The phenomenon of monosyllabization in the Kiengiang dialect of Khmer

Thach Ngoc Minh University of HCMcity

1. Introduce

Besides Cambodia , the country which uses Khmer as a national language , Khmer is spoken by a large population in Thailand and Vietnam . In Vietnam , Khmer is the language of more than six hundred thousand native Khmer people living in provinces in the Mekong delta such as Travinh , Vinhlong , Soctrang , Angiang , Kiengiang , Minhhai and along the Vietnam - Cambodia border (see appendix 1) . After a long process of interaction with various ethno- linguistic groups , especially the Kinh people and Chinese , The Khmer in this area of Vietnam has undergone a number of changes in pronunciation . One of the most clear changes is , especially in the Kiengiang dialect , the phenomenon of monosyllabization . This is also a common phenomenon for other polysyllabic languages in South East Asia . It is suggested that the phenomenon of monosyllabization in the Kiengiang dialect of Khmer came about as the result of the following conditions :

- 1.1. After a long ongoing process of interaction with the Kinh people and Chinese, various inevitable contacts occured. One of these contacts is linguistic contact with tonal language such as Vietnamese. This contact is an important factor in the phenomenon of monosyllabization in the Kiengiang dialect. This phenomenon occured more quickly than in other Khmer dialects such as the Khmer dialect in Cambodia.
- 1.2. The second condition is the principle of "least effort "in pronunciation. This is a common principle for the polysyllabic languages in the Southeast Asian area. This principle has had different influences on each language. We assume that this principle has strongly influenced the phenomenon of monosyllabization of Kiengiang dialect. It speeds up the occurance of phonetic changes faster.
- 1.3. The third condition is the necessity of improving the means of communication in order to suit to the social development

This phenomenon has led to a number of results. One of them is the gradual fasing out of polysyllabic words which are being replaced by monosyllabic words in the linguistic system. Now the word and the phoneme have become the same. The occurrence of words which contrast in pitch in the Khmer dialect of Kiengiang is also a result of this phenomenon. Monosyllabization has different influences on the language. For example, for Chamic language it is tone, for Khmer language it is pitch. There are more and more words which contrast by pitch in the Kiengiang dialect. The Kiengiang dialect has been chosen for this study because it displays these changes the most clearly as compared with other dialects such as Travinh.

Angiang ... Furthermore , data that we have collected shows that the changes in the Kiengiang dialect are representative for all Khmer dialects in Vietnam . For example , in the Travinh dialect , there are many more initial consonant clusters . Of these clusters , the nasal cluster is pronounced more clearly than in the Kiengiang dialect . There are not many words which contrast by pitch . But in the Kiengiang dialect , the initial consonant clusters are decreasing . Nasal consonants of the initial consonant clusters are pronounced slightly ; There are more and more words that contrast in pitch .The reason why the Kiengiang dialect has a lot of changes is because of the following distinct conditions : Kiengiang is an area where the Khmer people and the Kinh have interacted for a long time . They have many close relations with each other . Moreover , Kiengiang is also an area where transportation is very difficult . Therefore , the Khmer people in Kiengiang have less relationship with the other Khmer groups . These difficulties probably are important reasons create number of changes in the Kiengiang dialect . In this paper , we will consider the following changes :

- A. The phenomenon of monosyllabization.
- B . The reduction of trill initial consonant clusters of the main syllable in the pattern C1C2VC3 . In this pattern , C2 is a trill ed / r / .
- C. The shift from trill consonant / r / to fricative glottal $/ h / (R \ge H)$
- D. The occurrence of pitch in the dialect of Kiengiang Khmer (the languistic data shows contrast by pitch as a result of the phonetic changes in the Kiengiang dialect)
- 1.4. Characteristic of Khmer consonants consists of 21 initial consonants, there are four aspirate consonants. All can occur as initial consonants and 12 as final consonants (based on Khmer in Kiengiang). The final consonants will be indicated by the bold and italic characters in the table below.

	bilabial	Alveolar	palatal	velar	Glottal
Stops vl	P	t	C	k	?
asp	ph	th	ch	kh	
vd	b	d			
Fricatives		S			h
Nasals	m	n	p	n	
Lateral		l	J	3	
Trill		r			
Semi-vowels	w		y		

Among these initial consonants, initial aspirative consonants are different from Khmer in Cambodia. In Cambodian Khmer, there are no initial aspirated consonants. The aspirated consonants are pronounced clearly in areas such as Travinh, Minhhai, Vinhlong and they contrast with the unaspirated stops. But these consonants have been pronounced slightly in Kiengiang and Soctrang dialect. It is suggested that aspirated consonants are changing to unaspirated consonants.

- 1.5. Data collection . In order to prepare this study , we have had to collect from the field . A list of 1360 words have been used for this research . However , not all of the words have been used in this study . The subjects were from Kiengiang province . We also have collected data in other provinces such as Travinh , Vinhlong , Minhhai in order to compare with the Kiengiang dialect . The subjects vary in age , sex and education . They have lived in the area since they were born and they use Khmer in their daily life . All of them are fluent native speakers in these dialects , while only some others are literate in Khmer . The subjects were asked to pronounce each word in the wordlist . The data that we collected shows the phenomenon of monosyllabization has taken place for young people . It seems that the phonetic changes have taken place more significantly in the language of people who are under 30 years old .
- 1.6. The dialect of Khmer in Vietnam has not been studied by many languists . This research contains only the first steps in studying this dialect . Therefore , it is probably that there are some instances of mis-analysis . There are still many interesting matters that have not been researched . We hope that these matters will be studied in the future . The term "standard" that is used in this paper refers to modern Khmer orthography which is generally considered the base for standard pronunciation of Khmer . The standard pronunciation here refers to the variety of Khmer that is taught in school and spoken by educated Khmer especially in their careful speech . Comparision between modern Khmer orthography and standard Khmer pronunciation as presented in the Khmer Viet dictionary of Hoang Hoc (1979) .

2. Phenomenon of monosyllabization.

- 2.1. Syllabic pattern: There are two kinds of syllables: Pre-syllable and mainsyllable. In the dialect of Khmer in Vietnam, main syllable consists of four elements: initial consonant medial vowel final consonant. The full syllable pattern will be C (C1C2) SVC3. A Presyllable consists of three factors: initial consonants vowel final consonant. The full syllabic pattern will be: C'(C'1C'2)V'C3. There are two kinds of presyllables. These are open presyllables and closed presyllables. The final consonant of a closed pre-syllable is one of four nasal consonants / m / , / n / , / p / , / η /. The presyllable usually deos not display the complete pattern. Nowadays, there are only a few people who pronounce the full presyllable. Most of the presyllables now only contain one or two factors. Therefore, monosyllabization is an active and common phenomenon in the Khmer dialect in Vietnam, especially for young people. There are a number of initial consonant clusters as the result of this process. The phonemes of consonant clusters combine with each other according to the following rules:
 - 2.1.a. In the pattern C1C2SVC3, the voiced consonants do not occur in the C1 position; In the C1 position, a fricative voiced consonant does not combine with other consonants.

- 2.1.b. In the C1 position, nasal consonants combine with only other consonants that have the same place of articulation.
- 2.1.c. There are not more two elements in an initial consonant clusters of a main syllable. There are some consonant clusters which consist of three elements. These are the nasal consonant clusters. Nowadays, the nasal consonants have been reduced and it probably will be reduced completely in the syllable, but the meaning will not change. This phenomenon can be seen very clearly in Kiengiang dialect

The process of monosyllabization takes place according to the three main following tendencies:

- 2.2. The first tendency: Initial nasal consonant clusters of main syllable. These is the result of monosyllabization. In the Khmer language, there are number of presyllables having final nasal consonants. In the process of monosyllabization, initial consonants and main vowels are reduced. The final nasal consonants combine with the initial consonants of the main syllable that have the same place of articulation. It creates initial nasal consonant clusters. This phenomenon takes place variety in the dialects. The data that we collected showed that this phenomenon took place according to three main following tendencies:
- 2.2.1. The nasal consonant clusters consist of three elements . Appearance of these consonant clusters has broken the rule that a consonant cluster can only have two elements . The syllable pattern must be C(C1C2C3)SVC4 . In this pattern , C1 is nasal consonant , C3 is trill consonant . However , the nasal consonants are only recognized when they are pronounced very clearly , slowly and carefully . We assume that reduction of nasal consonants is a phenpmenon more suited to the pronunciation of Khmer dialect in Vietnam , especially in the Kiengiang dialect . Therefore , the full pattern of a main syllable will be C1C2SVC3 . We hypothesize a three-stages change as follows :

standard

1
2
3
cincra:m
ncra:m
?cra:m
cra:m
rea:m
?kra:n
kra:n
kitchen
2.2.2. The nasal consonant clusters consist of two elements . In the pattern
C1C2SVC3, C1 is a nasal consonant and C2 are consonants which have the same
place of articulation . This process takes place according to the two following

2.2.2.1. final nasal of pre-syllable combines with initial consonant of main syllable which have the same place of articulation. This process takes place as in the following examples (for more example, see appendix 3)

standard KG dialect gloss thumphia mphia to sew bomthup nthup room

tendencies:

canche:n nche:n to invite

However, nasal consonants are reduced and may not be pronounced, especially for young people and the people who are illliterate.

2.2.2.2. Nasal consonants are reduced completely. In this case, the syllable

and the phoneme are the same. We hypothesized a three stage change as follows:

standard Khmer	Kiengang Dialect			gloss
	1	2	3	
angkhi	ngkhi	?khi	khi	to sit
bancok	ncok	?cok	cok	rice noodle
cinchum	ncwm	?cwm	cwm	to feed

This phenomenon can be seen very clearly in Kiengiang dialect, but it is not clear in the other dialects such as Travinh, Vinhlong. We assume that these dialects are in the second stage of this process.

- 2.2.3. There are some common rules of change for the nasal consonant clusters in the polysyllable language of the area. Among them, the most common rule is the phenomenon of simplification of nasal consonant clusters. The complex nasal consonant clusters will change to more simple nasal consonant. For example, changes from nasal consonant clusters of Proto Viet-Muong to nasal consonants having the same place of articulation (N.K Xokolovxkaia 1979). (*). This rule has been influences on the Khmer dialect in Vietnam. This phenomenon took place in the dialect of Khmer in Vietnam in the following way. In the pattern C1C2VC3, C1 can be a labial nasal / m / or an alveolar nasal / n /; C2 are voiced stop consonants having the same place of articulation as C1. In the process of monosyllabization, C2 was reduced. Initial consonant of syllable now is a nasal consonant. This phenomenon is very common in the Kiengiang and Soctrang dialects, but not common in the other dialects. This is a reasonable thing because wheter nasal exists or not in these dialects, reflects a different stage of the process of monosyllabization. The data that we collected showed that the Travinh dialect has changed noticeably and in the future will probably be the same as Kiengiang dialect. There are three stages in this process (see appendix 4)
 - 2.2.3.1. first stage: the final consonant of the pre-syllable combines with initial consonant of the main syllable. The result of this process is initial nasal consonant clusters in the pattern C1C2VC3. In this pattern, C1 can be labial or alveolar nasal consonants, C2 are voiced stop consonants.
 - 2.2.3.2.second stage: Voiced stop consonants are reduced. Glottal stop occurs before labial and alveolar nasal. At this stage, C1 is a glottal stop; C2 can be labial or Alveolar nasal.
 - 2.2.3.3. Third stage: The glottal stop are reduced. Initial consonant of syllable are nasal consonants plus falling pitch. At this stage the syllable and phoneme are the same. This process takes place as follows:

Standard Khmer KG dialect Gloss

	1st stage	2nd stage	3rd stage	
and Et	nde:t	?n€#	n e #	float
andia	ndia	?nia	nia	white ant
kambit	mbit	?bit	mit	knife
ambil	mbil	?bil	mil	salt

Monosyllabization will take place as in 2.2.2.1 if the initial consonant of the main syllable is not a voiced stop consonant.

2.3. The second tendency: The reduction of the trill in the consonant clusters of the main syllable. In the Khmer language, there are a number of open pre syllable patterns that consist of a consonant or consonant cluster, a vowel nucleus. The full pattern will be C'1C'2V. C'1 includes most of the initial consonants; C'2 is a trill consonant. In the process of monosyllabization, C'2 and V' are reduced. C'1 combines with initial consonants of the main syllable. This is a phenomenon that is very common in all of Khmer dialects in Vietnam. This is also a difference in pronunciation between the Khmer in Vietnam and the Khmer in Cambodia (In the dialect of Khmer in Cambodia, this kind of pre-syllable is still pronounced clearly). This process will take place as follows: C'1C'2CVC1 C'1CVC1 (for more example see appendix 5)

standard Khmer	KG dialect	gloss
krodao	kdao	hot
srabak	sbak	a little time
prala:n	pla:n	to take an exar

In this case, the aspirative consonants have changed into unaspirative consonants. Nowadays, it is difficult to find consonant clusters of pre-syllables such as pr, kr, cr, sr, khr, ... in the dialect of Khmer in Vietnam. This phenomenon has increased the number of possible consonant clusters in the main syllable. We hypothesize that this process in Khmer in Vietnam take place faster than the Khmer in Cambodia because of contact with the Vietnamese language, a monosyllabic and tonal language.

2.4. The third tendency: Pre-syllable are reduced completely . A vowel / a / occurs before the main syllable as a new pre-syllable . This new pre-syllable are usually / 1 / or a vowel / a /). This phenomenon takes place only when the initial consonant of the pre-syllable is |trill|/|r|/| and aspirated velar stop /|kh|/|, (see appendix 8 |). For example :

standard Khmer	KG dialect	gloss
khokhi:	akhi:	one kind of tree
rolo:k	alo:k	waves
rola:t	alo:t	to scratched
robo;t	l a bo:t	to slip

3. Phenomenon of reduced trill consonant, In the Khmer language, there are a number of consonant clusters of main syllable type where the second element is a trill. Through a long process of contact with monosyllable and tonal language such

as Kinh, the trill has been reduced. There is only the fist element plus falling pitch. This phenomenon has created pairs of words which have the same segmental. These words only contrast with each other in pitch. The words with falling pitch are a result of reduced trill in the consonant cluster. It is suggested that language contact has influenced this phenomenon strongly in Khmer dialect in Vietnam. This phenomenon can be found in most of dialects of Khmer in Vietnam. In this paper, symbol (\(^{\delta}\)) is use to show syllables with falling pitch. (For more examples, see appendix 2)

Standard	KG dialect	Gloss
kra:	kà:	poor
krao	kào	out of
sre:	s è :	paddy field
cra:t	cà:t	stick

4. The R > H shift in the dialect Khmer of Kiengiang . This is a characteristic in Kiengiang dialect. It also occurs in the neighbouring dialect such as Soctrang dialect and Minhhai dialect. This shift happens when initial consonant of the main syllable is a trill. This phenomenon does not happen in consonant cluster. This also create a number of pairs of words which contrast in pitch. Some examples below show this phenomenon. (For more examples, see appendix 6)

standard	KG	gloss
riən	hiən	to learn
ra:p	hà:p	to count
ri:k	hì:k	to blossom
ra:m	hà:m	to dance

5. About the occurrence of pitch in dialect of Khmer in Vietnam

This is a new matter in Khmer phonology and it has not been studied very much. In this paper, we aim to bring these matters to the attention of other linguistics. Further study is needed. However, the data that we collected proves that monosyllabization process, reduction of trilled of initial consonant clusters and the $R^>$ H shift have influenced the occurrence of pitch in the dialect of Khmer in Vietnam. This has been proved by pairs of words having the same segmental which only contrast by pitch as example below. In this paper, the symbol () have been used for the word haved falling pitch. (For more examples, see appendix 7)

Gloss	1st group	2nd group	gloss
neck	ka:	kra: > ka:	poor
earring	kao	krao> kao	outside
dare	hian	rian > hi à n	to learn

6. conclusion

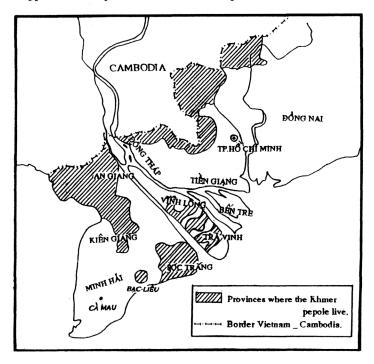
This study reflects major phonetic changes in the Kiengiang dialect of Khmer when compared to orthography. These changes are a common phenomenon in Khmer language in Vietnam especially in the Kiengiang dialect of Khmer.

Monosyllabization is a common occurance in all of the dialects of Khmer in Vietnam . This phenomenon creates a number of initial consonant clusters and more and more monosyllabic words . The words which have the same segmental are contrasted by pitch increasingly . It is suggested that language contact has strongly influenced these phonetic changes in the dialect of Khmer in Vietnam . The principle of "least effort" speeds up these changes . The study of this phenomenon has yet to be concluded . Therefore , further study are needed .

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Appendix 1. Map of number of Khmer speakers in Vietnam



Appendix 2

Standard KG dialect Gloss ka: kra: poor kà:p kra:p cover cà:n cra:n to push kà:l kra:1 to spread out kàh krah comb kw:m krw.m micropodus

kru:ng ku:ng city
kru:m ku:m group
kro:c ko:c orange

kruac kuac one kind of bird kruah kuah gravel krið:p kið:p rice paper

kriə:p kið:p rice paper kriəm kiðm dry

kriðw kiðw to castrate kre:ŋ kè:ŋ thought

kro:k kô:k stand up , get up

ko:m under kro:m kò:y kro:y behind kho:p khro:p to cover khu:p enough khru:p khra:n khra:n to be well off khà:p seed khra:p khù: teacher khru: ca:k gate cà:t stick

cra:k cra:t càh crah brush cà:n сга:п push cò:t cro:t to harvest сè:п much, many crə:n cà:m cra:m to chop up ciàn crian to sing cho:k chro:k to hide chtin chrwn bat

chru:n chu:n corner
chru:k chu:k peak
chre: chè: affternoon

clean streath ahead tomato to picle chest to lean to stand silve intelligent five talk to salted to use boy, male oil to compare to traslate dry season to agree morning pigeon bake fortune to touch rive budha border to agree to drop to pick up to shout bee bird alcohol light girl district

chrah	chah
trann	tàn
tra:p	tà:p
tra:m	tà:m
thru:ŋ	ւհ մ։դ
thre:t	the:t
thra:m	tha:m
prak	pak
pra:c	pà:c
pra:m	pà:m
pra:p	pa:p
pra:y	pà:y
prə:	е́q
proh	pòh
pre:n	pè:ŋ
priəp	piðp p€:
pr € :	p è :
pran	pan
phro:m	phŏ:m
phrwk	phwk
phri ∂ p	phi à p
phruh	phùh
phre:ŋ	phe:n
phrec	phèc
p hr&k	phèc phèk
phrah	phah
phru:m	phù:m
phro:m	pho:m
srak	sàk
sran	sàn
sr E :k	s ž :k
sran	san sa:t
sra:t	
sra:	sà:
sra:l	sà:1
sr^:y	s^:y
srok	sok

Appendix 3*

Standard KG dialect Gloss kamthec mthec ash bambe:k mbε:k to divide kampo:y mpo:y top tuft of hair kamphwh mphwh small shrimp kamphu:n mphu:q preent tense top

kamphu:l mphu:1

kamphe:m mphe:m one kind of insect

ntic

nthup

ntha:t

ntha:p

ntho:

nlE:

nphon

mphil

mphe:

kambi:t mbi:t canka: ŋka: **ŋk∧**h cank Ah ŋko:t canko:t cankian gkiðq grit cannit pcw:m ci:pcw:m ci:pc @:m bc9:m ci:pcian pci∂n banchu:n nchu:n pcra:m ci:pcram chapchan pchaq nle:n

?anle:n damna:p mm:p thomphok mphok banha:n gha:p ban?a:p д?а:р bancok ncok

bantha:t bantha:p bantho: banle: bamphon bamphil bamphe:

bantic

banthup

knife chin chopstick wheel light cricket to feed eversbrows

ring to take sb to to chop up wall earthworm

hook to guide to flirt rice noodle a little room rules cotinuete

sticky rice

to blow of steam

vegetable pile to spoile to rock

^{*}nasal consonants are pronouned very slightly

to establish nkð:t bank at to fell one's teeth onedge ŋkiə sankiə fog sansə:m m:çan to save money sansa:m nsa:m ŋka: ?aŋka: пісе ŋka:m rice husk ?anka:m nche:n to invite ?anche:n banla: nla: thorn to remind nlωk romlwk place nl£:n kanle:n mla:k to drop thomla:k bamboo shoot thomphan mphan mphia to chew thomphia to prostrate samphah mphah hankerchief kans€:n ns€:ŋ nka:ŋ shrimp

banka:n nka thonthw:n nth phno:mphe:p mp ?anrw:n nru

nthw:n to look forward
mphe:n capital of Cambodia
nrw:n hammock

Apper	dix 4

Standard		KG dialect		Gloss
	1st stage	2nd stage	3rd stage	
sande:k	nd£:k	?n€:k	n≥:k	bean
?and∂:k	ndə:k	?nə̀:k	nà:k	tor
dand w ŋ	ndwŋ	?ուս:դ	nw்:டி to pro	pose marriage
dandə:m	ndə:m	?nə:m	m:én	to dispute
?and&:t	nd€:t	?n`E:t	n€:t	float
sando:k	ndo:k	?no:k	nò:k	to stretch
band a :	ndə:	?nə:	:6n	to lead
sanda:p	nda:p	?na:p	nà:p young	rice plants
canda:t	nda:t	?nà:t	nà:t	tongue
cando:n	ndo:n	?no:n	nò:ŋ	well
ande:n	nd€:n	?n€:n	n€:µ one k	ind of fish
kandia	ndi ə	?niə di	6in	white ant
kanda:l	nda:l	?na:l	na:l	in the middle
dcnda:m	nda:m	?na:m	nà:m	to cook
?ambi:l	mbi:l	?miːl	mì:l	salt
samb ə :ŋ	mb ə :q	?m∂:ŋ	т э :4	straw
pra:mbuan	mbuan	?muan	muan	nine
sambok	mbok	?mok	môk	bird nest

Appendix 5

Standard KG dialect

Gloss

kdah paper krodah buffalo krab∧y kb∧y crocodie kphe: krapha: kmu:m young girl kramu:m hot kroda kda krala: kla: jar kla:p overturn krala:p k?o:p kra?o:p bulky crake:n craka:n cke:n cka:n

crane:n cne:n cba:l craba:1 cba:c craba:c cramoh cmoh crala:m cla:m tbak trabak pkah prakah pka:n praka:n pla:ц prala:n prochan pchan pchu:m

producting producting procham procham procham procham procham promap producting producting producting producting procham processis producting processing p

sremok smok sremo:c smo:c proca:n proca:n

srabak

sbak

jar
overturn
sweetsmell
bulky
envy
to mix
massage
nose
mistake
to snap
to inform
to forbear
to take exam
to struggle
meeting
in a hurry

in a hurry
to teach
bile
in law
dirty
spirit
quiet
a moment
to snore
ant
be jealous

Appendix 6		
Standard	KG dialect	Gloss
ro:k	ho:k	to look for
riə n	hi ð n	to learn
ra:m	ha:m	to dance
ru:n	hù:ŋ	cave
ran	han	to stop sb
rah	hàh	to shine
run	hùŋ	to push
rat	hat	to run
ra:p	hà:p	to count
re:k	he:k	to shoulder
n∈	hièn	shape
ri ∂ p	hi∂p	to tidy up

to grope for

bacteria

to cover

hiðw ri**ə**w hi:k ri:k to blossom hi:n hw:n hit huac ri:ŋ shallow ւտ:մ hard rit to tighten ruac to be able to hò:y ro:y hundred

hò:m ro:m to gather together hòh roh to live hù:m

hò:k

ro:k

ru:m

Appendix 7					
Gloss	Standard		KG dia		Gloss
neck	ka:	kr a:	>	ka:	poor
to follow	ta:m	tra:m	>	tà:m	to
pickle					
money	kah	krah	>	kah	thick
bird	sa:t	sra:t	>	sà:t	to take off
caring	ka:w	kra:w	>	kà:w	out, outside
when	ka:l	kra:l	>	kà:l	to pread out
to burried	ka:p	ka:p	>	kà:p	cover
a pair	khu:	khru:	>	khù:	taecher
wrong	khoh	khroh	>	khòh	accident
dare	hi∂n	nein	>	neid	to learn
whistle	huac	ruac	>	huac	to be able to
to tear off	h€:k	re:k	>	hè:k	to shoulder
bull frog	hi:ŋ	ri:n	> 1	hi:ŋ	shallow
to hold	ka:n	cankr	a:n >	ka:n	kitchen
to curled	kuac	kruac	>	kuac	kind of bird
brain	khua	khrua	>	khua	family
bowl	ca:n	cra:n	>	cà:n	to push
wait for	ca:m	cra:m	>	ca:m	to chop up
hair	sak	srok	>	sak	to drop
party	pak	prak	>	pak	silve
to be fine	sok	srok	>	sõk	district

^{*}Falling pitch in this paper will be use in () symbol