

Syntactic characteristics of Kasong: An endangered language of Thailand¹

SUNEE Kamnuansin
Mahidol University

1. Background information

Kasong is a Mon-Khmer language of the Pearic subgroup spoken in Borai district, Trat province of Thailand. This language and speakers have been known by the name Chong (of Trat). In previous documents Kasong is mistaken to be the same language as Chong, which has numerous speakers in Chanthaburi province. The earliest source on this language is the short vocabulary (about 275 words) collected by Nai Noe Isarangura in 1935. This was apparently elicited from Kasong villagers at Ban Danchumphon². Isarangura's article is used by Martin (1974) and Headley (1985) in the classification of Pearic dialects as Chong of Trat. Later in 1996 Kunwadee wrote an M.A. thesis in Thai on Kasong language (with her understanding of the Chong language). Her study provides us the phonological system and a rough structure of the language. Up to now knowledge about the Kasong people and their language was limited and imprecise with only a few documents published.

During a Field Methods course in linguistics in late 1998, I had an opportunity to study this language from a native speaker who came from Khlong Saeng village. At that time some Chong speakers from Chanthaburi province and a Samre speaker from Trat province also came in order to teach their ethnic languages to other linguistic students. That was the first time I learnt from my informant that her language was 'Kasong', different from Chong. She could not understand Chong spoken by Chong speakers from Chanthaburi. She could recognize only some words which are the same in her language. This distinction from the speaker's point of view encouraged me to explore the language in detail. Initially, I compared a number of Kasong words

¹Originally presented at the 8th International Conference on Thai Studies, Ramkhamhaeng University, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, January 8-12, 2002. I would like to thank Dr. Suwilai Premsrirat for encouraging me to write this paper and for various helpful comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank Dr. David Thomas for helpful English editing.

²Ban Danchumphon at that time had not been subdivided into Ban Khlong Saeng and other villages yet.

collected by myself with Chong words from various studies (see Table 1). There are both differences and similarity in vocabulary between Kasong (Chong of Trat) and Chong of Chanthaburi spoken in various communities as shown in the examples of Table 1.

Table 1. A lexical comparison between Kasong (Chong of Trat) and Chong spoken in Chanthaburi (R = Register)

Meaning	Kasong (my data)	Chong			
		Takhian Thong (Surekha, 1982)	Thung Ta-In (Sirikarn, 1987)	Nam Khun (Saifon, 1991)	KhlongPhlu (Siripen, 2001)
'mother'	mij	mee ^{R3}	mee ^{R3}	mee ^{R3}	mee ^{R3}
'sleep'	the:k	phic ^{R3}	pic ^{R3}	pic ^{R3}	p ^h ic ^{R3}
'he/she'	nak	dak ^{R1}	dak ^{R1}	dak ^{R1}	dak ^{R1}
'mouth'	ran:ŋ	pakaa ^{R1}	pa ^{R1} kaa ^{R1}	kaa ^{R1}	kəka: ^{R1}
'field'	ma:l	baaj ^{R1}	baaj ^{R1}	baaj ^{R1}	ba:j ^{R1}
'rice'	klɔŋ	plɔŋ ^{R1}	plɔŋ ^{R1}	plɔŋ ^{R1}	plɔŋ ^{R1}
'bite'	khát	tap ^{R1}	tap ^{R1}	tap ^{R1}	tap ^{R1}
'come'	jip	ceen ^{R1}	ceen ^{R1}	ʔeen ^{R1}	ce:n ^{R2}
'ride'	cíh	thəət ^{R3}	taat ^{R3}	təət ^{R3}	t ^h ɨ:t ^{R3}

It is also observed that the final consonant /-l/ and the cluster /sr-/ found in Kasong words do not occur in Chong phonological system recorded by Surekha (1982), Huffman (1985), Sirikarn (1987), Saifon (1991) and Siripen (2001).³

A grammatical difference is found in the position of the negative word as shown in the following examples. The negative in Chong occurs as a double negative in which the first negative element occurs before the verb and the second negative element occurs after the verb (in the final position of a clause) or only in the final position of a clause (Siripen, 2001) whereas in Kasong the negative word only appears before the verb.

Chong: c^han^{R1} (ʔi^{R1}) k^hah^{R1} dak^{R1} ʔih^{R1}
I (not) know he/she not
 'I don't know him/her.' (Siripen, 2001:30)

Kasong: chan kóh kháh nak
I not know he/she
 'I don't know him/her.'

³ According to Headley (1985), he sets Kasong (which is called Chong of Trat) and Chong of Chanthaburi apart from each other by phonological criteria based on treatments of Proto-Pearic forms: *-r/-l > -y~-w and *j- > c- in the case of Chong of Chanthaburi versus *-r/-l > -r/-l and *j- > s- in the case of Chong of Trat (Kasong). This proposition is also referred to by Isara Choosri (2002) in his thesis about Chong of Chanthaburi and of Trat (Kasong). However, Headley considers the language of Trat as a Chong dialect, not as a different language.

Judging from the lexicon, grammatical characteristics of the language and different autonyms, Kasong (Chong of Trat) and Chong spoken in Chanthaburi should therefore be considered different languages. However they are closely related. This idea was supported by Suwilai's recent article (2000) where she records Kasong as a language. Also, she mentions that Kasong is very close to Samre which is found in the same district. In Suwilai's report about Austroasiatic speaking groups in Thailand (2001) she also shows the relationship between Kasong and other Pearic languages as shown in Chart 1.

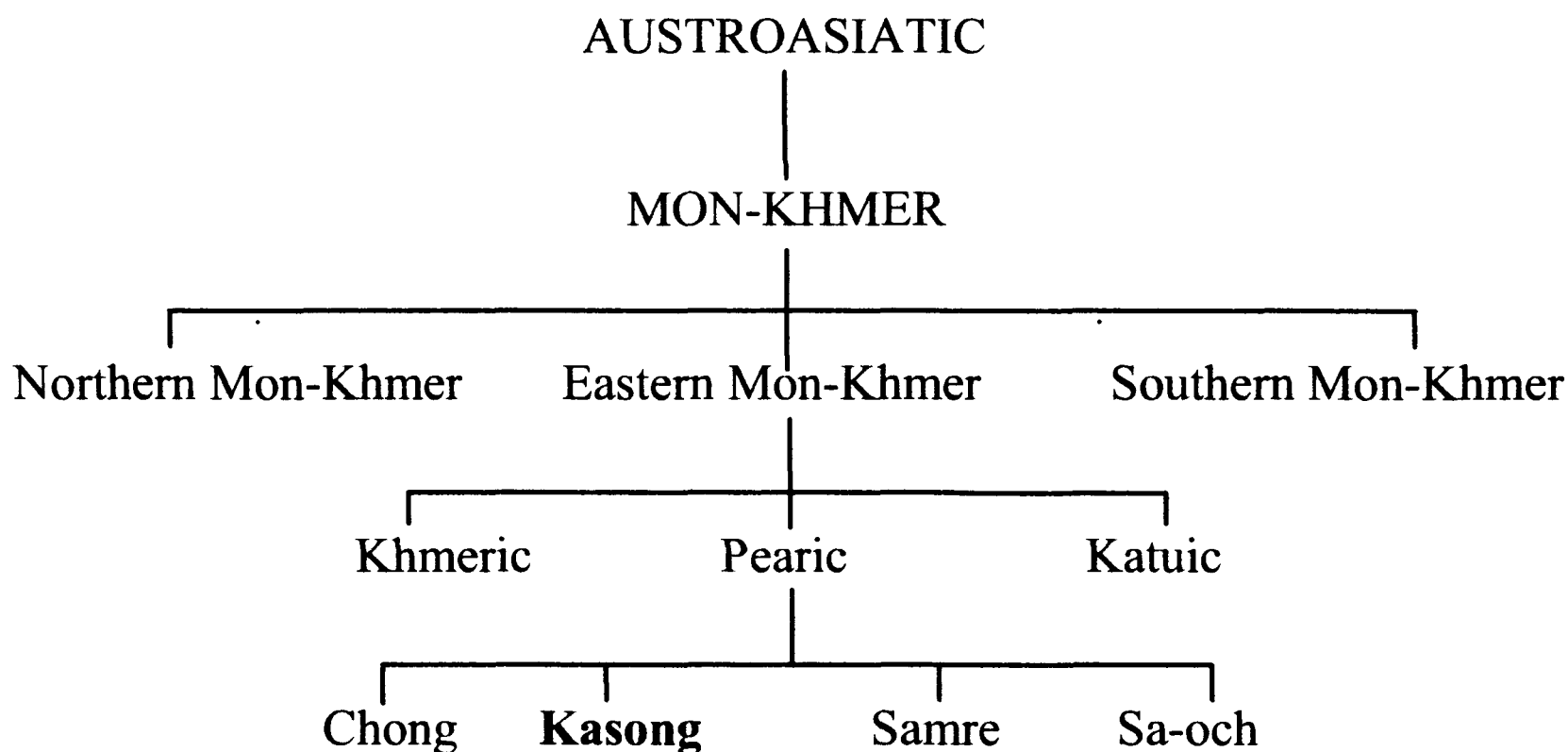


Chart 1. The relationship between Kasong and other Pearic languages found in Thailand (adapted from Suwilai (2001:4))

My first field trip to the Kasong area was in early 1999. A Kasong speaker who taught me her language in Field Methods in Linguistics class at Mahidol University took me to meet her group. I was informed by Mr. Thawin Ketthuk, a Klong Saeng village headman who is a Kasong descendant and others that now there are Kasong people living in Ban Khlong Saeng, Ban Padao, Ban Danchumphon and a few in Ban Thang Klang. However, from my survey there are not more than 50 Kasong people who still use their ethnic language. This shows that Kasong is in danger of extinction because of the low number of speakers. It is therefore urgent that we collect as much information as we can from these few survivors of this language community. I decided to do my thesis on Kasong syntax in order to provide a linguistic record for further work. The data used for analysis was focused on daily life communications and various kinds of text materials, such as folktales and procedural expositions based on field work during 1999-2001. This paper is derived from my thesis (Sunee, 2002). The syntactical features of Kasong language are summarized here. This description of syntax reveals language decay.

2. Social factors related to the decreasing use of the Kasong language

A small group of Kasong people (only a few hundred) today is surrounded by a majority of Thais. They are rather scattered far away from each other. Some of them live separately very far from their group, so that language interaction among them is seldom. The Kasong have close contact with Thai people and some have intermarried with the Thai (local), northeastern Thai, or Khmer. The children have compulsory Thai education in school. Mass media of television and radio which reaches all Kasong houses also influences their language use. Kasong speakers become bilingual in Thai, the language of wider communication which is an official language. Some former speakers have even abandoned their mother tongue to speak only Thai.

At present there are only one or two persons who are still able to speak Kasong in each family. Most of the remaining speakers are over 55 years old (Kasong is no longer used by all of the old people). Many Kasong speakers have already lost their mother tongue proficiency and are more fluent in Thai. Some are 'semi-speakers' who can talk basically in Kasong language with short sentences. Only 10-15 speakers still have a good ability in their language. The young cannot speak their ethnic language at all. They use only the Thai language in intra-group and inter-group communication. They refuse to learn the language from their parents because they want to be like the majority who speak Thai. Some gave the reason that the Kasong language does not have value in communication and it is shameful to speak this language. Some of my informants informed me that they were advised by former teachers not to speak the language with the children otherwise the children could not learn to speak and read Thai well. As a result, the language was not passed on from older to younger generations for a long time. Though nowadays the elder couples who are both Kasong still actively use their mother tongue with each other, they do not speak Kasong to their children. The speakers who married with a non-Kasong shift from the use of Kasong to speak Thai in the home. They will use the Kasong language when they meet other speakers in the village. Usually both Kasong and Thai are used among their group. However, most Kasong speakers use the Thai language more than their own ethnic language in daily communication.

Because Kasong is used mostly by the elderly, it is likely to become extinct in a few generations when the elder generation disappears. The Kasong language is now considered to be in a crucial situation of language endangerment. Suwilai (2000) classifies it in the group of languages which are severely endangered like Samre and Sa-och, languages in the same branch.

3. Kasong syntactic characteristics

The Kasong language clearly illustrates the influence of the Thai language especially in the use of the lexicon, phonological⁴ and syntactical features. At the same time, Kasong has lost a number of original characteristics which are found in other Mon-Khmer languages. In this section the syntactic construction is summarized, with a brief discussion of loanwords and traces of Mon-Khmer characteristics in this language.

3.1 Clause and sentence structures

Kasong has the SVO word order as in other Mon-Khmer languages. However, it is noticeable that the syntactic structures are very similar to those of Thai. The following examples show various clause patterns supplemented with examples.

S-V (Intransitive clause)	1. <i>mij the:k</i> <i>mother sleep</i> 'Mother is sleeping.'
S-V-O (Transitive clause)	2. <i>?ij h3:p kloŋ h3:j</i> <i>I eat rice already</i> 'I have already eaten rice.'
S-V-DO-IO (Bi-transitive clause)	3. <i>khu:ŋ ?ih kloŋ ch3:</i> <i>father give rice dog</i> 'Father gave rice to the dog.'
S-V-Location (Locative clause)	4. <i>toŋ nak kil lij n3:ŋ</i> <i>house he/she stay on mountain</i> 'His house is located on the mountain.'
(Motion clause)	5. <i>he:n p3p (kxaw pr3:)</i> <i>it run (enter forest)</i> 'It ran into the forest.'
S-V-O-Location (Propulsion clause)	6. <i>nak t3:k chan jip jak ?an</i> <i>he/she lead I come here</i> 'He leads me (to come) to here.'

⁴Kasong is in a transitional stage of becoming a tone language. The pitch contrasts (high, mid, low) are found as well as the voice quality contrasts (clear and breathy) from my data. In my study I decided that Kasong is a language with three tone contrasts: clear mid tone (it is unmarked in my phonemic transcription), clear high tone (there are two allotones of this type: high rising and high rising-falling; they are symbolized as \acute{v}) and breathy low tone (it is symbolized as \grave{v}). The complexity of the suprasegmental features in Kasong, which is not an issue in my study, still need a detailed study.

S-V-Explanation (Equational clause)	7. mù: hɛ:ŋ pen kasím kasò:ŋ <i>group we be person Kasong</i> 'We are Kasong people.'
S-V-"Speech" (Quotative clause)	8. nak sró:ŋ (líc) kóh ʔajpì: <i>he/she tell (that) not who</i> kil toŋ <i>stay house</i> 'She told (someone) that nobody was home.'
/ʔi:n/'have'-S-(V)-(O) (Existential clause)	9. ʔi:n srók mó:j ré: sruŋ <i>have pig one in sty</i> 'There is a pig in the sty.'
Passive form (marked with a marker /tò:n/)	10. ʔij tò:n mɪŋ tu: <i>I passive mk. mother hit</i> 'I was hit by my mother.'
Yes/No question (Marked with any yes/no question word)	11. pò: lɔ:ŋ ce:w mɔ:ŋ sa: hó: <i>you will go together ques. word</i> 'Will you go together?'
Content question (marked with any content question word)	12. pò: ce:w nǐ: jip <i>you go where come</i> 'Where did you go?'
Imperative (marked with a negative /má:j/)	13. má:j chá:p nah <i>don't catch fp.</i> 'Don't catch.'

Noun phrase Modifiers in a noun phrase normally follow the Head noun, (HN+Mod). A noun phrase may have one or more modifiers. Noun modifiers may interchange in their order but the inherent physical modifier normally comes before other modifiers.

samkhin mén ʔan
woman beautiful this
'this beautiful woman'

chó: caŋ tak pá: mo:l ten
dog black big two clf. that
'those two big black dogs'

However, it is noticeable that the use of /ki:/ 'demonstrative particle' has also been found before the head noun in narrative text though it usually follows the head noun. This reveals a vestige of former structure that has been modified to match the HN+Mod pattern.

ki: wa: (kɔ jip loŋ cha: khɔ:ŋ)
 monkey (then come down eat thing)
 ‘That monkey then came and ate something.’

lamɔ:ŋ
grandfather (address)
 ‘That old man dies.’

Verb phrase Verb phrases in Kasong consist of a main verb (MV) and optional modifiers (auxiliaries and adverbs) occurring before and after the main verb. The pre-verbal modifiers can be classified into three categories according to their positional occurrences away from the main verb, before or after the negative position (Neg). They are mainly Thai loanwords and used in the same way as in Thai.

PreV₃ preV₂ Neg preV₁ MV Neg postV

- Pre V₁ indicates mode. These are auxiliaries like /tɔ:ŋ/ ‘must’, /jɔ:m/ ‘allow’, /khə:j/ ‘used to’, /pé:/ ‘want to’, /ʔi:n/ ‘get, have an opportunity’, etc.
- Pre V₂ indicates intention and aspect. These are auxiliaries like /lɔ:ŋ/ ‘will’, /na:n/ ‘yet, still’, /than tɛ:/ ‘just’.
- Pre V₃ indicates state of existence. These are auxiliaries like /kamlaŋ/ ‘progressive action’, /ká:t/ ‘nearly, almost’.
- Post V indicates tense, ability and manner. These are auxiliaries or adverbs like /hó:j/ ‘already (past action)’, /ʔi:n/ ‘can, able’, /wíc/ ‘again’, /kò:j/ ‘slowly’, etc.

The two Negative positions are mutually exclusive in their occurrence. The negation word /kóh/ ‘not’ which occurs after the main verb is bound to the post-verbal modifiers.

Following are examples of verb phrases containing various modifiers functioning in the clauses.

1. nak kamlaŋ lɔ:ŋ ce:w pɿ:
 he/she progressive will go forest
 ‘He will be going to the forest.’

2. ʔij na:n kóh ʔi:n hu:m tɑ:k
 I yet not get bathe water
 ‘I have not bathed yet.’

3. khe:n nak lo:j tɑ:k kóh ʔi:n
 child he/she swim not can
 ‘Her child cannot swim.’

4. ʔij̄n l̄o:ŋ kóh t̄ò: ja:ŋ ten wíc
I will not do like that again
 ‘I will not do that anymore.’

Serial verbs occur in this language as they do in many languages of the region. There are a series of two or more verbs that occur together in a sequence and express several different activities. The sequences of serial verbs in Kasong are somewhat like those in Thai. Two or three verbs in series are common. For example:

5. khu:ŋ l̄o:ŋ ce:w thác se:
father will go cut rattan
 ‘Father will go to cut the rattan.’
6. nak ʔó:c khanam jip ʔih ʔij̄n
he/she take medicine come give I
 ‘He brought the medicine to give me.’

In connected speech, the order of clauses joined in various sentences is fixed. Two clauses or series of clauses whose meanings are related, are structurally joined by conjunctions or preverbal particles. The use of juxtaposition is common also in this language. There are a few Kasong conjunctions for linking diverse inter-clausal relationships like additive, temporal-sequential and cause-effect relationships. Some of them commonly found are /ʔi:n/ ‘then’, /m̄o:ŋ/ ‘and, because,’ and adverbial conjunction /j̄ðh/ ‘finish (after that)’. Apart from these, there is the common use of Thai loan conjunctions such as /thá:/ ‘if’, /t̄e:/ ‘but’, /pr̄ðh/ ‘because’, /h̄i:/ ‘or’ and so on, especially in the younger generation.

Examples of various sentence forms follow.

Conjunctive sentences

1. nak hó:c m̄o:ŋ si: khát
he/she die because snake bite
 ‘He died because of a snake bite.’ (causal)
2. ʔij̄n l̄o:ŋ ce:w thá: p̄ò: ce:w m̄o:ŋ
I will go if you go with
 ‘I will go if you go with me.’ (conditional)
3. nak thú: ʔi:n ce:w hu:m tà:k
he/she hot then go bathe water
 ‘He feels hot then he goes to take a bath.’ (correlative)
4. nak ʔa:n naŋsi: m̄o:ŋ hó:p ce:w m̄o:ŋ
he/she read book and eat go with
 ‘She reads the book and also eats (rice).’ (additive)

5. ʔiŋ hiw tɛ: kóh pé: cha:
I hungry but not want eat
 ‘I am hungry but I don’t want to eat.’ (contrastive)
6. hó:p kloŋ jòh ʔi:n cha: khanam
eat rice finish then eat medicine
 ‘When (you) finish eating, you then take medicine. (sequential)
7. khané:w ja:m pròh tò:n tu:
children cry because passive mk hit
 ‘A child cries because he was hit.’ (causal)

The Thai loan preverbal conjunction /kə~kó:/ is often used. It links the preceding clause and the clause it belongs to and indicates mainly a continuous action, like in Thai. It has been actively used either alone and together with the other connectors as /phə:...kə/ ‘when...then’, /jòh...kə/ ‘after...then’ and /kə lə:j/ ‘then’.

8. hó:p jòh he:n kə the:k
eat finish it then sleep
 ‘After it has eaten, it sleeps.’ (sequential)
9. phə: nak jip he:n kə ce:w
when he/she come it then go
 ‘As soon as he has arrived, it then goes.’ (sequential)
10. pò: kat the:k kə the:k ce:w
you to be sleepy then sleep go
 ‘If you are sleepy, then you sleep.’ (conditional sequence)

Kasong conjunctions are not in predominant use but the Thai loan conjunctions are commonly used. Only two original conjunctions /ʔi:n/ ‘then’ and /mə:ŋ/ ‘and, because,’ are still prominently retained.

Juxtaposed sentences

11. nak kóh jip ràp ʔiŋ kóh ce:w
he/she not come receive I not go
 ‘If he doesn’t come to receive me, I won’t go.’ (conditional)
12. nak jip kóh ʔi:n nak cap kat
he/she come not can he/she sick
 ‘He isn’t able to come because he is sick.’ (causal)
13. chan sri: nak nak kóh sró:ŋ
I ask he/she he/she not tell
 ‘I asked her but she didn’t tell.’ (contrastive)

14. ʔa:sí: nak ce:w rù:c ma:l ʔawan
yesterday *he* *go* *clear* *plantation* *today*
- nak ce:w wíc
he *go* *again*
- ‘Yesterday he went to clear the plantation and today he goes again.’ (additive)

Merged sentences

15. pùək nak cák kana:j ʔó:c plò:k
group *he/she* *shoot* *elephant* *take* *tusk*
- ‘They killed the elephant (by shooting) to get its tusks.’
 (purposeful)
16. mɨj khut lum cho:l pò:t
mother *dig* *hole* *plant* *corn*
- ‘Mother makes a hole to plant corn.’ (purposeful)

3.2 Thai loanwords in Kasong

There are a lot of Thai loanwords in this language. About 1,000 words from 2,500 basic words I have initially collected are Thai loanwords. Thai loanwords are in a wide range of semantic fields of basic vocabulary used in daily life, such as verbs of movement, verbs of feeling and emotion, instrument nouns, time words, classifiers, kinship terms and some pronouns. However, these Thai loans may be different and phonologically modified to the Kasong phonological system. The tones in Thai words usually do not appear when they are borrowed in Kasong. Some Thai loanwords are pronounced with the breathy voice quality. The final sound of some Thai loans is changed according to the Kasong final consonant system, as in /kata:l/ ‘plank’, /sa:c/ ‘splash, throw’ (/kada:n/ and /sà:t/ in Thai respectively).

Examples provided below are some basic words that are Thai loans.

chan	[c ^h an ³³²]	‘I’	ma:k	[ma:k ³³²]	‘betel’
pa:	[pa: ³³²]	‘aunt’	hiw	[hiw ³³²]	‘hungry’
ba:j	[ba:j ³³²]	‘afternoon’	liəŋ	[liəŋ ³³²]	‘to feed’
pàn	[pən ²¹]	‘thousand’	thu:	[t ^h u: ³³²]	‘to scrub’
laŋ	[laŋ ³³²]	‘classifier for house’	thi:	[t ^h i: ³³²]	‘to carry’
mù:	[mɨ: ²¹]	‘group’	jòk	[jɔk ²¹]	‘to lift’
tĩ:	[tɨ: ²¹]	‘area’	saj	[saj ³³²]	‘to put’
nà:	[nə: ²¹]	‘paddy field’	ràk	[rək ²¹]	‘to love’
niw	[niw ³³²]	‘finger’	ʔɔ:k	[ʔɔ:k ³³²]	‘to go out’
mò:	[mɔ: ²¹]	‘doctor’	loŋ	[loŋ ³³²]	‘down’

The equational verbs like /pen/ ‘to be’, /kla:j pen/ ‘to become’, /cì:/ ‘to name’ and the quantitative verb /la:khá:/ ‘to cost’ and /ʔa:jú:/ ‘to have age’ are all Thai loans. Some modifiers for quality are also borrowed from Thai,

such as /dok/ ‘fertile’, /ŋɔ:m/ ‘overripe’, /kɔ̀:j/ ‘slow’, /son/ ‘naughty’, /tron/ ‘straight’, /ba:n/ ‘bloom’, /pɛ̀:ŋ/ ‘expensive’, /puj/ ‘fluffy’, /chəh chəh/ ‘slushy’, /saʔa:t/ ‘clear’, etc. For examples:

1. **khe:n** **nak** **pen** **mò:**
child *he/she* *be* *doctor*
 ‘His child is a doctor.’
2. **phli:** **ŋɔ:m** **ŋɔ:m** **kɔ** **ŋá:m**
fruit *overripe* *overripe* *then* *sweet*
 ‘A very ripe fruit is then sweet.’
3. **súk** **he:n** **na:** **puj** **puj**
hair *it* *particle* *fluffy* *fluffy*
 ‘Its hair is fluffy.’

In many cases both Kasong and Thai loan words occur together in compounds or expressions as shown below. The bold letters are Kasong words.

khɔ:ŋ cé:	‘utensils’	tɛ:ŋ kǐp	‘to dress’
khɔ:ŋ ŋip	‘plaything, toy’	mò:p thít	‘to peep at’
lúk namprík	‘chili paste’	lo:m jí:m	‘borrow’
thé: niəw	‘clay’	kít phlaŋ	‘think of’

A great number of grammatical words used in Kasong are Thai loans. They are also used in the same way as those in Thai. Some prepositions that are Thai loans are /ca:k/ ‘from’, /ta:m/ ‘along’, /kla:ŋ/ ‘in the middle of’, /kha:ŋ/ ‘beside’, /khɔ:ŋ/ ‘of’, /tɔ:n/ ‘when, while’, /kataŋ/ ‘until’ and /taŋtɛ:/ ‘since’.

1. **he:n** **jip** **ca:k** **nǐ:** **kɔ** **kóh** **kháh**
it *come* *from* *where* *then* *not* *know*
 ‘I don’t know where it came.’
2. **nak** **jip** **taŋtɛ:** **ʔa:sí:** **hó:j**
he/she *come* *since* *yesterday* *already*
 ‘He came yesterday / He has been here since yesterday.’

Some Thai loan conjunctions that are commonly used are /thá:/ ‘if’, /tɛ:/ ‘but’, /pròh/ ‘because’, /hi:/ ‘or’, /kɔ/ ‘then’, /phɔ:…kɔ/ ‘when…then’, /lə:j/ ‘so’.

1. **thá:** **nak** **kóh** **pa:j** **kóh** **ʔajpǐ:** **kháh**
if *he/she* *not* *speak* *not* *who* *know*
 ‘If she doesn’t tell, nobody will know.’

2. pò: lɔ:ŋ klap hi: pò: the:k jak ʔan
you will return or you sleep here
 ‘You will go back or you will stay overnight here.’

Most of the auxiliaries expressing mode are borrowed from Thai, such as /tɔ:ŋ/ ‘must’, /jɔ:m/ ‘allow’, /ná:/ ‘should’, /cɔ:p/ ‘like’, /klá:/ ‘dare’.

1. he:n kóh jɔ:m kíh
it not allow get up
 ‘It doesn’t get up.’
2. ʔijɲ cɔ:p khuj mɔ:ŋ nak
I like talk with he/she
 ‘I prefer to talk with him.’

Final particles such as /thəh/, /sih/, /na:/, /nah/, /lé:w/ are Thai loans.

mij the:k thəh
mother sleep fp.
 ‘Mother, you sleep’

In some cases, the Kasong speakers use Kasong words and Thai words interchangeably.

English Gloss	Kasong	Thai loan
‘put’	dak	saj
‘finish’	jòh	set
‘friend’	kana:	klə:
‘beautiful’	mén	súəj

The older generation Kasong speakers (over 50 years old) use more Kasong words while the younger generation (less than 50 years old) tend to use more Thai loans (both content and grammatical words). I found that some grammatical words used by some older generation such as /than tɛ:/ ‘just’ are never used by the younger generation, but they use Thai loan /phín/ ‘just’ instead.

nak than tɛ: ce:w (older generation)
he/she just go

nak phín ce:w (younger generation)
he/she just go
 ‘He has just gone.’

It is observed that many cases of the syntactical change in Kasong are the result of loanwords and it is going towards the Thai pattern. Examples are provided below.

nak r̀ò: mó:j khu:ŋ (Kasong structure)
he high one father

or nak r̀ò: tháw khu:ŋ (Thai structure)
he high equal father
 ‘He has the same height as his father.’

Both examples provided above are found in Kasong speech. The use of Thai loan /tháw/ in the second example makes the clause have the same structure as Thai.

The compound or complex sentences in Kasong tend to be more in the conjunctive form with speakers preferring to use Thai loan conjunctions for expressing the inter-clausal relationships, especially among the younger generation. For example

p̀ò: hiw ?iŋ kóh hiw (juxtaposed form)
 p̀ò: hiw tɛ: ?iŋ kóh hiw (conjunctive form)
you hungry I not hungry
 ‘You are hungry, but I am not.’

The modifier pattern /jà:ŋ/ added to an adjective is common in Thai. This pattern is also found in Kasong.

tɛ:ŋ k̄ip ja:ŋ méŋ lə:j na:
dress body but beautiful fp.
 ‘(You) dress beautifully.’

3.3 Traces of Mon-Khmer language characteristics in Kasong

Affixation is a significant syntactical feature in Mon-Khmer languages. In Kasong there is little affixation left. Only a few affixes that still have clear meaning can be observed as shown in Table 2 and 3. Furthermore they are not productive anymore.

Table 2. Kasong prefixes

Prefix	Function	Example word	
/na-/	V → N	hó:p ‘to eat (rice)’	→ nahó:p ‘food’
/sam-/	Adj → N _(human)	khin ‘female (animal)’	→ samkhin ‘woman’
		klò:ŋ ‘male (animal)’	→ samklò:ŋ ‘man’
/la-/	Prep→V	liŋ ‘on’	→ laliŋ ‘turn up’
/khla:-/	Prep→Adv	liŋ ‘on’	→ khla:liŋ ‘above’
		pata: ‘under’	→ khla:pata: ‘below’
		r̀è: ‘in’	→ khla:r̀è: ‘inside’
			etc.

Table 3. Kasong infixes

Infix	Function	Example word				
/-an-/, /-ap-/ /	V → N _{inst}	khé:t	'to comb'	→	khané:t	'comb'
		ké:w	'to harvest'	→	khané:w	'sickle'
		pók	'to wrap'	→	panók	'package'
		kók	'to carry on the shoulder'	→	kanók	'shoulder pole'
		kók	'to gather' a long	→	kapòk	'hook with handle'

While the affixation process is no longer productive, compounding has become more predominant. From my observation, a Thai-Kasong compound word /khə:ŋ cha:/ (thing+eat) 'food (in general)' is more often used in Kasong speech than the Kasong word /nahó:p/. The causative prefix /ma^{R1}/ in the word /mahó:c/ 'to kill' (Kunwadee, 1996: 55) is not found in my data. On the contrary, a Thai loan /khá:/ 'to kill' is found instead. I asked my informants Do you know the word /mahó:c/, What is its meaning? They said that there is only the word /hó:c/ "to die". However, the speakers prefer to explain a cause of death more than using the Thai loan /khá:/.

In many Mon-Khmer languages the use of regular classifiers is not always obligatory. In the Khmu language, for instance, a speaker can say /ʔoʔ ʔah sóʔ p^ha:r/ or /ʔoʔ ʔah sóʔ p^ha:r to:/ (I + have + dog + two ± classifier) 'I have two dogs' (Suwilai, 2002: xlix). In Kasong only the singular number /mó:j/ 'one' usually appears without a classifier in a noun phrase (see Ex.1 below). The use of a classifier after a plural number becomes obligatory (see Ex.2 below). In the same way, a lot of Thai loan classifiers are used in Kasong.

1. ʔij ʔi:n chó: mó:j (mo:l) (optional classifier)
I have dog one (clf.)
 'I have a dog.'

2. ʔij ʔi:n chó: pà: mo:l (obligatory classifier)
I have dog two clf.
 'I have two dogs.'

4. Conclusion

This study shows that Kasong syntax has become more like Thai syntax though some Mon-Khmer characteristics can still be observed. Also, Thai loanwords are very prevalent, spreading beyond nouns and verbs into all parts of the lexicon, including closed classes of grammatical words. The modified syntax is also observed; for instance, the ordinary word order in a noun phrase /saŋin klə:ŋ/ 'wife and husband', the speakers also accept the reverse order as /klə:ŋ saŋin/ which is similar to the Thai language

(correspond to Thai /p^hǔə miə/ ‘husband and wife’). These syntactical changes in Kasong are the result of bilingualism in Thai.

The result of the study on Kasong syntax is in line with many studies on endangered languages such as the So (Thavung) language (Suwilai, 1995) and the Samre language (Pornsawan, 2001) in Thailand. It reveals that those languages have lost a number of characteristics which are rooted in the traditional culture of their speakers and become in many ways an imitation of the dominant language.

It is hoped that this paper will be useful for the syntactic study of other endangered languages in Thailand and in Southeast Asia. The data on Kasong presented here contribute significantly to the knowledge of one specific dialect of the Pearic languages, a dialect of which only a little is known. Further comparative studies between Kasong, Chong and other Pearic dialects could lead to more understanding about the relations of the languages in the Pearic branch.

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Received: 16 September 2002

Institute of Language and Culture
for Rural Development
Mahidol University
Phuttha Monthon, Salaya
Nakhon Pathom 73170
THAILAND