

English Language and its Education in Cambodia, a Country in Transition

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[ABSTRACT]

This is a study to investigate the present situation of the English language and its education in Cambodia. The first half of the study consists of a review of current literature researching the present situation of Cambodia in transition, changes in the status of foreign languages, and the condition of English and its education in Cambodia. The second half of this study reports on the results of a small-scale survey recently undertaken in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The survey asked Cambodian teachers of English about their professional development (PD) needs and their responses were compared with those of Japanese and Korean teachers of English. Cambodian teachers' preferred PD areas include Teaching Skills & Methods, Understanding Students, Attending Conferences, Seminars & Workshops, and Communication Skills. Not so many teachers were interested in Language Improvement, which is popular among Japanese and Korean teachers. These aspects are discussed by referring to qualitative data including e-mail messages and interviews.

KEYWORDS: Cambodia, English language education, teachers' professional development needs, English as the Global Language, Globalization, language choice

INTRODUCTION

... the teacher is a major - probably the major - factor in classroom life. Researching language teachers' voices and participating with them in their work ... offers SLA [Second Language Acquisition] researchers not only ways of bringing their insights to bear on language pedagogy but also of enriching SLA (Ellis, 1997, p. 251).

This is a study to investigate the present situation of the English language and its education in Cambodia. The first half of the study consists of a review of current literature researching (1) the present situation of Cambodia in transition, (2) English as the global language, (3) changes in the status of foreign languages in Cambodia vis-à-vis the country's checkered political and economic history, and (4) the condition of English and its education in Cambodia. The second half of this study reports on the results

of a small-scale survey recently undertaken in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The survey asked Cambodian teachers of English about their professional development needs. Their responses were then compared with those of Japanese and Korean teachers of English in order to illustrate the idiosyncrasies of Cambodian teachers and their situation. In addition, interviews were also conducted with some teachers in Phnom Penh. Selected data from the interviews, along with data from e-mail communications, are appended to exemplify the points in question and to supplement the survey results.

In recent years Cambodia has undergone a massive political and economic turmoil and people have suffered a great deal. In the process of rearing from the tragic past, the government and people of Cambodia have chosen English as the second language to communicate and do business with people, organizations and companies from abroad. In this respect, Cambodia shows a clear example of language policy and its impact on the people's life, education and future of a country in transition.

English language education is a boom in Cambodia. Communicative competence in English means a better job and a better pay. The remarks by U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, Joseph A. Mussomeli, at an international conference of English language teachers in Cambodia (CamTESOL) illustrates the situation:

You are doing more than just teaching a foreign language. You are teaching a life skill that will be crucial to the future prosperity of this country. English, as I have often stressed, is no longer a language. It is, instead, a tool, a weapon, a vehicle. A tool to build a stronger society, a weapon to combat poverty and ignorance, and a vehicle for those who possess it to travel anywhere they choose throughout the world and be understood and understand.

Although the Cambodian context might be very different from the situations of English teachers in other countries, studying professional development needs of Cambodian teachers of English contributes to a holistic understanding of the professionalism of second language teachers, affording a more global view of the profession.

Literature Review

In an article in the *Japan Times*, McLaren (2000) reports on the enthusiasm Cambodian people have towards the study of the English language. Referring to the communicative competence of the people she met in Cambodia, "from cyclo (bicycle rickshaw) drivers to government officials," she states: "English is fast becoming a second language for a considerable number of Cambodians." McLaren does not forget to point out a reason for this "boom" in the country, quoting a British teacher of English in Phnom

Penh saying, "English-language learning in Cambodia is the 'key to prosperity.' ...Cambodians can see themselves having a better lifestyle if they have English education." This was reported in the year 2000 and it might be the case that this boom is intensifying within the country.

1. Cambodia in Transition

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian country located on the Indochina Peninsula. It has an area of 181 thousand sq km, bordering Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and the Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia has an estimated population of 14 million (July 2007 est.), including such ethnic groups as Khmer (90%), Vietnamese (5%), Chinese (1%), and others (4%).

Throughout the nation's 2,000-year history, Cambodia has experienced a number of glories and tragedies. It has recently undergone political upheavals that have destroyed both people and land. The most notable upheaval came under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) under Pol Pot. At least 1.5 million people were killed and the upheaval also resulted in the subsequent 10-year Vietnamese occupation (1979-1989), both of which caused irrevocable traumas to the society.

The end of the Cold War (1945-1990) pervasively impacted both the world and the war-torn country of Cambodia. The ensuing changes culminated in the year of 1993 that marked a new start for Cambodia; it was a time when the democratic elections, supported by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), were conducted "to restore some semblance of normalcy under a coalition government" (CIA FACTBOOK: Cambodia). Cambodia's entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999, announcing its official return to the international arena, also signified the country's renewal.

Clayton (2007), a sociolinguist conducting longitudinal research on language choice in Cambodia, points out the significance of these two events, not only from a political point of view, but also from a linguistic point of view, which in essence is a focus of this study:

Political change in Cambodia began in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) era, and it has continued with the country's admission to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). More specifically, UNTAC facilitated Cambodia's transition to democracy, and entry in ASEAN symbolizes the country's integration into wider political networks. Both organizations have introduced similar language demands for participating Cambodians (p. 100).

Namely, English is the language that this political context of Cambodia demanded and the study and use

of English has been strongly encouraged and promoted. This political situation has paved paths for a variety of international aid agencies to come to Cambodia and accelerate the process of “globalization” in the country.

Cambodia’s transition to democracy and its return to international society have also been a transition towards a market economy. Clayton (2007) summarizes the nation’s shift as follows: “The country has transitioned away from the communist systems and practices of the 1980s and today embraces the market economy and liberal democracy” (p. 95). In fact, the economic development of Cambodia has been clearly highlighted in recent years. This shift toward a market economy has encouraged the study and use of English in Cambodia.

However, Cambodia is still a poor country and a variety of indexes attest to this reality. The author of *A Short History of Cambodia*, Tully (2006), for example, mentions:

Today, Cambodia remains one of the poorest nations on earth. Between one third and one half of its 13 million people live in abject poverty on less than US\$1 per day, and the numbers rise every year. Fifty percent of the country's children under five are underweight (p. 229).

The discrepancy of income among Cambodians is becoming an issue. Clayton (2006) cites changes in the country’s Gini index; “a score of 0.0 represents perfect equity and a rating of 1.0 represents perfect inequity.” Referring to an increase in the rating from 0.40 in 1995 to 0.45 in 1999, Clayton (2006) points out the expanding discrepancy among the incomes of Cambodians and mentions that even the Gini rating in the United States stood at 0.41 in 1997 (p. 256). Although the recent Gini coefficient of Cambodia got slightly better, 0.42 in 2004 (CIA est.), it still reveals a polarized income situation. It is not so inappropriate to assume that English language is serving as a gatekeeper to high-paying jobs, accounting at least partially for this income gap among Cambodians.

This situation could be described as the result of the process of globalization in Cambodia, as Capella (2000) points out: “Globalization is misshapen, or uneven, not uniform ... Globalization affects various peoples around the planet in different ways” (p. 229).

B. English as the Global Language

Language is an important tool for information and communication in the age of globalization. Futurists Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) made predictions of how the world’s society and culture come along in *Megatrends 2000* and mentioned the prospects of English in glowing colors:

The most important factor accelerating the development of a single global lifestyle is the proliferation of the English language. Language is a great agent of homogenization; it is the frequency on which the culture is transmitted ... Today there are about 1 billion English speakers in the world. By the year 2000 that figure is likely to exceed 1.5 billion. The world's most taught language, English is not replacing other languages; it is supplementing them ... (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990, p.140)

In fact, today, English is the language that is most frequently used across national boundaries and is the *de facto* global language (i.e., Crystal, 1997; Gladdol, 1997). However, it may be important to stress the point Naisbitt and Aburdene made about the role of English in relation to local languages: English is not replacing other languages. Hasman (2000) states: "Instead, it may supplement or co-exist with languages by allowing strangers to communicate across linguistic boundaries" (Hasman, 2000, p. 5).

Although English now enjoys this privileged status, there is some threat from rival languages. From a point of view protecting the current position of the English language, Graddol (2001) presents three possible future linguistic scenarios for rapidly developing Asia:

1. English will remain the preferred language of international communication within Asia, since the investment in English may be regarded as too great to throw away, or the social elites who have benefited from English in the past may be reluctant to let their privileged position become threatened. Or it may simply be the most common shared language.
2. Mandarin becomes regionally more important, beginning as a *lingua franca* within Greater China (for communication between the regions of Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Taiwan) and building on increased business communication between the overseas Chinese in South-east Asia.
3. ... no single language will emerge as a dominant *lingua franca* in Asia and a greater number of regional languages will be learned as foreign languages. If intraregional trade is greatest between adjacent countries, then there is likely to be an increased demand for neighbouring languages (p. 30).

As far as Cambodia is concerned, the first scenario seems to be the case, although the probability of the second sequence occurring could increase in the future.

C. Languages in Cambodia

Cambodia's official language is Khmer, a member of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic Language Group. 95% of the population speaks the language as their mother tongue (CIA FACTBOOK: Cambodia) and this official language is used heavily at the national level. The status of the Khmer

language in Cambodia can be summarized in the words of Clayton (2006):

To a large degree, Khmer's utility in economic and political domains emerges organically without decision, even as most Cambodians acquire Khmer without choosing it. To a certain extent, however, utility derives from language choices, notably the decision promulgated with the 1993 constitution to privilege Khmer as the official national language (p. 212).

In education, at primary and secondary schools, the language of instruction is Khmer. In university education, however, the situation is different; Khmer has not yet been developed for the use in many fields of study. Clayton (2006) mentions: "While the national language serves as the medium of education in many universities, its utility at this level is limited, particularly in terms of its technical precision" (p. 213). Professors use English or French technical words.

Cambodians regained their freedom to learn and use the Chinese language in 1993, more than 20 years after the language ban was first enforced by the Khmer Republic in 1970 and then carried out by subsequent regimes. Many schools have been opened and numerous students study at these schools. Clayton (2006) observes: "The skyrocketing enrollment in Chinese-language schools provides one illustration of how Cambodians have embraced this new freedom" (p. 214). Clayton (2006) further explains the situation as follows:

If they choose Khmer by default at birth, Cambodians in increasing numbers are making conscious choices to learn Chinese. After having suppressed the language for decades, the Cambodian government lifted restrictions on Chinese in 1992, and ethnic-Chinese Cambodians in particular have embraced their heritage language, as illustrated by the astonishing growth of Chinese-language schools (p. 236).

Speakers of Chinese are needed in present Cambodia for the "dual economic demand and utility" (Clayton, 2006, p. 215). Due to the globalization of today's world economy, many businesses, looking for a more cost-efficient labor market, headquartered in Chinese-speaking countries, including China and Singapore, come to Cambodia and open garment factories and other enterprises. These businesses require Cambodians who possess the ability to speak Chinese. On the other hand, ethnic-Chinese Cambodians, comprising 1% of the population, own and manage many local businesses, which in many cases operate in conjunction with enterprises from Chinese-speaking countries; Chinese-speaking Cambodians are preferred by these local companies.

Sakanashi (2004) conducted a survey on the use of the Khmer and Chinese languages and asked high

school students in Phnom Penh which language they use at home. An overwhelming majority of students of three public high schools (C, S, and P) said “Khmer only”; 98.8% of the students at School C, 95.8% at School S, and 91% at School P. All of the other students at these three schools said, “Khmer and Chinese”.

Students at a private high school for ethnic-Chinese (School T) responded quite differently. 80.8% of the students answered, “Khmer and Chinese”, while 12.0% said “Khmer only”, 3.2% “Chinese only”, and 4% “Other”, which means a trilingual family situation of “Khmer, Chinese, and Thai or English” (pp. 118-119).

Sakanashi (2004) stresses the points that almost all the students at School T can speak Khmer and Chinese and that ethnic-Chinese are raising their children bilingually so that they can find jobs both inside and outside of Cambodia.

The French language held a special status in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, the region formerly known as “French Indochina” because it was the language of their métropole. According to Wikipedia:

French, once the lingua franca of Indochina and still spoken by some, mostly older Cambodians as a second language, remains the language of instruction in various schools and universities that are often funded by the government of France. Cambodian French, a remnant of the country's colonial past, is a dialect found in Cambodia and is frequently used in government (Wikipedia, Cambodia).

The number of students learning French, however, has been declining since 1996 and in recent years, French has not been used very much at all in Cambodia; more and more people are studying English. This could be understood as part of a growing phenomenon, English as the Global Language.

France is famous for its policy to support French language education outside the country, particularly in its former colonies. In an article included on the homepage of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, de Lavaréne (1998) regrettably announces that Asia is the region where there are the fewest number of French-speaking countries and that only 1.1 million people are studying French in this region. As to the situation of French education in Cambodia, de Lavaréne explicates:

Of the 13,000 students enrolled at Phnom Penh universities in 1997, more than half, i.e. 7,000, are learning French. Financed by the Cultural Centre or the Aupelf-Uref, the courses are provided by 25 French-speaking lecturers, whose work also involves handing over the relay to Khmer professors. The secondary level has 200,000 pupils learning French.

In spite of France's efforts to promote French with generous educational aids including teaching personnel and scholarships, Cambodians prefer English to French because of the utility of the English language. Although the communicative competence in French still gives an advantage to Cambodians in the field of education, it is difficult to find more utility than cost attached to the French language in terms of both politics and economics (Clayton, 2006). Reporting a shift in foreign language preferences in Cambodia, Prusher (2001), in the *Christian Science Monitor*, explains: "Although appreciative of France's aid, many here feel that the insistence on French is a little impractical in an age when the argot of economic recovery is English."

In today's Cambodia, English is the most preferred foreign language. It is the language used in international business and education. Clayton (2007) points out two political events in recent years that pronounced and promoted the use of English in Cambodia: (1) The era of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (1992-1993) and (2) Cambodia's admission into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1999).

Led by Yasushi Akashi, more than 20,000 international personnel came to Cambodia with UNTAC. Although this UN organization was designed as bilingual, English and French, English quickly became the major language and French was marginalized. Clayton (2007) observes: "In total, more than 60,000 Cambodians worked for the United Nations at some point during the 2-year mission, and most needed some degree of proficiency in English to perform their duties" (p. 101). This naturally marks the start of the dominance of English among foreign languages in Cambodia.

ASEAN is a powerful organization consisting of the ten member nations in Southeast Asia. Unlike other international organizations, which take a multilingual stance, ASEAN's only official language is English. This has given a strong drive for Cambodia to develop English-speaking personnel. Clayton (2007) mentions: "ASEAN's language policy has introduced what one ministry official in 2000 termed 'tremendous pressure' in Cambodia. Simply put, Cambodian representatives, delegates, and conferees must know English" (p. 101).

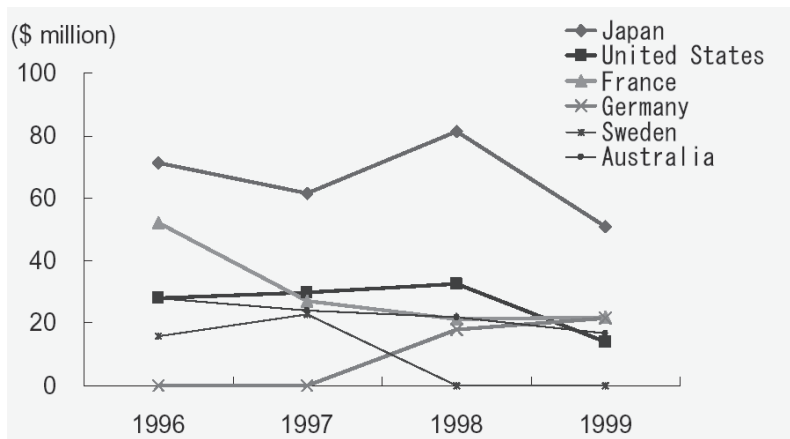
This language requirement by ASEAN is not only limited to politics. In the field of economics, Cambodians communicate internationally in English, rather than in French. Prusher (2001) explains:

Today, Cambodia is struggling to emerge from that dark period and the crippling poverty of its aftermath. It dearly hopes to enter the World Trade Organization. But as Cambodians look for trading partners among their neighbors in ASEAN - the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - they find that the only common language is English.

Thus, there have been more job opportunities for Cambodians who speak English in the 2000s. Certainly, English is the “language of advantage” (Collins, 1990, p.211), as quoted in Mackay (2000, p. 63.).

These two political events also paved ways for the international community to offer development aids and grants, and technical and educational cooperation to Cambodia. Many donor countries have granted and loaned millions of dollars to Cambodia. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a community in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and has 22 member countries that support the developing countries in the world. Chart 1 shows the six major DAC countries; Japan, the United States, France, Germany, Sweden, and Australia; and their Official Development Assistance (ODA) in years 1996-1999.

Chart 1. Trends in Major DAC Countries' ODA in Cambodia



Source: Japan's ODA Annual Report 2001, DAC publications (JICA, 2001)

As shown in the chart, Japan has been the top donor to Cambodia and its total ODA in the past ten years is \$720 million dollars, “accounting for 25 percent of all assistance to Cambodia” (Government of Japan, 2007).

These countries, excluding France, facilitated the use and study of English in the process of implementing their development assistance in Cambodia even though only two of them, the US and Australia, are English-speaking countries.

According to Clayton (2007), international aid agencies, in developing countries like Cambodia, have influenced the Cambodian people's language choices in three ways:

1. ... the aid enterprise ... hires significant numbers of Cambodians, both directly as staff and indirectly

as government counterparts ... Most aid organizations ... use and demand knowledge of English (p. 102).

2. ... aid agencies have worked actively in schools and universities to provide foreign-language education and to train foreign-language teachers (p. 103) [mostly French in the 1990's and overwhelmingly English now].
3. ... though actively promoting French and English, the international aid community has demonstrated inconsistent interest in Cambodian languages (p. 103).

This observation symbolically confirms what has been discussed so far: Cambodians currently prefer English instead of French and the Khmer language is domestically active but holds a relatively minor status both internationally and academically. It might be significant to also point out that the Chinese language in Cambodian society is growing in terms of utility.

D. Foreign Language Education in Cambodia

Since gaining independence in 1953, there have been drastic changes in the choice of foreign language(s) taught at secondary schools in Cambodia. Vira (2002), a Cambodian applied linguist, describes the major changes in the choice of foreign languages: The changes are summarized in Table 1, according to the political periods in the current history of Cambodia.

Table 1. Changes in Cambodia's Foreign Language (FL) Education (Vira, 2002)

#	Period	Years	Foreign Language Education
1	King Sihanouk's Government	1953-1970	French only: French was the only language officially included in schools' curriculum. It was used in all sectors of Cambodia at that time.
2	Lon Nol Republic	1970-1975	French & English: Because of American involvement (politics and military) in the Indochina War, the study of "English" was also encouraged.
3	Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea	1976-1979	No use or study of foreign languages: No formal education was implemented. The study and use of FL were severely prohibited.
4	President Heng Samrin and the Age of International Politics	1979-1986	Vietnamese & Russian: Vietnamese and Russian were the languages officially included in schools' curriculum. The study of "English/French" was prohibited. If one was found to be learning either language, he/she would be severely punished and even imprisoned.
		1989-	English & French
5	The 1993 Elections & Afterwards	1993-	English & French

French, the language of the former suzerain, was the only foreign language taught at secondary schools in Cambodia from 1953 to 1970. However, because of the pro-American nature of the Lon Nol Republic (1970-1975), English was added. But when Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, took power and started his primitive communist regime, no foreign languages were taught. It was a time when town people were ordered to move to the countryside and at least one million Cambodians, about 15 percent of the total population, died for a variety of reasons, including execution. It was this time, Tully (2006) states, when: "Intellectuals and 'book-learning' were treated with particular contempt." "The wearing of spectacles was sufficient to brand one as an intellectual and therefore an enemy of the people, and the consequences were often lethal" (p. 184). It was no time for teaching and learning foreign languages and, in fact, no time for school education at all. All the schools were closed in Cambodia during this period.

The fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979 brought a totally different phase of foreign language education in Cambodia. Vietnamese and Russian were introduced as foreign languages and French and English were prohibited. Towards the end of the 1980s, at the end of the Cold War, people began to teach French and English once again at Cambodian secondary schools. The teaching of French and English in the schools has continued ever since that time (Vira, 2002). However, now English is treated as the first foreign language and French as the second. Clayton (2006) observes:

Most [Cambodians], however, have followed the shifting allocation of language resources away from French, toward English. More specifically, as teachers, books, and materials dedicated to English language learning have been made available by international assistance organizations and local educational administrators, Cambodians have grasped them and unceremoniously dropped French (p.236).

Foreign language education begins at secondary school level (7th grade) in Cambodia. Yet, it might be necessary to note that only a small portion of the primary school graduates go on to secondary schools in Cambodia.

While nearly 100% of the population attended primary school in 2004-2005, approximately 25 % of primary school graduates continued their education to lower secondary schools, according to the homepage of Cambodia's Ministry of Education: The enrollment ratio decreases even lower to 8% for upper secondary schools (Refer to Charts 2 and 3).

Chart 2. Net Enrollment Ratio in Lower Secondary Schools in Cambodia: 2001-2005

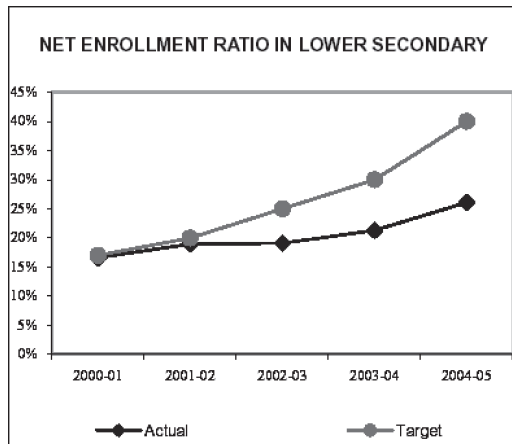
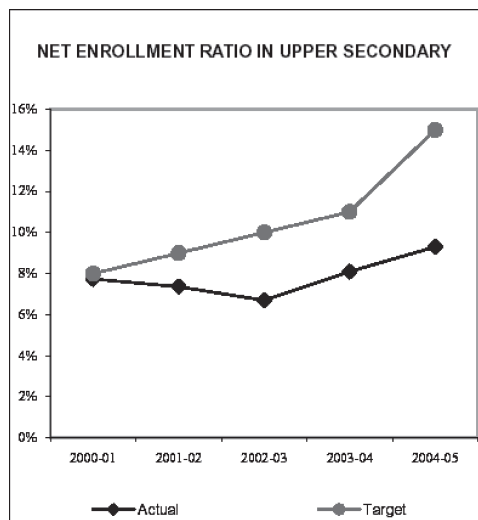


Chart 3. Net Enrollment Ratio in Upper Secondary Schools in Cambodia: 2001-2005



Since English language education starts in lower secondary school (7th grade) for Cambodian students, these low enrollment ratios to secondary schools indicate that only one fourth of the population currently has a chance to learn the language. This unequal access to English education contributes to a further disparity in the income of Cambodian people.

E. Current Challenges for Cambodian Teachers of English

Vira (2002) conducted a survey of Cambodian secondary school teachers of English to investigate their

preferences in regards to teaching conditions. A total of 56 teachers responded to Vira's questionnaire and 39 teachers were interviewed. Vira asked the following questions in the questionnaire:

1. What are your preferences concerning the atmosphere of your school?
2. What are your preferences concerning teaching materials?
3. What are your preferences concerning your teaching colleagues?
4. What are your preferences concerning classroom observations?
5. How do you like the presently-used textbook?
6. What do you prefer to do if you have [the] chance to get further training?

As to Question 1, regarding the atmosphere of the school, Vira (2002) reports that all the participants expressed the same preference: The school atmosphere should be made pleasant and suitable for both language learning and language teaching by providing basic necessities. Vira explains:

Their preferences were based on the fact that the present CSSs [Cambodian secondary schools] in general, are in poor conditions. Almost [all] school buildings [are] left from pre wars (prior to the 1970s) are decayed and unattractive, and basic necessities such as qualified teachers, teaching resources, and all the like are in bad shortages (p. 201).

Also noted are the points related to teachers and their relationship with management. 87.5% of the participants said that teachers should be helpful and approachable. The same ratio of teachers also mentioned the importance of maintaining a solid relationship and having a good deal of cooperation between school principals and teachers. Issues related to the low salary standard for teachers and the necessity to supplement their income were also included in the responses.

As to the second question related to teaching materials, 94.6% of the participants said that teaching materials should be made available and should be accessible for daily use. Vira (2002) explains:

Their complaints were based on the reality of unavailability and inaccessibility of TMs [teaching materials] in their present schools. They claimed that they had not demanded electricity-used materials such as OHP, Video, or even cassette players because they knew that schools could not afford those items due to the shortages of budget. What they demanded was only simply made materials such as pictures, post cards, photographs ... (p. 202).

Regarding Question 3, concerning their colleagues, many participants again mention the problem of low teacher salary. They complain that they do not have enough time for communication with their

colleagues: "... most of the teachers working in the same school seldom had time to meet and discuss over teaching techniques with each other since they needed to work outside the school to get extra payment to supplement their meager salaries for their families' survival" (p. 202).

As to Question 4, concerning classroom observations, many participants mentioned that they felt nervous when they were officially observed. This anxiety seems natural and similar feelings could be shared by teachers all around the world. On the other hand, 98.2% of the participants agreed that constructive advice or comments should be given after making observations. It could be interpreted that this data indicates that Cambodian teachers of English believe they need more advice for their professional development because many of them are still new to the profession; English has now been taught in Cambodia for less than 20 years.

Responding to Question 5, "How do you like the presently-used textbook," all the participants said "interesting." The majority of them are satisfied with the current textbooks used at school; "appropriate to the students' levels" (92.8% of the participants), "relevant to the reality of Cambodian daily life (91%), and containing "a variety of activities for the students to do practice" (91%).

Concerning Question 6, "What do you prefer to do if you have [the] chance to get further training," Vira (2002) points out that only a small number of the Cambodian teachers of English were ELT (English Language Teaching) majors. Others were chosen to teach English only because they could speak the language. Some others, Vira (2002) also mentions, spent three years learning Russian or Vietnamese, but at the fall of the communist bloc, they were told to learn English for a year and to become English teachers (p. 203).

83.9% of the participating teachers said that "they would learn how to make effective lesson plans and how to teach the four-macro skills in a communicative way." 71.4% expressed "their desire on learning new things related to LT [language teaching], such as how to assess and evaluate students' performances." 58.9% indicated that "they would learn how to deal with students effectively and successfully" (p. 203).

The challenges for Cambodian secondary teachers of English, as reported by Vira (2002), can be summarized as follows:

1. School buildings and facilities should be made pleasant and suitable for both students and teachers by providing basic necessities.
2. Teachers' rapport with students, colleagues, and management should be improved.

3. Teachers' low salary standards should be ameliorated.
4. Teaching materials and equipment should be made available and accessible for daily use.
5. Constructive advice or comments should be given after making observations.
6. All the teachers are satisfied with the textbooks currently used.
7. Many Cambodian secondary teachers of English lack proper teaching preparation before actually teaching.
8. Many said they would like to have professional training on such topics as how to make effective lesson plans and how to teach the four-macro skills in a communicative way.

The Study

Rather, it was my aim to suggest that as teachers we become aware and think for ourselves, as well as interact with our peers, for the purposes of developing our own curriculum, and becoming aware, autonomous, and authentic professionals. If we are committed to doing that, then it is likely that we will also foster the same qualities in our students (van Lier, 1996, p. 225).

A small-scale survey was carried out in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in February, 2008 to investigate the professional development (PD) needs of Cambodian teachers of English. The purpose of the study was to shed light on the current situation and the challenges related to Cambodia's English language education, which have been scarcely addressed in the international TESOL literature thus far.

The study of current issues in relation to English education in Cambodia could provide us not only with several different perspectives to view the teaching of English at Cambodian schools, but also with multiple vantage points from which to better comprehend English education. This is because of the universal nature of second language learning and of the language teachers' professionalism. It could be argued that this universal nature is also due to the globalization phenomena of "interconnectedness" between our politics, economy, and culture, and the fact that English acts as a pivotal part of the "global infrastructure" (Cochrane & Pain, 2000, pp. 15-17) for information and communication today.

The participants of the study were asked to indicate three (3) professional development needs that interested them from a list of 10 need areas. The 10 areas are the professional development needs identified by Igawa (2008) (also reported in Igawa & Tsukamoto, in press), who studied the PD needs of EFL teachers practicing in Japan and South Korea. Although the PD need areas were generated from the study of English teachers in Japan and Korea, the scope of second language teacher education proposed by Richards (1998) was consulted in the process of delineating the need areas.

Some qualitative data is used to supplement and interpret the results of this study. The data used include transcripts of interviews separately conducted in Phnom Penh by one of my research collaborators, Ms. Miki Tsukamoto, and also her personal e-mail communication with Cambodian teachers. Although the names of the teachers in Cambodia remain anonymous, all of them kindly gave permission to use their data in this study. These teachers function as informants in this study. All of the teachers teach at higher institutions in Cambodia and they are identified by the following numbers:

Table 2. Informants and their Identification Numbers

No.	Sex	Nationality	Type of Data
T-1	Female	Cambodian	Interview Transcript
T-2	Female	Australian	
E-1	Female	Cambodian	e-mail Communication
E-2	Male	Cambodian	

A. Participants

The participants of the study are 36 Cambodian teachers of English who were attending “CamTESOL 2008¹,” an annual international TESOL conference supported by the National Institute of Education of Cambodia. The overwhelming majority of the participating teachers were male; of them, 25 were male and five (5) were female, while six (6) others did not indicate their sex. This gender condition of the participants may look different from the ELT professional population which consists of more female teachers than male teachers worldwide, particularly in developed countries.

As to where they were teaching, the 36 participating teachers include three (3) primary school teachers, one (1) junior high school, three (3) senior high school, 10 college teachers, and 13 teachers teaching at other institutions, such as the Australian Centre for Education (ACE), a language school established by the Australian Universities and accredited by the National ELT Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) of Australia. Also, six (6) other participants did not disclose where they currently teach.

The relatively large number of participants teaching at higher education institutions may be due to the fact that these teachers were attending an international TESOL conference. This may also help to partially explain the unusually large number of male teachers among the participants; the ratio of male English teachers is higher at institutions of higher education than at primary or secondary schools. Sunderland (1994), for example, discusses the “gendering” of the English language teaching profession. (See also Ehrlich, 1997)

¹ Refer to “<http://www.camtesol.org>”

As to their experience in teaching, the majority of the Cambodian teachers were young, novice teachers; 28 (77.8%) of them said that they have been in service for 0-5 years, 7 (19.4%) said 6-10 years, and only 1 (2.8%) said 11-20 years. This participant feature in terms of years in service may not seem peculiar. Rather, it looks as expected when we consider the fact English education only officially started, or re-started, in 1989 (Vira, 2002).

B. Professional Development Needs

The 10 professional development need areas are listed with some specific explanations excerpted from the survey entries from Igawa (2008).

(a) Teaching Skills & Methods (TSM)

- Try to learn and apply the various and proper ways of English teaching methods... (Mid-career Korean teacher: Entry No. 013)
- Learn theories of teaching to give clear goals (reasons) of the activities to the students and to create effective activities in order to improve the students' skills (4 skills) (Mid-career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 382)

(b) Language Improvement (LI)

- Try to improve [the] four skills of English; listening, speaking, reading and writing; in the integrated way. (Mid-career Korean teacher: Entry No. 011)
- To be a better teacher, my experience tells me that teachers should keep learning English. We should practice English as much as possible... (Mid-career Korean teacher: Entry No. 021)

(c) Communication Skills (CS)

- To have a sharp sense of humor to help encourage students (Young Japanese teacher: Entry No. 161)
- To improve ability to communicate (not only in English, but in our native language) (Mid-Career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 241)

(d) Motivation (MO)

- How to motivate students to study English: Most of my students will not study (read) English any more after graduation. (Young Japanese teacher: Entry No. 312)
- To encourage the students who are not good at English to study it. (Mid-career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 371)

(e) Attending Conferences, Seminars & Workshops (ACSW)

- To join various seminars to get information. We need to know and exchange our idea to conduct classes. (Young Japanese teacher: Entry No. 141)
- To participate in some workshops and seminars for English teachers and share information on English teaching. (Young Japanese teacher: Entry No. 232)

(f) Lifelong Education (LE)

- ... teachers should learn endlessly not only for themselves, but also for our students. I mean, we should try to make the best use of our knowledge and ability to put our power into action. (Veteran Korean teacher: Entry No. 021)
- As society changes, its education changes. Teachers should always be concerned about education. We should get more information about education. We should know a new theory and acquire a new teaching method. We should continue to improve ourselves, both for us and for our students. (Veteran Japanese teacher: Entry No. 301)

(g) Cultural Understanding (CU)

- Try to understand the cultural difference between Korea and English speaking countries and have an identity as a global citizen in the future society. (Mid-career Korean teacher: Entry No. 012)
- To be a person who has wide and long perspective. To teach English at school is not only teaching English language. Languages include cultures, people and their lives. English teachers must know them to make the world peace, and to make children to be wise people. (Mid-career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 263)

(h) Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK)

- To have knowledge and proficiency of English. We must have or get enough knowledge of English to teach, for example, grammar, words, phrases, and so on. (Mid-career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 261)
- To build up professional skills, I think I need to analyze the difference between English and Japanese, especially that of sound structure. (Mid-career Japanese teacher: Entry No. 361)

(i) Understanding Students (US)

- Understand students, more deeply as a consultant. (Mid-career Korean teacher: Entry No. 093)
- Looking through students' minds: (Maybe parents', or of society) It's hard to lead them to the right road with right ways. But I'm getting older, socially biased and conservative... (Young Korean teacher: Entry No. 063)

(j) Others (OT)

- ... we should make a school system that we can show our class to other teachers easily and study our teaching skills. (Veteran Japanese teacher: Entry No. 222)
- Having various experiences such as traveling abroad, is important for teachers to widen their way of thinking (Veteran Japanese teacher: Entry No. 283)

In the questionnaire of this study, the Cambodian teachers were asked to specify, in the open-ended section their professional development need, when they chose the last item, (j) Other (OT).

C. Results & Discussion

The responses by the 36 Cambodian teachers were added up by PD need area. Although the majority of teachers identified three (3) areas as they were instructed, some of them identified only two (2) and others more than three (3). Therefore, the total number of responses stood at 110, rather 108.

The most popular PD area was (a) Teaching Skills & Methods; 19 (50.0%) of the 36 teachers identified this as the area where they required professional development. The second most popular area was (i) Understanding Students; 15 teachers, or 39.5%. The third area was (e) Attending Conferences, Seminars & Workshops; 13 teachers, 34.2%. The fourth was (c) Communication Skills; 12 teachers, or 31.6%. The other areas, such as (b) Language Improvement, (g) Cultural Understanding, and (h) Subject Matter Knowledge, were not popular among the Cambodian teachers.

The areas of professional development needs of Cambodian teachers are listed below in order of popularity (Table 2).

Table 3. Areas of Professional Development Needs (Cambodian Teachers)

Rank	Areas of PD Needs	No	%
1	Teaching Skills & Methods (TSM)	19	50.0
2	Understanding Students (US)	15	39.5
3	Attending Conferences, Seminars & Workshops (ACSW)	13	34.2
4	Communication Skills (CS)	12	31.6
5	Motivation (MO)	11	28.9
6	Language Improvement (LI)	10	26.3
7	Lifelong Education (LE)	10	26.3
8	Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK)	10	26.3
9	Cultural Understanding (CU)	8	21.1
10	Others (OT)	2	5.3
	TOTAL	110	
	No. of Participants	N=36	

The results present quite a contrast to the responses by Japanese and Korean teachers reported by Igawa (2008). The PD areas that Japanese and Korean teachers were interested in were TSM, LI, CS, and MO. However, in the two groups, the Cambodian group and the group of Japanese and Koreans combined, TSM was the most popular area of professional development and CS was also a preferred PD area. But in the areas such as LI and MO, in which the Japanese and Korean group showed a great deal of interest, Cambodian teachers showed very little interest. (Refer to Table 3.)

Three points of significance (TSM, LI, and US) are discussed in the following section by comparing the Cambodian teachers' responses with those of the Japanese and Korean teachers. To supplement and interpret the questionnaire results, the informants' interview transcripts and e-mail communication have been utilized.

**Table 4. Areas of Professional Development Needs:
Cambodian, Japanese, & Korean Teachers**

Areas of PD Needs	Cambodians	%	Japanese	%	Koreans	%
(a) TSM	19	50.0	15	57.7	10	83.3
(b) LI	10	26.3	16	61.5	8	66.7
(c) CS	12	31.6	10	38.5	2	16.7
(d) MO	11	28.9	7	26.9	5	41.7
(e) ACSW	13	34.2	7	26.9	2	16.7
(f) LE	10	26.3	5	19.2	5	41.7
(g) CU	8	21.1	3	11.5	2	16.7
(h) SMK	10	26.3	4	15.4	1	8.3
(i) US	15	39.5	1	3.8	3	25.0
(j) OT	2	5.3	9	34.6	2	16.7
TOTAL	110		77		40	
No. of Participants	N=36		N=26		N=12	

The Cambodian teachers' most preferred PD area is (a) Teaching Skills & Methods (TSM) and this preference is the same with the Japanese and Korean teachers. This finding looks natural because teaching skills and methods are at the center of teacher professionalism. Yet it should be mentioned that the Korean teachers show the highest ratio by far (83.3%). It is possible that this is due to the heavy pressure the Korean government places on its teachers to teach in the manner that is officially specified. The Cambodian teachers are not pressured by external forces in this manner.

It is, however, necessary to remind ourselves of what Vira's (2002) study found: Many Cambodian secondary teachers of English lack proper teacher preparation before they actually start teaching,

which resulted in a high number of teachers indicating TSM as a PD need area. A possible reason for the difference between the two findings is that the participants of Vira's study were secondary school teachers, while the majority of this study's participants were young higher education institution teachers. In other words, higher education teachers are more informed of the current TSM and are more confident of their teaching practice. It is possible that in this respect, there is a discrepancy between secondary and higher institution English teachers.

One of the informants, E-1, mentions her experience of learning English at high school about 10 years ago:

When I first started my English course, English was not widely used in Cambodia yet. I studied with a Khmer teacher... At that time, there was only Grammar Translation, I remember. I started to know about Communicative Language Teaching approach when I studied at [the] University [E-1, excerpted from the e-mail message dated March 19, 2008].

As to (b) Language Improvement, only 10 Cambodian teachers (26.3%) showed interest, while more than a half of the participating Japanese and Korean teachers were interested (61.5% and 66.7%, respectively). This leads us to an interesting point: Language improvement is a professional development area that is always ranked high among non-native speaking teachers. Roberts (1998) lists two characteristics of non-native speaking (NNS) teachers:

- * NNS teachers may lack confidence in their English language ability and give their own language improvement a high priority.
- * NNS teachers may undergo erosion in their English language performance through its restriction to classroom discourse (p. 97).

It could be that these young Cambodian teachers are elite, the very best of Cambodia's English education. In fact, two of the informants say:

... most of Cambodian teachers (of English) do have [a] high level of English [and] they think it's not important to get their English improved [E-1, excerpted from the e-mail message dated March 19, 2008].

..., through my experience in attending the conference in Thailand and Vietnam, I should say that we are better at English than our neighbors. The reason behind this is that English in Cambodia is more important than in the neighboring countries, as it is almost the only choice to improve your

opportunities both at work and your self-improvement [E-2, excerpted from the e-mail message dated Tue, 18 Mar 2008].

These two comments sound true. However, we must keep in mind the possibility of major differences existing between secondary school and tertiary level education and teachers.

The PD area “Understanding Students” (US) was quite popular among the Cambodian participants. This same area was not preferred by the Japanese and Korean teachers. The choice of this PD need seems to suggest that the Cambodian teachers have difficulties in terms of understanding their students.

Because like Cambodian students, most of them are a little bit shy. According to our culture, we don't really show off a lot. And to study English, they need people to socialize, be talkative, [and] show their opinions. And it's very hard to get the students to communicate in English. [T-1, excerpted from the transcript of the interview conducted Friday, February 22, 2008].

... because I come from Australia, I think the most difficult thing for me to learn was how to manage the classroom and how to deal with, from my perspective, very passive students who weren't as active as what I had anticipated them to be, so doing more active group work and getting them to stand in front of a classroom and things like that. They were so shy. And I felt like I was embarrassing them all the time... [T-2, excerpted from the transcript of the interview conducted Friday, February 22, 2008].

These Cambodian and Australian teachers say that Cambodian students are shy. This shyness might be one of the reasons why the teachers feel as though they have not understood their students and why the teachers think that they need professional development in this area.

The other possible explanation for this is that there is a discrepancy among Cambodians. As pointed out, Cambodia's growing economy has been generating an income gap in the population. The teachers might feel detached from the younger generation from wealthy families and therefore, the teachers think they need professional development to better understand their students.

The Australian informant, T-2, referring to her teaching experience at a kindergarten in Cambodia, mentioned that she was surprised how the parents were affluent; “ ... in the kindergarten, yes, because it was, a lot of the students that were going there were quite wealthy. So, it was amazing the amount of resources that were there” (T-2; Friday, February 22, 2008).

Asked why he thinks there were more male teachers than female teachers among the participants of this

study, E-2, the male Cambodian teacher, mentions the following:

Most of Cambodian respondents are university teachers. In this tertiary education, there are more male than female teachers. However, in primary and secondary education, there are more female than male teachers, just like in Japan. The reason for less female teachers in higher education is because we still have a strong influence from our tradition, which discourages women from further education [E-2, excerpted from the e-mail message dated March 19, 2008].

On a similar note, pointing out the traditional gender bias in terms of education, E-1, the female Cambodian teacher, writes:

... it's because Cambodian people prefer to send sons to university rather than to send daughters. Women are supposed to be inferior in our culture (in the past). The older people usually think that women don't need to study a lot as high school should be enough for them to be a critical wife and mother [E-2, excerpted from the e-mail message dated Tue, 18 Mar 2008].

Therefore, it could be said that there are more male than female English teachers at higher education institutions due to the traditional gender-biased thinking that restricts women from going to universities and becoming tertiary education teachers.

The following can be gleaned from the discussion on Cambodian teachers and their professional development preferences:

1. The Cambodian teachers' preferred areas of professional development are: Teaching Skills & Methods (TSM), Understanding Students (US), Attending Conferences, Seminars & Workshops (ACSW), and Communication Skills (CS).
2. The Cambodian teachers' most preferred PD area is Teaching Skills & Methods (TSM). This preference is the same with the Japanese and Korean teachers. However, there might be a gap between secondary teachers and university teachers in the way they were prepared and informed.
3. As for the Language Improvement (LI) area, only a small portion of the Cambodian teacher group showed interest, while more than a half of the participating Japanese and Korean teachers were interested. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the participants of this study are higher institution teachers. Because they are teachers at higher institutions, they might be considered as "elite" in Cambodian society, while secondary teachers might be more in need of this type PD.
4. Understanding Students (US) was quite popular among the Cambodian participants, although this was not the case among the Japanese and Korean teachers. This preference seems to suggest that

teachers have difficulty in understanding their students because Cambodian students are culturally shy and/or because there is a growing income gap among the people of the nation. This income gap is causing communication problems between teachers and students.

5. There are more male than female English teachers at the higher education institutions in Cambodia because women's entry into the universities has been discouraged.

Conclusion

Ball and Goodson (1985) noted "individual careers are socially constructed and individually experienced over time" (p. 11) (Kilgore & Ross, 1993, p. 286).

Cambodia is a nation under transition. It has undergone many glories and hardships. In recent years, the country has been transforming itself towards a market economy, with a rapidly growing GDP and widening income gap. Globalization is heavily impacting Cambodia and as a result, English has become the foreign language of choice.

Because now we are coming into the globalizations and most of the investors that come to Cambodia, say like companies or other organizations, they require those who can speak English. That's why they try to study English. Part time or can be full time. So once they graduate, they can get a job easily... That's why they study English. [T-1, excerpted from the transcript of the interview conducted Friday, February 22, 2008]

The foreign language to learn in Cambodia has gone from French, then to Vietnamese and Russian, and now finally to English. At one point in Cambodia's history, foreign language education was banned completely. Currently, Chinese is gaining popularity in Cambodia for its practical utility.

However, in spite of the turmoil in the past, English language education in Cambodia seems to be going well. Naturally, many challenging situations for English teachers still exist; substandard school buildings, classrooms, and facilities, teachers' low salaries, and limited availability of teaching equipment and materials (Vira, 2002). But at the same time, there are groups of young Cambodian teachers of English who are confident in their pedagogical knowledge and communicative competence.

It is my hope that this dichotomous situation will be resolved in the near future and that English language education will bring to the teachers and students of this nation under transition the happiness they deserve.

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変革期のカンボジアにおける英語と英語教育

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【要旨】

本稿は、グローバル化の中で市場経済への移行が進むカンボジアにおける、英語および英語教育の現状を、研究し論考するものである。前半においては、文献研究により、近年のカンボジアの政治経済の情勢、学校教育における外国語の選択および変遷、英語および英語教育の現況を概観する。後半においては、最近首都プノンペンで著者が行なった、英語教員の研修（PD: Professional Development）に関する希望調査を報告し、その結果を日本および韓国の英語教師に関する同様の調査結果と比較して論じる。カンボジア人英語教師のPD希望が多かった分野は、「英語教授法・教授理論」、「学生・生徒理解」、「学会・講習会・ワークショップへの参加」、「学生／生徒・保護者とのコミュニケーション」など。日本人および韓国人英語教師による希望が多かった「英語運用能力の向上」に関するPDの希望は少なかった。これらの結果を、カンボジア人英語教員とのインタビュー・データ、e-mailメッセージなどのQualitative Dataを交えて論考する。

キーワード：カンボジア、英語教育、教員研修（PD）の希望分野、グローバル語としての英語、グローバル化、言語政策