact if they are used alternately by the same speakers. (Weinreich 1953:1). In contact situations, elements can be transferred from one language to another. Linguistic borrowings, areal linguistics, etc., are examples of language contact

phenomena (McMahon 1994:200). Since Kuai-Kui has been in contact with Khmer, Lao and Thai spoken in the same area for a long period of time and Kuai-Kui people are mostly bilingual or multilingual, this has undoubtedly led to linguistic variation and then change in Kuai-Kui.

The author has noticed that Kuai or Kui spoken in different speech communities have different phonological systems, especially consonants. The dialects spoken in the area close to Lao communities seem to have fewer consonants than those spoken in the area close to Khmer communities or other Kuai-Kui communities. Some consonants which exist in some dialects have been lost in the others. This phenomenon seems to suggest the idea that language contact can be a cause of consonant variation and change.

2. Theoretical background

According to Labov's theory (Labov 1986:535 cited in Theraphan 1997:153), language change is a continuous process and an inevitable by-product of linguistic interaction, which it depends upon for the entire sociolinguistic structure of the whole speech community. Gradual nondistinctive changes can make the leap into a new distinctive category. He also indicates that new sound changes are emerging and old ones proceeding to completion at a rapid rate in all of the speech communities that have been studied. Linguistic change is an inherent factor of natural language.

Campbell (1976) divides the causes of change into two major categories, the internal and external causes. The internal factors are physical explanations (e.g. speech organs), psychological explanations (e.g. perception and learnability) and "naturalness". The external factors are social and stylistic variations, expressive and communicative needs, positive and negative social evaluation, linguistic play, literacy and mass communication, political decree, size and complexity of the speech community, remedial innovation (e.g. avoidance of homophony) and language contact.

Linguistic changes which are motivated by external factors are termed "contact-induced changes."

Language contact is a term used to apply to situations where two or more groups of speakers who do not have a native language in common are in social contact with one another or come into such contact. Communication between the groups may be difficult in the short term, and may in the long term lead to the different languages influencing one another, as a result of bilingualism on the part of (some of) the speakers involved (Trudgill 1992:45).

Linguistic borrowings, areal linguistics, language shift, etc., are examples of language contact phenomena. The heterogenous life situations of a speech community usually lead to bi- and multi-lingualism (Lehiste 1988).

McMahon (1994:224) in her conclusion of language contact points out that linguistic contact may be modified by social factors, thus, languages roughly equal in prestige are likely to show mutual influence, while a less prestigious language is more likely to borrow from a more prestigious one than vice versa.

In this paper the consonant variations and changes in four dialects of Kuai-Kui are illustrated. These spontaneous variations and changes are influenced by the phonetic and phonological features of Khmer, Lao and Thai, the prestige languages spoken nearby.

3. Methodology

Phonological changes from Proto-Kuai (PK) reconstructed by Preecha (2003) to four modern Kuai-Kui dialects, and phonological variations in each dialect, were investigated. These four dialects are Ban Sangkae Kui (SK), Ban Chomphra Kui (CP), Ban Samrong Kuai (SR) and Ban Phonphueng Kuai (PP). They are spoken in different speech communities.

Ban Sangkae is a small village which is very close to the other Kui groups and also close to Khmer communities. Ban Chomphra is now an urban community. Ban Samrong is a large village which is very close to Lao communities. These three villages are in Thailand. The other dialect is spoken in Ban Phonphueng a small village which is in Laos. This village is close to other Kuai and Lao communities.

To do a systematic investigation into the nature of phonological variations, twelve informants (16-80 years old) of each dialect were asked to say some selected words in both citation form and connected speech. Variations in real-situation conversation were also observed. The author intended to investigate consonant variation in each dialect in general with no attempt to quantify the results as sociolinguists normally do. Therefore, data on many variables and their variants were collected, analyzed and presented in this paper.

4. Geographical settings

Ban Sangkae is in Srikhorapum district, Surin province. The village comprises 65 households with a population of about 385. From Surin city to Srikhorapum city and from Srikhorapum city to Ban Sangae, it takes about 2 hours by car. The neighboring villages are Ban Tael to the north, Ban Nongku to the east, Ban Ta-kuk to the west and Ban Khwau to the south. Ban Tael and Ban Nongkhu are Kui-speaking villages, whereas Ban Ta-kuk and Ban Khwau are Khmer speaking villages.

Ban Chomphra is in Chomphra district, Surin province. The village is divided into 2 sections, an urban area or a market place and a rural area. The rural area which was studied in this research comprises 120 households with a population of about 580. From Surin city to Chomphra, it takes about 30 minutes by car. The neighboring villages are Ban Krathum to the north, Ban Nongkhorn to the east, Ban Nonklang to the west and Ban Bueng to the south. Ban Krathum, Ban Nonklang and Ban Nongkhu are Kui-speaking villages, whereas Ban Bueng is a Khmer-speaking village.

Ban Samrong is in Chomphra district, Surin province. The village comprises 275 households with a population of about 1,380. From Surin city to Ban Samrong, it takes about 45 minutes by car. The neighboring villages are Ban Sanit to the north, Ban Nongkap to the east, Ban Nongbau to the west and Ban Kharm to the south. Ban Sanit, Ban Nongbau and Ban Nongkap are Lao-speaking villages, whereas Ban Kharm is a Kui- speaking village.

Ban Phonphueng is in Sukhuma district, Champasak province of The People's Democratic Republic of Laos (Lao PDR). The village comprises 60 households with a population of about 420. From Pakse the capital city of Champasak province to Ban Phonphueng, it takes about 3-4 hours by car. In rainy season, travelling by boat along the Khong river is more convenient, but it takes a longer time, about 5-6 hours, to reach Ban Ponphueng. The neighboring villages of Ban Phonphueng are Ban Maung to the north, Ban Sukhuma to the east, Ban Bok to the west and Ban Talu to the south. Ban Maung, Ban Bok and Ban Talu are Kuai-speaking villages whereas Sukhuma, which was originally a Kuai village, has become Lao and intergrated with the Lao way of life recently.

5. Language situations

SK people usually speak Kui at home. They are also fluent in Thai, especially the younger generations. Thai is used for official purposes and also with outsiders. However, some adults can also speak Khmer and occasionally use Khmer when they are involved with Khmer people.

CP was a very big Kui community, surrounded by other Kui and Khmer villages. In the last 3-4 decades, as the main roads were constructed through the village to many destinations, a lot of people from different places migrated to CP. This caused Chomphra to become an urban area. In the 1960s, Chomphra was designated a district (amphur) of Surin province. A lot of Thai government officials together with their families were sent to work in the new district. As a result, Ban Chomphra has become a multilingual community. Since CP people have been in contact with different ethnic groups (Thai, Lao and Khmer) some Kui adults can speak not only Kui but also Lao and Khmer. Everybody in the village can speak Thai, which is the official and national language. Nowadays younger generations use both Kui and Thai at home. Thai

seems to be the most prestigious language. It is used at school and also for official purposes and when interacting with outsiders.

SR is a bilingual community. People are fluent in both Kuai and Lao. They use these two languages at home and among members of the same ethnic group outside the villages when they meet in town or big cities. Only Lao is used for daily activities that involve outsiders. Thai is used at school and for official purposes. The historical and geographical settings of Samrong Kuai and Lao indicate that these two ethnic groups have been in continuous contact with each other (Preecha 1988:45). For a long time Lao seems to be the more prestigious. Very few Lao people can speak Kuai. On the contary, Kuai people are eager to learn and speak Lao.

PP is a bilingual community. People are fluent in both Lao and Kuai. They use these two languages at home and also among themselves. When interacting with outsiders only Lao is used. Lao is the national language and also an official language of Lao PDR so Lao is the prestige language for Kuai people.

The summary of language situations in SK, CP, SR and PP are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Language situations in SK, CP, SR and PP.

villages / situations	SK	CP	SR	PP
at home	Kui	Kui and Thai	Kuai and Lao	Kuai and Lao
to outsiders	Thai Khmer	Thai Lao Khmer	Lao	Lao
official purposes	Thai	Thai	Thai	Lao

6. Proto-Kuai consonants

According to the phonological reconstruction by Preecha (2004), Proto Kuai (PK) is a register language. It has two sets of vowels, clear vs. breathy vowels, and 18 consonants all of which can occur initially, and 14 of which can occur finally. There are 8 initial clusters. PK consonant system is as follows:

Initial consonants

*p-	*t-	*c-	*k-	*ʔ-
*b-	*d-	*ɟ -		
*m-	*n-	*ɲ -	*ŋ-	
	*l-			
*w-	*r-	*j-		
	*s-		*h-	

Consonant clusters

*pl- *pr- *bl- *br- *tr- *cr- *kl- *kr-

Final consonants

*-p *-t *-c *-k *-ʔ *-m *-n *-ɲ *-ŋ *-w *-l *-r *-j *-h

7. Consonant change from PK to modern Kuai-Kui

The consonant changes from PK to modern Kuai-Kui which indicate the influence of language contact are as follows:

Initial consonants

Nearly all initial consonants in PK have been retained in the four modern Kuai-Kui dialects except *ɟ- and *-r.

*ɟ- remains ɟ- (voiced palatal stop) in SK, but has become j- (voiced palatal approximant) in the other three dialects. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP[2]	
*ɟɛ:ŋ	ɟɛ:ŋ	jɛ:ŋ	jɛ:ŋ	jɛ:ŋ	'gold'
*ɟɯ:ŋ	ɟɯ:ŋ	jɯ:ŋ	jɯ:ŋ	jɯ:ŋ	'foot'

*r- remains r- (voiced lingual trill) in SK, CP and PP, and has become l- (voiced lateral approximant) in SR.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*ʔərɛh	rɛh	rɛh	ʔəlɛh	rɛh	'plant root'
*ʔəraj	ʔəraj	ʔəraj	ʔəlaj	raj	'rattan'

Consonant clusters

*pl- *bl- *kl- *tr- have been retained in all four dialects. See examples below.

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[2]Breathy vowels in PK have become clear vowels in PP.

*cr- has become tr- in SK and CP, and has become tr- or kl- in SR and PP. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*crɛh	trɛh	trɛh	klɛh	klɛh	'oxide'
*kəɲcrɛːŋ	ntrɛːɲ	ntrɛːŋ	ŋklɛːŋ	ntrɛːŋ	'a fishing tool'
*ɲcruəh	truːh	truːh	ntruəh	truəh	'to pound rice'

*pr- and *kr- remain pr- and kr- in SK and CP. They have become pl- and kl- in SR. In PP, *pr- remains pr-, or has become pl-; and *kr- remains kr- See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*prak	praʔ	praʔ	plaʔ	plaʔ	'money'
*priət	priːt	priːt	pliət	priət	'banana'
*kraj	kraːj	kraj	klaj	kraj	'correct'

*br- remains br- in SK and CP, but has become bl- in SR and PP. See example below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*bruː	bru̞ː	bru̞ː	blu̞ː	bluː	'mountain'

kw- in SR and PP derives from the reduction of *kə.w-. See example below.

PK	SK	CS	SR	PP	
*kəwa̱ːl	kəwi̠əl	kəwi̠əl	kwa̱ːl	kwa̱ːl	'to raise cattle'

sr- in PP derives from the reduction of *sə.r-. See example below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*sərɛː	sɛː	sɛː	sæː	srɛː	'rice field'

Final consonants

*-p, *-t, *-ʔ, *-m, *-n, *-l, *-w, *-j remain -p, -t, -ʔ -m, -n, -l, -w, -j in all dialects.

*-c remains -c in SK and CP, but has become -ʔ after front vowels and -jʔ elsewhere in SR. In PP it has become -t. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*səmuːc	səmoːc	səmoːc	səmuːjʔ	səmuːt	'ant'
*pic	pec	pec	peʔ	pit	'to dig'

*-k has become -ʔ in all dialects. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*sok	sɔʔ	sɔʔ	sɒʔ	sɔʔ	'hair'
*ləʔɔːk	ləʔɒːʔ	ləʔɔʔ	ləʔɒʔ	ləʔɔːʔ	'unclear'

*-ɲ remains -ɲ in SK and CP, but has become -n in SR and PP. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*ɲhuːn	huːn	ɲhoːn	ŋhuːn	huːn	'to smell'
*kəsaɲ	kəsaɲ	kəsaɲ	kəsan	kəsan	'snake'

*-ŋ remains -ŋ in all dialects, except in SK it has become -ɲ after front vowels and remains -ŋ elswhere. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*kɛːŋ	kɛːɲ	kɛːŋ	kɛːŋ	kɛːŋ	'elbow'
*ʔətaŋ	ʔətaŋ	ʔətaŋ	ʔətaŋ	ʔətaŋ	'bitter'

*-r remains -r in SK and CP, but has become -l in SR and PP. See examples below.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP	
*kətoːr	kətɔːr	kətɔːr	kətɔːl	kətɔːl	'ear'
*məntoːr	ntɒːr	ntɔːr	ntɒːl	mətɔːl	'star'

The initial and final consonant changes from PK to the four modern Kuai-Kui dialects can be summarized and illustrated as in Table 2.

Table 2. Consonant changes from Proto-Kuai to the four modern Kuai-Kui dialects.

PK	SK	CP	SR	PP
*ɟ-	ɟ-		ɟ-	
*r-	r-		l-	r-
*pr-	pr-		pl-	pr-/ pl-
*br-	br-		bl-	
*cr-	tr-		tr-/ kl-	
*kr-	kr-		kl-	kr- / kl-
*kə.w-	kə.w-		kw-	
*sə.r-		s-		sr-
*-c	-c		-ʔ after front vowels -jʔ elsewhere	-t
*-k		-ʔ		
*-ʔ				
*-ɲ	-ɲ		-n	
*-ŋ	-ɲ after front vowels -ŋ elsewhere		-ŋ	
*-r	-r		-l	

8.   Consonant variation in four modern Kuai-Kui dialects

8.1 Ban Sangkae Kui (SK)

8.1.1 SK consonant inventory

SK has 22 consonants, 18 of which derived from PK. The other four consonants, which are the aspirated stops *ph, th, ch, kh,* are found in loan words from Thai, Lao or Khmer. All of the 22 consonants can occur initially.

Initial consonants

p	t	c	k	ʔ
ph	th	ch	kh	
b	d	ɟ		
m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
w	l	r	j	
s				h

Consonant clusters
          The 11 consonant clusters which can occur in initial position have stops (p-, ph-, t-, b-, k-, kh-, k-) as the first element of the clusters and liquids (-l- or -r-) as the second elements. The clusters derived from PK are: *pr-, pl-, br-, bl-, tr-, kr-, kl-* and the other 4 clusters: *phr-, phl-, khr-* and *khl-* are found only in loan words.

Final consonants
          There are 14 final consonants, 13 of which derived from final consonants in PK, except *-k* which is found only in loan words. Final consonants in SK are : *-p, -t, -c, -k, -ʔ, -m, -n, -ɲ, -ŋ, -w, -l, -r, -j, -h.*

8.1.2 Consonant variation in SK

          The following consonant variations show the contact-induced variations in SK.

          The voiced palatal stop *ɟ-* has two variants [ɟ-] and [j-]. The older speakers (especially the oldest one who is about 80 years old) prefer [ɟ-] to [j-], while the others tend to use [j-] more often. Example:

(ɟ -)   *[ɟ-   ~   j-]*
                                   ɟɯɯːŋ   jɯɯːŋ   'foot'

          The only consonant cluster which varies in SK is *tr-*. The variable (tr-) has three variants: [tr-], [kr-] and [r-] which vary when occurring before different types of vowels. Before clear vowels, two variants [tr- ~ kr-] are

found, but before breathy vowels all three variants [tr- ~ kr- ~ r-] are found as follows:

(tr-) + V	[tr- ~	kr-]	
	tri:ʔ	kri:ʔ	'buffalo'
(tr-) + V̬	[tr- ~	kr- ~	r-]
	ntrṳːj	ŋkrṳːj	nrṳːj 'chicken'

The only final consonant which varies in SK is *-h*. Varying only in syllables having long vowels, the (-h) variable has two variants. In citation form, [-h] still exists but in connected speech [-h] is omitted, consequently, closed syllables have become open ones. See examples below.

(-h)	[-h ~	-ɸ]	
	kla:h	kla:	'comb'
	tənɔːh	tənɔː	'mouth'

8.2 Ban Chomphra Kui (CP)

8.2.1 CP Consonant inventory

CP has 21 consonants, all of which are identical to SK consonants, except *ɟ* which occurs in SK, but never does in CP.

8.2.2 Consonant variation in CP

The only cluster which varies in PP is *tr-*. The variable [tr-] has three variants: [tr-], [kr-] and [r-]. The occurrences of these variants are the same as the ones of (tr-) in SK (see the occurrence of each variant in SK in 8.1.2).

The 4 final consonants which vary are: *-c, -ɲ, -r* and *-h*. The conditions of variation are as follows:

(-c) has two variants: voiceless palatal stop [-c] and voiceless velar stop [-k]. After front vowels, [-c] varies with [-k], but after central and back vowels, only the variant [-c] occurs.

(-c) + front vowels	[-c ~	-k]	
	pec ~	pek	'to dig'
	bic ~	bik	'to sleep'
(-c) + elsewhere	[-c]		
	ləɲhac		'to whisper'
	kac		'to harvest'

(-ɲ) has three variants [-ɲ], [-j] and [-n]. The older speakers always use [-ɲ], while the younger ones use [-n]. Occasionally, [-j] occurs after back vowels in some words. See examples below.

(-ɲ)   [-ɲ   ~   -n]
                        mlaɲ   mlan   'fish net'
                        [-ɲ   ~   -j]
                        ŋkhruːɲ   ŋkhruːj   'termite'

        (-r) has two variants, [-r] and [-l]. See examples below.
(-r)   [-r   ~   -l]
                        piːr   piːl   'flower'
                        huːr   huːl   'sweat'

        (-h) has two variants [-h] and [-ɸ]. The occurrence of these two variants is the same as (-h) in SK. See examples in 8.1.2.

8.3 Ban Samrong Kuai (SR)

8.3.1 SR Consonant inventory

        SR has 20 consonants, 18 of which derive from PK. The PK consonants which have been lost in SR are *ɟ- and *r-. The additional four aspirated stops *ph, th, ch, kh* can be found only in loan words from Thai, Lao or Khmer. All of the 20 consonants can occur initially.

                        Initial consonants
                        p   t   c   k   ʔ
                        ph   th   ch   kh
                        b   d
                        m   n   ɲ   ŋ
                        w   l   j
                                            h

                        Consonant clusters
        There are six initial clusters *pl-, bl-, tr-, kl-, khl-* and *kw-*.

                        Final consonants
        There are 11 final consonants and one final cluster: *-p, -t, -k, -ʔ,*
-m, -n, -ŋ, -w, -l, -j, -h and *-jʔ*.

8.3.2 Consonant variation in SR

        The consonant clusters which vary in SK are *pl-, bl-, kl-* and *tr-*. Each of the four variables has two variants as shown below.

(pl-)		[pl- ~	p-]	
		pliət	piət	'banana'
(bl-)		[bl- ~	b-]	
		blɛ:ŋ	bɛ:ŋ	'arm'
(tr-)		[tr- ~	t-]	
		triə? ~	tiə?	'buffalo'
(kl-)		[kl- ~	k-]	
		klaj	kaj	'correct'

Two final consonants in SR which vary are -*l* and -*h*.

(-l) has two variants, [-l] and [-n].

| (-l) | | [-l ~ | -n] | |
| | | təpal ~ | təpan | 'motar' |

(-h) has two variants, [-h] and [-ɸ]. The occurrence of these two variants is the same as (-h) in SK. See examples in 8.1.2.

8.4 Ban Phonphueng Kuai (PP)

8.4.1 PP Consonant inventory

PP has 20 consonants all of which can occur initially as shown below.

Initial consonants

p	t	c	k	?
ph	th		kh	
b	d			
m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
w	l r-	j		
	s		h	

Consonant clusters
There are 8 initial clusters: *pl-, pr-, bl-, tr-, kl-, kr-, kw-* and *sr-*.

Final consonants
The eleven final consonants are : *-p, -t, -k, -?, -m, -n, -ŋ, -w, -l, -j* and *-h*.

8.4.2 Consonant variation in PP

The initial consonant *r-* has two variants, [r-] and [l-]. The older speakers usually use [r-], while the younger speakers prefer [l-].

The consonant clusters which vary in PP are *pl- pr- bl- kl- kr- tr-* and *sr-*. Each variable has 2 variants as shown below;

(pl-)	[pl-]	~	[p-]	
	plaj		paj	'fruit'
(kl-)	[kl-]	~	[k-]	
	klɔːŋ		kɔːŋ	'excrement'
(pr-)	[pr-]	~	[pl-]	
	priət		pliət	'banana'
(bl-)	[bl-]	~	[b-]	
	bluː		buː	'mountain'
(tr-)	[tr-]	~	[c-]	
	triə?		ciə?	'buffalo'
(sr-)	[sr]	~	[s-]	
	sru?		su?	'village'
(kr-)	[kr-]	~	[kl-]	
	kraːw		klaːw	'villager'

Two final consonants which vary in PP are *-l* and *-h*.

(-l) has two variants; [-l] and [-n]. See examples below.

(-l)	[l	~	-n]	
	kədɛːl	~	kədɛːn	'husband'
	keːl	~	keːn	'play'

(-h) has two variants [-h] and [-ɸ]. The occurrence of these two variants is the same as (-h) in SK. See examples in 8.1.2.

8.5 Comparison of consonant variations in the four Kuai-Kui dialects.

Initial consonants

The voiced palatal stop *ɟ-* which has been retained only in SK has two variants [ɟ-] and [j-]. The occurrence of [ɟ-] is very rare. Only the oldest 80 year-old informant used this variant.

The trill *r-* which occurs in SK CP, and PP has been lost in SR. In SK and CP, *r-* does not vary, but in PP it varies with [l-].

Consonant clusters

In SR the variants [pl-], [bl-], [tr-] and [kl-] vary with the variants in which the second elements *-r-* and *-l-* are deleted, i.e., [p-], [b-], [t-] and [k-] respectively. In PP, there is a variation between [pr-] and [pl-], as well as [kr-] and [kl-]. There is also a variation between [pl-] and [p-], [bl-] and [b-], [kl-] and [k-].

The cluster *tr-* varies differently in all four dialects. In SK and CP, it is conditioned by clear and breathy vowels. Before clear vowels [tr-] varies with [kr-]. Before breathy vowels, the variants are [tr-], [kr-], and [r-]. In SR, it varies the same way as other clusters that are [tr-] and [t-]. But in PP, there is a variation between [tr-] and [c-].

The cluster *sr-* occurs only in PP. It has two variants [sr-] and [s-].

Final consonants
The finals *-c, -ɲ* and *-r* have been lost in SR and PP, but have been retained in SK and CP. In SK, these final consonants have no variants, while in CP these final consonants contain two or three variants each. The final (-c) has two variants, [-c] and [-k], the final (-ɲ) has three variants, [-ɲ], [-n] and [-j] and the final (-r) has two variants, [-r] and [-l].

The final *-l* does not vary in SK and CP, but varies between two variants [-l] and [-n] in SR and PP.

The final *-h* varies in long syllables with two variants [-h] and [-ɸ] in all dialects.

A comparison of consonant variation in the four dialects is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of consonant variants in the four modern Kuai-Kui dialects.

variables	Variants			
	SK	CP	SR	PP
ɟ -	ɟ- ~ j-		---	
r-	r-		---	r- ~ l-
pl-	pl-		pl- ~ p-	
pr-	pr-		---	pr- ~ pl-
bl-	bl-		bl-~ b-	
tr- before V tr- before V̬	tr- ~ kr- tr- ~ kr- ~ r-		tr- ~ t-	tr- ~ c-
sr-	---			sr- ~ s-
kl-	kl-		kl- ~ k-	
kr-	kr-		---	kr- ~ kl-
-c after front vowels -c elsewhere	-c	-c ~ -k -c	---	
-ɲ	-ɲ	-ɲ ~ -j ~ -n	---	
-r	-r	-r ~ -l	---	
-l	-l		-l ~ -n	
-h	-h ~ -ɸ			

9. Contact-induced change and variation

SK has retained all PK consonants, due to two main reasons, i.e., the geographical setting that SK is surrounded by other Kui and Khmer communities, and the use of Kui in their everyday lives.

Because of the geographical setting surrounding Kui and Khmer communities, and both the older and younger generations usually use Kui in their daily lives, SK has retained all PK consonants.

Both Kui and Khmer are Mon-Khmer languages, therefore, the consonant systems of these two languages are very similar. Khmer spoken in Surin (KS) has 21 consonants (Prakorb 1987), while SK has 22 initial consonants. The 21 consonants which are identical are *p- t- c- k- ʔ- ph- th- ch- kh- b- d- m- n- ɲ- ŋ- l- w- r- j- s-* and *h-*. The only consonant which occurs in SK but not in Khmer is *ɟ-*.

The variation of *ɟ-* between [ɟ-] and [j-] and the aspirated stops *ph- th- ch- kh-* which occur in SK, and also in the other Kuai-Kui dialects, are mostly found in loan words from Khmer and Thai. This indicates the influence of Khmer and Thai on Kuai-Kui.

CP
Regarding the variations occurring on final consonants -c, -ɲ, -r and -h each has two variants; (-c) [-c ~ -k], (-ɲ) [-ɲ ~ -n], (-r) [-r ~ -l], and (-h) [-h ~ Ø].

For the last 3-4 decades, CP has become a multilingual community. The speakers, especially younger generations, use both Thai and Kui in their daily lives. Actually, they seem to prefer Thai to Kui. Since Thai does not have -c, -ɲ, and -h in final position, the original finals in Kui, i.e., -c, -ɲ, and -h have been replaced by the variants -k, -n and [Ø], respectively. This may be regarded as a case of the contact-induction by the influence of Thai.

SR
The speakers of SR have been in contact with the Lao (Northeastern Thai) for a long period of time. Kuai people feel that Lao is more prestigious than Kuai, which is their own native language. Phonologically, Lao does not have initial *r-* and finals -c -r -ɲ -l -h. Moreover, there are no consonant clusters in Lao (Preecha 1988).

This fact seems to encourage a gradual change in SR. The following consonant changes from PK to SR : *r- > l-, *pr- > pl-, *br- > bl-, *kr- > kl-, *-c > -jʔ / -ʔ, *-r > -l, *-ɲ > -n and the following variations, i.e., (pl-) [pl- ~ p-], (bl-) [bl- ~ b-], (tr-) [tr- ~ t-] (kl-) [kl- ~ k-], (-l) [-l ~ -n], (-h) [-h ~ ɸ], which in a later stage may become p-, b-, t-, k-, -n and ɸ respectively, are presumably contact- induced by the influence of Lao. See detail in Table 4.

Table 4. Consonant changes from PK to SR, variation in SR and comparison of SR and Lao consonants.

PK	SR	Lao
*r- ⟶ l-		l-
*pr- ⟶ pl- > [pl- ~ p-] *pl-		p-
*br- ⟶ bl- > [bl- ~ b-] *bl-		b-
*tr- ⟶ tr- > [tr- ~ t-]		t-
*kr- ⟶ kl- > [kl- ~ k-] *kl-		k-
*-c ⟶ -jʔ *-ʔ ⟶ -ʔ		-jʔ[3] -ʔ
*-n ⟶ -n *-ɲ		-n
*-r ⟶ -l > [-l ~ -n]		-n
*-h ⟶ -h > [-h ~ -ɸ]		ɸ

PP

Since SR is surrounded by Lao while PP is surrounded by Kuai, PP has retained *r- as an initial consonant, as well as the second element of the four clusters; *pr-, tr-, kr-* and *sr-*. In PP, the PK consonants which have been changed are *br- > bl-, *-c > -t, *-r > -l,* and *-ɲ > -n.* The consonants which vary in PP are (r-) [r- ~ l-], (pl-) [pl- ~ p-], (pr-) [pr- ~ pl-], (bl-) [bl- ~ b-], (tr-) [tr- ~ c-], (sr-) [sr- ~ s-], (kl-) [kl- ~ k-], (kr-) [kr- ~ kl-] (-l) [-l ~ -n], and (-h) [-h ~ ɸ].

The change and variation of *r* either in the initial position, final position or when being the second element of the cluster indicate a strong influence of Lao on Kuai, because Lao does not have *r* in any position.

The variation of clusters which normally have two variants, cluster (Stop + *-r-* or *-l-*), and a single initial consonant (stop without *-r-* or *-l-*) is also a Lao influence. Since Lao has no clusters, the variant which is a single consonant causes PP phonology to be very close to that of Lao.

10. Conclusion

Due to language contact with different surrounding languages, Kuai-Kui cannot avoid variation and change.

SK, located among the other Kui and Khmer groups, has retained all PK consonants.

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[3]The final *-jʔ* in Lao is phonologically *-j* accompanied by the glottalized tone / [31]/.

Phonologically, Thai has initial *r-* but Lao does not. Thai has initial clusters but Lao has none. Neither Thai nor Lao has finals *-c, -ɲ, -r, -l* and *-h.* The influence of Lao, with which SR has long been in contact, caused the loss of initial *r-* and finals *-c, -ɲ, -r,* while the initial clusters including finals *-l* and *-h* are in the stage of variation.

The influence of Thai on CP which started within the past 3-4 decades caused the variation of the finals *-c, -ɲ, -r, -h,* but not of the initial *r-* and initial clusters. These consonants have not changed or varied in CP.

Even though PP is surrounded by Kuai communities in Lao PDR, Lao, which is the national language, is used as the medium of instruction in schools at all levels and also for formal and official purposes. As a result, PP has lost the finals *-c, -ɲ* and *-r,* while the initial *r-,* initial clusters, and the finals *-l, -h* are in the stage of variation.

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