

Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students



Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students

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Foreword

Folsom Cordova Unified School District, which serves three distinct communities at the outskirts of suburban Sacramento, has faced rapid unexpected changes in the ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic makeup of its student population over the past ten to fifteen years. Those of us serving this district's students, for the most part, were trained before teacher training programs offered courses in second language acquisition, cultural diversity, and adaptation to life in a new country.

The arrival of a few Vietnamese refugee students between 1975 and 1979 introduced the district's personnel to the challenges and rewards of teaching language minority students. Beginning in 1979, our community resettled about 10% of Sacramento County's newly arriving refugees, resulting in twenty to forty new students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, enrolling each month. These students, also from Vietnam, were of a different language group, ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically unlike the earlier students. During the following several years, students from yet other backgrounds enrolled in our district schools, challenging our teaching staff to learn enough about the changing population to plan and carry out effective programs.

Our district, like many others in the state, has come face to face with California's new student population with little preparation and few resources. The Asian and Minority Language Group Project of the California State Department of Education's Bilingual Education Office provides a valuable educational resource to classroom teachers, specialists, and administrators serving the language minority students within an ongoing program. We are pleased to work cooperatively with Van LE and other consultants at the Bilingual Education Office, as it is at the district and school level that the "ideal" educational programs are refined and reshaped by practical experience.

We, as individuals in the school community, have been enriched by the diverse talents, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and world views of peoples from so many backgrounds, and we are proud to recognize their importance in tomorrow's California with the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center, and the collaboration on the production of this handbook.

David H. Benson
Superintendent
Folsom Cordova Unified School District
November, 1988

Acknowledgements

This handbook was developed as part of the Asian and Minority Language Group Project in the Bilingual Education Office, California State Department of Education. The Project Team identified as its first major activity the development of handbooks for a number of Asian and minority language groups. The project was designed to assist school personnel in understanding selected Asian and minority language groups.

Chapter I and II of this handbook address general background factors regarding the Khmer-speaking language group: history, educational background, and sociocultural factors. Chapters III and IV contain specific information regarding the Khmer language and appropriate program offerings that will promote the academic achievement of Khmer-speaking students.

There are other related publications developed by the Bilingual Education Office, including *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*,ⁱ which provides extensive information regarding bilingual education theory and practice. It also outlines the basic principles underlying successful bilingual education programs and suggests a variety of implementation strategies. The analyses and illustrations in the *Theoretical Framework* are not specific to particular language groups. Rather, the *Theoretical Framework* provides a way of conceptualizing and organizing appropriate program services based on program goals, available resources, community background factors, and student characteristics.

The Asian and Minority Language Group Project has completed handbooks on Korean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Pilipino, Japanese, Portuguese,ⁱⁱ and Hmong speaking students.ⁱⁱⁱ We believe that by using these handbooks in conjunction with the *Theoretical Framework*, school personnel should be able to develop program services that are

ⁱ Information regarding this publication is available from the Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles, 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032. The Center also has handbooks on Vietnamese-speaking and Korean-speaking students.

ⁱⁱ Handbooks on Cantonese-speaking, Japanese-speaking, Pilipino-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking students are available from the Bureau of Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95801-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students is available from the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center (Folsom Cordova Unified School District): 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670; (916) 635-6815.

appropriately suited to the needs of individual language minority students.

The Asian and Minority Language Group Project Team of the Bilingual Education Office began development of this handbook in early 1980. The initial contributors were Than Pok of the United Cambodian Community in Long Beach, Kry Lay and Kung Chap of Long Beach Unified School District, and Bit Seng Lim of Oakland. The drafts were reviewed and improved by Reverend Oung Mean of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple in New Carrollton, Maryland, Im Proum and his wife, Sivone Proum, of Falls Church, Virginia, Ngon Som of Oceanside, and San Diego and Professor Franklin E. Huffman of Cornell University, New York. Betty Seal, former director of the Southeast Asian Learners (SEAL) Project, Long Beach Unified School District did extensive editorial work on the 1980-82 draft.

Work resumed on the handbook in 1987 in close collaboration with staff of Folsom-Cordova Unified School District. Two new contributors were added: Mory Ouk of Long Beach Unified School District and Judy Lewis of Folsom Cordova Unified School District. They spent time in meeting, collecting recent data, and doing extensive research work and rewriting sections of the handbook. Bilingual Education Office staff reviewed drafts and made suggestions to the writers. David Dolson, Assistant Manager, and Daniel Holt, Consultant, edited copies of the manuscript. Van LE, as Team Leader, provided overall coordination of the development of the handbook.

Every effort has been made to produce a handbook that will be useful to educators who are responsible for the education of Khmer-speaking students. Despite the extensive work of many individuals, this handbook should be regarded as a first edition. As time and resources permit, efforts will be made to refine it. It is difficult in one volume to depict the uniqueness and heterogeneity that characterizes the Khmer language group. The reader should recognize that any language group is complex and diverse, with individual members and generations having a variety of needs and characteristics based on different experiences in America and in their native countries.

This handbook represents an initial attempt to describe generally the needs and characteristics of the Khmer language group. Much more research and developmental work needs to be done by all who are responsible for ensuring the successful adaptation to America by the Khmer language group.

Judy Lewis
Folsom Cordova Unified School District,
November, 1988

Note to Readers

In the preparation of this handbook the authors have attempted to provide information that would be helpful to teachers and administrators working with Khmer students and their parents. Chapter 4 deals directly with instructional strategies for Khmer and English language development. To bring out the relevance and applicability of information elsewhere in the text, boxes with the heading "*Implications for Educators*" have been inserted into the text wherever appropriate. Since these implications and teaching hints are based on the main text, that should be read first. But the boxes will be the place to look later when you are searching for practical suggestions.

In the development of Chapter 1, "*The Background of the Khmer People*," we attempted to provide a sketch of the contemporary events taking place in Cambodia. Teachers of Khmer students may find this information too detailed for their use, but secondary social science teachers have expressed a need for such information, not yet available in textbooks. We recognize that the current political context of Cambodia necessarily involves differing opinions and accounts of ongoing events. The information in Chapter 1 has been gleaned from published materials, international agency reports, and the personal observations of contributors. The *References* section lists the works consulted in the development of Chapter 1, and other works on Cambodia are listed in the section *Further Reading*.

Background of the Khmer People

The people of Cambodia, the Khmer¹, have been living in southeast Asia for more than 4,000 years. Their culture and language have continued in an unbroken path until today. The past is marked with upheavals, but the events of the last three decades have scattered the Khmer across the world and placed them in limbo. More than 200,000 have made new homes in the United States, France, Canada, Australia, and England. Never before have so many Cambodians faced such sudden and dramatic changes in lifestyle, with their children thrust into the role of guides along this new path. A woman living in the ruins of a temple in 1988 told a New York Times reporter, "Pure Khmer culture, the civilization that built Angkor Wat, will not survive this generation." (Crossette, 1988)

Origins of the Khmer

Archeological studies document the existence of Khmer life in Southeast Asia 4,000 years ago. The paleolithic specimens of bone handiwork at Phnom Loang in the province of Kampot, covered with the neolithic deposits indicate that this site was occupied in 2000 B.C.

¹The people and the language are *Khmer*, and the country *Kampuchea*, both transliterations of the Khmer words. *Cambodia* is another transliteration of 'Kampuchea', and the outside world has generally used that form. After 1975, when the communists renamed the country first *Democratic Kampuchea*, and then *People's Republic of Kampuchea*, they reverted to the first transliteration, closer to the true Khmer pronunciation. In this handbook, 'Kampuchea' is used prior to the French colonial period, and 'Cambodia' after that time. 'Khmer' and 'Cambodian' are used interchangeably, although to most non-Khmer, 'Cambodian' refers to any national of Cambodia regardless of ethnicity and 'Khmer' refers to the group that is ethnically Khmer.

A radio carbon test performed in 1965 on a flint point and two tools made of horn and fragments of pottery brought up from the prehistoric cave at Phnom Teak Trang (Laang Spean, Battambang) date the occupation of this site from 4000 B.C. to 800 A.D. The artifacts of Samrong Sen (Kompong Chhnang province), especially tools and ornaments in bronze prove that technology had advanced to the use of bronze by the Khmer by the end of the neolithic period (2000 B.C.). A great deal of decorated pottery and bronze and iron bracelets and necklaces were discovered buried under the temple of Baksey Camkrong (Siemreap province); they were dated thousands of years before Christ, and showed the high degree of civilization of the Khmer since the early period of man's history in the world.

The Khmer Empire

Until the first century of the Christian era, the Khmer people were concentrated along the Mekong River from the middle Mekong southward to the sea. The country was known as *Norkor Phnom*, or *Founan* in Chinese. The seaport of O-Keo of Norkor Phnom was the biggest seaport during that time between China and India. Since the first century, history tells that the Indians and the Chinese had a good relationship with the Khmer of Nokor Phnom. In the fifth century the relationship between the king of Nokor Phnom and the emperor of China was very close.

By the end of the sixth century a new dynasty emerged which changed the name of the Khmer country from Nokor Phnom to *Tchenla*, or *Kambuja* (*Kampuchea*). In that period, Tchenla was a mighty empire which controlled the seas with a marine fleet of 500 battle ships. At the beginning of the seventh century, Tchenla was divided into *Tchenla Kauk* ('highland Tchenla') and *Tchenla Toeuk* ('lowland Tchenla'). Tchenla Kauk was ruled by King Isanavarman I, and had its capital at Sambor Prey Kuk (in Kompong Thom province). Tchenla Toeuk was ruled by King Jayavarman I, and had its capital at Angkor Borei (in Takeo province). It was in this capital city of Angkor Borei that the first stele written in Khmer script was found, dated to 611 A.D.

At the end of the seventh century, the monarchic conflicts and the Javanese invasion broke the mighty Tchenla, but the Khmer language and culture did not vanish. In 802 A.D., under King Jayavarman II, the Khmer reunited, regained their independence from the Javanese, and established a new capital at Hariharalaya (in Siemreap province). Jayavarman II and his successors were the first founders of Angkor's splendor, and the Khmer Empire ruled much of mainland southeast Asia for the next 600 years.

Monuments of the Khmer Empire

Throughout the country a multitude of major building complexes in laterite, brick, and sandstone were built, reflecting the great civilization and the glories of the Khmer during the Angkorian period (802 to 1431 A.D.). Of the whole complex of 72 major monuments, the most famous gigantic monument of Angkor Wat was the largest and artistically and architecturally the most accomplished. The two and a half mile long moat that surrounded Angkor Wat added to the details of its Khmer beauty and the perfect symmetry on every single piece of stone, from its walls and galleries to its five lotus bud towers, soaring gracefully 215 feet above the jungle. The Angkor Wat was one of the architectural wonders of the world. It took 37 years in the first half of the 12th century to complete this world-famous monument.

The high civilization of the Angkorian period was recorded in more than the building of temples like the Angkor Wat. There were irrigation canals, unlike any others in the world at that time, that the Khmer dug in eastern and western Baray province. These complex canals formed a fabulous hydraulic system for transportation and rice cultivation, which allowed the people to produce multiple crops of rice which could support a population of more than one million people, and the building of vast monuments.

The last monument built in this Angkorian period is the impressive Angkor Thom, literally 'great city.' It consisted of six square miles surrounded by a wide moat and double stone walls that were 20-30 feet high. Inside the city of Angkor Thom stood the epitome of towers known as Bayon. Each of its 54 gigantic towers was formed by

four faces of Buddha, smiling enigmatically as if to wish peace to the world.

All together, the whole complex of monuments, the temple of temples Angkor Wat, the tower of towers Bayon, and the hydraulic system of Baray, reflect a harmonious combination of a great civilization, a powerful political organization, and a strong centralized uniform Khmer society.

The fall of the Khmer Empire

By 1431, the capital of Angkor Thom was seized by the Siamese (Thais), who left it in ruins. They took everything they could carry away. They killed or captured and took with them women, artists, artisans, dancers, musicians, and scholars, along with all the written heritage. They enhanced their own kingdom by imitating and incorporating the high civilization of the Khmer. They burned up everything they could not carry with them, and left nothing but the ruins of Angkor. In 1432, one year after the fall of Angkor, the Khmer abandoned the ruins of the great city, moving southeast, finally retreating to Phnom Penh in 1434. A dark period of constant fighting, both to regain seized territory and to defend Khmer-held lands against the Siamese began and eventually lasted for 400 years.

At the beginning of the 17th century as the Khmer weakened, the Annam (Vietnamese) empire, which had already absorbed the kingdom of Champa, began to attack the Khmer kingdom from the east, in order to take Khmer Cochinchina (the present day southern Vietnam) for its own territory. The kingdom of Kampuchea was under attack from both sides, the Siamese from the west, and the Vietnamese from the east. Both were enemies of the Khmer Empire, but there was a deeper cultural difference between the Chinese-influenced Vietnamese and the Indian-influenced Khmer, who shared Theravada Buddhist beliefs with the Thai people.

Present-day Cambodia

The boundaries of present-day Cambodia might have receded further, but France colonized the region in the mid-1800's and set the boundaries where they were at that time. France took over control of its first bit of Vietnamese territory in 1858, and shortly after that King Ang Duong of Kampuchea signed the Khmer-France alliance treaty with Emperor Napoleon. On August 11, 1863, Cambodia became a French protectorate, and its internal autonomy was preserved. Twenty years later, on June 17, 1884, the French colonists surrounded the palace and forced the king to sign an agreement which made Cambodia even more dependent on France. Ninety years later, on November 9, 1953, Prince Norodom Sihanouk finally obtained complete independence from France for his country. The Cambodians hailed him as *Preah Beida Ekreach Cheat*, or 'Father of National Independence.'

During its independence, Cambodia was first given financial aid by the United States, but Prince Sihanouk accepted aid from China as well. To keep Cambodia out of the costly wars in Indochina, Prince Sihanouk maintained a middle position between the United States, the Soviets, and the Chinese, and he proclaimed that Cambodia would follow a neutral policy as a non-aligned country.

After the bombing of Cambodian villages Chantrea and Tradok Bek by U.S. bombers from Vietnam, Prince Sihanouk renounced American aid and asked for more aid from France and China. Cambodia cut diplomatic relations with the United States on May 3, 1965, and it was during this time that the Cambodian people first learned and used the word *yankee*. On March 18, 1970, while Prince Sihanouk was in France, Prince Sisowath Sirimatak and Lon Nol called the Parliament into full session to unanimously remove Prince Sihanouk from his position as head of state. Prince Sihanouk went to China, established his government in exile, and supported the Khmer Rouge.

The country was proclaimed to be the Khmer Republic on October 9, 1970. Backed by the United States, Marshall Lon Nol became the first President of the Khmer Republic. The military actions against the North Vietnamese staging areas in the eastern border regions intensified, aggravated by the invasions of South Vietnamese and U.S. troops. These actions pushed the Vietnamese communists further into Cambodia, and intensified the disruption of Cambodian villagers'

lives in the eastern provinces. The communist movement, which had existed in the remote border mountains for years, was able to recruit more and more villagers. American aid was once again accepted by Lon Nol, and the Khmer Republic aligned itself with the United States in an effort to keep the Khmer Rouge from taking over. Even with U.S. support, Lon Nol's administration was unable to control the war and its effects on the population. After five years of fighting, the Khmer Republic came to an end on April 17, 1975, thirteen days before the North Vietnamese overran Saigon.

The "year zero"

On April 17, the Khmer Rouge entered the capital city in the early morning. For about two hours, there was rejoicing, everybody laughing, shouting, cheering, waving, and jumping—except for the Khmer Rouge themselves. At around noon, the Khmer Rouge soldiers began coming into houses, firing guns into the air, and ordering people to leave the city immediately. Shocked and terrified, crowds of people with bundles on their heads and shoulders started to fill the roads, following the direction of the soldiers' pointed guns. A few cars, motorcycles, and bicycles were used, but most people were on foot with whatever possessions they had quickly grabbed. A city of two million was emptied; the people marched for two and three months along the roads into the countryside. The people were herded into forest work camps.

In a violent and senseless social experiment, the Khmer Rouge attempted to completely restructure traditional Cambodian society, bypassing the stages of socialism and going straight to communism. Prince Sihanouk recalled that on September 1975 the Khmer Rouge Army Commander-in-Chief Son Sen² and Prime Minister Khieu Samphan told him of their plans for Cambodia: "Thus the name of our country will be written in golden letters in world history as the first country that succeeded in communization without useless steps." (Chanda, 1986).

²Not to be confused with *Son Sann*, the leader of one of the resistance groups after 1979.

Signs of the former society—religion, urban centers, money, transportation and books—were destroyed. Temples, the centers of village life and traditional education were demolished, the monks forced into labor or killed. A Khmer Rouge Tribunal Document detailed what would happen to the monks who did not discard their robes, abandon their spiritual way of life and return to the secular world: they “...will be regarded as enemies who undermine from within and to whom a policy will apply ‘to leave them alive brings no advantage; to kill them incurs no loss’” (Hawk, 1987).

Family life was disrupted—parents and spouses sent to different work camps, the children raised in communal groups to honor *Angkar* (the ‘organization’) rather than their parents. The old relationships—mother, father, husband, wife—were reduced to *sammamitt*, ‘equal friend’, or ‘comrade.’

The country was turned into a vast labor camp devoted to agriculture. The country’s infrastructure was destroyed as the professionals, officials, government employees, teachers, and doctors were targeted as enemies of *Angkar*. Outward signs of a former life of education, wealth, or western sophistication invited persecution or death. Calluses on the writing fingers, knowledge of calendars and understanding French or English phrases were enough to bring about persecution.

Throughout the country, the newly renamed *Democratic Kampuchea*, there was a basic division between the “old people,” who had lived with the Khmer Rouge cadres all along, and the “new people,” who were evacuees of the cities and towns. The New People were strictly classified as enemies captured as war prisoners, and the Old People treated them worse than animals or slaves. After 12 or 18 hours of forced labor—plowing, hoeing, digging canals, or building dams—the New People were fed last, given a small ration of rice gruel, then led to nightly meetings to criticize one other. If the same person was criticized two or more times, he would be executed. Night after night, people were led away, hands tied behind their backs, never to be seen again.

The Khmer Rouge forced Cambodia into their image of an ideal communist society, in which every person was equal, living just like one other materially, morally, culturally. But the Cambodians received only suffering, separation, starvation, forced labor, fear, and death.

After 1979, outsiders who came to Cambodia found mass graves all over the country, with thousands of bodies and skeletons in each, some skulls still wearing blindfolds. Three million³, out of seven and one half million Cambodians, were killed under the Pol Pot regime.

Implications for Educators:

There has been quite a lot written about Cambodia, the conditions under Pol Pot, and refugees' experiences. Accounts vary from newspaper articles which are often based on personal accounts that are translated through several people before reaching the reporter, to scholarly analyses that attack other scholars' conclusions. The political beliefs of the writers often color their accounts. Becker (1986) says that the political left (the anti-war activists of the 1960's and 1970's) turned towards downplaying the horror and dwelling on the damage done by U.S. intervention, while the political right exploited the tales of grief to show that the United States had been justified in fearing a communist takeover of Indochina. Those who are interested in reading more about Cambodia should become familiar with the wide variety of materials available, and the political orientations of the writers.

Educators working with Cambodian students and their families should keep an open mind and refrain from assuming that one account is true for all people from all regions. The political issues continue to cause extreme reactions, and often are at the root of problems which arise between people working side-by-side in American-Khmer communities.

Communist Vietnamese invasion

Communist Vietnamese in Hanoi assumed that the Khmer Rouge, led by communists who had studied in Hanoi and learned communism shoulder-to-shoulder to Ho Chi Minh in Paris, would accept guidance from Hanoi. However, they underestimated the historical animosity towards the Vietnamese. The Khmer Rouge gave no allegiance to

³The "true" figure will never be known. Most estimates are between two and three million. Meng-Try Ea (1987) estimates conservatively that 2.3 million died during the period from 1970 to 1978. This included 700,000 who were killed by bombing, fighting between Lon Nol's troops and the Khmer Rouge, and indirect effects of that war. It also includes 1,000,000 who died as a direct result of the Khmer Rouge actions—violent deaths and deprivation under harsh conditions. The remainder were "normal" deaths. Most accounts add the deaths that occurred after the Vietnamese invasion, during the famine and escape to Thailand.

Hanoi, and in fact, pushed back the Vietnamese settlers, fought battles at Vietnam's border, and alarmed Vietnam by opening relations with China, Vietnam's enemy. Vietnam found that the Chinese were at its western border as well as its northern border. Democratic Kampuchea broke relations with Vietnam at the end of 1977.

The Khmer Rouge launched raids into Vietnam from the "Parrot's Beak," the portion of Cambodia that juts into Vietnam. The communist Vietnamese countered these attacks, and in 1977 invaded Cambodia in the southern and eastern regions of Cambodia. As they "liberated" areas from the Khmer Rouge, they encouraged prison camp laborers to return to their homes. By January 1979, backed by the Heng Samrin "front of national rescue," the Vietnamese attacked and took over Phnom Penh. Those who were the remnants of Pol Pot's government and military forces retreated into the mountains in northwest Cambodia along the Thai border. Weary Cambodians were optimistic that they could return to their old ways of living, but later in 1979, the Vietnamese forces and the Khmer Rouge guerrillas continued to fight for control of the villages, burning the remaining rice reserves. As a new period of turmoil began, Cambodians were given the opportunity and impetus to escape the killing fields, to find peaceful places to settle. The events of the previous four years—plus the burning of rice reserves and crops, the destruction of the transportation system, and a government devoid of trained administrators—led to widespread famine which propelled hundreds of thousands more to the Thai border during 1979-80, awakening the world with scenes of starvation and desperation.

Fleeing Cambodia as Political Refugees

In the history of the world there is no evidence of Khmer refugees or immigrants into other countries. The people have always retained a strong attachment to their homeland and pride in being Khmer. The nearly half million Khmer found in Surin, Srisaket and Boriram provinces of northern Thailand, and the approximately one-half million Khmer living in the eastern provinces of South Vietnam were

not refugees or immigrants. They lived on what was once Khmer soil, land that belonged to their ancestors, but was annexed by their neighbors.

Not until April 1975, right after the communist Khmer Rouge forces took over the Khmer Republic did the Cambodians flee their homeland to other countries to escape the Khmer Rouge. Many Cambodians went to Vietnam, some went to Singapore, and some to the Philippines. In the four years after the communist Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge took power in Cambodia, the refugee movement to Thailand was slight (fewer than 35,000), due to the suddenness and severity of the Khmer Rouge actions. Once the Vietnamese communists displaced the Khmer Rouge in 1979, people fled by the thousands. Individually or in family groups, nearly one million Cambodians moved towards Thailand, fleeing the horrors of the past and uncertainty about the future under another communist regime, this one led by ancient enemies. Men, women, old and young carried, pushed, pulled, dragged, and helped one another walk, crawl, and run through the forests, across mine fields, through water, under the heavy monsoon rains and hot tropical sun. Despite the dangers—ambush, mine explosions, robbery, rape, starvation, and disease—more than half a million of them succeeded in reaching the border area near Thailand by the end of 1979.

Resistance forces

Although the Vietnamese overthrow of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge released people from their forced labor camps, the people were subjected to another communist regime, this one backed by Vietnam and the Soviet Union. In addition, the historic fears of the Vietnamese "slowly eating silkworms"—an allusion to the policy of slowly absorbing Cambodian territory while claiming to help support the government—returned as thousands of Vietnamese soldiers and settlers arrived in Cambodia. Resistance forces formed to fight the Vietnamese occupation.

The first resistance group was made up of the remnants of the deposed Khmer Rouge, still led by Pol Pot. The second was a nationalist, anti-communist group led by Son Sann, a former minister in Sihanouk's government, called the KPNLF ('Khmer People's National

Liberation Front'). The third was led by Prince Sihanouk, who was still respected and a symbol for a united return to the former neutrality; his group is known simply as the "Sihanoukists," or FUNCINPEC, an acronym for the French name meaning "National United Front for an Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia." Until 1982, these groups competed for control of border areas, all of them fighting the Vietnamese occupation forces. With strong urging by Chinese, Thai, Indonesian, and Malaysian leaders, the three groups formed a coalition in 1982, called the "Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea" (CGDK).

Thailand, fearful of Vietnam's expansion, saw the Cambodian buffer zone disappear with Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. As a result, Thailand encouraged any resistance groups who would keep the Vietnamese at a distance. China continued to support the Khmer Rouge, admitting that Pol Pot had "made some mistakes in the past" (Chanda, 1986), but relying on the Khmer Rouge to keep fighting the Vietnamese. The other countries of Southeast Asia were dismayed to find that in addition to advising the Vietnamese-backed government in Cambodia, the Soviet navy was installed at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. The United States, in its new friendship with China, supported Chinese policy towards Vietnam, which was based on "bleeding Vietnam white"—forcing the country to forego economic and social development to support the military both in Cambodia and at the Vietnam-China border. Thus, Thailand, China, and the countries of ASEAN all supported the idea of building the resistance forces, whether Khmer Rouge or non-Communist, to keep the Vietnamese and Soviets contained. Thailand agreed to let Chinese ships unload supplies for the Khmer Rouge at Sattahip and Klong Yai ports, while the Thai army provided transportation of the arms and ammunition to the border area camps. As early as 1979, China deposited \$5 million with the Chinese embassy in Bangkok for Khmer Rouge financial needs, including food, medicine, and civilian supplies. The Chinese and Thai set up training camps in southern China for resistance fighters. The international food programs fed the Khmer Rouge along with the civilians; the UN tolerated the Thai demand that everyone be fed, as they needed Thailand's cooperation as a first asylum country. The United States worked behind the scenes, providing ASEAN with a covert \$15 million per year to strengthen the coalition and provide

materiel for the non-Communist resistance forces. (Chanda, 1986). At about this time, the U.S. lawmakers and public opinion favored the support of freedom fighters all over the world; Congress in 1985 authorized \$5 million in overt economic or military aid to the coalition. By then, the Khmer Rouge were rejuvenated, resupplied, and numbered about 35,000. Son Sann's non-communist forces experienced organizational problems, and Prince Sihanouk, hating Pol Pot for killing his family, holding him prisoner, and destroying his country, remained the coalition's reluctant leader.

International refugee assistance in Thailand

In April, 1979, the Royal Thai government, alarmed by the lack of international concern for their plight as the only mainland refuge in Southeast Asia, and looking at half a million people ready to cross the border into Thailand, began pushbacks. On April 12, 1,700 "illegal immigrants" were bussed to the border and handed over to Khmer Rouge soldiers at gunpoint. In the third week of April, Khmer Rouge soldiers were allowed to march 50,000 civilians inside the Thai border then back into Cambodia. In mid-April, 826 Cambodians were pushed over a cliff in Buriram province, and on May 7, another 250 Cambodians were pushed back over the border. Then, the world took notice on June 8, when more than 40,000 Cambodian refugees were loaded onto hundreds of buses driven to the border near the temple of Preah Vihear.

"...they were told that there was a path down the mountains but that on either side of it there were mine fields ...on the other side the Vietnamese army was waiting to welcome them ...the path down the mountains became steeper, the jungle thicker ...dozens, scores of people fell onto mines ... for days this operation went on ...altogether, between 43,000 and 45,000 people were pushed down the cliffs at Preah Vihear." (Shawcross, 1984).

Once again, survivors made their way to Thailand; and again they faced the explosions, starvation, and ambush.

The countries of the world met in Geneva in the July, 1979, to discuss the plight of the "boat people." The situation of Cambodians fleeing into a resistant Thailand was barely mentioned. Countries like Japan offered to pay large percentages of the costs of the program,

while countries like the United States, France, Australia, and Canada agreed to give permanent homes to 260,000 of the refugees, initially. Thailand, under the condition that after the crisis passed, no "residuals" would remain in Thailand, agreed to provide first asylum protection to refugees from Cambodia (as well as Vietnam and Laos). Khao-I-Dang was opened in November, 1979, creating refuge for up to 160,000 Cambodians. Thailand declared an open border to all who wished to enter first asylum.

Refugee camps in Thailand

There have been several different kinds of camps for Cambodians inside Thailand since 1975. Today there are only two camps in which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) consider people for resettlement as refugees: Khao-I-Dang and Kap Choeng. The other camps—Huay Chan, Na Trao, Site B, Site 2, Site 8, Borai, Sok Sann, and Ta Luan—hold "illegal aliens," those Cambodians who have not been designated as refugees. In addition there are several locations built to temporarily hold Cambodians displaced by sporadic fighting.

Khao-I-Dang was the largest Cambodian refugee camp, located in the eastern part of Aranyaprathet, Prachinburi province, Thailand, built to contain up to 160,000 people. By May 1980, the Cambodian population in the camp was 136,000; it eventually reached 142,000 in July, 1980. At that time, Khao-I-Dang held the largest concentration of Cambodians in the world outside of Cambodia.

The camp was built by the Cambodians themselves, with the help of international agencies' funds, under the supervision of the UNHCR. The Royal Thai government maintained control of the camp. Surrounded by double barbed wire fences and guarded by Thai soldiers, the camp was divided into eleven sections, each with its elected leader, and food distribution and security teams. Construction materials, mainly bamboo, thatch, and plastic sheeting were provided to each family to build its shelter. Relief items such as sleeping mats, blankets, and buckets were immediately supplied. Food and especially water were the first priority, and since there was no water source at Khao-I-Dang, more than a hundred water trucks per day delivered

water to huge holding vats. People lined up for water, one bucketful rationed to every two people. Trenches were dug to provide latrines. Medical clinics and schools were established by voluntary agencies in each section. The serious public health outbreaks were treated in one of the two large hospitals. The physical survival needs were met, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations and the charity of the concerned world.

The camps were financed and run by the United Nations and voluntary agencies from around the world operated medical and educational programs inside the camps. By United Nations definition, a refugee is

“any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his habitual residence, is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.”

The United States acceded to this definition in 1968, and included a nearly identical definition in the Refugee Act of 1980.

The responsibilities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are: 1) to protect refugees against attack or forcible repatriation; 2) offer them assistance—food, shelter, clothing, medical care; and 3) help them find a “durable solution.” For most refugees the choices for a durable solution are only two: return home, or go to live in a third country (for some refugees, there is a third choice—to settle in the country of sanctuary—but in Thailand, this is not even a remote possibility). Efforts at voluntary repatriation met with little success, and public and congressional opinion in the United States at the time resulted in reluctance to begin accepting Cambodians in addition to the Vietnamese boat people. The interviewing process in the camp went slowly. Families that had been broken apart since the evacuation of the cities had no way of knowing who was still alive. Farmers who never learned to read had no identity records or even knew their birth dates. It became impossible for the officials to determine who was who, and the UNHCR guidelines required that refugee status not be granted to anyone who is seriously suspected of having committed a

crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity. There were many cases in which families had some members who were Khmer Rouge, and others who were victims of the Khmer Rouge; having any relative identified as Khmer Rouge eliminated the chances of resettlement for the whole family. Thus, the political situation made a human situation very complicated. Officials denied asylum to thousands, maintaining that they were either economic migrants fleeing bad harvests, soldiers preparing for battle, or could not adequately document their time between 1975 and 1979 and therefore might be Khmer Rouge. In 1982 and 1983, the situation was clarified and Cambodians no longer had to have physical evidence to document their refugee status. During the next two years 50,000 Cambodians left for the United States, Australia, France, Canada, and other western nations. At the same time the United States began to reduce its rates of resettlement, aiming for an eventual switch from refugee processing to regular immigration.

Thailand was concerned that the international refugee processing would act as a magnet, drawing persons who would otherwise have no choice about living under the communist regimes in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. In February 1980, Thailand closed the border, less than six months after declaring it open. People who entered Thailand after that date were no longer placed on the refugee list. They were sent back to the border areas by Thai soldiers. The UN continued to provide food and shelter to them, but they had no hope of leaving for the United States or any other countries. There was a gradual decline in the new arrivals, but every night, hundreds of new refugees sneaked into the camp, bribing the Thai guards to let them in, and finding ways to obtain tracing cards that would allow them to be "long-stayers," or legal camp residents. Despite the continual departures for third countries, the population of the camp kept increasing. By July 1980, the UNHCR began to transfer refugees from Khao-I-Dang to three new camps, Kampot, Mairut, and SaKaeo. The refugees who had been accepted by third countries went to the transit and reprocessing center, Phanat Nikhom, near Bangkok.

By 1985, many of the camps and holding centers in Thailand were closed, leaving only the border encampments and evacuation centers (run by the UN Border Relief Operation, 'UNBRO', providing food and interim shelter during the dry season offensives). By 1987, even Khao-

I-Dang, the largest and most stable camp, was closed. More than half the refugees in Thailand (a total of 238,000 Khmer have been registered as refugees with the UNHCR between April 1975 and the end of 1987) have been waiting there for four or more years. Those who arrived as children are now getting married and producing a second generation, whose experience of life is confined to the inside of the refugee camp. They live a life of nonsense.

Implications for Educators:

Cambodian families in the United States are fragmented, both by the losses of the war and the Pol Pot regime, and by the politics and policies that govern the placement and potential resettlement of those still at the border or in Khao-I-Dang.

In Khao-I-Dang there are three kinds of Cambodians: legal refugees, who were registered with the UN before February 1983; "family card" holders, who entered the camp between February 1983 and August 1984; and illegals who arrived after August 1984. The illegals do not get food rations, and the Thais frequently make surprise raids to round up the illegals and send them to the border encampments.

Since 1985, there has been a special immigration program, called the "humanitarian parole" program, for the relatives of U.S. Cambodian families who are living in the border encampments. To date, however, fewer than 700 individuals have entered the U.S. by this method. (Refugee Reports, IX(10), October, 1988).

Border camps

The quarter of a million Cambodians camped along the border today are not refugees; they are "displaced persons" living in about twenty makeshift communities in a strip of war zone. The border population remains fairly stable at 250,000-300,000, down from a high of 600,000-750,000 in 1980. The three factions of the coalition government control the border areas, and the UN provides food through the UNBRO. Each year the Vietnamese attack these areas in an effort to dislodge the resistance groups and the civilians who support them. Evacuation areas are set up further inside Thailand, and when the dry season fighting is over, the people move back to the border areas. In 1985, the Vietnamese destroyed many of the resistance bases and actually invaded Thailand by a few miles.

Figure 1.

Border Camps and United Nations Holding Centers on the Thai-Cambodian Border, 1988



Cambodians on the Thai-Cambodian border (1987-88).

The major refugee camps and border encampments on the Thai side of the border are shown with triangle markers and reversed type. Other names which have appeared from time to time are also shown (there is great variation in place names—most camps are created in “no man’s land” and are not officially named). The population figures are based on recent articles in *Christian Science Monitor* (Russell, 1988) and *Refugee Reports* (September 1987 and December 1987). Only about 14,000 of those in Khao-I-Dang are eligible for resettlement interviews, and the rest are considered “illegal aliens” in Thailand.

The resistance forces who make up the coalition government, especially the Khmer Rouge, control the civilians living nearby with coercion and violence. Even among the non-communist resistance forces, those in charge have few leadership skills and control harshly. Site 2 is one of the largest of the border encampments; it is near a KPNLF (Son Sann) military installation and holds 185,000 displaced persons. For the people in these border encampments, life is dangerous and non-productive—no stable community life, no education, an uncertain future.

Implications for Educators:

The young children born in Thailand have grown up in an environment of crowding, poor sanitation, idleness, authoritarianism, and dependency. They and their parents will probably have different needs than the groups of Cambodians who spent less time in the camp environment.

What will happen to them? Current optimistic speculation is that if, and when, the communist Vietnamese leave Cambodia, and the coalition government under Prince Sihanouk takes power, with a group of international observers watching the Khmer Rouge, the people in the border area will return to the interior of Cambodia to begin rebuilding.

Cambodia's Future

A settlement of the problems in Cambodia depends on an agreement among the Soviet Union, China, and the United States, as well as Thailand and the other nations of ASEAN, in addition to compromises between the four contenders in Cambodia and Vietnam. In 1988, the Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev, shows signs of pressuring the Vietnamese occupation forces to withdraw from Cambodia, following their "Afghanistan plan." (Vietnam says that half of their troops will be out by the end of 1988, and the other half by the end of 1990). Vietnam's economy, meager as it is, goes to support its army, the fifth largest in the world. The Soviet Union provides most of the money to Vietnam's economy, as the western countries, led by the United States, refuse aid and international loans to Vietnam as long as

they occupy Cambodia. The Soviets are anxious to lessen the drain on their budget, and the Soviet-Chinese impasse over Cambodia is a major obstacle to improved relations between the two countries. As international relations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China turn toward economic development and improved relations, the possibility that Cambodia will be left to Cambodian rule also improves.

There is, however, doubt as to what the Cambodian government will be like. Will the non-communist members of the coalition be able to keep Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge in line? Are there enough trained leaders left to run the country? Will an international peacekeeping group be able to protect a new Cambodian government from control by Vietnam, the Soviets, or the Chinese? Will the ASEAN states feel that both the USSR and China are contained? In October 1985, Prince Sihanouk summed up his ideas to Robert Shaplen in an interview:

"There must be free elections, the right to choose our own political system through self-determination, and our own economic system. So far, I see no signs of this happening. And I am worried about many other things, including demographic changes. Soon we will have a whole new generation of young people in Cambodia, and this will pose a danger to us. Time remains in favor of the Vietnamese. ...Neither the Soviet Union nor China will want to give up its strategic position in Southeast Asia. And the Vietnamese will not surrender their position in Cambodia simply for the shadow of compromise. The Khmer Rouge, for their part, can fight until most of the country is in ashes, but it's wishful thinking to hope that they can ruin or exhaust the Vietnamese." (Shaplen, 1986).

As this handbook goes to press, there are signs of movement between the various groups with a stake in Cambodia's future, for the first time since the "Third Indochina War" began with the Vietnamese communists' occupation of Cambodia in December, 1978. Informal talks that brought together the factions of the coalition, the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian government, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and the nations of ASEAN ended in July, 1988, with no concrete agreements, but with the doors open for future meetings.

Until the political situation in Cambodia is resolved, the situation at Thailand's border with Cambodia will continue to be

unstable and unpredictable. The children in California's schools, and their families, are still affected by these events that take place ten thousand miles away.

Figure 2.

Chronology: 1975 to 1988

1975

April 17 Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge captures Phnom Penh.

Professional, government and educated Cambodians flee. 150,000 enter Vietnam; 34,000 reach Thailand. *4,600 are resettled in the United States.*

1975-1978

Cambodia is closed to the outside. Khmer Rouge begin the communist restructuring of the society. As much as one-third of the population dies. Khmer Rouge attack Vietnam. United States and China normalize relations. Vietnam launches "Cambodian rescue," invades Cambodia. *27,000 Cambodians arrive in United States in 1976-78.*

1979

January 7 Vietnamese communists capture Phnom Penh. Heng Samrin is new leader. China and Thailand meet to plan support for guerrilla war against the Vietnamese in Cambodia. 100,000 Cambodians crowd the Thai border.

February China attacks Vietnam at its northern border, "punishment" for invading Cambodia.

March Soviet navy establishes base at Cam Ranh Bay.

June 8-12 Thailand forces 44,000 Cambodians back into Cambodia at gunpoint. Many die. International community takes notice.

September UN allows DK (Democratic Kampuchea/Khmer Rouge) to retain Cambodia's seat.

October Son Sann forms the KPNLF (non-communist resistance) to fight the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge.

- November Thai government allows the UN to establish camps for refugees and begin processing for resettlement. Khao-I-Dang opens. Thailand declares "open border."
- December U.S. government estimates that 350,000 Cambodians died of starvation during this year. Nong Chan Land Bridge begun to funnel food and medicine to starving Cambodians inside Cambodia, aware that food is also reviving the Khmer Rouge.
- First outsider glimpses of the Khmer Rouge atrocities. 600,000+ Cambodians on the border. 132,000 refugees at Khao-I-Dang. *6,000 Cambodians arrive in the United States*

1980

-
- Refugee Act of 1980 passed in the United States. Quotas are increased, funding program begun for short term assistance to refugees.
- January 15 Thai government halts registration of refugees at Khao-I-Dang to decrease the "magnet effect." Thailand closes border; new arrivals are sent to border camps.
- June 17 UNHCR begins voluntary repatriation. Poor response.
- June 23 Vietnamese troops attack border encampments. Thai soldiers and Cambodian civilians are killed.
- Khmer Rouge rejuvenated due to international relief and Chinese supplies. *16,000 Cambodians arrive in United States*

1981

Thailand begins "humane deterrence" policy. Prince Sihanouk forms third faction of non-communist resistance forces in the border area. *27,000 Cambodians arrive in the United States*

1982

-
- UN creates the UN Border Relief Organization to provide food and shelter (evacuation sites) for Cambodians confined to border camps.
- June 22 Coalition of Khmer Rouge, KPNLF (Son Sann), and FUNCINPEC (Prince Sihanouk) resistance groups is formed. Prince Sihanouk is president, Son Sann prime minister, and Khieu Samphan vice president and foreign minister.
- Fall U.S. covert assistance of \$15 million per year through ASEAN to equip and train non-communist resistance. *20,234 Cambodians arrive in the United States*

1983

May	Further clarification in admissions screening. <i>13,114 Cambodians arrive in the United States</i>
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1984

Severe dry season fighting along the border, resistance bases attacked, resistance forces and civilians go into Thailand.
19,849 Cambodians arrive in the United States

1985

February-	Sixteen resistance forces bases destroyed. Vietnamese troops invade Thailand in pursuit of the fleeing resistance forces. UNBRO evacuation sites open to take in people.
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September- October	Thai government moves evacuated people back to the border. U.S. Congress votes \$5 million overt aid to resistance forces. <i>19,131 Cambodians arrive in the United States</i>
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1986

Changes in Vietnam's leadership. Improvement of Soviet-China relations. *10,054 Cambodians arrive in the United States*

1987

Khao-I-Dang, the last UN camp, is closed. 21,000 Cambodians remain there, uncertain as to whether or not they will be interviewed for resettlement. Border encampments hold 300,000, ineligible for refugee status. *1,539 Cambodians arrive in the United States*

1988

Soviets propose that Vietnamese withdraw troops from Cambodia. Vietnam withdraws 20,000 by June, promises another 30,000 by year's end, and the remainder by the end of 1990. July meeting held between resistance factions, Cambodian government, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and ASEAN nations. Soviets, ASEAN, Thailand, U.S., Vietnam agree that Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot cannot be allowed to return to power.

Cambodian Resettlement in the United States

So far, from 1975 to 1987, more than 215,000 Cambodian refugees have been able to leave Thailand for a resettlement country. The United States has resettled 140,000 persons, another 34,000 are in France, and 41,000 are in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, Malaysia, and other countries of the world. In the United States, Cambodians make up 16.5% of the Southeast Asians resettled between 1975 and the present.

Table A

Number of Indochinese Who Arrived in the United States, 1975-87

FY	From Vietnam	From Cambodia	From Laos
1975	125,000	4,600	800
1976	3,200	1,100	10,200
1977	1,900	300	400
1978	11,100	1,300	8,000
1979	44,500	6,000	30,200
1980	95,200	16,000	55,500
1981	86,100	27,100	19,300
1982	43,656	20,234	9,437
1983	23,459	13,114	2,835
1984	24,927	19,849	7,224
1985	25,209	19,131	5,181
1986	22,443	10,054	12,894
1987	23,012	1,539	15,564
Total	529,706	140,321	177,535

Refugee Reports VIII:12, December 1987 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. State Department).

Among the first group of 5,000 to 6,000 Cambodians to arrive in the United States were the families of diplomats, former employees of the American Embassy, military officers who had access to planes or

ships for escape, military trainees, students, businessmen, and other government employees who worked in the border provinces near Thailand or Vietnam. The large numbers of Cambodians who entered after 1979 brought with them different backgrounds and experiences. This group tended to be less educated, for those among them who knew how to read or write, tell time or use numbers, were suspect and culled out during the four years of genocide. Added to the hurdles of entering a literacy-based society, this group brought with them the scars of their recent past; the process of adaptation to a new society was added to the process of grief and recovery from witnessing and experiencing atrocities. Even those who did have some education survived only because they pretended to be illiterate. Very few had been exposed to a language other than Khmer, and at that time the ESL programs in the reprocessing centers were sporadic and poorly taught.

The most recent arrivals are of similar backgrounds, but they have been confined to camps for longer periods of time, and bring with them the problems induced by captivity and idleness. Most of these latest arrivals are here because of family reunification.

Cambodian population centers in the United States

The philosophy governing the placement of refugees in the United States has been one of dispersal all over the United States, without regard to elements of family groups (the exception to this was an experimental program called the "Khmer Guided Placement Project" in 1980 and 1981).

Because of the way in which statistics have been kept, and because of secondary migration, it is difficult to pinpoint the current populations in any particular state or city. More than 75,000 Cambodians arrived in the United States between 1975 and 1982, and informal estimates are that perhaps half of those were resettled in California locations. Data collected since 1983 on the destinations of refugees by ethnic group show that during the past six years Cambodians were resettled primarily in California (25%), Texas (8%), Massachusetts (8%), Washington (7%), New York (5%), Pennsylvania (4%), Illinois (4%), Minnesota, Virginia, Utah, Georgia, Ohio, North

Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Maryland, Connecticut, and Florida (*Refugee Reports*, December 1987).

Of the first group of Cambodian refugees to enter the United States in 1975 and 1976, about half were assigned sponsors in California where they were well received, especially in areas with large Asian communities. Later groups settled in or moved to California because of its agreeable climate, assistance from relatives and friends who were already here, good opportunities for training and employment, supportive social services, and growing Cambodian communities which gave them a source of ethnic solidarity and help.

Estimates of the current total Cambodian population in California vary from 45,000 to 66,000⁴. The difficulty of arriving at a closer estimate results from several factors. The Cambodian community groups are organized to different degrees in different areas, and local leaders have no way to count their former country-mates living nearby. Welfare departments in each county now collect data on the ethnicity of clients, and whether or not they were originally resettled in other states. However, their numbers do not account for those who arrived in California and were on assistance before such background information was collected. Counties vary as to the programs and services that are offered, so some the statistics in some counties cannot be generalized to all counties. Welfare statistics do not count Cambodians who are self-sufficient, nor those whose children are over eighteen years of age; unmarried youth and older individuals are likewise not counted. Refugee resettlement agencies keep statistics on how many people arrive each year, but these figures don't reflect those who move to other counties or states, nor those who move to California from other states. Nor are there reliable estimates of how much the population has increased with U.S.-born children and deaths of people who were resettled here.

⁴ These are very crude estimates. 1) In San Diego and Long Beach, community leaders estimate family size at about 4.6, and generate a state-wide estimate of 45,000 Cambodians. 2) The Population Research Unit of the state's Department of Finance estimated the number of Southeast Asians in California at 369,000 in October, 1986. Increasing that by 10% gives about 400,000 for 1987. Assuming that the Southeast Asians have moved to California in roughly equal proportions—not a very safe assumption—then 16.5% of 400,000 Southeast Asians gives an upper estimate of 66,000 Cambodians in California in 1987.

The most reliable figures on linguistic groups come from the statistics collected each spring by the State Department of Education in the Language Census. The numbers of children from kindergarten to grade 12 who speak a language other than English are reported as either limited English proficient (LEP) or fluent English proficient (FEP); statistics are reported by school district and county. The numbers of FEP students may be undercounted as more and more children in school understand, speak, read and write English well. Table B below shows the numbers of Khmer-speaking students reported since 1981.

Table B

ENROLLMENT OF CAMBODIAN STUDENTS IN
CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS, 1981 TO 1988

<i>CENSUS</i>	<i>LEP</i>	<i>FEP</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Spring 1981	2,474	419	2,893
Spring 1982	5,166	650	5,816
Spring 1983	6,695	937	7,632
Spring 1984	8,399	1,434	9,833
Spring 1985	10,730	2,005	12,735
Spring 1986	13,907	2,723	16,630
Spring 1987	15,665	3,914	19,084
Spring 1988	17,274	4,283	21,557

DATA BICAL Report No. 88-71. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, Spring 1988.

Using the Language Census figures by district and county code designation, it is possible to estimate which areas have significant Khmer-speaking populations. Appendix A shows the enrollment of limited English proficient Khmer speakers by district and by the percentage of the total Khmer LEP population in California. Long Beach was ranked first with 24% of the total; Stockton was second with 17% (two districts); San Diego third with 6.5%; Los Angeles fourth with 6%; Oakland and Modesto (two districts) fifth with about 5%; Fresno and Santa Ana each had about 4%. Other cities with sizable Cambodian populations are San Francisco, San Jose, and Lodi. There are a large number of districts with small numbers of Khmer-

speaking students, suggesting that the Cambodian population is widely dispersed throughout California, with a large concentrations in a few cities.

Worldwide Khmer Population

Khmer was spoken by nearly 90% of the population of Cambodia, and spoken by about 400,000 people in northeastern Thailand in the provinces of Surin, Srisakhet, and Burinam (Huffman, 1970a). About one-half million Khmer-speakers live in South Vietnam, in the eastern provinces. Another half million Khmer are refugees scattered all over the world (France, the United States, Canada, Australia, England, and Malaysia) and in Thai refugee and holding centers.



Educational Background of Khmer Refugees

Factors in Cambodia

Pre-Angkorian period

Khmer culture, literature, architecture and art were highly developed from the third century on. The well-known Khmer stele carving in Sanskrit dated to the third century was discovered by a French scholar in the former lowland Cambodia area now known as Vo Canh, Nha Trang, in South Vietnam. It established that there was highly developed education among the Khmer, using a second language, Sanskrit, as the medium of instruction.

Even though the education in that era was accessible to very few people and was usually limited to those living in and around the royal palace, within 300 years a script for writing Khmer had been developed. The inscription written in Khmer and scripts found sculpted on the stone at Angkor Borei (Takeo, Cambodia), bear the date 611 A.D. The themes were simple, but the rich vocabulary denoted an advanced culture and education of the period.

Angkorian period

During the Angkorian period, Khmer literature appeared in two languages, Sanskrit and Khmer, sculpted on steles or stone pillars or written on animal hides. Mostly, those in Sanskrit were written in verse and those in Khmer were in prose. One of the most celebrated works is the *Ream Ker*, which is an epic poem adapted from the Indian *Ramayana*. The Khmer *Ream Ker* has its own style and originality

with new information from the real lives of the Khmer completely different from the *Ramayana*.

This period, Cambodia's "golden age", ended with the invasion of the Siamese (Thais) in the 1400's. During this invasion, the cultural center, Angkor Thom, was devastated, and the treasures, books, scholars, artists and musicians were either destroyed or carried back to Thailand. Only the stone monuments remained to remind later generations of the age during which the Khmer culture dominated the regions south of China and west of present-day Vietnam.

Post-Angkorian period

It took three centuries for the remnant Khmer to rebuild the country and culture. In the 17th century, the structure and content of Khmer education began to sprout anew. The Pali language of Theravada Buddhism, which came to replace the Sanskrit, brought a new set of vocabulary to the existing Khmer language, and made it the richest language of the period. The inscriptions on stone were gradually replaced with manuscripts written on palm leaves called *sastra*, or on the thick accordion-pleated paper called *kraing*.

When Theravada Buddhism spread all over Cambodia, education was also expanded to the masses. Buddhist monasteries became the traditional centers of education and preservation of the Khmer culture. Although education was delivered in the Buddhist monasteries and the monks served as teachers, education did not consist solely of religion and epic, but also of history, real human life, morals, traditions, literature, metaphysics, sociology, astrology, cosmology, and warfare studies. The monasteries and temples throughout the countryside were the centers of community life, and provided the glue which held the Khmer society together.

French protectorate period

Unfortunately, traditional education in Khmer suffered another setback when the French colonized Cambodia in 1863. Those who were thought to be nationalists were killed and Cambodian men were conscripted to serve in the colonial French army. The French destroyed

the educational centers, charging they were underground political centers of rebellion against the French. With the exploitation of the native resources and people by the French came opium and alcohol use, gambling, and prostitution; society's "glue" began to weaken. The Khmer strived to keep their identity, culture, and language intact and kept their faith in the traditional monk-led education. Thus, the Buddhist monasteries and temples were retained as the national centers of learning.

In 1917 the French scholars set up an uniform education system in French Indochina, the countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In Cambodia, the Cambodians called that education system the "French school". The French schools were established in the cities and big towns only. This education was compulsory for the children from 6 years to 12 years of age. Even so, not even half the Cambodian children attended French schools. Many of the boys went to the monastery and entered Buddhist monkhood to be able to continue their education.

In the French schools, from 1917 to 1953, the curriculum was the French curriculum transplanted intact from France into its colonies. French was the language of instruction for all grade levels. Educational codes, school rules, and regulations were also transplanted from France.

The Cambodians never liked and never trusted the French colonialists, even though they recognized the contribution of a uniform educational system, and appreciated the work of French archaeologists who helped document and preserve the ancient Khmer monuments and cultural heritage.

Implications for Educators:

Khmer have been a majority group throughout history, with ties to a long-past position of power, and the heritage of a high civilization. The Khmer have never had to deal with minority status in a different culture. The teachings reveal little about how to avoid conflict and turn aside ill-treatment by others who view them as a minority.

Education after independence

After the date of independence on November 9, 1953, Cambodia proclaimed her new "neutral policy" as a non-aligned country. Prince

Sihanouk had good relations with the whole world, especially the countries who respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of independent Cambodia. There was rapid development in the field of education. Schools were established throughout the whole country, in rural areas as well as in the big cities. But the education system was still the same French education system that had existed before. French was taught from second grade on. Khmer was used as the language of instruction in the first grade, and then gradually decreased.

Levels 12, 11, 10	100% Khmer and 0% French
Levels 9, 8, 7	80% Khmer and 20% French
Levels 6, 5, 4	35% Khmer and 65% French + 1 hour/ week of English in levels 5 to 1 and terminal
Levels 3, 2, 1	20% Khmer and 80% French
Level "terminal"	5% Khmer and 95% French
Post secondary	0% Khmer and 100% French

The monastery and temple schools, after 1953, were given new life. The renewed traditional school system adopted the same curriculum as the national public schools except the monk schools retained their special Buddhist program. In the renewed traditional schools girls were included.

Education reform in 1958

The education reform in 1958 promoted the Khmer language in the schools. French was still the principal language of instruction, because Cambodia did not have enough Khmer educational materials and lacked technical terms in the fields of math and the newly developing sciences. Promoting the Khmer language was only a transitional bilingual approach that used Khmer as a vehicle for becoming proficient enough in French to study academic subjects.

Education reform in 1967

There was tremendous growth in education to serve the need of the Khmer people in the newly independent country. People could see

the poor quality of education, the linguistic burdens on the students, and the assault on the dignity of an independent nation with the use of French as a medium of instruction. A great new reform in education was begun; it was called the "Khmerization of education", because the Khmer language was substituted for French as the language of instruction. All subjects were taught in Khmer except six to eight hours for French or English as a foreign language. Science and technical terminology was kept in French with Khmer phonic spelling. Still, the core curriculum was the same as that in schools in France.

Education after 1970

On March 18, 1970, the American-backed Lon Nol government overthrew Prince Sihanouk who established a government-in-exile in China. The 1970-75 war began in Cambodia. The American B-52s that bombed rural Cambodia, in support of the Lon Nol government and to destroy North Vietnamese who operated out of neutral Cambodia, disrupted the rubber production. Very few crops could be harvested. This, plus the effects of the bombing and fighting between Lon Nol's

Implications for Educators:

The youngsters of this generation speak, read, and write some French but their French is not as good as that of the old generation that used only French. But the Khmerized education provide better and clearer understanding of the concepts of the studied subjects.

army and the Khmer Rouge, put the economy into crisis, which seriously affected the national budget for education. The schools in the zones occupied by the Khmer Rouge were closed. Some schools in the big cities remained open but were overcrowded and had very few teachers. To serve the overpopulation, every single remaining school had to run two sessions per day: one morning session from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and one afternoon session from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Each class had 45 to 60 students. To obtain more instruction, students went to private schools at noon or in the evening where 80 to 125 students were packed in each room. It wasn't impossible to learn in this overcrowded situation

because the students were very anxious to study. They disciplined themselves very strictly and wasted very little time. Unfortunately, not all students could afford the private courses, so many students received very poor education during the war.

Implications for Educators:

Young adults (over 25 years old) who had a good educational background in Cambodia do well in high school and in higher education in the United States. They can be used as aides for junior and senior high school to help students with primary language support in math, science, health, government, economics, etc., and as liaisons between schools and parents. Unfortunately, a person with this kind of background is usually in high demand by agencies that offer year-round employment, often with more hours and higher pay.

Overview of the Cambodian school system

Figure 3.

**Cambodian Schools
Compared to American Schools**

<u>Cambodian Schools</u>		<u>American Schools</u>
<i>Ecole primaire élémentaire</i>	<i>Cours enfantin</i>	Grade 1
	<i>(Classe de 12ème)</i>	
	<i>Cours préparatoire</i>	Grade 2
	<i>(Classe de 11ème)</i>	
<i>Ecole primaire complémentaire</i>	<i>Cours élémentaire</i>	Grade 3
	<i>(Classe de 10ème)</i>	
	<i>Cours moyen 1ère année</i>	Grade 4
	<i>(Classe de 9ème)</i>	
	<i>Cours moyen 2ème année</i>	Grade 5
	<i>(Classe de 8ème)</i>	
	<i>Cours supérieur</i>	Grade 6
<i>Collège</i>	<i>(Classe de 7ème)</i>	
	<i>Examination</i>	
	<i>Classe de 6ème</i>	Grade 7

<i>Classe de 5ème</i>	Grade 8
<i>Classe de 4ème</i>	Grade 9
<i>Classe de 3ème</i>	Grade 10

Examination

<i>Lycée</i>	<i>Classe de 2nd</i>	Grade 11
	<i>Classe de 1ère</i>	Grade 12

Examination

Classe terminale

Examination

Even though there was great reform in education in 1967, the education in Cambodia was still compulsory for elementary children from age 6 to 12 only. In the countryside where children had no birth records, children may have entered school younger or older than 6 years. School administrators adopted the practice of asking the child to reach over his head with his right arm. If he could touch his left ear, then he was old enough to attend school; if not, he had to wait. Parents often had to arrange to get an "official" birth record for the child. Most of these certificates bear an estimated birth date, which is probably within one year of the actual, forgotten birth date. Sometimes, the child was too old to begin school in the first grade; in order to attend school, he had to obtain a record with an adopted birth date younger than his actual age. In the city, most of the educated parents kept good records for the children. Many parents could send their children at an early age to private preschools or private nurseries.

All schools started in September and ended in July. There was a one week vacation at the end of December, and at the end of the second quarter in April (Cambodian New Year). The last quarter was followed by a vacation of seventy days.

The primary school had six grade levels: *classe de 12ème, 11ème, 10ème, 9ème, 8ème, 7ème*. All primary schools followed a grading system based on ten points. Students had to have a grade of 5.0 to pass to the next class. The student who fell below 5.0 failed, and were

required to pass a year-end exam. If the student failed the year-end exam, he had to repeat the same grade level the next year.

At the end of the *classe de 7ème* the students had to take a competitive exam to get into the *collège*, or junior high school. Students who failed the exam could choose to repeat the 7ème grade in public school or attend a private *collège* if the parents could afford the tuition and living expenses.

In secondary schools, the marking system was based on a 20 point system, and the minimum passing grade being 10.0. Secondary education was divided into two cycles: the first cycle, or *collège*, had had four grades: *classe de 6ème, 5ème, 4ème, and 3ème*. The second cycle, or *lycée*, had three grades: *classe de second, première, and terminale*. Many *lycées* also contained the *collège* levels, and so were actually seven grades.

At the end of the *classe de 3ème* (10th grade), all students had to take a national exam to graduate with a diploma called *Diplome de fin d'études secondaires du premier cycle* ('Diploma of completion of the first cycle of secondary education'). This diploma conveyed privilege and prestige to the holder. Those who earned the diploma could find good jobs with high salaries, and enjoyed the respect of the Cambodian community. No more than 30% of the students could pass this exam. Many of the students from lower socioeconomic levels quit school to find jobs at the time of this exam.

At the end of the *classe de première* (12th grade), all students had to take another more difficult national exam to get a certificate called the *Certificat de baccalauréat première partie* ('Certificate of the first part of the baccalaureat'). This is equivalent to the high school diploma in the United States, but fewer than 25% of those who passed the 6th and 10th grade exams could pass this test. Those who passed this exam went on to the *classe terminale*. At the end of this *classe terminale*, students had to take and pass the most difficult test of all to get the *Diplome de baccalauréat de l'enseignement secondaire* ('Diploma of baccalaureat of secondary education'). Fewer than 20% of the students who made it this far could pass this test. The French system of education created a status system in Cambodian society that separated out a very small percentage of the population as "the educated".

Implications for Educators:

American schools are based on the concept that education (literacy) should be available to all, regardless of family finances or individual ability. The French schools in Indochina were available to only a few, and resulted in a very small percentage of people who graduated—those who could afford the years in school and who had the ability and discipline to pass the national exams. American schools are compulsory through age 16, and students progress through the grades according to age rather than performance; education is an obligation rather than a privilege. This helps explain the emphasis that Cambodians and other Indochinese place on the opportunity to attend school.

After earning the *Diplome de baccalauréat de l'enseignement secondaire*, the elite could continue to higher national education which was offered free in Cambodia or could go to France, with national scholarships or financial aid from France.

The course of study in Cambodian schools, both public and private, was uniform throughout the country. There were no elective courses at any level. All courses were required.

The classrooms were similar to American classrooms only in size. They differed considerably in shape, decor, facilities and equipment. They were very austere, equipped with only a chalkboard, and decorated with a few student-drawn pictures. Very few textbooks were available. Due to the lack of educational materials, teachers had to give information orally and write the lessons on the board for the

Implications for Educators:

The opportunity to choose electives is an unusual idea to Cambodian parents who are familiar with school. If counselors do not explain clearly the options and the consequences of the various choices, students may end up with transcripts that are not adequate for their future educational goals.

students to copy. Students were expected to listen carefully, memorize, imitate, practice and be able to recite all the lessons that were taught.

Classroom discipline was very strict. Students over 12 years of age were not required to be in school, so the ultimate consequence was to lose the opportunity to attend school, which was to lose the opportunity to have higher status and a secure future. Students were

assigned to certain seats, where they sat for the entire year. Positive reinforcement was present in only individual teachers' styles, and basically was just the logical consequence of effort: good grades. Students' names and grades were posted on an honor board at the end of the semester or school year, and accomplishment brought pride and good reputation to the student's family. Punishment was more common than consciously applied positive reinforcement. Teachers were free to

Implications for Educators:

There is a fundamental difference in responsibility between "teaching" and "arranging the conditions so that students learn." Often teachers trained in the French Indochinese system will teach a lesson; that ends their responsibility. The student's responsibility is to learn what the teacher taught, whether it was well-presented or not, whether it takes one hour or five hours. It is perhaps this attitude of responsibility that delights American teachers when the children of educated Indochinese parents are assigned to their classes.

discipline students as they saw fit, including corporal punishment if necessary. Good teachers would find students' errors and correct them, so that the student could improve.

But not every family could afford to support all their children while they went to school, even though it was compulsory for young children and free. Parents had to pay for individual educational needs such as paper, pencils, pens, clothes, and especially, textbooks, which were very expensive. Parents who supported themselves from family labor couldn't afford to lose the help of children, especially when they

Implications for Educators:

General praise to encourage students ("Good job reading") is not as necessary as specific instruction and re-teaching. Parents consider the correcting of errors an important part of teaching; students will know they've done a "good job" when they succeed. The teacher should be sure the student knows the criteria of success; knows specifically what is wrong; and knows how to correct what is wrong.

Implications for Educators.

Calls home to report discipline problems or other negative news, particularly minor mistakes, can result in what the teacher may regard as over-reaction. The student may show up at school the next day with bruises, and the problems with Children's Protective Services may lead to a situation that is far worse than the original problem. Parents take calls from school very seriously, and feel that the problem must be very major for the teacher to call home. The child's misbehavior causes shame to the whole family. However, it's just as bad to let a child's misbehavior continue without any consequences.

The most effective solution is to have a trusted liaison contact the parents, and explain the ways in which American schools operate, in addition to reporting the behavior problem. In addition, if the liaison is one who has the confidence of the parents, he may be able to suggest ways to handle the problem, short of physical abuse. Young aides, either siblings or college students, may be put into a very difficult position if they are used to communicate with parents. Young aides may not have the appropriate vocabulary or knowledge of etiquette, and the problem may be worsened.

were physically big enough to contribute to the family farm. Children from small villages that didn't have schools had to go live with relatives in larger villages or in the cities. The parents would have to send money to help the relatives provide food and shelter for their children while attending school. The junior highs (*collèges*) existed only in the larger towns, and the high schools (*lycées*) were very few and only in the large urban areas. For this reason, the maximum that most village families could manage was to allow children to go to school for three to six years, which was enough to read and write Khmer.

Elementary schools did not have libraries, and secondary schools had only the barest skeleton libraries. To borrow a book, students had to place a deposit of 50-70% of the book's purchase price.

Adult literacy

The general census of 1963-64 showed that over one million people (about 20% of the population) were illiterate. Prince Sihanouk proclaimed a national literacy campaign on October 9, 1964, run by the Ministry of Education. The national congress passed the literacy

regulations on May 31, 1965, stating that Cambodian citizens of both sexes from ages ten to fifty must be able to read, write, and calculate in the Khmer language. The campaign and the regulations were strongly supported by all branches of government and administrations at all levels.

Implications for Educators:

Children and most parents are not familiar with public and school libraries. They need specific instruction in the library—what it's for, how it's used, what the borrower's responsibilities are. Most public libraries have staff who are eager to attract under-represented segments of the community. School staff can play an important liaison role, both in teaching students about libraries at school sites, and arranging for tours and special help at the public libraries. Simply finding ways to identify books at the appropriate level (labeling books with grade levels, and using signs in the library) will help students and their parents negotiate the new and unfamiliar system. Teachers can actively encourage students to use the library by giving extra credit, reading books in class from the library, or arranging a special after school library time once every three weeks so that students will know that someone nonthreatening will be there to help them. Keep in mind that teaching one teaches many others; if library use is a habit with one student, he will take friends and relatives, and they, too, will become regular library users.

Encourage parents and students to look for books and magazines written in Khmer, or works that are about Cambodia. Often librarians have funds to buy books that appeal to community sectors, but often do not know which books to order.

The literacy classes were opened everywhere in the country. Monks, soldiers, civil servants, students, and literate citizens volunteered to teach the illiterates to read, write, and perform basic calculations. Reading began everywhere: in the markets, shopping areas, under the trees, at the monasteries, and on the buses...everywhere. The literacy developed amazingly at no cost to the national budget. In July, 1966, over 261,000 First Literacy Certificates were awarded to the Cambodian citizens who passed the exam. The number of citizens awarded was increased to 900,000 by July 1967. Of course, the certificates, by themselves, gave no particular privilege to the holder, but it had a great moral value, proof that the citizen was conscientious about his rights and duties. Unfortunately, the tribal people living in the isolated areas, along the border didn't participate in the campaign.

Implications for Educators.

Although there was great success in the literacy campaign in 1966-67, not all Cambodian parents in the United States can read and write in Khmer. Schools can use written notices to parents who are in the age range of 25 to 50 years of age. For some parents, especially the Lao-Cambodian parents, oral Khmer must be used if communication is expected to take place.

The *coup d'état* on March 18, 1970, in which Lon Nol overthrew Prince Sihanouk, put an end to the literacy program in Cambodia. People who didn't participate in the literacy campaign before 1970 never had a second chance to learn to read. There were few opportunities for those who obtained minimal literacy to use and improve their skills. The unused knowledge vanished with time.

English instruction

Because of the long period of French domination (1863-1953) and the use of French as the medium of instruction in Cambodian schools, it was a mark of high status to be able to speak French and to be familiar with French manners and ways of life. Almost all the Khmer elite received their education in French.

Until 1953 English was a completely unknown foreign language. When Cambodia got her full independence from France in 1953, she had diplomatic relations with the Anglophonic countries such as England, Australia, Singapore, Canada, and especially, the United States, because of the large amount of American aid flowing into Cambodia. English was then used in Cambodia, but its use was limited to foreign businesses, diplomatic agencies, and some religious communities. As more and more Americans and other English speakers came to Cambodia, the city people were more and more interested in learning English. By 1958, English was adopted as a second foreign language taught one hour per week in secondary schools from the *classe de 5ème* (8th grade) and up. In 1959, the first Khmer-English high school was established in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. In this unique high school, the curriculum was the same as that used in all other high schools in the country, except that English was substituted for French.

Even so, English was still a language of little interest, because it was taught only in the classroom, and useless outside school in the community, especially between 1964 and 1970, the period of diplomatic disruption between Cambodia and the United States.

By 1970, the Khmer Republic became an ally of the United States and once again received American aid. Many Cambodian soldiers were sent abroad to attend intensive English and military schools. The U.S. Embassy and the international voluntary agencies in Cambodia had great need for English-speaking Cambodian workers. Businesses and services sprung up to serve the English speakers in Cambodia. Cambodians found it more and more lucrative to be able to understand and speak English. More and more people chose to study English, and many private non-accredited schools offered English classes. The emphasis was on oral skills, but there was also some instruction in reading and writing. Unfortunately, not everybody could afford private classes, available only in the cities at great cost. English teaching, and the use of English, ended when the Khmer Republic was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. In fact, knowledge of English put a person at great risk.

Education after the "year zero," 1975

The *year zero* was the beginning of the Khmer Rouge drive to completely restructure Cambodia into a communist state. In addition to forcing all city dwellers into the countryside onto collective work-farms, a major goal was to eradicate the educated upper and middle classes. The Khmer communist revolutionaries adhered to the idea that it's nearly impossible to "re-educate" people who have enjoyed the labor and benefits of a system of capitalism. Rather than try to turn their minds to the single purpose of a communist state, they are eliminated. The Khmer Rouge followed this doctrine with fanatic brutality. Any evidence of education, work outside the family farm, or of association with western countries doomed a person to death. The soldiers, themselves illiterate, looked for physical evidence of education or foreign influence. During the four years that began with the year zero, there was no education, no religion, no currency, no hospitals, no markets, no temples, and in fact, no life outside the forced labor camps. Obviously, there was no opportunity for education, and

Cambodians who were school-aged during this time were taught only allegiance to Angkar, and learned only how to survive. Some of those who had received education before the year zero survived only by hiding all evidence of education.

Although there were no schools, the Cambodian children learned during this time. They learned by watching, listening, observing, doing, accepting, being patient, being hard-working, harboring care and love for friends and relatives but not demonstrating it, by thinking but

Implications for Educators:

Students who were born after 1970 probably had no formal education. Students born between 1965 and 1969 may have had one to five years of school. When hiring bilingual aides keep in mind the backgrounds of different age groups. The bilingual aides are not hired for their English, although it's important to understand and be understood. They are hired to teach concepts in Khmer and communicate with parents and students. Young adults, whose English may be almost accent-free, may not have the knowledge of Khmer to be able to explain concepts or communicate well with parents. It's better to look for an older person, who no doubt is more difficult to understand in English, but who possesses the Khmer skills that schools need. Keep in mind that the English proficiency increases day by day, but the Khmer proficiency does not. A good dictionary is absolutely necessary, as are clear and concise English versions of what needs to be communicated.

not asking questions or revealing any clues about themselves or those they knew. Some of the things these children learned will help them survive in American society and in schools, but others will not.

Factors in Refugee Camps

So far, since 1975, more than 238,000 Cambodians have crossed the border and have registered in Thailand as refugees, and at one time or another nearly three-quarters of a million have been along the border, not officially refugees. When people arrived in Thailand, the primary concern of the Cambodian parents, after survival, was education of the children. After the camp was set up, former Khmer teachers gathered themselves together to set up a new schooling system for the children in the refugee camp.

Implications for Educators:

Cambodians are in the United States as *refugees*, not immigrants. All newcomers to America face some of the same obstacles, but immigrants have a chance to prepare their hearts for a new life. Refugees are often just waiting for a chance to regain the old life, one they didn't willingly give up. Refugee parents may need more time to adjust to the United States, and their degree of successful acculturation will have an impact on their children.

The schools began from scratch. There was no building, no desks, no chairs, no blackboard, no books, no pencils. The teachers volunteered to teach and gradually needed supplies began to arrive. The UNHCR and other voluntary agencies (IRC, CARE, Redd Barna, Japan Sotoshu Relief Committee, and others) gave strong support to the refugee education in the camp. All instruction was given in Khmer, and no foreign languages were allowed. Primary and secondary classes opened using the core curriculum of the former Khmerized French schools. The students learned reading and writing in Khmer, Khmer literature, morals and customs, math, health, and science. The schools were run year-round, with brief holidays only on the Thai national holidays. The accomplishments of the students and teachers were impressive. In addition to academic achievement, there was restoration of the Khmer cultural arts, classical dance, folk dance, religious ceremonies, traditional celebrations, customs, and so on. A video, *The Khmer*

Implications for Educators:

Children who spent one or two years in the refugee camp schools may have learned some Khmer literacy and math. But, the Khmer alphabet is composed of characters totally unlike the roman alphabet, and English is very different from Khmer. Some of the skills learned by students will help them learn English faster. The schools in the camps cannot compare at all to American schools. School staff should keep in mind that students do not automatically know the many rules, customs, procedures (both written and unwritten) that operate in American schools. Orientation will need to be more than just a guided tour around the campus. Involve parents in school familiarization activities, for if they have an image of a school in mind, it is very different from what actually exists in the United States.

Historical Mural of Khao-I-Dang (Insight Multicultural Communication, 1986) shows the painting of a huge mural of Angkor Wat, and the importance of aspects of Khmer history and culture .

Transit and reprocessing centers

After being accepted for resettlement to the United States, Cambodian families are moved to Phanat Nikhom, a transitional camp near Bangkok, or to Bataan, in the Philippines, or to Galang, in Indonesia. At one of these camps, most stay a minimum of six additional months prior to actual entry into the United States. During this time, attendance in a six-month English class and American Cultural Orientation is required for all refugees over the age of 16. Run by an organization called the Consortium, Phanat Nikhom provides survival English as a Second Language, cultural orientation and work orientation training. The classes are taught by native teachers (Thai, Filipino, or Indonesian), assisted by American teachers and Cambodian teacher aides. The goal is to help adult refugees acquire language skills, and to prepare them to adjust to American life.

English classes are offered at six different levels. Level 1 is for those who speak no English at all, while the highest level, level 6, is for those able to communicate fairly well in English. Those refugees who only complete level 1 prior to entry into the United States are only able to speak a few common English phrases; while those who have completed level 6 are fairly fluent in English. The majority of refugees have completed levels 2 or 3 before entering the United States, and this means that they are able to communicate at least a little with their American sponsors, case managers, and social workers. Since 1983, the English level that refugees have achieved is printed on the back of the immigration and naturalization document that they bring to the United States.

The American Culture Orientation course is intensive and covers many aspects of life in the United States. Use of and maintenance of American plumbing, large and small appliances, and electrical facilities is covered. Also covered are how to shop for, store and prepare American foods; American holidays; the school system;

business and work ethics; American etiquette; and many other aspects of the American culture.

A special program, called the PASS ("Preparation for American Secondary Schools") program has been established for young refugees who will enter junior or senior high schools in the United States. The content is ESL, math and American studies.

There is a journal produced by the camp staff and students twice per year, that contains articles and pictures about the programs offered in the reprocessing centers. It's entitled *Passages*, published by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the Office of Refugee Resettlement. There are various other informational items put out by the same office from time to time, in an effort to coordinate the camp programs more closely with the school experiences students will encounter once they arrive.

Implications for Educators:

New Cambodian students will continue to arrive from the refugee camps, and their backgrounds are different still from those who arrived shortly after 1979. Those students, taught to be silent, fearful, and thoughtful, may have never learned to count, the names of the days of the week, or other everyday knowledge that children of any language learn from their parents. At first, American educators thought these children were severely retarded; they were, in the sense that the normal learning processes had been slow or non-existent. But, in terms of learning, they were not retarded. Once teachers began an appropriate sequence of education, taught in a comprehensible way, children learned very quickly, and caught up with others. Children arriving today may not have the same educational deficiencies, but this example shows how important it is to have someone who understands both sides, American and Cambodian, to act as the guide for both parents and American educators.

Factors in California

Parents and Children

The structure of the family and the relationships between the members of families change throughout time, because of changes in the society, economy, education, labor market, intermarriage and contact

with other cultural groups. The patterns of Khmer families were altered radically and abruptly during the time that the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia. In addition to the purposeful separation of family members, the Khmer Rouge required that everyone give allegiance only to *Angkar* rather than parents. Children were rewarded for reporting their parents for wrong thoughts or deeds, and punished for placing parents or other relatives above *Angkar*. Children who were born shortly before 1975 were socialized by *Angkar*, in communal groups; children may have seldom seen their own parents. Village Khmer, who had lived with kin and friends were suddenly thrown together with strangers. *Angkar* chose marriage partners for some and forbade other marriages. Following the four years the Pol Pot regime, families were subjected to more disruption during escape and life in refugee camps. Again families were separated by virtue of their status as legal refugees, illegal aliens, or displaced persons. Often members of families processed to third countries not knowing if other family members still lived.

The pattern of most Khmer families before the disruption of the past thirteen years was most often patriarchal, although there was great variation depending on whether the young couple lived near the husband's family or the wife's family. Even though the father was the acknowledged head of the family, the children saw the importance of their mother in handling her responsibilities in the family and the way that both parents were involved in making decisions.

Cambodian families in the United States are changed in many ways. Most of the families are now matriarchal, out of necessity; there is often no man in the family. Also, families who apply for welfare find that the checks are made out in the wife's name. The man has no job, no income, and therefore no honor, no respect, no power. (A new expression is "living under the wings of the wife"). In other families, there is the appearance of patriarchy, but actually it only looks that way because the wife agrees. Once she says "no," everything stops.

There are still patriarchal families, although they are very few. In these families both the husband and wife work, but at home both understand and follow roles that are familiar and comfortable. The husband honors his wife in the way that puts "ladies first," even though it doesn't conform to the idea of equal rights. In these families, the father doesn't hold absolute power over the wife and children, but

shares responsibility for decisions with all members, each one asked their ideas before a final decision is reached.

There is a new family pattern emerging in the United States, which might be called "filiarchal"—families headed by the children. If the parents are unemployed, there is no way to survive unless there are children to qualify for welfare under AFDC ("Aid to Families with Dependent Children"). People without jobs can't just go out and find land to raise food. Children are now the means of providing survival for the family. The children are also the ones who go to school and who learn English very quickly. More than that, they are the ones who learn the new rules and the new roles quickly. They adopt behavior and practices that conflict with the expectations of the parents: independent-thinking children say "no" to parents or argue back when they disagree with a parent's decision. The children act as interpreter and the parent is dependent on the child to find out what is happening. English speakers address the child who understands English, rather than the adults. When the parent doesn't understand the American system, it's the child who explains what to do. Often, rather than consulting parents for their advice, they tell parents what they intend to do. Parents who don't understand the American child abuse regulations are worried about discipline, and joke ruefully that they are suffering from "parent abuse".

There are many similarities between the important values of Khmer families and those in other Asian cultures. The family was the basic unit of society, and strong bonds of emotion, loyalty and mutual obligations held the parents and children together. Maternal and paternal kin were considered important sources of affection, support and aid, whether or not they lived in the immediate area. Other than the village community that centered on the temple, there were no other close associations. Close relationships between members of the nuclear family as well as the extended family were highly valued.

Very different from American values is the premium placed on reaching old age, as opposed to yearning for eternal youth. The older a person is in a Khmer family, the more respect and consideration he or she is accorded by the younger members. It is felt that as people get older, they acquire knowledge and wisdom through experience, and they are seen as the carriers of tradition. Respect is shown to older members by a person's attitude, behavior, and by the use of special

vocabulary words and styles of address that convey respect. One of the ways in which the Khmer Rouge affected the traditional family relationships was to turn upside down the respect for age. Khmer Rouge placed their trust in the children, who were uncontaminated by the past, easier to indoctrinate; these child-soldiers carried a great deal of power, including who would live and who would die.

Traditionally, the Cambodian children, like other children in the world, were taught by their parents at home how to become fully functioning members of the culture in which they live. They learned the linguistic practices, both the vocabulary and the ways of using the language in different social situations. They learned proper behavior, social courtesy, respect and obedience for the parents and other adults, and of course, all the common childhood knowledge. If asked, most parents will answer that the most important thing a child learns during the early years at home is the role of filial loving, loyalty and devotion to the parents and family. The close bonds that last throughout life are established during this time. One way that a child demonstrates filial piety is by recognizing the authority of the parents, whether or not they agree. It is a serious breach to tell a parent "no", or to talk back, or to offer alternatives that begin with "why" or "if". Such behavior brings shame to the family. The filial piety extends to grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and all other older people in the immediate and extended family. Acting with piety does not end when a child grows up. Even adults are expected to demonstrate filial

Implications for Educators:

Teachers enjoy the same kind of respect accorded to the older members of Khmer families; teachers are seen as "second parents". The relationship between teacher and student is very similar to the one between father and son. The courtesy extended to the teacher includes saving face. For example, asking questions is insulting because it implies the teacher did a poor job of explaining. Even after understanding the language is no longer a problem, students may answer "yes" to a teacher's questions as a way of avoiding disrespect and insult. Related to the idea of courtesy and respect is the way in which the Khmer refer to themselves in depreciatory terms, using complimentary expressions for others. This leads to problems when students (or adults) are expected to "sell themselves", or even to evaluate themselves realistically.

piety towards those who are their elders. Children expect to provide a home for their parents when they are old. To be put in a nursing home would be an absolute rejection of filial piety.

An important aspect of traditional life was religion, combining Theravada Buddhism with folk beliefs, ancestor worship, and animism. The Buddhist temple was the center of education, social activities, and the transmission of moral values. It was the monk who

Implications for Educators:

A child doesn't know his own birthdate or real age, because no one ever told him or kept a written record of it.

A child doesn't talk because he was taught to be quiet in order to survive.

A child observes and does not act, because he knows to wait to be told what, where, and how to do.

The child does not know what to do when given a general assignment, because he is waiting for exact instructions.

The child is not independent because he was taught not to do what is precisely assigned to do.

The child listens but does not answer because he does not have enough English to express his thoughts or to ask questions.

The child is evasive about personal or family information because he was taught to keep the secrets in order to survive.

The child takes food out of the cafeteria because he always tried to find food to share with the family.

The child is alone because he is afraid to open up, to be laughed at, or rejected.

The child asks a mediator or go-between to approach the teacher or other adult instead of confronting him directly. This may be because of the lack of English, lack of confidence, or politeness, not because of lack of courage or forthrightness.

The child accepts unwelcome activities because he has been taught to respect and obey the teacher. Talking back or refusing to perform a task is impossible.

The child does not look at the teacher because he has been taught not to look at adults when they talk. Prolonged eye contact means the child is challenging the adult, or is at least very rude.

The child is caught carrying a knife at school because he used to carry a knife for survival needs, much like campers have pocket knives. Carrying a knife is not considered a sign of violence, and the child needs to have knife rules clearly explained.

The child doesn't know how to use scissors (children used knives instead). Scissors were very expensive, breakable, and dangerous. The child is not stupid, just faced with something unfamiliar.

The child can't tell time because he never heard people talking about time or using calendars during the Pol Pot times.

taught the villagers how to live the "right" kind of life. Most of the social events were actually ways in which the people could demonstrate good deeds in life and could build their chances for a better next life. Buddhist teaching forbids killing or torturing living things (an incredible thought, considering that the Khmer Rouge soldiers were also raised with Buddhist teaching), lying, stealing, immoral sexual relations, and drinking alcohol. The parents depended on the monks to teach the children, especially the boys, appropriate behavior.

It was these foundations of Khmer society that the Khmer Rouge attempted to destroy.

Parents' attitudes towards education

Khmer parents have always considered education as a key to the future of their children. In Cambodia they admired educated people and wanted their children to get an education so they could take part in the development of their own community and of the country as a whole. In traditional Cambodia education was the only route to a better life for most people, and very few had the ability to pass all the tests. In addition, many village families did not have the money that was needed to support the children in the towns and cities where the schools were located. The war from 1970 to 1975 destroyed about half the schools, and the Khmer Rouge restructuring of the society destroyed the rest. There was sporadic volunteer education in a few of the refugee camps. Now, as refugees in the United States, parents are still worried about their children's future.

The Cambodian youth encounter many problems and difficulties in their process of adjustment to the American system of education. They face a linguistic barrier which prevents them from learning with maximum efficiency and, along the way, developing their intellectual faculties. Many of them came to this country with a weak or non-existent background in academic knowledge. Thus, they have a hard time keeping up with American classmates in this country. Finally, many of the Cambodian young people drop out of school before finishing their high school education. Only a very small number are able to continue their studies at the university level and obtain a diploma or an advanced degree.

Tomorrow, these children will be the Cambodian community's leaders to a new life. At present, the Cambodian children need help to prepare themselves to be able to carry such a responsibility. Too young to identify completely with the old world or to be completely and unselfconsciously identified with the new, Cambodian adolescents constantly live with frustration.

Most Cambodian families are very concerned about the situation of their youth in this country. They are aware that the competition in the job market in the next few years will be very difficult. Those young people who do not have a good education may not be able to find a good job and to build a better future. Many people think that it is necessary to recertify Cambodian teachers and encourage students to enter teaching programs, so they can teach Cambodian children, can involve the Cambodian families more effectively in the American system of education, can work closely with the school districts in planning for the education of Cambodian children and youth, and can provide positive role models for the youth. At the same time teachers who are not Cambodian but who are aware of the backgrounds of these students and the conflicts they face can also help the children to surmount the obstacles in their paths.

Already there are examples of outstanding success among Cambodians. Linn Yann is perhaps most famous, as the winner of the 1984 National Spelling Bee. Disney Studios made a movie about her accomplishments, called *The Girl Who Spelled Freedom*. Haing S. Ngor has also become well-known, as the winner of an Academy Award for his supporting role in the movie called *The Killing Fields*, and as the author of his own personal narrative called *A Cambodian Odyssey* (1987). In each community there are examples of young Cambodians successfully competing in the American school system, becoming honor students at their different schools.

Parents' involvement in education

In the face of new social, cultural and economic problems in the United States, Cambodian parents and other adults strongly encourage the youth and children to study hard in school and to get as much

Implications for Educators:

Teachers can help parents understand what their children are bringing home by using a consistent symbol, word or color of ink to indicate how well work has been done. Without a system, non-literate parents rely on other cues. For example, parents might be told that if there's a lot of writing by the teacher on the paper, then it's bad; if there's a short word, then it's good. If parents know when to expect a work folder from school, then they can ask to see it.

There's a great volume of written communication between the school and home, including advertisements and information about optional activities. If the information is important, teachers might mark a red X or other symbol on it; parents can then take that paper to be translated, rather than taking everything. If it's important information, teachers would be wise to have the bilingual aide call home and explain to the parents.

An important part of the parent education program is explaining grades, homework policy, and expectations of the school. *Support your child* is too vague; it might mean paying for food and rent while the student stays in school, rather than going to work. As part of a parent education program, school personnel should be able to explain clearly what they assume to be true for children in their classes. For example:

- ❖ Children should get 8 hours of sleep, parents should see that they go to sleep early enough.
- ❖ Children should either have food before school, or bring a snack to eat during the morning.
- ❖ Children should be expected to do homework at a certain time each day.
- ❖ Children should stay home when they're sick (explain what symptoms are considered sickness).
- ❖ Parents should expect their children to learn, and do well.
- ❖ Parents should take an active interest in their children's schooling; explain clearly what "active interest" means.
- ❖ Parents should discipline their children, but not abuse them.

Parents will come to school for meetings and conferences, when they know that they will be able to understand what is said.

School personnel should resist the temptation to convince parents to do what the school wants. Many parents are suspicious of strong efforts to convince. A more effective technique is to have the trusted Cambodian paraprofessional present the pros and the cons, cite other examples familiar to the parents, and even give his own personal opinion.....then wait for the parents to decide on their own. The school has to be willing to accept a negative answer, even in cases of special education placements, or other decisions they see as vital to the student.

Parent participation preschools are a good place to begin the process of involving Cambodian parents in their child's education, and to demonstrate the value of primary language development along with early exposure to English.

It's important for school personnel to remember that not all Cambodian parents are educated, nor are they all former peasants; using one approach will result in misunderstanding at best, and insult at worst. Here again it's the bilingual staff person who knows best how to approach parents.

education as possible in order to be better prepared for their future in this country. But this encouragement tends to be limited to good advice from the community leaders and some financial assistance from the parents while the children finish school. Because many of the Cambodian parents have only a little education, if any, and speak little English, they are not able to check the school work and monitor the academic progress of their children. If they have never worked for wages themselves, they have great difficulty in advising them about their vocational goals. Cambodian parents who have never been to school themselves are likely to rely on their children and let them do what they want. They are ready to believe what the young people tell them about their homework, their grades and their activities in class.

Moreover, Cambodian parents generally think they should not criticize the American system of education, which they feel must be good or there wouldn't be so much technical progress, high standards of living and modern ways of life. They feel that the teachers are trained, have credentials, and therefore know about teaching and learning. They are thus ready to entrust the education of their children to the teachers and the school. As a result, very few Cambodian parents attend parent-teacher meetings or sign up for conferences. Teachers and other school officials need to make special efforts to educate Cambodian parents about their role in the public education of their children and to strongly encourage their active cooperation with the schools. Combined with the high position of respect accorded to teachers, it is understandable why parents are puzzled when teachers request them to give input and consent to program alternatives for their children.

Adjustment Problems

Since the arrival of Southeast Asian refugees in the United States there have been many studies of their languages, their cultures and customs, their health care strategies and beliefs, and how their adjustment to the American world of living and working has progressed. It is reasonable to expect that all the groups have cases of great success and also problems and obstacles to overcome. It is reasonable to expect

that the Cambodians have been especially affected by their experiences during the Pol Pot time. Recent studies confirm that idea, and also point out the signs of difficulty that teachers and others should be able to recognize.

After-effects of trauma

Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder are the most common problems that Cambodian adolescents and adults face. In one study (Sack et al., 1986), students who were referred to psychiatric workers were seen by their teachers as withdrawn or daydreaming, rather than disruptive. Kinzie calls the stress syndrome seen in Cambodians the "concentration camp" syndrome because of its similarity to what was seen in survivors of Nazi death camps (Kinzie, 1987). Surprisingly, none of the patients came to the clinic because of their Pol Pot experiences or symptoms that dated from that time, but because of other problems. All the patients in his study actively avoided talking about their experiences under the Pol Pot regime, and when they were asked questions about their experiences, they replied with unusually passive neutral expressions. The most common symptoms were depression with disturbed sleep, appetite and concentration; intrusive thoughts and nightmares; exaggerated startle reactions; poor concentration and memory. These symptoms intensified whenever they saw events that reminded them of their trauma or when they were under any kind of stress (academic, social, or vocational). Other symptoms included detachment and numbness—not wanting to associate with anyone outside their immediate surviving family—irritability and aggressiveness towards those around them, guilt and shame about surviving when others didn't. Kinzie feels that all those who survived the events in Cambodia are subject to post-traumatic stress disorder, but that it is not discovered unless people have some other complaints which make them to seek help.

In another study, forty Cambodian high school students were interviewed and 50% had developed post-traumatic stress disorder, and more than 50% experienced mild but prolonged depression. The problems were more severe when the students did not reside with

family members (Kinzie et al., 1986). The Sack study (1986) pointed out the crucial role that the schools play as the cultural agent of change.

Southeast Asian youth studies (1987-88)

Three studies of the adjustment of Southeast Asian youth were commissioned by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Philadelphia, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and San Diego) and the studies found differences between the different groups from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

The Philadelphia report (Peters, 1988) found that the largest obstacle to all the Southeast Asians was the difficulty of learning. Major school problems included placing students in grades by age rather than background and skills; poorly designed programs for teaching English; lack of bilingual support staff; general lack of knowledge about the needs of Southeast Asian refugee youth; and a high incidence of prejudice and violence directed towards Southeast Asians.

In Minneapolis, the Cambodian students tended to fall into two distinct groups: those *with*, and those *without* close family members in the United States. Those who had support and guidance from family did better than those from broken families. The Cambodian adolescents were judged as suffering more from the effects of the war than the other Southeast Asian youth. They didn't seem to have much confidence in themselves and their ability to attain a higher education. They were the least aware of the vocational and career opportunities available in the United States. They were fairly passive about seeking out assistance, but they welcomed it when it was offered. The girls, in general, saw themselves as working in order to help the family, but not in terms of pursuing a career. The Cambodian youth saw themselves as behind American peers, and unable to catch up (Baizerman et al., 1988).

The San Diego study looked at school performance, background factors, and problem behavior among Vietnamese, Chinese-Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, and Hmong high school students. In general all the youth were marginal in both their worlds, the one they were born into and the one they have been "formed" by. The educational level, current income and employment of the parents were important factors in how well the students did at school, but they were not the main determinants. It was the mother's emotional characteristics and

socioeconomic status that were highly correlated with students' performance—stable mothers had higher performing children. Generally, girls performed better than boys; the longer they were in the United States, the better they did; those who were younger did better; children of intact families did better; those with families who retained their ethnic pride and cultural identity had children who performed better. In terms of grade point average, the Khmer were below Vietnamese, Sino-Vietnamese, and Hmong, but above Lao. The Lao and Khmer cultures were seen as providing lower levels of discipline and orientation towards education, and less likely to have extended families to help resolve difficulties. The Khmer students did not aspire to the higher status jobs, but they chose human service jobs more frequently than the other groups. Khmer youth, along with Lao and Hmong, had a fairly short view of the future. Khmer were the most likely to drop out of school, but not more than non-Southeast Asian youth. The Khmer and Hmong showed the lowest rates of suspension from school; suspension in general was most frequently for fighting in response to racial baiting. Khmer and Hmong were less likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system or police. No matter which ethnic group, those who did run into trouble with the law were most likely to be male, from one-parent families, and were involved with collective violations of the law (gangs or groups). Khmer students often had broken families or caretakers who remained depressed. The Khmer tended to respond to problems by withdrawing rather than confronting, as shown by high rates of depression and drop out. The study concluded that the after-effects of the Pol Pot period undermined the persistence of the Khmer youth in school, and their parents' ability to parent effectively (Rumbaut and Ima, 1987).

Factors Related to Khmer Educational Needs

Availability of trained Khmer educators

In 1988, about 21,500 Khmer-speaking students attend California schools, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, with an unknown number studying in institutions of higher education. However, only a very small number of Khmer-speaking teachers are currently involved in the American system of education. There are Cambodians in California who have teaching experience. However, they were trained in Cambodian schools, and the records of their education and experience did not survive the Pol Pot years and the escape. When they arrived, they had to make a decision about how to earn a living. To become a teacher again required redoing five years of college training. Many personnel directors look for almost accent-free oral skills in teacher candidates, something which is very difficult to accomplish when learning a second language as an adult. The job is only ten months a year, and the pay is almost the same as one can get from semi-skilled or skilled work. Thus, most former teachers are working as machinists, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and so on.

Value placed on Khmer language instruction

The pride that Cambodians have for the Khmer place in Southeast Asian history cannot be underestimated. They know that their ancestors used written language many centuries ago to create a high civilization before many of their present-day neighbors. Still, this was developed in their homeland, not while they were newcomers in another people's land. The majority of Cambodians support maintenance of the Khmer language and culture in America, but feel they are unable to force this view on their children. Coming from a multilingual society, most know the value of being biliterate and bicultural, but if forced to choose one or the other, most agree that knowing English well is the priority, essential for success in America.

Community resources for Khmer language development

In traditional Cambodian society there were several mechanisms which encouraged youngsters to know about the Khmer culture and expand their knowledge of the Khmer language. These mechanisms are still working to varying extents amongst the Cambodian refugee communities.

One way that Cambodian elders teach their children more about the Khmer language is through the practice of traditional ceremonies and rituals. In addition to observances in the home, there are several Buddhist ceremonies and rituals throughout the year. If the community has a monk, then these rituals can continue. As in the villages in Cambodia, people learn about the ways of life from the preaching and rituals of the monks.

Development of Khmer literacy is a different problem. Learning to recognize English letters does not help distinguish the characters of the Khmer alphabet, so what children learn in school does not lead to informally learning to read Khmer. There are presently very few formal systems existing in the Cambodian communities to provide Khmer language instruction. Reasons for this may be lack of past experience in establishing a schooling system, lack of financial support, and lack of accredited teaching personnel. Informally, however, Khmer can be taught. Educated parents may teach their children at home. Communities with temples may have access to basic literacy classes taught by the monks. Cultural groups organized to preserve the Khmer classical ballet and music may also sponsor classes for teaching Khmer literacy. Summer school programs and community recreation districts are often willing to provide space for classes if community members know how to find students, teachers, and materials. A few universities offer summer programs (mostly for non-Khmer speakers) in Khmer.

Materials for Khmer language development

Literacy materials are very limited, but there are some. The three volume textbook series approved for use in Cambodia is available in some communities (Ministry of Education, 1943, 1967). Huffman has produced several volumes, beginning with the *Cambodian System of Writing and Beginning Reader* (1970b). This book, along with its companion, *Modern Spoken Cambodian* (1970a), are designed for use by non-Khmer speakers. Once basic literacy is established, two other

Implications for educators:

Schools can play an important role in helping the Cambodian community maintain the language and culture. However, teachers can acknowledge the importance of knowing how to read and write Khmer, and can encourage efforts in a variety of ways, other than full bilingual classroom programs.

- ❖ After third or fourth grade, have the students write the reading vocabulary words in Khmer as well as English. Have the bilingual aide go over the reading vocabulary and key concepts in Khmer. If the Khmer children are shy about using Khmer in front of other classmates, provide a time and place for review or reteaching in Khmer; it's important not to use art or physical education time for this, as the students don't want to miss class activities.

- ❖ Set up a homework program in which older siblings use the Khmer equivalents of basic word lists, like the Dolch Basic 220 word list, to tutor younger siblings on a regular basis.

- ❖ Involve the non-Khmer students in learning simple Khmer words.

- ❖ Help set up Khmer literacy classes through the local recreation program for summer vacation and after school; offer Khmer literacy during summer school programs; assist the Khmer community organization set up classes at school sites. In Stockton Unified School District, during summer school 1988, primary language classes were taught for two hours per day by trained paraprofessionals under the supervision of credentialed teachers. To the surprise of district personnel, even the fluent English speakers were eager to sign up for classes.

- ❖ Keep in mind that until there are good Khmer dictionaries, secondary students may not see much value in learning Khmer. Demonstrate ways to use Khmer to help learn English material: taking notes, writing equivalent words, noting pronunciation, etc. Help the librarian locate Khmer language books for the community and school libraries.

- ❖ Above all, the teacher is a model to the students, Khmer and non-Khmer. Many communities have programs that introduce "survival Khmer" to non-Khmer. In addition to learning a few words, the teacher is better able to understand and anticipate problem areas in class, and learns a great deal of the culture via study of the language.

readers, *Intermediate Cambodian Reader* (Huffman, 1972), and *Cambodian Literary Reader and Glossary* (Huffman and Proum, 1977b) can provide reading materials. Many libraries have the Huffman textbooks. Huffman and Proum have also produced the most complete *English-Khmer Dictionary* (1978), which may still be available from Yale University Press, and a book for teaching English to Khmer speakers (Huffman and Proum, 1983) which contains a helpful chart of the sound-spelling correspondence in English. The Foreign Service Institute also has several publications designed to teach Khmer to English speakers, but they contain graded reading passages on various topics that can be used with Khmer literacy students. Judith Jacob also has a text, *Introduction to Cambodian* (1968), and a dictionary, *A Concise Cambodian-English Dictionary* (1974). There is a *Cambodian-English Dictionary* published by the Catholic University Press (Headley et al., 1977), and a very complete Khmer and French dictionary in two volumes, *Dictionnaire Cambodgien* (L'Institut Boudhique, 1967). The Cambodia Foundation, Inc., in Austin, Texas, and CEDOREK in Paris, France, sell various materials printed in Khmer and French. Mory Ouk has produced introductory literacy materials for Khmer-speaking children, including *Let's Learn Cambodian*, *Cambodian Consonants*, a primer and books 2, 3, and 4 (Ouk, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988).

Language Use in the Community

Use of Khmer in the community

The Khmer language is used and heard at the majority of Khmer community events, such as mutual assistance association meetings, temple services, and various social events. Although certain English and French phrases may occasionally be inserted during discussions—usually phrases which refer to Western ideas which cannot be translated into Khmer—almost all communications between Cambodian adults are conducted in the Khmer language. On the other hand, educated Cambodians use French to communicate with other French-speaking Indochinese.

Implications for Educators:

Listening to stories told by parents, grandparents, relatives, neighbors, and especially the preaching of Buddhism by the monks at the temples gave Cambodian children the opportunity to develop vocabulary, concepts, and reasoning skills in Khmer. In America, the TV, radio, cassette player, record player, video tape player, and movies have replaced the oral Khmer activities. Children are exposed to less complex language and have less practice in complex thinking skills. If their English is limited, then they have no way to express their ideas, or even to manipulate complex ideas in thinking.

Khmer is still spoken as a first language in the majority of Cambodian homes at the present time. A primary reason for this is that most elders and adults are not yet, and may never be, fluent in the English language. Thus, preschool children, adults, and elders use Khmer almost exclusively as their language for communication. As the children grow up and enter the American school system, it becomes increasingly common to hear them communicate with each other in English. For children who have grown up in the United States, after a few years in school, it seems that many have become more comfortable communicating in English. As time passes, it seems that more and more children use Khmer only when communicating with elders, and if given a preference, will use English instead.

Use of English in the community

Most of the refugees who arrived between 1975 and 1977 had American sponsors. Individual families or churches were the common sponsors during that time period. Thus, refugee families arriving then immediately came into contact with English. Often, there were difficulties in communication between sponsors and refugees at the initial contact, but usually within a few months the head-of-household would be able to speak at least some broken English. For those Cambodians who have moved away from their sponsors to live near relatives, or whose sponsors have not kept in touch after the first few weeks or months, of course, these contacts have now been lost.

After 1977, many Cambodian refugees were sponsored by other Cambodian families who had already resettled in the United States. Regardless, refugees are processed by one of the national voluntary agencies, and each refugee family is usually assigned to a case worker and/or case manager who follows them for the first few months of resettlement. Interviews with the case manager, mandatory health screening, and other interviews with job counselors and welfare workers are common contacts refugee families have with American personnel.

The majority of Cambodian refugees live in apartments or low cost houses, and of course have contact with American neighbors. Often, although Khmer is spoken exclusively in many Cambodian homes, preschool children become semi-fluent in English by playing with neighborhood children. Those who have older siblings who learn English in schools also pick up the language from hearing these siblings speak and play. Children who attend preschool may begin kindergarten with a surprisingly strong understanding of spoken English.

Also, there is daily contact with Americans at markets, shopping centers, and recreational areas. Another almost universal contact refugees have with the English language is through television, as almost every family has access to a set. Children often pick up a great deal of idiomatic speech by watching cartoons and popular shows. Cambodians who have found employment of course learn a great deal of English through talking with their co-workers and employers. On the job, Cambodians learn oral skills, idiomatic meanings, and how to joke and socialize.

The English proficiency of Cambodian parents varies widely. Those who have learned another language in addition to Khmer learn English more quickly; those who can read and write Khmer reach higher levels of English proficiency (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1982-84). Persons who can't read or write Khmer learn only what they hear and remember. As their children grow up and speak more and more English at home, it is common to find many parents also picking up and using more English, although most are more comfortable speaking Khmer. It is becoming increasingly common to hear conversations between parents and children where the parents speak Khmer and the children answer in English, yet both understand each other. In general, it is safe to say that while relatively few

Cambodian parents are fluent in English, the majority know at least some survival English, and can usually communicate simple thoughts and ideas. It's important to remember that second language learners usually understand English better than they speak it. Many also know, through hearing their children, numerous idiomatic phrases.

English language proficiency is also related to differences in how long a family has been living in the United States, which varies from more than ten years to less than a month. Of course, the longer the adults have lived in the West, the more exposure to English they have had, and the more proficient they become in speaking English. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1982-84) analyzed the influence of background characteristics on the refugee adult's acquisition of English. More important than time in the U.S. were three other factors: age, education in Cambodia, and the ability to read Khmer.

Cambodian elders have a much lower rate of English proficiency. This may be because in this age group, few received more than a few years of formal education, either at temples in villages or city schools. Also, fewer in this group are encouraged by social service agencies to actively participate in ESL classes and job search activities. Persons in this age group generally find it more difficult to learn a new language. Moreover, in traditional culture it is common to find that when persons became grandparents they have earned the right to semi-retirement. They would turn over many responsibilities to their children. Their families would treat them with respect and not ask them to perform any physically or mentally stressful tasks. They are relied upon for their wisdom rather than their energy. Lastly, no one really knows how many Cambodians with the ability to read and write Khmer were killed during the Pol Pot years; the Khmer Rouge intent was to remove those who had been contaminated by past ideas, and education was one source of contamination. In this group of older Cambodians are those who escaped early and resettled in the United States during the few years after 1975. They were the ones in society with the greatest skills in French and/or English, since they had been working first with the French, then with the Americans. School personnel may be surprised when they discover that they have highly educated and widely respected professionals—university professors, doctors, former government officials—living in their neighborhoods.

Cambodian students in U.S. schools today have had educational experiences very different from their parents, some better and some worse. While California schools will seldom need to plan appropriate educational programs for the parents of their students, it is important to understand the extent and range of the parents' exposure to formal education and literacy. The educational and socioeconomic background of the parents has a strong impact on their adjustment to life in the United States, which in turn has an impact on the success of the children in school.



Linguistic Characteristics of the Khmer Language

Relationship of Khmer to Other Languages

The official name of Cambodia is *Kampuchea* (*Kambuja*), which has been Anglicized to *Cambodia* via the French *Cambodge*. However, the people call themselves and their language simply *Khmer*, which may be used as either an adjective (as in "the Khmer people" and "the Khmer language") or as a noun (as in "I am a Khmer" or "I speak Khmer"). The term *Cambodian* or *Kampuchean* would refer to any national of the country, whether ethnically Khmer, Chinese, or one of several minority tribal groups. *Kampuchea*, while the official designation of the country since 1975, carries a negative connotation to some people, as *Democratic Kampuchea*, was the Khmer Rouge, or communist Khmer, name for the country under the new communist regime.

The term *French Indochina* is a purely geographic term applied by the French to their colonies in Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Earlier writers included Thailand and Burma in the "Indochinese peninsula." There is no such thing as an *Indochinese* people or language. The Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, and Hmong languages are as different from each other as are, for example, English, Russian, and French, and a speaker of one language cannot understand a speaker of another language unless he has studied that language.

The Khmer have perhaps the oldest linguistic and literacy tradition in Southeast Asia. Khmer belongs to the Mon-Khmer (or Austroasiatic) language family, which consists of some one hundred languages scattered from Eastern India to the South China Sea.

Implications for Educators:

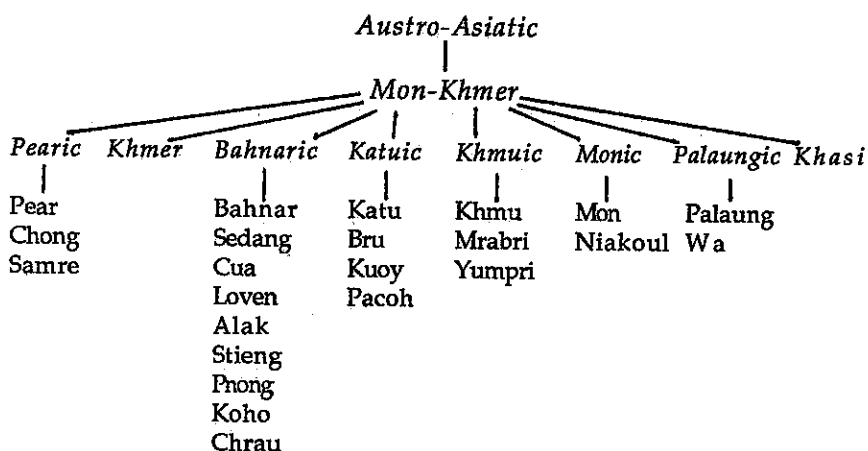
Teachers often assume that one "Indochinese" student will automatically know and understand another. Because of the many language and cultural differences, and the lack of general education, most Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao, Khmer, Hmong, Mien, and other groups are only just now beginning to learn about each other. English enables them to communicate with each other for the first time.

Inscriptions in Khmer go back to the 7th century A.D., and it is probable that the family goes back much earlier than that. Khmer was the language of the great kingdom of the Angkor (802-1432 A.D.), which has been referred to as the "Rome of Southeast Asia", and whose power at one time extended to present day Cambodia, southern Vietnam, southern Laos, Thailand, and northern Malaysia.

Vietnamese was also probably originally related to this large Austroasiatic stock, but as a result of some 2,000 years of Chinese influence, Vietnamese today is a tonal, monosyllabic language with a large portion of Chinese loan words in its vocabulary, while Khmer is

Figure 4.

THE MON-KHMER FAMILY OF LANGUAGES



non-tonal, largely disyllabic, and has drawn its loan words primarily from Pali and Sanskrit. Lao, on the other hand, is related to neither Khmer nor to Vietnamese, but rather to Thai. Hmong and Iu-Mien, finally, are part of the Miao-Yao family of languages, whose wider affiliation is not known. Furthermore, the languages use different writing systems—Khmer and Lao (like Thai and Burmese) use different forms of an Indic alphabet, like the romance languages all use the roman alphabet. (Indic is a branch of the Indo-European languages that is made up of Sanskrit and its modern descendents, Pali, Prakrit, and Dard). Vietnamese was formerly written with modified Chinese characters but has used a romanized script for official purposes for about a hundred years. Hmong exists in several alphabets, but the most widely known version is romanized. Iu-Mien ritual texts are written using Chinese characters, and several forms of romanization are in the process of refinement and adoption. Unlike Khmer, these minority languages have only recently been reduced to writing by missionary-linguists.

Distribution of languages in Cambodia

Khmer is the national and official language of Cambodia and is spoken by over ninety percent of the Khmer population. Prior to 1975 about ten percent of the population was composed of about equal numbers of Chinese and Vietnamese, belonging mostly to the merchant class, and living primarily in the urban areas. Some Thai and Lao are spoken in the border areas. Cham, a language related to Indonesian, is spoken by Khmer Muslims who engage primarily in fishing along the banks of the Mekong and the Tonle Sap Rivers. Finally, various minority languages are spoken by approximately 100,000 hill people (sometimes called "upland Khmer"), such as the Stieng, Pnong, Jarai, and Rhade in the northeastern highlands, and the Kuoy and Samre in the Dangrek Mountains forming the border between northern Cambodia and Thailand, and the Pear and Chong in the Phnom Kravanh (Cardamom Mountains) in the southwestern part of the country (LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave, 1964). French, of course, was widely used as a second language during the period of French domination (1863-1953), especially among the educated in the larger cities and towns.

Dialects of Khmer

Although all the languages mentioned are mutually unintelligible, Khmer is generally spoken as a second language by all non-Khmer ethnic groups, except for the minority hill people who rarely interact with Khmer speakers. Khmer itself is remarkably homogeneous; among native speakers of Khmer there is very little dialectal variation from one region to another. Nevertheless, several dialect areas can be identified:

- 1) *Standard Khmer*, defined as the form of the national language which is taught in schools, spoken by educated speakers, and used for mass communication. It is best represented by the variety spoken in the central provinces.
- 2) *Northern dialect*, characterized by a change in some vowels and the retention of the final |r|: spoken in Siem Reap and Battambang provinces.
- 3) *Southeastern dialect*, characterized by a simplification of the vowel system.
- 4) *Phnom Penh dialect*, characterized by the loss or change of |r| to |h| in initial or second position, and an accompanying rising tone.

Relative status of different languages

During the period of French influence, greater prestige was associated with schools in which instruction was in French while those schools which trained students only in Khmer were correspondingly less prestigious. Competence in French was considered modern and progressive while Khmer was associated with tradition and the pagoda schools, which emphasized the classical religious languages, Pali and Sanskrit. After independence from France, there was a resurgence of national pride in Khmer as the repository of the Khmer culture. Street and place names were changed from French to Khmer, and official government publications emphasized Khmer. During the early 1970's there was considerable pressure on Chinese and

Vietnamese shopkeepers to change their shop signs to Khmer, and all ethnic minorities were encouraged to become literate in Khmer.

Implications for Educators:

Although educated parents may have been educated in French, neither French nor English has much relevance to languages of instruction for young Khmer. After 1975, of course, all education was disrupted, so literacy in Khmer should not be assumed.

Differences Between Khmer and English

Consonants

Some English consonant sounds do not exist at all in Khmer. The Khmer speaker will have to first learn to hear these sounds, then pronounce them, such as the *th* in 'thigh' and the *th* in 'thy.'

Even those sounds which are shared by the two languages may not be exactly alike. For example, Khmer has two sounds for *p*, one aspirated as in 'pot' and the other unaspirated as in 'spot.'

Many consonants which Khmer shares with English do not occur at the ends of words in Khmer; the student will have to first learn to hear the sounds at the ends of words, then produce them. This is not as easy as it sounds. For example, in English there is an *|h|* at the beginning of a word, but not at the end; English speakers would have difficulty in hearing and producing the *|h|* in a final position. Likewise, English speakers produce *ng |ŋ|* at the end of words, as in 'sing,' but not at the beginning; English speakers who try to produce the common Vietnamese family name 'Nguyen' know the difficulty in pronouncing the sound correctly. Khmer has *|h|* and *|ŋ|* at both the beginnings and ends of words.

English has many more clusters of consonants than does Khmer. Although Khmer has many more initial clusters (about 100) than most languages, it has no final clusters. Thus, English words such as 'strengths' and 'can't' will be difficult to pronounce.

Consonants and clusters which are similar in both Khmer and English (when followed by a vowel):

<i>p</i> as in 'pot'	<i>m</i> as in 'man'
<i>t</i> as in 'take'	<i>n</i> as in 'no'
<i>ch</i> as in 'chat'	<i>f</i> as in 'fat'
<i>k</i> as in 'kit'	<i>s</i> as in 'sat'
<i>b</i> as in 'bit'	<i>y</i> as in 'you'
<i>d</i> as in 'duck'	<i>h</i> as in 'he'
<i>pl-</i> as in 'play'	<i>kl-</i> as in 'clay'
<i>sp-</i> as in 'spot'	<i>st-</i> as in 'stop'
<i>sk-</i> as in 'skill'	<i>sm-</i> as in 'small'
<i>sn-</i> as in 'snap'	<i>sw-</i> as in 'swim'
<i>sl-</i> as in 'slip'	

There are some English consonant sounds which are different from their Khmer counterparts and will be difficult for Khmer speakers:

<i>r</i> as in 'rip'	<i>l</i> as in 'lip'
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Clusters such as in *pry, try, cry, brown, blue, drive, fly, fry, spring, split, strike, scrape, and sphere* will be unfamiliar.

There are consonant sounds which do not exist in Khmer, and will be very difficult:

<i>j</i> as in 'jug'	compare to 'chug'
<i>g</i> as in 'gate'	compare to 'Kate'
<i>th</i> as in 'thigh'	compare to 'thy'
<i>th</i> as in 'thy'	compare to 'thigh'
<i>z</i> as in 'zoo'	compare to 'sue'
<i>sh</i> as in 'ship'	compare to 'sip'
<i>zh</i> as in 'measure'	compare to 'pressure'
<i>w</i> as in 'we'	compare to 'vee'
<i>wh</i> as in 'what'	compare to 'watt'

When these sounds are part of clusters, they will also be difficult, as in *ground, glove, throw, shrine, twenty, quick, dwell, Gwen, thwack, squelch*.

The consonants in final positions will be difficult. Khmer has these consonants in final positions, but their sounds alter the other sounds in

Figure 5.

Khmer Consonants

	FIRST SERIES		SECOND SERIES		
	Unaspirated	Aspirated	Unaspirated	Aspirated	Nasal
Velar	ក k	ខ kh	គ k	ឃ kh	ង ng
Palatal	ច ch	ឆ chh	ជ ch	ឈ chh	ញ nh
Retroflex (dental)	ដ d	ថ th	ឌ d	ឍ th	ណ n
Dental	ត t	ត្ថ th	ទ t	ទ្ធ th	ន n
Labial	ប b/p	ផ ph	ព p	ភ ph	ម m
Misc.			យ y	រ r	
			ល l	វ v/w	
	ស s	ហ h			
	ឡ l	អ —			

Both forms of the consonants are shown, the subscript under the normal case., along with a transliteration. The consonants are in the order memorized, from left to right, top to bottom: 5 groups of 5, plus 8.

the word rather than representing final sounds as English speakers know them. Khmer speakers will encounter difficulty with the following:


<i>ch</i> as in 'batch'	compare to 'badge'
<i>j</i> as in 'badge'	compare to 'batch'
<i>b</i> as in 'tab'	compare to 'tap'
<i>d</i> as in 'bed'	compare to 'be'
<i>g</i> as in 'bag'	compare to 'back'
<i>f</i> as in 'half'	compare to 'have'
<i>v</i> as in 'have'	compare to 'half'
<i>th</i> as in 'breath'	compare to 'breathe'
<i>th</i> as in 'clothe'	compare to 'cloth'
<i>s</i> as in 'bus'	compare to 'buzz'
<i>z</i> as in 'fuzz'	compare to 'fuss'
<i>sh</i> as in 'push'	compare to 'puss'
<i>zh</i> as in 'beige'	




Words with final clusters like these, which contain the above consonants will have to be learned as new sounds:

<i>first</i>	<i>stopped</i>	<i>carves</i>	<i>helm</i>	<i>hunt</i>
<i>church</i>	<i>stabbed</i>	<i>month</i>	<i>calls</i>	<i>lunch</i>
<i>strengths</i>	<i>jogged</i>	<i>months</i>	<i>called</i>	<i>rhythm</i>
<i>arts</i>	<i>fifth</i>	<i>width</i>	<i>warm</i>	<i>bulge</i>
<i>cards</i>	<i>fist</i>	<i>ask</i>	<i>warn</i>	<i>laughs</i>
<i>dogs</i>	<i>gorge</i>	<i>asked</i>	<i>comes</i>	<i>banks</i>
<i>cats</i>	<i>sharp</i>	<i>asks</i>	<i>canes</i>	<i>banged</i>
<i>wasp</i>	<i>nails</i>	<i>cars</i>	<i>buzzed</i>	<i>judged</i>
<i>help</i>	<i>cart</i>	<i>filth</i>	<i>makes</i>	<i>bugle</i>
<i>held</i>	<i>carved</i>	<i>ground</i>	<i>jump</i>	<i>girls</i>

Figure 6

Khmer Consonants and English Sounds

( represents another consonant)

On-line	Subscript	Transliteration	English example (approximate)
ក		k	scale, scar
ខ		kh	cow
គ		k	school

យ	ក្រ	kh	cool
ង	ង	ng	sing
ច	ច	ch	no equivalent
ឆ	ឆ	chh	chalk, child
ជ	ជ	ch	Joe
ឈ	ក្រ	chh	cheat
ញ	ញ ញ	nh, ñ	canyon, niño
ដ	ដ	d	dog
ថ	ថ	th	Tom, Thomas
ខ	ខ	d	door
ឈ	ក្រ	th	tool, too
ណ	ង	n	net, no
ត	ដ	t	state, stock, step
ថ	ញ	th	Tom, Thomas
ទ	ង	t	Stephen
ឆ	ង	th	tool, too
ន	ង	n	noon
ប	ក្រ	b	boy
ផ	ង	ph	pat
ព	ង	p	spin

ភ	ព	ph	pool
ម	ម	m	moon, move
យ	យ	y	youth, yellow
រ	រ	r	room, rule
ល	ល	l	liver, loose
វ	វ	v, w	widow, visa
ស	ស	s	saw
ហ	ហ	h	home, hair
ឡ		l	law
អ	អ	-	awful

(Mory Ouk 7/88)

Vowels

Khmer has about fifty different vowels and diphthongs (sounds, not spellings), while English has only about fourteen. One common analysis of English defines these vowels in English:

iy as in 'beat'	uw as in 'boot'
ɪ as in 'bit'	ʊ as in 'book'
ey as in 'bait'	ow as in 'boat'
e as in 'bet'	ɔ as in 'bought'
æ as in 'bat'	ay as in 'bite'
ə as in 'but'	aw as in 'bout'
a as in 'father'	oy as in 'boy'

It would seem logical that if Khmer is so rich in vowel sounds then these fourteen English vowel sounds would be found in Khmer as well. But, sounds are seldom the same in different languages, and learners

will have to learn the differences between similar sounds and learn both to hear and produce sounds that are new to them. Khmer speakers will encounter difficulty with |ɪ|, |ɛ|, |æ|, and |ʊ|.

Figure 7

Khmer Vowels

Long vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	ii	ii	uu
Mid	ee	əə	oo
Lower mid	ɛɛ	aa	ɔɔ
Low		ɑɑ	

Long diphthongs

	Front	Central	Back
High	iə	iə	uə
Mid	ei	əi	ou
Low		ae, ao, aə	ɔə

Short vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	i	u
Mid	e	ə	o
Lower mid		a	
Low		ɑ	

Short diphthongs

	Front	Central	Back
High			uə
Mid	eə		oə
Low			

Note: This represents 31 of the approximately 50 vowel sounds; vowels are represented by specific symbols and sequences of consonants.

An effective way to teach the slightly different and completely new sounds is through the use of minimal pairs. Minimal pairs are two words which differ on in one target sound (the spelling is not important, but the sounds are). Generally the sequence of learning involves first hearing and discriminating the sounds, then producing them orally; speakers cannot except by accident produce a sound that they cannot successfully hear and discriminate from similar sounds. As an example:

Target sounds: |k| vs |g|

In an initial position:

coat - goat
Kate - gate
coal - goal

In a medial position:

bicker - bigger
mucky - muggy
tacking - tagging

In a final position:

back - bag
pick - pig
leak - league

Target sounds: |iy| vs |i|

peak - pick
feel - fill
seek - sick
reach - rich
scene - sin

Grammar

Every language has its own grammar, its own system of rules that govern how the language works. All grammars are complex, but the areas of complexity are different from language to language. Children growing up in a particular linguistic environment learn the rules of grammar by trial and error, over time, with parents, older siblings, and others acting as gentle tutors, first comprehending the child's message no matter how garbled, then restating it in acceptable form. Learners of second languages acquire fluency in a similar way, except that prior language use, literacy, willingness to take risks, and social environment

all play important roles in the rate at which the rules of the new language are mastered. The grammar of the first language will almost always influence the way in which English thoughts are expressed.

Khmer is far more complex than English in its system of status-related personal pronouns and its verbs. For example, a Khmer speaker must use a different pronoun for *you*, depending on whether he is speaking to a servant, the clergy, or royalty. Likewise, he must use one of at least ten different words for *to eat*, depending on the social context. These systems are very difficult for English speaking learners of Khmer to master because they are so complex in areas where English is so simple. In a similar way, certain aspects of English grammar are difficult for Khmer because they are complex where Khmer is simple.

The most difficult area of English for Khmer speakers will be the variable forms of verbs and pronouns, which depend on the word's use in the sentence rather than its social connotation. Khmer verbs and pronouns stay the same, without reference to tense or person.

In English, there are three kinds of verbs:

1) Verbs with three different tense forms:

go	went	have gone
do	did	have done

2) Verbs with two different tense forms:

work	worked	have worked
sleep	slept	have slept

3) Verbs with only one tense form:

hit	hit	have hit
bet	bet	have bet

Khmer verbs are all like the third group; e.g., the verb *go* would have the form |*tiw*| in all of the following:

I <i>go</i> .	He <i>went</i> .
He <i>goes</i> .	I <i>have gone</i> .
I <i>am going</i> .	He <i>has gone</i> .

Time relationships are made clear by other words in the sentence, just as in English.

I want to hit him.
He hit me <i>yesterday</i> .
He <i>has</i> hit the jackpot.

Another complication for Khmer speakers is the use of a different form of the verb with third person singular subjects, as in:

I <i>go</i> .	He <i>goes</i> .
I <i>have</i> .	It <i>has</i> .
I <i>do</i> .	She <i>does</i> .

The most complicated English verb, of course, is *to be*, which is conjugated for both person and tense. For example:

I <i>am</i> .	I <i>was</i> .	I <i>have been</i> .
You (we, they) <i>are</i> .	You <i>were</i>	You <i>have been</i> .
He (she, it) <i>is</i> .	He <i>was</i> .	He <i>has been</i> .

Khmer uses the same form for the six forms of *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, and *been*, so these forms, and the reasons for their use, will be a mystery for the Khmer speaker. Of course, they are automatic for an English speaker, but the pattern, for historical purposes, is entirely arbitrary. For example, the first and third person present forms are different (*am* and *is*), while the first and third person past forms are the same (*was*).

Another aspect of English which is different from Khmer are the differing forms of personal pronouns:

Nominative:	<i>I</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>they</i>
Accusative:	<i>me</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>them</i>
Possessive adj:	<i>my</i>	<i>your</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>their</i>
Possessive pron:	<i>mine</i>	<i>yours</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>hers</i>	<i>our</i>	<i>theirs</i>

In Khmer the pronoun would be the same in all five columns. If Khmer was translated literally, it would come out as:

I am go.	(I am going.)
He hit I.	(He hit me.)
It's car I.	(It's my car.)
It's of I.	(It's mine.)

English plurals will be difficult, since Khmer does not change nouns for singular or plural. English forms the plural in regular nouns by adding the sound |s| after the voiceless sounds, |z| after the voiced sounds, and |z| after |s, z, sh, ch, j, zh|. For example:

s	cat - cats	laugh - laughs
z	dog - dogs	can - cans

|z| horse - horses church - churches

Some English plurals are formed by adding | (r) n |. For example:

ox - *oxen* child - *children*

Others form the plural by changing the vowel, as in:

man - *men* mouse - *mice*

In some words, the final |f| changes to |vz|. For example:

knife - *knives* half - *halves*

In a few words, the nouns in unchanged for the plural form:

fish - fish sheep sheep

In Khmer, all nouns are invariable like for *fish - fish*. Plurals are marked only when necessary, with additional words, as the following literal translations show:

I buy horse. (unspecified)

I buy horse *only one*. (singular).

I buy horse *two*. (plural)

Horse be animal big. (general)

One dictionary (Headley et al., 1977) lists the following classes of words in Khmer: noun, pronoun, numeral, classifier, demonstrative, predicative/verb, adverb, conjunction, interjection (in several different forms with several functions), verbal particle (auxiliary to a verb), final particle (which occurs at the end of a phrase and affects the entire phrase), and general particles/prepositions.

Syntax

In the area of syntax (word order), the differences between Khmer and English are not major. The word order of the following sentences would be roughly the same in both languages.

He built a house.

He works every day.

He wants to buy a car.

After I finish school, I plan to get a job.

There are some important differences, however, including the use of the English articles *a/an*, and *the*. We all learn in school that *a/an* is the indefinite article and *the* is the definite article, as in

I bought *a* horse. (indefinite)

I bought *the* horse I saw yesterday. (definite)

But the use of the English articles is far more complex than that; in fact, *a* can be used definitely and *the* indefinitely, as in

What *a* pretty sunset! (definite)

The horse is a mammal. (indefinite)

All Khmer nouns are rather similar to the English mass nouns, or generic nouns, as in the English examples

Water is essential.

Horses are big animals.

Khmer uses mechanisms for expressing the function of the English articles when it seems necessary to do so in order to clarify a statement.

For example:

I give pencil *one* to he. (I gave him a pencil.)

I give pencil *that* to he. (I gave him the pencil.)

Another difference involves the placement of modifiers (adjectives and adverbs). In Khmer all modifiers follow the words they modify, as in:

house *I* (my house)

car *red* (red car)

tired *very* (very tired)

dogs *three* (three dogs)

money *some* (some money)

Perhaps the most striking difference is the order of the elements in complex noun phrases, in which Khmer tends to reverse the English order. For example:

car *red* (red car)

car *red I* (my red car)

car *red big of I* (my big red car)

car *red big of I that* (that big red car of mine)

(examples from Huffman and Proum, 1983)

Vocabulary

One reason why it has been hard to determine family relationships among languages in Asia is that so many vocabulary items and structural properties are shared by various Asian languages regardless of their genetic origins. These similarities seem to be the result of centuries of commerce and cultural interchange among the people of the region. Because ancient Cambodia was on the shipping lanes between India and China, it would stand to reason that Khmer might contain many words derived from these two languages. In fact, many of the words that separate the educated elite from the less educated villagers are loan words from Sanskrit and Pali, and are learned by sight.

The Khmer have also made up their own new words for some new cultural objects. During the French colonial period, French words were

Implications for Educators:

When translating or interpreting for Khmer parents about school-related concepts, it's necessary to explain the "American" views on which the concepts are based. Often there is no equivalent concept in Khmer, so that translation/interpretation alone does not mean that communication and understanding take place. For example, the American concepts of "potential," "intelligence," "learning handicapped," "gifted," "under-achiever" and so on all depend on a general concept of something unseen within a person that can be measured, and then increased or decreased. The Khmer don't have distinctions in the language to differentiate between a child's *potential* to perform vs. his actual *performance*. What a person *does* is what he *can* do; therefore, a student who gets C's and D's cannot be in the same category as a student who gets A's and B's. Parents will need to understand how a student with C's may be in a program for the gifted, but a student with A's is not. Likewise, they will need to understand that there are ways to change or enhance the performance of children with blindness, deafness, physical disability, retardation, or learning handicaps. Before involving parents in home strategies to teach a deaf child to function in a hearing world, the parents need to understand that Americans truly believe that it's possible to change that child; Khmer probably believe that it's "karma" have a deaf child born to them, and that that child will be taken care of throughout his/her life (he/she will no doubt marry a hearing person); the way in which the family cares for the child will improve their next lives.

The best way for the translator/interpreter to learn these basic American concepts is to work day to day in an environment where he or she can see "with his own eyes" different situations and their outcomes.

taken into the language, and during the American involvement, English words were adopted. So Khmer words for objects and concepts are partly borrowed from Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, French, and English and partly constructed from native resources. The Khmer alphabet has to deal with sounds in loan words that are not present in native words; these sounds are represented in English by 'f', 'g', 'sh', and 'z'.

Another difference to keep in mind is that Khmer simply doesn't have any commonly accepted term for many of the objects and concepts that are part of the American culture. When a language lacks words for some new object, concept, or institution, the gaps are usually filled by deriving new words from old ones or, more commonly, by importing them from languages where the needed words already exist. The English language has "borrowed" terms from other languages for many feature of Western educational practices, for example, over the past several hundred years. The English words *school*, *kindergarten*, *elementary*, *education*, *course*, *gymnasium*, *library*, *mathematics*, *civics*, *schedule*, *instruction*, *college*, *university*, and most other school terms have been brought into English in this way, from Greek, Latin, French and other languages. In Cambodia, formal education was conducted in the French language, so those who went to school used French terms to talk about school topics, particularly secondary school subjects like physics, chemistry, math, and government. Some of these words have made their way into the Khmer vocabulary, and they have no native counterpart. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult even to translate information about educational and other activities into Khmer in a way that will be generally understood without explanation. For high school and college students, a French dictionary may be of more help than an English dictionary.

There are words that cause confusion between any two languages. Following are a few examples of common English vocabulary that cause confusion for Khmer learners of English.

hot and *cold* are fairly clear...
as are *dog*, and *cat*...
but, a *hot dog*?

open, close
house, school
open house?

chicken sandwich
turkey sandwich
finger sandwich?

Linguists point out that a culture's emphasis on certain aspects of the world can be compared by looking at the number of words devoted to a given class of concepts. A common example is the way in which most Asian languages have several words for *rice*, depending on whether it's in the field, cut and threshed, or cooked and ready to eat, whereas to English-speakers, rice is rice. On the other hand, in many other cultures a *vehicle* refers to cars, trains, trucks, ambulances, and so on; Americans not only have different words for each kind of vehicle, but also for each make and model of automobiles ("I used to drive a *Chevy*, but now I have a *Celica*"). Likewise, Americans eat *breakfast*, *brunch*, *lunch*, *dinner* or *supper*, and *snacks*; Cambodians *eat rice*. Americans greet one another with *good morning*, *good afternoon*, *good evening*, *good night*, or *good-bye*; Cambodians use only one—*chum reap sur*. Americans *carry*, but Cambodians

<i>tool</i>	(carry on the head)
<i>lee</i>	(carry on the shoulder)
<i>rek</i>	(carry on a pole)
<i>seng</i>	(carry on a pole between two persons)
<i>pun</i>	(carry on the shoulder, the object suspended behind)
<i>kan</i>	(carry in the hand)
<i>yoor</i>	(carry suspended from the hand)
<i>tbeat kleak</i>	(carry under one arm)
<i>speay</i>	(carry suspended from the shoulder)
<i>poem</i>	(carry a baby)
<i>poh</i>	(carry a baby on the arm)
<i>bey</i>	(carry a baby, cradled in the arms)
<i>kang</i>	(carry wood on the arm)
<i>kandeat</i>	(carry on the hip)
<i>banchiss kar</i>	(carry a child on one's shoulders)

On the other hand, in English *carry* can have a variety of different meanings, depending on context:

carry away ("get carried away")
carry away the garbage
carry away (an audience)

carry here (bring)
carry a disease
carry an account
carry an election
carry responsibility
carry weight (influence)
carry a baby (pregnant)
carry off first place
carry off a crime
carry on (persevere)
carry on (won't stop crying)
carry out a plan
carry out the garbage
carry out a crime
carry over
carry a mile (rifle shot, sound)
carry the '1' (addition)
carry through on a promise
carry me through the winter
carry yourself well
carry your own weight

Implications for Educators:

Teachers assume that a reader will know that the vocabulary word *rode* is the past tense of *ride*; second language learners have to learn that they are the same, except for time. A common problem in the teaching-learning process is when a teacher assumes that the student understands the meaning of the words they can decode. This is rarely true for second language learners.

When teaching the vocabulary in a reading group, look through the story from the point of view of a second language learner; look for past tense verbs, contractions, idioms, verbs like *get up*, *get down*, *get over*, and culturally different concepts. Prepare to teach each of these with its corresponding other forms. For example, teach *will not* along with *won't*; teach *peanut*, *peanut butter*, *jelly*, and *sandwich* along with *peanut butter and jelly sandwich*; teach informal spoken forms like *no way* along with the more formal *impossible*; teach *legislature* along with *Legislature*, pointing out what the capital L signifies; teach *legislate*, *legislation*, and *legislator* as well, showing how each form is used (noun, verb, adjective, etc). For high school students, one of the most difficult areas of writing is knowing which form of a word to use. Common errors include *I interested in it*. *I am boring*. *Did you reservation us a room?* and so on.

A related difficulty is the use of many near-synonyms in English, that correspond to only one word in Khmer. Teach the shades of meaning, using opposite pairs when possible.

Khmer Writing System

The Khmer writing system, as well as the Thai, Lao, Burmese, Old Mon, Old Cham, and Old Javanese scripts, are all derived from some form of the ancient Brahmi script of South Asia. Although all these scripts derive from an Indic source, they have all gone their separate ways, and are as different from each other as is English spelling from Cyrillic (used for Russian). Thus, although the shapes of the letters are similar, and the placement of the vowels either before, after, above, or below the consonant works approximately the same, a Khmer cannot read Thai, and vice versa.

Khmer has 33 different consonant symbols, 31 subscript consonants (slightly different versions of the on-line counterparts, and used only when the word has an initial consonant cluster), and 26 vowel symbols (which are combined in different ways to represent about 50 different sounds), plus a variety of diacritics.

Cambodian characters are these days used almost exclusively in schools, writing letters, newsprinting, and in both private and official publications. Cambodian words are written in a continuous line from left to right, without spaces between the words; spaces occur only between the sentences, longer phrases, or around citations or numbers. There is, of course, no distinction between capital and lower-case forms of letters. There are, however, two rather distinct styles of script which serve in a rather similar way as punctuation:

- 1) a "round" or "ornamental" script, most of whose characters are simply more ornamental shaded versions of their ordinary counterparts, but some of which are totally different in shape. This script is used for titles of books or articles, chapter headings, newspaper headlines, public signs, and for personal names in a running text such as a novel. (see Figure 8, *Samples of Khmer Script*).
- 2) An "ordinary" or "slanted" fine-line script which is used for all purposes other than those mentioned in (1), such as running

text in all letters, newspapers, and novels. (see Figure 8, Samples of Khmer Script).

Figure 8.

Samples of Khmer Script

របៀបបែប សំណួរកំហែង មានច្រើន សង្ខារ តាមបែបសាសនា
 វិហារ ដូចជាខ្លះវិហារខ្មែរ ខ្លះវិហារបួនជ្រុង
 ខ្លះវិហារមូល ខ្លះវិហារសាវ័ន ។ ន ។

ឥតកត្តាខ្វះបណ្តា យក្ខនក្ខប ឲ្យជេរបញ្ចោចក្នុង ជួនកាលក្នុងនោះ
 វាយដំប្រាក់ផង ហាក់ដូចជាមានអំណាចនឹងធ្វើបាបអ្នកកំសត់ទុក្ខតាមចិត្ត
 ពីព្រោះតែខ្លួនកើតឡើងមានសម្បត្តិច្រព្យ ។

លក្ខណសម្បត្តិធម្មជាតិនៃប្រទេសខ្មែរ

ភូមិវិទ្យានយោបាយនៃប្រទេសខ្មែរ

ក ខ គ ឃ ង
 ក ខ គ ឃ ង

ក ខ គ ឃ ង
 ក ខ គ ឃ ង

Cambodians take pride in their writing system, and skill in penmanship is stressed in the schools. There are a great many stylistic variations of the two basic scripts described above. Although Khmer script has its own system of numbers, Cambodian students are usually familiar with Arabic numerals as well, and publications frequently carry both Khmer and Arabic page numbers.

Degree to which the writing system is phonetic

Khmer script, with its derivation from one to several forms of the ancient Brahmi script of South Asia, has twice as many consonants as it needs to represent its consonant sounds. The consonants are divided into two series, and the series to which a consonant belongs determines the pronunciation of the vowel. For example if "first series *k*" is combined with the vowel symbol 'a,' the syllable is pronounced |ka|; however, if "second series *k*" is combined with 'a,' the syllable is pronounced |kia|. The pronunciation of the syllable may also be affected by the final consonant. Finally, there is also a system of diacritics. So you can see that the pronunciation of a syllable may be determined by the following factors:

- 1) the series to which the initial consonant belongs
- 2) the combination of vowel elements
- 3) a final consonant
- 4) a diacritic

Thus, we might best describe the Khmer writing system as "syllabic" or at least "configurational," rather than "alphabetic" (in which there is a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and sound). This idea of configuration is strengthened by the fact that vowel symbols are written before, above, below, after, and around the consonant after which they are pronounced. At this configurational level, the Khmer writing system is far more regular or phonetic than the English writing system. Khmer, like English, sometimes does have several ways to write the same syllable, similar to *to*, *too*, *two* in English; but, given a particular written syllable in Khmer, there is seldom any question as to how it should be pronounced. This is unlike English where, for example, the spelling *-ough* may be pronounced in different ways:

though
through

plough
cough

Cultural Patterns and the Khmer Language

Vocabulary and social relationships

We have already noted that, in its vocabulary at least, the Khmer language reflects the culture of the people who speak it. It is also true that the spoken word is an integral part of that culture. Beside reflecting the technology of a culture, the content of a language may reflect various aspects of social structure and cultural values. Perhaps the best example of this is the use of "context-oriented" vocabulary, in which the choice of a word depends on the situation, or on the relationship between the speaker and the person addressed or referred to. This is especially true of the pronoun system. In English *I* and *you* are neutral, i.e. they can be used by anybody in any situation, whereas Khmer has an elaborate system of pronouns for referring to oneself and to others. Consider the following different ways to say *I* in Khmer:

<i>kñom</i>	between equals; rather formal
<i>añ</i>	familiar; to servants or to express anger
<i>knia</i>	between intimate friends
<i>kñom-baat</i>	to superiors
<i>kñom-preah-baat</i>	to high officials
<i>kñom-preah-karunaa</i>	layman to priest
<i>atmaa</i>	priest to layman
<i>tuul-preah-bangkum-cia-kñom</i>	commoner to royalty

The forms of *you* are even more elaborate. It is hard to escape the conclusion that such complex pronominal systems reflect the importance of social and class distinctions in Khmer society.

The importance of age relationships and respect for elders is reflected in the Khmer system of kinship terminology. English has what social anthropologists call a "biological" or "genealogical" kinship system. When we say, "I have three brothers," we mean that we share one or both parents. Khmer, on the other hand, has a "classificatory" kinship system. For example, *pauon* as a term refers not only to an older brother or sister in the biological sense, but also to any older relative or friend; likewise *taa* refers not only to one's own grandfather but also to all respected older men of one's grandfather's age or generation. These kinship terms are also used as (or in place of) personal pronouns; e.g., to continue with the list of forms which may be used for *I*:

<i>bong</i>	older to younger friend or relative or husband to wife
<i>pauon</i>	younger to older friend or relative
<i>uon</i>	wife to husband (sometimes)
<i>owpuk</i>	father to child
<i>kuon</i>	child to father
<i>puu</i>	uncle to niece/nephew
<i>kmuary</i>	niece/nephew to uncle/aunt
<i>taa</i>	grandfather to grandchild
<i>chaw</i>	grandchild to grandparent

The list can go on and on. These are sometimes called "reciprocal" kinship terms, because the use of one pronoun for *I* implies that the person addressed stands in a specific relationship to the speaker and will respond in the appropriate manner, using the reciprocal form of *you*. Khmer requires that you classify yourself in relation to the person to whom you are speaking before you can refer to either yourself or the other person; even to greet a person requires defining your relative social and generational positions. As you can well imagine, this sometimes leads to a certain amount of verbal sparring when two Khmer meet for the first time, and a reluctance to commit oneself to any pronoun at all until one has sorted out the precise social and age relationship between oneself and the person addressed. There are various strategies for avoiding the decision—one is to use the person's name instead of the pronoun, e.g., *Where is Bill going?* when speaking to Bill; another is to avoid using any pronoun at all, since subjectless sentences are perfectly acceptable in Khmer grammar. It is even

reported that younger Khmer have resorted to using the English *I* and *you* when speaking Khmer, precisely because they are neutral with regard to the reciprocal system.

The importance of social distinctions in Khmer society is reflected even in the choice of nouns and verbs. For example, the way you say the simple verb *eat* depends on the situation and the relative status of the speakers:

<i>ñam</i>	among friends and family, to children
<i>totual-tean</i>	polite, referring to oneself
<i>pisaa</i>	polite, referring to others
<i>boripoke</i>	formal, written
<i>chhann</i>	of the clergy
<i>saoy</i>	of royalty
<i>sii</i>	common term, not polite (usually used of animals)

Khmer names

Cambodian names reflect the importance of family and respect for age. The family name comes first, followed by the given name. For example, the name *Ouk Mory* implies "My family is Ouk, and I am Mory, one of its members." He is addressed as *Mr. Ouk Mory* or *Mr. Mory*; the family name is never used by itself. Age-mates who are good friends or classmates would call him by his given name alone, *Mory*. Younger people would refer to him by use of a generational term, such as *baang*, 'older brother,' *puu* 'Uncle,' or *taa* 'Grandfather,' even if there is no blood or marriage relationship.

Women retain their own names after marriage, as in *Kek Sisouat* ("Sisouat of the Kek family"), but may be referred to as "wife of Ouk Mory" or *Mrs. Mory*. Formally, both family and given names are used:

Maiden name: Miss Kek Sisouat

Married name: Mrs. Kek Sisouat, or Mrs. Ouk Mory

As with men, younger people call her by a generational name rather than her family or given name (*Sister, Aunt, Grandmother*).

Nonverbal communication

The attitude of Cambodian students with respect to nonverbal behaviors is similar to that of other Asian students. Cambodian students usually sit quietly and patiently in the classroom, with a pleasant demeanor, and listen attentively to the teacher. They do not stare at the teacher's face, for such behavior is considered rude; teachers may think the students are bored or not paying attention. There is often very little outward sign that a listener is really listening, except that the eyes are usually downcast. American methods of conveying interest to the speaker, like nodding or murmuring "uh-hmm" every so often are uncommon. Cambodian students generally follow instructions of the teacher without asking questions or showing signs of unwillingness. The smile is another often mentioned source of misunderstanding; for example, if someone slips and falls, and a Cambodian smiles or even laughs, it is not necessarily to make fun of the unfortunate individual. The smile may cover embarrassment for the person's loss of face.

Other difficulties in the classroom include body language that is misinterpreted. The notion of beckoning to someone to "come here" has been mentioned often: Asians generally motion with the palm down, and the four fingers moving as a unit. The act of "pledging" by holding the right hand up, palm out, at about ear height carries little meaning, and is regarded as unusual, especially for older Cambodians, who would place a fist over the heart to promise or pledge. On the other hand, an extended middle digit of an upraised hand has no meaning to a newly arrived Cambodian (children quickly learn from their peers, however!). Americans cross their fingers to show that they hope for good luck or good results; this is an obscene gesture to most Southeast Asians. Drawing a finger across the neck as a warning may carry unintended horror for Cambodians, as it means literally, "I'll kill you." The American OK, formed by making a circle with the thumb and forefinger, with the other three fingers raised, doesn't mean the same thing; it means "zero," "nothing," "bad job." The American insult "crazy," twirling a finger pointing at the temple, simply means "think about it" to a Cambodian. To have a teacher sit on a child's desk is disconcerting, as is having a teacher stand too close while the student is working.

Lilly Cheng (1987), in her book about the assessment of special education needs among Asian children, lists several typical characteristics of Asian children, and how American teachers sometimes form erroneous conclusions, based on their differing cultural backgrounds. For example, teachers may report that a child is submissive or passive when actually he or she is simply quiet and does not talk back. A teacher may view a child's tendency to speak only when asked a question as a sign of disinterest. Children who don't make a choice, or who do not look at the teacher, especially when being corrected, as defiant. Those who wait for the teacher's explicit directions, do not volunteer information or ask questions may be seen as indecisive, lacking in initiative, or overly dependent on others. Children who observe others rather than participating, or who is alone, as shy, inhibited, or having difficulty in establishing friendships. If a child observes and imitates, or pursues conformity rather than non-conformity, may be seen as lacking in creativity. A child who does not confront peers directly, or who asks a mediator to approach the teacher on his or her behalf may be considered afraid, devious, or unwilling to seek help. These examples, and many others, point out the value of being able to switch from one's own cultural frame of reference to another's before reaching conclusions or passing value judgements on a person's behavior.

Recommended Instructional and Curricular Strategies for Teaching Khmer Students

Introduction

Cambodian refugees in the United States are undergoing rapid changes in their lifestyles, social and economic development, and educational status. Former villagers have the opportunity for education, highly valued historically as the only avenue to life in the city and working in a wage economy. Former city dwellers have educational backgrounds, but in French rather than English, and find that the lives they prepared for are as distant as their former homes. Success in America is often based on different formulas than success in post-colonial Cambodia; being in the "right place at the right time" is often as important as degrees or educational attainments. Traditional family roles and values have been torn apart by the Khmer Rouge and the events of the past thirteen years.

Adherence to Buddhism and its view of life allows individuals to survive even the most devastating conditions. For most, adjustment to life in the United States and coming to terms with having survived genocide has taken precedence over developing advanced oral and literacy skills in Khmer. Amongst the children and teen-aged Cambodian students, there is evidence that Khmer literacy is not being developed, in the belief that learning Khmer well won't be of any advantage in becoming successful in an English-speaking country.

Efforts to encourage Khmer language development, both communicative and literacy skills, should be taken by both the Cambodian communities and the American school systems to ensure that not only do limited-English-proficient students receive equality of educational opportunity, but that they do not suffer from the effects of

subtractive bilingualism (interruption in the acquisition and development of the first language and insufficient acquisition of the second language).

Those Cambodian adult and teen-aged students who are literate in Khmer will probably be easily able to transfer these reading and writing skills to English. Even though Khmer is written with a script very different from English, it is not difficult for them to learn a new symbol-sound code (Thonis, 1981). Those who are literate in their own language have proven that they have the requisite visual, auditory,

Table C.

PERCENT OF LEP CAMBODIAN STUDENTS IN
CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS, 1981 TO 1988

<i>CENSUS</i>	<i>LEP</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>Percent LEP</i>
Spring 1981	2,474	2,893	86%
Spring 1982	5,166	5,816	89
Spring 1983	6,695	7,632	88
Spring 1984	8,399	9,833	85
Spring 1985	10,730	12,735	84
Spring 1986	13,907	16,630	84
Spring 1987	15,665	19,084	82
Spring 1988	17,274	21,557	80

DATA BICAL Report No. 88-71. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, Spring 1988.

and sensorimotor skills, as well as oral language and conceptual development necessary to become literate in any language and able to progress educationally even when taught in a second language.

Another positive effect of native language literacy is that it encourages a sense of pride in the students for having the ability to read and write in their own language. It also implies that the students have a positive sense of their own identity, are well adjusted to their ethnic group, and reflects acceptance and knowledge of the culture.

Native language literacy ensures an educated group of fully bilingual-bicultural persons who can be leaders in the fields of education, politics, economics, medicine, and so forth. They will

doubtless be leaders of their ethnic groups as well as needed liaisons between their communities and the greater society.

Acquiring Two Languages

Students should be exposed to both Khmer and English so that they can become proficient in both languages. School personnel and practices should create an emotional climate that allows students to maintain and develop their primary language skills.

By the age of five or six, all children, except those who are severely retarded, deaf, or aphasic acquire basic interpersonal communicative skills in Khmer, spoken in the home and community. However, unless taught in a planned program, students will not proceed to cognitive or academic language proficiency in Khmer (cognitive or academic language skills are those associated with literacy and school achievement). The home, the school, and the community are all appropriate settings for such development of primary language skills.

Parents and older siblings can be encouraged and taught to work with preschool and school-aged children in a variety of activities. Teachers in American classrooms often tell language minority parents to speak English more at home. Unfortunately, such a practice is often not possible or even desirable. Speaking torturous or broken English may severely limit the quantity and quality of verbal interaction between parents and children. Rather, teachers can encourage parents to verbalize with children in their strongest language in ways that build underlying cognitive skills. For example, many parents, especially those who have never been to school, are not familiar with the ritual that goes on in many homes: sitting with a child and looking at a book; pointing to pictures and asking questions; reading a few lines, and letting the child fill in the rest; letting the child retell a familiar story. All these activities enhance the reading process, and can take place in any language. Too often, the most frequent kind of verbalization consists of commands or instructions: *close the door, watch your sister, time to eat*. Children are exposed to more advanced vocabulary, structure, and logic when listening to their elders discuss something, or when observing traditional rituals in the home or

community. Educated parents tend to involve children in activities that prepare children for learning to read and write (Wells, 1988), and are more likely to teach their children Khmer literacy in the home. While parents do not necessarily have to speak more English at home, they can *expect* their children to learn both Khmer and English well.

The school is often not directly involved in Cambodian community activities, but school personnel can advise and influence community leaders as to what is important for successful school achievement, the advantages of proficiency in the home language as well as the majority language, and the skills and attitudes that teachers take for granted. Schools can assist communities with the organization and implementation of literacy or cultural classes, production of a community newsletter in Khmer, bringing community members into the school setting to share information with non-Cambodians, and cooperation with community groups who promote skills in Khmer language and culture.

As more and more children are American-born, and as the second, bilingual or bridge, generation has children, students may have been exposed to English from the beginning at home. Schools can make students and parents aware of the benefits of bilingual proficiency, and encourage children to learn the home language of their parents through auxiliary classes. Cambodian parents who attended school learned French very early, so they are familiar with the experience of trying to learn concepts in a second language; they may expect their children to do the same. School personnel can help parents become aware of research which shows the advantages of native language fluency and literacy in academic success. A key to encouraging students to *want* to become proficient in Khmer is to avoid making English proficiency the only means of gaining prestige at school. Finding ways to enhance the prestige of Khmer in the majority community will encourage children to learn and use Khmer.

Promoting Bilingualism and Biliteracy

Research on students of many language backgrounds strongly supports an affirmative effort by the school to cultivate each student's potential bilinguality. This approach will benefit not only Khmer skills, but also English skills and academic achievement.

Willig (1985) has conducted a "meta-analysis" of several bilingual programs in the country, and compared the students in many ways—backgrounds, literacy in the home, prior schooling, socioeconomic status, and so on. She found that well-matched students in comparison bilingual programs performed at least as well as the control students on criterion testing, no matter which language was used for testing. Her study suggests that evaluations of results of the effectiveness of bilingual programs is highly dependent on the way in which the groups of students are compared. At the very least, students in good bilingual programs (in which students are taught in their own language before English reading is introduced) performed no worse than "ordinary" students, and had the bonus of knowing their own native languages well.

Using programs in seven California districts, Krashen and Biber (1988) found that students in bilingual programs equal or better the performance of matched students on standardized tests that use academic language. Their findings supported earlier estimates that it takes five to seven years to develop the language skills necessary for academic learning and abstract reasoning, but only about two years to become conversationally adept.

Students who spend time becoming bilingual and biliterate, then, are investing in their futures. The problem is that any given teacher cannot see the whole process, which takes up to seven years. After the entire process is completed, the students are not any less skillful in English, but they have the added power of skill in a language other than English. This ability will enable them to respond to opportunities in the increasingly multinational business community that are not open to monolinguals. Proficient bilingual and biliterate students have other advantages over less proficient language minority students and even over monolingual students (Cummins, 1981; *Evaluation of California's Education Services*, 1981). In particular, adults who learned to manipulate the rules of two languages as children

outperform monolinguals in cognitive flexibility, divergent thinking, and analyzing complex situations for underlying structures.

Suggestions for Educators:

Spell new English words both vocally and visually to help students understand the pronunciation, tie the word to the concept, and fix the word in memory.

Dictate sentences and paragraphs aloud for students to write. This helps students check their knowledge of English vocabulary, to find weaknesses in the form of their written English, and improves their skills in listening and comprehending.

Grouping students with native English speakers provides Cambodian children with English acquisition as a natural process. The kinds of structure that children use, the type of feedback, and the motivation that peers provide is very important. Since Cambodian children may be shy about initiating friendships with American classmates, the teacher can help by assigning a sympathetic buddy, seating compatible children together in class, and assigning work groups to increase the interaction between Cambodian and native English speaker.

Being understood is the single greatest aid to learning English. Even though the syntax and grammar may be wrong at first, if the message is understood, then the form of the English utterances will gradually improve.

Limited-English-proficient students find it very difficult to view a film or video in class and get much information from it. Often the sound is poor, the people speak rapidly, and the vocabulary and concepts are unfamiliar. In addition, the elements of body language and facial expression, which is important to understanding, are totally absent. The teacher should outline what is to be seen, so the students have a frame of reference. Taking notes while watching a film is almost impossible.

Likewise, taking notes during a class lecture is very difficult. In addition to comprehending what the teacher is saying, the student has to be able to summarize it, then write down the appropriate parts as notes. Even those who were secondary students in Cambodia, taking notes in French, will find it difficult. The teacher can help this process by providing a simple written outline of the lesson, or at least by writing the important parts on the board.

The best teachers for newcomer children are those that are patient, and show with nonverbal cues that they are loving and compassionate. Once the children know that the teacher understands their difficulties, they will gain confidence in the teacher, and will believe and trust the teacher above all others. As a child sees that the teacher is concerned, they will do anything the teacher wants, even when it is very difficult. At the same time, students should clearly know the limits of behavior, and should bear the consequences when they do not behave appropriately.

California school personnel who wish to provide Khmer language development to Khmer-speaking students face several

obstacles related to the relative scarcity of Khmer language materials and the interim lack of trained teachers. Even in Cambodia there was a lack of educational materials in Khmer, because of the post-colonial reliance upon French as the language of development. The Cambodians in America, however, have new materials and reprints of materials appearing every year, and with the creation of computer software that produces Khmer script easily, more and more materials are just on the horizon. Until there are sufficient credentialed teaching personnel, the schools can look to the home, temple, and community for literate adults who can assist with Khmer literacy instruction. Schools can promote the community efforts by making available school sites for after-school literacy classes, and can share developed resources across district boundaries. Parent education programs in schools can share the parenting techniques that literate parents use with their young children to promote the attitudes and the prerequisite skills necessary for literacy. School personnel can help parents understand the effects of parental expectations, and encourage them to expect children to be bilingual and biliterate. Above all, the public school educators can create an atmosphere in which being bilingual and biliterate is admired and respected, and one in which both languages are regularly used.

Readiness for Reading and Writing Khmer

Five skills are necessary before reading and writing in Khmer can begin. The first two prerequisites for learning to read and write Khmer are the same visual skills and sensorimotor coordination that English-speaking children need to begin reading. These are nonlanguage-specific skills, but they are learned through the use of language, such as naming basic shapes, comparing same and different, and counting in order. The next two required skills are a command of spoken Khmer and a knowledge of concepts by which the student can begin to understand and analyze meanings in the written language. Oral language development in Khmer can build both these skills at the same time. The fifth requisite for beginning to read and write is motivation.

In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education introduced reading instruction in the first grade. Children of that age usually possessed

the cognitive and physical development necessary to deal with specific characteristics of the Khmer language.

Visual skills

Visual skills include recognizing basic shapes, sizes, and colors, telling whether patterns are the same or different, naming the items that are missing in a picture, or choosing a picture that is different from the others. Obviously there is a strong cultural component to the nature of the tasks children are asked to perform; for example, they have to be personally familiar with the components of an object or a scene before knowing what is missing. Some children are rehearsed in these skills by parents before entering school; however, such experience should not be assumed, especially when teachers may not be sure which parents are educated and literate, and which ones are not. These visual discrimination and memory skills are necessary before learning to reading in either Khmer or English.

The Khmer alphabet consists of characters whose significant differences are position (over, under, before, after), straight and curliques lines, tiny vertical or horizontal marks, and left-right orientation of identical forms. It's as if in English 'T' and 't' represented different sounds. Just as beginning English readers confuse 'b', 'p', and 'q', or 'i' and 'j', beginning Khmer readers have to differentiate ឃ, ឆ, ជ, ដ and ក, ខ, គ, ត

Sensorimotor skills

The motor control skills and eye-hand coordination skills necessary to begin writing are called sensorimotor skills. A sequence of activities usually leads from the gross-motor level to the fine-motor level and from the three-dimensional space around the body to the two-dimensional area of the page. First, isolated motions are mastered, such as jumping, throwing, catching, and clapping. Second, sustained sequences of actions related to a whole task are required; for example, acting out all the body motions that accompany a song or cutting and pasting pieces of paper to make a picture. Finally, the

hands and fingers practice the fine skills of handling crayons, paper, and pencil. Prewriting pencil-and-paper practice may include drawing lines through a maze, drawing basic shapes such as circles and triangles, and making Xs or Os on work sheets in response to visual discrimination tasks. Materials that focus on prereading skills for non-native speakers are difficult to find, and native English teachers find it difficult to isolate the specific skills that need to be taught. Material developed for language delayed students often have the sequences well defined and do not assume any prior knowledge of either the concepts or the skills.

Auditory and oral language skills

Students need personal mastery of most of the sounds, syntax, and common vocabulary of Khmer before they can begin to read and write. Students raised in Khmer-speaking environments will learn these skills through daily exposure, but without deliberate effort, they may not proceed to understanding complex vocabulary and various forms of expression that are so important in Khmer. There are different styles of spoken Khmer, from language reserved for high status persons and royalty to the interaction between siblings as they play.

The Khmer language requires the discrimination of at least 50 discrete vowel sounds, many more than the number of vowel sounds in English. Significant differences include the duration of otherwise identical sounds, the consonant which precedes a vowel and changes the vowel sound from one to another, several combinations of simple vowels in diphthongs, and many combinations of consonants into blends.

Implications for Educators:

Teachers and school specialists should not overlook the possibility of untreated ear infection, or residual ear damage from previous untreated ear infections.

Conceptual skills

Conceptual skills include the abilities to organize thoughts in chronological or thematic order, to anticipate consequences, to explain similarities and differences, to classify things, to give simple definitions, and to identify difficult words or phenomena. Development of these skills involves building awareness of surroundings, feelings, people's roles and relations, and many life experiences. As students practice these analytical skills through play, word games, and informal discussions, they prepare themselves for the conceptual demands of reading and writing. These skills are developed once, in the strongest language, and then transfer readily to any second language that is learned later. However, in many homes where children use mixed English and Khmer, these skills are never really developed in either language. The children don't have a language to "think with".

The relationship of the sounds of the Khmer language to its alphabet, in which there are two series of consonant symbols which cause vowel symbols to be pronounced differently, children have to be able to deal with fairly abstract classifications and complex rules.

Implications for Educators:

Folk tales and stories from different cultures have different formats and thus differences in the way that "what comes next" is anticipated. Teachers should not assume that children come to school knowing the usual American tales, legends, nursery rhymes; the ESL curriculum should include building a base of knowledge that can be used when answering questions or drawing conclusions in later grades.

Motivation for reading and writing

Motivation to read and write in Khmer at school can be promoted through an environment that is rich in opportunities, reading materials, and encouragement from all teachers and students. The teachers and the principal of the school must communicate clearly the goals of the school program to the students' parents. In addition, school

personnel should coordinate their efforts with those of the staffs of other Khmer literacy classes, so that the programs support each other.

Transfer of literacy skills

There are skills that transfer from literacy in a first language to other subsequent languages. This transfer of nonlanguage specific skills makes the learning of the second language more efficient. The types of skills that are language-specific, and thus not transferrable, are the more technical aspects such as particular spelling patterns and syntactic rules.

The prereading skills do not have to be relearned; they are nonlanguage specific. Students will understand that a written language is a code, and there are particular rules for decoding (reading) and encoding (writing). They will understand that the written language differs from the spoken language, but that there are conventions to help the reader make the written passage sound as much like oral speech as possible when read aloud (periods, commas, quotation marks, boldface, and so on).

Literate students will have strategies for confronting a written page, and for understanding the punctuation and layout of text. They may be familiar with the physical cues that help them analyze the nature of a document (this is a letter, this is a poem, this is dialogue, and so on), even before they can fully comprehend the meaning of the words and sentences.

Literate students will know how to read for meaning in a paragraph, how to organize and classify details, how to form images of what is read. Problem solving strategies for figuring out unknown words can be applied to the second language, such as using context clues, looking just before or just after a new word to find its meaning restated, consulting a dictionary, or describing a problem that needs solving.

Khmer differs from English in both structure and content, and its writing system and characters are totally different from the Roman alphabet. However, the skills that do transfer directly from Khmer literacy to English literacy are the sensorimotor skills, in that both proceed from left to right and top to bottom on a page. Khmer sentences, like those of English, consist of subject, verb, and object; each word has

a particular language function, and the function is basically the same in both languages. The construction of sentences and paragraphs is similar, although in Khmer there are no spaces between words. Higher thinking skills involved in analyzing the meaning of written material—such as comparison and contrast, understanding metaphors, antonyms, homonyms, intentions of the author, differentiating fact from opinion—all these are learned in Khmer, then transferred to English. Ada (1980) divides reading skills into the four categories of readiness, decoding, comprehension, and critical reading, and shows that “no one learns to read twice.”

Literacy Programs in Cambodian Communities

Learning to Read Khmer

In Khmer orthography the letters have a very consistent correspondence to the sound system, and so, the phonic method is the most effective way for teaching most students. Reading by the phonic method requires knowledge of the symbol-sound correspondence and blending skills.

Learning to read with fluency in school in Cambodia or Thailand depended on practicing or memorizing set texts of material, to be read in front of the class. This may have been a carry-over from learning in traditional schools, or may have been necessary because of the lack of books and paper. Memorization and recitation were supplemented by dictation, and eventually, sight recognition of words occurred. The immediate recognition of words, rather than decoding them in a low voice and listening to the words, is essential for speed, comprehension, and the editing skills required by writing.

The traditional way of teaching reading to Cambodian children followed this sequence:

- Step 1: The 33 consonant symbols are introduced first, in strict alphabetical order. The students repeat the teacher's pronunciation in unison. Some of the consonant names are

actually words, in the same way that in English *b* is *|bi|*, or *bee*, an insect; a verb (*be*), or a name (*Bea*). Khmer *k* is called *|kɔ|*, which also means *neck, build, or then*.

Step 2: Students learn to pronounce all the vowel symbols, in dictionary order. Since the vowels have to be written in relation to a consonant, the students are actually reading a few Khmer words.

Step 3: Next, students are drilled in consonant-vowel combinations, which are words in their own right (although some are of very low frequency). This is similar to the English practice of pronouncing nonsense words when learning consonant and vowel blending.

Step 4: Students then add final consonants and practice the changes in the vowels which occur, and the final sounds.

Step 5: By this time, students are familiar with first series consonants and second series consonants. Students now learn to use the diacritics, which convert the consonant from one series to the other.

Step 6: Students next learn to read two consonant initial clusters. In Khmer the second consonant of a cluster is represented by a subscript. Thus, students have to learn two forms for each consonant (some are smaller versions of their regular counterparts, but some are entirely different). In these four examples, two sets of *|k|* and *|kh|*, the first symbol is the regular consonant, the second is the subscript, :

ក្រ ក្រ ខ្ល ឃ្ល

Step 7: Finally, the independent vowel symbols are introduced. These occur in loan words from Pali and Sanskrit, but are found in a few very common words, like the words for *give, father, and now*.

Once students have mastered these steps, they can decode almost any Khmer word. The rules governing the decoding are very regular, unlike English. As students progress through school, they learn literary words from Pali and Sanskrit, which must be learned by sight.

Materials for teaching Khmer reading and writing are described in Chapter 2 and are summarized below. Most are difficult to obtain; see the appendix for information on sources of Khmer materials.

- Catholic University of America Press (Washington DC).
Cambodian-English Dictionary (Headley, et al., 1977).
- Foreign Service Institute (Washington DC).
Contemporary Cambodian: Grammatical Sketch. (Ehrman, 1972).
Contemporary Cambodian: An Introduction. (Lim & Purtle, 1972).
Contemporary Cambodian: the Land and Economy. (Ehrman et al., 1973).
Contemporary Cambodian: Political Institutions. (Ehrman et al., 1973).
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(Cambodian: Basic Course, Volume I). (Noss & Proum, 1966).
Cambodian: Basic Course, Volume 2. (Suos, 1970).
- Huffman, Franklin (Cornell University).
Modern Spoken Cambodian. (1970).
Cambodian System of Writing and Beginning Reader. (1970).
Intermediate Cambodian Reader. (1972).
Cambodian Literary Reader and Glossary. (1977).
Cambodian-English Glossary. (1977).
English-Khmer Dictionary. (1978).
English for Speakers of Khmer. (1983).
- Jacob, Judith (London).
Introduction to Cambodian. (1968).
A Concise Cambodian-English Dictionary. (1974).
- L'Institut Bouddhique (Phnom Penh, Cambodia).
Dictionnaire Cambodgien. (1967).
- Ministry of Education.
 Textbook series (3 volumes) (1943).
Viccea Khaemmara Phiasaa (Study of the Khmer Language). (1967).
- Ouk, Mory (San Diego Unified School District).
Cambodian Consonants (1984).
Let's Learn Cambodian, Primer, with Teacher's Guide (1984).
Let's Learn Cambodian, Book 2 (1985).
Let's Learn Cambodian, Book 3 (1987).
Let's Learn Cambodian, Book 4 (1988).

Learning to Write Khmer

The process of teaching children to write

Usually American teachers present the manuscript form first, because it is believed that this method is more suitable for young hands and fingers. Manuscript writing requires fewer hand or eye movements.

The physical skills necessary for anyone to begin writing are: 1) establishing the dominant hand; 2) learning to manipulate the pencil or pen; 3) establishing left-to-right direction; and 4) learning to position the body, hand, and paper. Initial exercises usually include practice in making basic strokes and shapes (large and small circles, vertical lines, diagonal lines, and regular spaces). Instruction in writing is begun by having students learn to write letters of the alphabet, by copying from models.

For cursive writing, learners need to have sufficient small muscle control and coordination to enable them to make the retracing, joining, and flourishes that are part of cursive writing. The essential differences between the two forms of writing are the joining of letters and the lifting of the pencil at the ends of words rather than the ends of strokes.

Teaching Khmer writing

At the beginning, learning to write Khmer is simultaneous with learning to recognize and pronounce the symbols. After pronouncing each letter and word, the students write them down in their copybooks, observing how the teacher writes each one on the blackboard. The direction and sequence for drawing Cambodian characters is analyzed in *Cambodian System of Writing and Beginning Reader* (Huffman, 1970b). Penmanship is stressed, and Cambodians take great pride in having a beautiful script. Because Khmer typewriters and word-processors were fairly rare, many Khmer materials are hand-written.

Traditionally, composition activities for students followed the "copy the form" method of learning, in which students copy texts verbatim at first, then vary the texts according to personal style. Dictation was also extensively used, writing on slates rather than paper. Beginning in grade four, students wrote short descriptive essays, stories, narratives, and letters. Literary comment and argumentation was normally introduced at the secondary level (usually in French, however).

Among the younger groups of Cambodians, there may be some who are fond using writing Khmer skills to write. Like all aspiring authors, they need a forum through which they can publish their works.

Interested school or community people could assist the Cambodians to find funds, volunteers, and personnel, or provide access to computers with Khmer fonts and printers to produce journals, books, articles, and so on, in the Khmer language. This endeavor would provide two benefits, one being a way to encourage persons to write in Khmer, and the other being a way to provide much-needed Khmer written resources to the Cambodians and the greater community. An additional benefit is the involvement of community elders in meaningful school-home pursuits, the preservation of what they know.

Acquisition and Literacy Programs in the Schools

Learning to speak a second language involves acquiring the language in much the same way as all children acquire their native tongues: first comes listening, then understanding what is heard, and finally producing thoughts so others can hear. We acquire language *by understanding what we hear* (Krashen, 1982, 1985a). To speak better English, a person has to hear more and understand more. Fine-tuning the spoken language comes through having someone rephrase and repeat what has just been said, as parents do for children, and learning through more formal methods the "right" way to speak. For second language learners, the school often replaces the parent in the rephrasing role, as well as teaching the formal rules of the language. However, the formal rule learning is not a substitute for being understood and gently corrected.

Language learners who have already acquired a second language (for instance, French-speaking Khmer) have been exposed to the strategies that are important for success — listening and analyzing sounds and structures, using "telegraphic" speech ("*you go where?*") in an effort to communicate as soon as possible, imitating the patterns and intonation of speech units, searching out empathic listeners, repeating over and over when misunderstood, and taking risks.

Krashen and Biber (1988) identify three elements in effective programs for limited-English-proficient students:

- 1) high quality instruction of subject matter in the native language, without translation;
- 2) development of literacy in the native language;
- 3) comprehensible input in English.

Language Programs in the Schools

In California, most language minority students enter one of four types of classroom situations: 1) *grammar-based English as a Second Language* (taught as high school foreign languages are taught, with emphasis on translation, phonology, and rules); 2) *submersion* (taught as if every one is a native speaker of English); 3) *communicative-based ESL* (with emphasis on language use and language functions, the "natural approach"); or 4) *sheltered-English* (in which the subject matter is taught in English, with modified materials and special techniques that enhance comprehension). The research suggests that communicative-based ESL and sheltered English instruction best promote the acquisition of English, and the other two methods are less effective (Krashen, 1981; Terrell, 1981).

Depending on the age of the student entering the American schools, and the school environment, appropriate program design will differ. The basic guideline to remember is that language acquisition takes place when the input is made comprehensible in some way (whether by using pictures, hand signals, "motherese", modified materials, bilingual aides, or peer tutors). Young children who enter school at kindergarten find an environment that provides plenty of comprehensible input; kindergarten teachers use short phrases, demonstrations, repetition, and instructions to perform physical activities. On the other hand, high school teachers use English that has fewer apparent clues as to meaning, and students cannot watch and mimic peers as kindergarteners do.

Grammar-based ESL classes are usually offer one of two approaches: grammar-translation (inductive), or audiolingual or cognitive code (deductive) methods. Either of these approaches teaches the formal rules of language, and leads to the development of a language monitor (Krashen, 1981). The monitor assists learners of English in producing carefully constructed and grammatically accurate

utterances. Before the monitor can be effectively used, the task at hand must be focused on language forms in some way (for example, a grammar test); the students must have already learned the grammar rule; they must recognize the appropriateness of the situation for the rule; and they need sufficient time to retrieve the rule, adapt it to the situation, and use it correctly in producing an utterance. Seldom does the normal speech situation allow for these conditions. The monitor can actually inhibit the output of language.

In submersion environments language minority students are placed with native-English-speaking peers and a native English teacher who teaches as though there are only native English speakers in the room. Submersion environments are less effective than grammar-based ESL classes, because during submersion lessons, the students do not comprehend much of what is said. Krashen (1981) states that the critical elements of "comprehensible input" are 1) what the student can already comprehend, and 2) the additional input that is made comprehensible by a variety of techniques. In submersion classes, there is too much input that is too far removed from the level of comprehension of the student. Cummins (1981) and Krashen (1981) have conducted research that shows that in submersion environments, neither the ability to communicate socially nor the cognitive/academic skills are developed.

The elements in effective programs that help students acquire English simply provide multiple paths to better and earlier understanding of messages. All of the standard methods for helping students learn English are appropriate and effective at some point in their seven year journey to becoming proficient in both the conversational and more abstract uses of the language. The teacher's role is to know which approach is appropriate at any given time for a particular student. Over-reliance on any one approach limits the students' options for understanding more, and thus acquiring more.

An important part of "understanding more" is the background knowledge a student brings to the task. Studies show that more that students know about the content of a message, the more likely they are to understand (Bransford, 1979; Smith, 1982). This is a critical factor when teaching newcomer students who enter American schools without adequate schooling *before* they arrive. In addition to building background knowledge (using the primary language is usually the most

effective and efficient method), teachers are faced with the very difficult task of providing remedial background knowledge—all that other students have been learning slowly since kindergarten—as well as current subject matter. Students have to catch up as well as keep up.

Four Instructional Approaches

Literacy—reading and writing a language—is acquired in much the same way as understanding and speaking. People *learn to read by understanding what they read*. In learning to read, a person masters the code, and puts it to use, first in reading, and then in writing. The fastest route to literacy is in the language in which thinking takes place. In learning to read a second language, students have to accomplish the same tasks, but without knowing what the decoded words mean. However, reading is another form of language input, and if comprehensible, should result in increased language acquisition. Research shows that one of the most important factors in learning to read, whatever the linguistic situation, is free reading (Smith, 1982; Krashen, 1984, 1985b; Nagy, et al., 1985). As students understand more and more, they build vocabulary, as well as learn and internalize more complex grammatical constructions. Thus, reading improves both reading and writing skills in all learners, and for second language learners results in further acquisition of language. The key is whether or not students understand what they decode. The challenge for the public schools is to enable second language learners from a variety of language backgrounds to understand what they read.

The appropriate time to introduce reading instruction depends on the goals of the program. If the goal is biliteracy, then reading instruction would begin in Khmer, in kindergarten and continue through at least sixth grade. Formal instruction in English reading would begin at about second or third grade, after the basic processes are strongly developed in the primary language, including higher reading skills such as inference and study skills. In transitional bilingual programs, reading instruction is begun in the primary language and is continued until about 4th grade, when a transition is made to reading only in English. In English-only programs, students attain the readiness skills necessary for reading instruction, and begin to read in English. Essential

readiness skills would be interpersonal communicative skills and underlying cognitive skills demonstrated by native English speakers when they begin reading instruction.

There are four basic choices in organizing a reading program in bilingual contexts:

- Begin literacy in Khmer, introduce English later, at second or third grade; continue both through sixth grade.
- Simultaneous instruction in both Khmer and English.
- Begin literacy in English then teach Khmer literacy (immersion programs).
- Literacy instruction in English only.

Khmer followed by English

When there are sufficient human and material resources available and the parents support the concept, the first-language reading approach appears to be effective in developing full bilingualism and biliteracy, with fully developed cognitive and academic skills (Cummins, 1981; Krashen and Biber, 1988; Willig, 1985). An effective program introduces reading in the primary language in the first grade and continues it until third grade. Formal English reading instruction begins in third grade, and instruction in both languages is continued to sixth grade (Rosier and Holm, 1980; Cummins, 1981). The effects of reading instruction are cumulative, adding up year after year, and the best results are achieved after a seven year program (Cummins, 1981, Krashen and Biber, 1988).

Khmer and English simultaneously

In these programs, students learn to read in Khmer and English at the same time. Some studies suggest that there is confusion (like "false cognates") when learning two alphabetic systems at the same time, that is not a problem when learning characters (like Chinese) and letters (like English) at the same time. The confusion arises when letters represent different sounds or follow different rules in the two coding systems.

The key to an effective program is the coordination between the lessons and teaching staff of the two reading programs. It would not be necessary to teach twice the underlying skills that are developed by reading instruction (for example, a student learns to alphabetize or identify the topic sentence in a paragraph only once). If one teacher teaches both languages, it has been shown to be more effective if the instruction periods are clearly separated in terms of time, materials, and environment. Simultaneous literacy instruction does not mean mixing the two languages in the same activity. Rather, it should involve complementing and enhancing the student's literacy development through the use of two languages in separate, efficient, challenging sets of activities.

English followed by Khmer

Immersion programs in French for native English-speaking students have been in operation in Canada for more than a decade, and there have been several experimental programs in the United States. In these programs, all instruction is given in the students' second language (for example, English), including literacy instruction (in the language of immersion, English). At second or third grade, language arts instruction in the primary language (French) is begun. Research has shown that most students in French immersion programs achieved high levels of literacy in both languages (Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1981; Genessee, 1980; *Studies on Immersion Education*, 1984). Even though students were provided with most of their instruction in French, once English language arts were added to the curriculum, the students quickly caught up to their monolingually schooled peers. The students did as well as monolingually schooled peers in grade level tests of academic language, but had gaps in speaking and writing (Pellerin and Hammerly, 1986). In addition, however, the students were proficient in French.

One should note that the immersion programs are especially designed so that native English-speaking students acquire a second language while at the same time experiencing normal academic and English development. These students, in general, attain a level of proficient bilingualism. Implementing such programs in the United

States should be based on a commitment by educators to promote the LEP students' academic learning as well as comparable proficiency in both English and their native language.

English only

For a variety of reasons—philosophical position, desires of the students and parents, or lack of educational resources—some school districts will continue to provide Khmer students with English-only, submersion type reading instruction. Fortunately, most programs offer at least oral ESL instruction; nevertheless, few recognized ESL (initial) literacy curricula are available, and few staff members are trained in this approach. Unfortunately, most of the activities in the ESL program tend to be remedial versions of the same activities used with native English speakers.

Under the best circumstances within the English-only option, formal English reading instruction should be delayed until language minority students have acquired some basic interpersonal conversational skills in English. Once an oral language base in English is established, students will be better able to cope with the more cognitively demanding concepts associated with literacy. Educators should be aware that since Khmer literacy is not addressed, a subtractive form of bilingualism will probably be the result for most students.

Clearly, English-only reading instruction is not a recommended option. However, if such an option is used, there are several suggestions for making it the best possible program:

1. Provide students with ample amounts of comprehensible input in English, so that basic communicative skills will be acquired.
2. Build background knowledge in content areas through sheltered English strategies and native language teachers or aides.
3. Group second language students apart from native speakers for part of the oral language and literacy development, where communicative ESL and sheltered English strategies can be employed.

4. Sequence instruction appropriately so that students will not be introduced to the new ideas until they have acquired enough English and background knowledge sufficient for understanding.
5. Analyze English reading materials in order to anticipate where the students may have difficulty with vocabulary, syntax, and cultural content.
6. Provide interested parents with materials and instructions to carry out language tasks at home in Khmer. Teachers should encourage parents to focus on activities that better prepare students for the academic requirements of school.
7. Encourage students to build native language literacy skills.
8. Teach students strategies for coping with unfamiliar materials, and study skills for researching unknown concepts, use library resources, and so forth.

In practice, few programs will have biliteracy in Khmer and English as their goals; the resources, methodology, and trained teachers are too few to implement such programs, and the parents, who grew up in a French-educated society, place an emphasis on early learning of the language of commerce and development. Biliteracy will produce positive outcomes, and schools can foster Khmer literacy by encouraging and assisting the Cambodian community in efforts to conduct classes in literacy, produce materials to read, and training teachers who are bilingual and biliterate. However, appropriate school instruction must consider the negative effects of limited bilingualism, in which students become semi-proficient in English, and yet are limited in their own language.

Summary

In summary, effective reading programs in bilingual contexts require that school personnel correctly match the instructional approach with student needs, community desires, and human and material resources. Regardless of the approach selected, the quality of implementation is the key to producing positive outcomes. In practical terms, for Khmer students, acquiring English skills in understanding,

speaking, reading, and writing should be combined with, at least, effective re-instruction of key concepts and vocabulary in Khmer. This will enhance the development of underlying cognitive/academic skills, as well as promoting the ability to reason and speak in Khmer. Practical activities, that are fairly easy to implement with the help of bilingual aides, include:

ELEMENTARY:

- Reviewing basal reading vocabulary with a Khmer aide.
- Reviewing weekly spelling words with a Khmer aide.
- Reviewing vocabulary and key concepts in science and social science with a Khmer aide.

SECONDARY:

- Sheltered English courses in the core requirements that use simplified, vocabulary-based English materials and re-instruction or review with a Khmer aide/teacher.
- Foreign language credit for Khmer instruction in high school.

As the re-certification of Khmer-speaking teachers becomes a reality, more options for effective programs will be possible.

Historically, parents and educators have considered the acquisition of interpersonal communication skills the only goal for language minority students. For the students, the best possible program would be one in which the core curriculum is delivered in the language they know best, while learning to use English with native-like proficiency. "A strong and consistent research base indicates that properly staffed bilingual education—a combination of native language instruction for academic subjects with intensive English language development—is the most efficient approach for teaching limited-English-proficient children because it addresses both a child's academic development and language needs." (Olsen, 1988). Full bilingualism, including the ability to read and write both languages, is the ideal goal for students who speak a language other than English at home. For schools, incorporating full instructional services in as many as 150 languages is beyond the realm of possibility. Somewhere in between lies a program that is well-designed, skillfully implemented, and specific to the language group it serves.

Schools that have Khmer children can provide appropriate programs for children by keeping in mind these guidelines:

1. To acquire a language (English or Khmer), children must be exposed to it, the input must be comprehensible, and there must be a positive attitude towards acquiring it.
2. To succeed in school, underlying cognitive language skills are necessary, in at least one language.
3. There are ways in which parents can increase their children's chances for academic success, and schools can teach parents these skills.
4. There are ways for schools to incorporate the use of Khmer in programs which emphasize English, even though there are currently inadequate/insufficient Khmer materials and personnel.
5. Schools can work cooperatively with Cambodian community groups to plan and implement Khmer literacy and culture classes outside of the regular school day.
6. School programs must be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the incoming Cambodian populations.

Language development, oral and written, in English and/or the native language, forms only one of many components of an appropriate and effective educational program for Cambodian students. Other components include strong academic content, psychosocial support, staff development, school climate, home-school relations, parent education programs, and vocational/college counseling.



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Districts Ranked by Enrollment of Limited-English Proficient Students Who Speak Khmer

California law requires that school districts each year conduct a language census. The purpose of the census is to identify students who are considered to be limited-English proficient (LEP). Once identified, state law requires that LEP students be offered bilingual learning opportunities.

In the spring 1988, 21,557 students were reported to speak Khmer at home. Of these students, 17,274 or 80% percent were found to be of limited English proficiency and were classified as LEP. In addition to the 55 districts listed below that enroll 18 or more LEP Khmer-speaking students, another 128 districts reported between 1 and 17 LEP students who speak Khmer.

Table D.

DISTRICTS RANKED BY ENROLLMENT OF LEP STUDENTS WHO SPEAK KHMER, SPRING, 1988

<i>Name of School District</i>	<i>Rank by # of LEP (Khmer) students</i>	<i>LEP (Khmer) enrollmt Spring 1988</i>	<i>LEP (Khmer) students as a percentage of state LEP (Khmer) stds</i>
Long Beach USD	1	4,095	23.7%
Stockton City USD	2	2,247	13.0
San Diego USD	3	1,136	6.5
Los Angeles USD	4	1,020	5.9
Oakland USD	5	926	5.3
Fresno USD	6	777	4.4
Lincoln USD	7	748	4.3
Modesto City Elem SD	8	703	4.0
Santa Ana USD	9	669	3.8
San Francisco USD	10	524	3.0
Lodi USD	11	504	2.9
Franklin-McKinley Elem SD	12	391	2.2

East Side High SD	13	292	1.6
Modesto City High SD	14	254	1.4
Pomona USD	15	224	1.2
Alum Rock Union Elem SD	16	207	1.1
Paramount USD	17	139	0.8
Stanislaus Union Elem SD	18	134	0.7
Santa Rosa Elem SD	18	134	0.7
ABC USD	20	125	0.7
Montebello USD	21	97	0.5
Garvey Elem SD	22	89	0.5
Santa Rosa High SD	23	81	0.4
Garden Grove USD	24	74	0.4
Redlands USD	25	69	0.3
Sacramento City USD	26	63	0.3
Rialto USD	26	63	0.3
Washington USD	28	61	0.3
Alhambra City High SD	29	58	0.3
Norwalk-La Mirada USD	30	50	0.2
San Bernadino City USD	30	50	0.2
Orange USD	32	45	0.2
Elk Grove USD	33	41	0.2
Alhambra City USD	34	40	0.2
Riverside USD	35	39	0.2
Lake Elsinore Union SD	36	32	0.1
Hacienda-La Puente USD	36	32	0.1
Evergreen Elem SD	38	31	0.1
Sonoma Valley USD	38	31	0.1
Bakersfield City USD	40	29	0.1
Mountain View USD	40	29	0.1
Anaheim Union High SD	42	28	0.1
Anaheim Elem SD	43	26	0.1
Downey USD	43	26	0.1
Westminster Elem SD	43	26	0.1
Rio Linda Union SD	43	26	0.1
El Monte Union High SD	47	25	0.1
San Jose USD	48	24	0.1
Berryessa Union Elem SD	49	22	0.1
Clovis USD	50	21	0.1
Chico USD	51	19	0.1
Bellflower USD	51	19	0.1
Moreno Valley USD	51	19	0.1
Elsinore Union High SD	54	18	0.1
Empire Union High SD	54	18	0.1

Source: DATA BICAL Report No. 88-71, Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, Spring, 1988.

Educational Resources

Sources of cambodian language materials and materials about Cambodia

CEDOREK, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Civilisation
Khmère, 218, rue Saint-Jacques, 75005 Paris-France.
(Books in Khmer and French)

The Cellar Bookshop, 18090 Wyoming, Detroit, MI 48221. New, used, rare
books on Southeast Asia.

Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 104 Lane Hall, University
of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 260 Stephens Hall,
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International & Area
Studies, Box 13A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

International Scholarly Book Services, 2130 Pacific Avenue, Forest Grove,
OR 97116.

John M. Echols Collection on Southeast Asia Collection, Olin Graduate
Library, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

Southeast Asia Community Resource Center, Folsom Cordova Unified SD,
2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670, (916) 635-6815.

Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 120 Uris Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853.

Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project (SARS)
Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), 330 Hubert H. Humphrey
Ctr, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue S.E., Minneapolis, MN
55455.

University Film and Video, University of Minnesota, 1313 Fifth Street, S.E.,
Suite 108, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 1-800-847-8251.

U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Computer software

Ecological Linguistics. PO Box 15156, Washington, DC 20003. *Khmer SK, KhmerMool SK. Cham, Mon for Apple Macintosh*

Fontrix, Data Transforms, Inc., 616 Washington St., Denver, CO 80203.
(303) 832-1501. *For IBM-compatibles.*

Indochina Resource Action Center (IRAC), 1118 22nd St. NW, Suite 300,
Washington, DC 20037. *Angkor, Bayon, and other fonts for Apple Macintosh*

Khek Brothers, 1753 W. Ainslie, Chicago, IL 60640, (312) 275-4762.
Kompong Pras and other fonts for Apple Macintosh.

The MN Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc., 1821 University Ave, Rm
340S, St. Paul, MN 55104. *For IBM compatibles.*

Cambodian Community Organizations and Publications

California Cambodian Organizations

United Cambodian Community
1432 Atlantic Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90813
(213) 599-2210
Mr. Than Pok, Executive Director

Cambodian Association of
America
602 Pacific Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90802
(213) 432-5849
Mr. Nil Hul

United Cambodian Community
11859 Rosecrans Avenue
Norwalk, CA 90650
(213) 868-0706

United Cambodian Community
5287 Sunset Boulevard
Hollywood, CA 90027
(213) 462-5775

United Cambodian Community
2110 East 1st Street, Suite 103
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(714) 836-0463

Khemara Buddhikarama,
2100 West Willow Street
Long Beach, CA 90810
(213) 595-0566; 599-9401
Rev. Chhean Kong, Ph.D.

Cambodian Buddhist Association
of San Diego
Non-profit Religious Corp.
3616 47th Street
San Diego, CA 92105
(619) 584-0569

Cambodian-American Cultural
Institute
4912 Tanglewood Lane
Stockton, CA 95207
(209) 477-2615

Oakland Cambodian Buddhist
Society
1924 14th Avenue
Oakland, CA 94606
(415) 451-6729, 535-2428
Mr. Sim Touch

Cambodian New Generation
1909 East 14th Street, 2nd Floor
PO Box 12764
Oakland, CA 94604
(415) 532-0804
Francis Samsotha

Cambodian Art Preservation Group
2194 Pasadena Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90806
(213) 591-6464
Mrs. Leng Hang

Cambodian Women Association
1801 West 17th Street
Santa Ana, CA 92706
(714) 953-6912
Sunly P. Winkles

Cambodian Foundation
PO Box 1448
Orange, CA 92688
(714) 538-7550
Mr. Chanthan Chea

Cambodian American
Community
PO Box 15701
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(714) 835-3399
Tuon S. Sary, Exec. Director

Publications

Cambodian New Generation News
PO Box 12764,
Oakland, CA 94604
(bimonthly)

CEDOREK
Centre de Documentation et de
Recherche sur la Civilisation
Khmere
218, rue Saint-Jacques,
75005 Paris-France
Kaun Khmer (monthly, in Khmer)
Seksa Khmer (annual, in French)
Culture Khmere (Khmer & French)

Khmer Characters

កំពង់ កំពង់ Kompong Pras

Consonants

កខគឃឆ ចផដឈញ ដប្បឧឡណ
 តថទធ្ម ប្បផពភម យ្យវល្លវស្សហឡអ

Ruhlen (1976) lists the following consonant sounds in Khmer:

p	t	c	k	ʔ
b	d		g	
f	s	ʃ		h
v	z			
m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
	l			
	r			

g, f, ʃ, z are for loan words.

Vowels

ា ឺ េ ែ ៃ ៊ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ
 ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ ៊្រ

Khmer Vowels and Sounds

There are about 50 vowels and diphthongs that occur in Khmer. The following 31 vowels are those described by Huffman and Proum (1970, 1978):

10 long vowels: |iɪ, ee, ɛɛ, ɨɨ, əə, aa, ɑɑ, uu, oo, ɔɔ|
 10 long diphthongs: |iə, ie, uə, ei, əi, ou, ae, aə, ao, ɔə|

8 short vowels: |i, e, i, ə, a, ʊ, u, o|
 3 short diphthongs: |eə, uə, oə|

The vowels are represented by independent and dependent symbols, and the pronunciation varies according to whether the base consonant is "first series" or "second series". Transliteration (writing Khmer syllables with Roman characters) has several forms, used by librarians and others who need to represent Khmer sounds on a standard typewriter.

Independent Vowels

Symbol	Pronunciation (IPA)
ឺ	i
៊	ii
ុ	u
្ហ or ្ឡ	uu
េ	e
្ហ	ai
្ហ	o
្ហ	au
្ហ	ri
្ហ	rii
្ហ	li
្ហ	lii

(Doubled vowels indicate longer duration, "long" vowels.)

Dependent Vowels

(These vowel symbols go over, under, before, or after the consonant, represented by 𐄌)

Symbol	First Series IPA	Second Series IPA
—	ɑɑ	ɔɔ
𐄌	aa	iə
𐄌	e	i
𐄌	əy	ii
𐄌	ə	i
𐄌	əi	ii
𐄌	o	u
𐄌	ou	uu
𐄌	uə	uə
𐄌	aə	əə
𐄌	iə	iə
𐄌	iə	iə
𐄌	ei	ee
𐄌	ae	ææ
𐄌	ay	iy
𐄌	ao	oo
𐄌	aw	iw

◌ံ	om	um
◌ံ	am	um
◌ံါ	am	ǎm
◌ံး	ah	eǎh
	ဝံ	
	ုံ	

Diacritics

◌ံ	◌ံး	◌ံ	◌ံ
◌ံ	◌ံ	◌ံ	◌ံ

Numerals

၀၁၂၃၄၅၆၇၈၉

Khmer National Holidays and Traditional Ceremonies

Traditional Cambodian holidays and festivals do not fall on the same date each year. They are determined by the Cambodian calendar which is different from the Gregorian. The important observances during the year are described below.

April (*Chet*)

Cambodian New Year

The New Year may last anywhere from three days to three weeks. The most important days are *Maha Sangkrant Day* (April 14), which is the last day of the old year; *Vana Bat Day* (April 15), which divides the old year from the new year; and *Loeung Sak Day* (April 16), when a new year begins. Celebrations include relaxing, eating good food, drinking, visiting friends and relatives, and honoring elders.

Maha Sangkrant Day

Everyone dresses in new clothes. Families visit the pagoda to bring food and offerings to the monks, build the sand (or rice) dune, listen to the monks' prayers and teachings, and the youngsters play games (*ram vong*—dance in a circle, *chhuong*—tossing a scarf game, *angkunh*—a game like bowling or horseshoes played with large brown nuts, and *teanh proat*—tug of war game). Gifts are taken to the parents. At night, the candles, lamps, and lanterns are lit. Everyone dances and plays until morning.

Vana Bat Day

Children give presents (food, clothes, money) to the parents. Gifts are given to the servants and to the poor. In the evening people go to the pagoda to build a sand dune (or rice dune). The monks are invited to the tomb or to the *stupa* (monument containing the relics of deceased persons) to *bangsukol* (pray) for the dead relatives and ancestors. Popular games are continued.

Loeung Sak Day

In the morning the inauguration of the sand dune by the monks takes place. Children bathe their parents. In the afternoon, at the pagoda, the Buddhists wash the Buddha statues. Buddhists believe this will bring rain for the coming crops. Water ceremony takes place (pouring or throwing water on each other, to bestow good wishes on friends, neighbors, family). Ugly coloring (playfully covering each other's faces with charcoal and mud) is the most fun and unforgettable part at the close of the New Year celebration.

May (*Visakh*)

Visakh Boja

(Day of Birth, Enlightenment, and Death of Buddha)

This ceremony has existed in Cambodia since the 9th century when Theravada Buddhism spread into this country. The Khmer celebrate this national traditional ceremony on the 15th *koet* (full moon) of the month of *Visakh* (May) to commemorate the triple events of Buddha's life: Buddha's birthday, Buddha's enlightenment, and Buddha's death. All these events happened on the full moon of *Visakh* (but of course in different years). On this day the Buddhists go to the monastery to offer foods to the monks before noon. In the afternoon, people offer incense and flowers to ask for the blessings of Buddha. At night, hundreds or thousands of candles brighten the temple full of Buddhists who come to listen to the sermon of the monks and the chanting of the *Buddhappawatti* (the biography of Buddha) all night until dawn.

Chroat Preah Neangkoal (Sacred Plowing)

Renamed "Agricultural Day" in 1970

This national ceremony began in Cambodia in the earliest days of its history. The *Ream Ker* (the Khmer *Ramayana*) that is sculpted on the wall of the gallery of Angkor Wat showed King *Dasaratha* who found the baby, *Sita*, in the sacred plowed furrow. *Chroat Preah Neangkoal* takes place every year on the 4th *roch* of *Visakh* to ask the gods for rainfall and to open the new agricultural season. The monsoon rains start to fall in *Visakh* (May) and so begins the work of growing the crops. During the last century, the ceremony was celebrated in the *Preah Meru* field (*Veal Men*) on the east side of the royal palace in Phnom Penh, with the plowing of the field by the King "*Meak*" followed by the "*Mehour*" who sow the seed into the sacred furrow.

The plowing and sowing go only three rounds just to symbolize the new agricultural season. After the plowing, the Brahmins take the *ko usubbhareach* (royal oxen) to feed on the crop served on silver trays. If the ox eats the rice, it means that in the coming year the rice crops will be good. If the ox eats beans but not rice, it means that the bean crops will be good but the rice will be poor. If the ox drinks alcohol, it means there will be a lot of disease. The entire ceremony last only one morning.

September (*Phatrabot*)

Bon Phchum Bend (The Ancestor Festival)

This ceremony asks the Buddhist monks to intervene with the ancestors and deceased relatives to offer them blessings and foods. The Khmer believe that people are reincarnated after passing away, and their next life is a consequence of their "karma" (past actions). One who did bad things in his last life will become a *pret* (ghost) who eats only blood and pus, or who suffers burning by fire, or who suffers starvation waiting for offerings of relatives through the monks. It is for this last group of *pret* that the *Bon Phchum Bend* is celebrated. The ceremony lasts 15 days, from the 1st *roch* (day after the full moon) of the month of *Phatrabot* (September) to the 14th *roch*, 14 groups of the Buddhists take turns bringing food and drink to the monastery. This 14 days' ceremony is called the "*kann bend*", and the main event is held on the 15th *roch*, called the "*phchum bend*". On that day, people meet together, bringing food, flowers, and offerings to the monastery in memory of those who passed away. The time of the *Phchum Bend* is the darkest time of the month, as the moon gets smaller and smaller. The *pret*, who are afraid of the light can come out into the darkness looking for the offerings and food their relatives brought. If after these 15 days the *pret* reach seven monasteries and can not find any relative or offering then they are doomed to starvation for another year. They angrily curse their relatives and cause them to suffer unhappiness, bad luck, danger, sickness, starvation, separation, and death.

At this time, the Buddhists recognize the unknown who died defending the country in war, and for the dead who have no relatives.

"*Phchum*" means gathering or meeting, and it is during this ceremony that the people, relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow district residents, and visitors meet each other. It helps establish and nurture strong bonds in the community.

Besides the religious ceremonies at the monastery, there is another traditional rite that is celebrated in the home on the evening of the 15th *roch*. It is called "*sen daun-ta*" (offering to ancestors). The family prepares good food, especially the favorite foods of those have

passed away. A big mat is put in the middle of the house with one big pillow on it. A white spread covers the mat and the pillow. The meal must include *nom ansam* (cylinder cake), *nom kaom* (sweet coconut sticky rice cake), *samlaw misuor* (clear noodle soup), and sticky rice balls. When the food is ready, the family members gather around the sheet, then the head of the family lights up the candles and incense sticks, and prays to call to the spirits of all the deceased ancestors to invite them to dinner and ask for their blessings. Everyone apologizes for their mistakes. The next morning, each family prepares a small boat made of banana leaf, loaded with food, and puts it into a stream for it to travel to the ancestors.

October (*Asoch*)

Bon Chenh Vassa (End of *Vassa*)

The first *roch* (the first day after the full moon) of the month *Asoch* is the end of the *Vassa* season which began on the full moon of *Asadh*. The religious ceremony that is held to mark the end of *Vassa* is known as "*Chenh Vassa*". The ceremony consists of "*roap batr*" (putting food into the monk's bowl) and serving breakfast and lunch to the monks in the morning. Then, in the afternoon, the people come to the monastery to listen to the monk's chanting and sermon called "*tesna moha cheat*", which lasts until midnight or until dawn.

Bon Kathen (Clothes for the Monks)

There is no particular day for this rite, the "*Kathen*", but it must occur during the 30 day period between the first *roch* (day after the full moon) of the month *Asoch* and ends on the 15th *koeut* (day of the full moon) of the month *Kadoeuk*. The Buddhists offer "*Trei Chivor*" (three clothes for the monk) and other necessities to the monks who have observed the *Vassa* for three months. The day begins with a march to the temple, carrying the *Trei Chivor*, led by the oldest and most popular band and dance called the "*Chhayam*". The people carry the *Trei Chivor* over their heads under decorated parasols, and behind them comes a classical band, the "*pin peat*", and other followers. At the monastery, they invite the monks to chant and deliver sermons. In the evening, people are entertained with music, lyric poetry, dance, and art performances until midnight. The next morning there is a luncheon, serving the monks and all the participants. In the afternoon, the main ceremony consists of carrying the *Trei Chivor* and other offerings around the temple three times before entering it. The things are given to the monks and they chant blessings.

November (*Kadoeuk*)

Bon Om Touk (Boat Racing)

In November, the water of the Tonle Sap river flows from the great Tonle Sap lake to the lower Mekong River, and at this time the Khmer celebrate the *Bon Om Touk*, or "Water Festival", translated literally from the French '*Fete des Eaux*'. This ceremony is celebrated on the 14th and 15th *koeut* and the first *roch* of the month of *Kadoeuk*. It takes place in the Tonle Sap river, in front of the Royal Palace. For three days, a race begins at 4:00 p.m. with 30 pairs of racing boats called *touk ngo* and *touk muong*, selected from the Buddhist monasteries along all the rivers. Each boat has to have three different races per day. The race course is down the Tonle Sap river from the Phnom Penh harbor to the royal dock house. People come from all over the country to enjoy this yearly boat racing festival.

After the boat racing at 7:00 p.m. there are fireworks and cannon shots to begin the floating light parade (electrical decorated boat parade) which floats up and down the boat racing course until midnight. After midnight, there is special singing of "*sakrava*" at the royal dock house to entertain the public until dawn. According to history, the *Bon Om Touk* was to demonstrate the naval maneuvers of the Khmer navy.

Awk Ambok Sampeah Preah Khe (Salutation to the Moon)

Besides the *Bon Om Touk* celebrated in Phnom Penh, there is another ceremony which is celebrated on the full moon night of *Kadoeuk* by all the Khmer throughout the country. "*Ambok*" is a special Cambodian rice flake cereal. In the evening of the fifteenth *koeut* of *Kadoeuk*, the *ambok*, bananas, green coconut, and flowers are presented to the moon in respect of the "*Bothisatva*", who was born as a rabbit and sacrificed his life to give his flesh to the Brahman. The God Indra created the picture of the rabbit on the moon as a souvenir. When the full moon is rising up on the horizon, the ceremony begins by lighting up candles and incense sticks. Then the people pray to the gods to bring peace to the country and to the world, and to bring more rainfall for the coming year. The ceremony ends by enjoying the *ambok*, the bananas, and the green coconut under the silvery light of the moon.

Glossary

additive bilingualism— A process by which individuals develop proficiency in a second language subsequent to or simultaneously with the development of proficiency in the primary language.

affective filter— The screening effects of personality, motivation, and other feelings on the reception or expression of a second language. The filter is high when the learner is tense, uncomfortable, or defensive, but low when the learner is comfortable and receptive. A high filter diminishes the amount of comprehensible input.

American Cultural Orientation course (CO)— A course offered in Phanat Nikhom refugee camp in Thailand (and elsewhere) for refugees accepted for resettlement in the United States, designed to develop basic survival skills. Classes are taught by indigenous staff, supervised by American teachers.

Angkar— "the organization" under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime; the state.

Annam— Vietnam, in the last century.

ASEAN— Association of Southeast Asian Nations

basic interpersonal communicative skills— Second language skills that are equivalent to the ordinary conversational fluency of native speakers. These skills are normally acquired in the home or community, and are necessary but not sufficient grounds for academic success.

bilingual— able to understand and speak two languages.

bilingual education program— An organized curriculum that includes (Khmer) language development, English language learning, and school subject learning through both Khmer and English. Adds the goal of bilingualism/biliteracy to the other school goals.

biliterate— able to read and write two languages.

Buddhism, Mahayana— "Greater Vehicle" Buddhism; that form of Buddhism practiced in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, Vietnam.

Buddhism, Theravada— "Lesser Vehicle" Buddhism; that form of Buddhism practiced in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Burma.

Cambodia— transliteration of the Khmer word '*Kampuchea*'; derived from the French '*Cambodge*'.

Cambodian— national of Cambodia; may be Khmer or other ethnic group.

CGDK— Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea; uneasy coalition of the Khmer Rouge, and two non-communist, anti-Vietnamese resistance groups (Sihanoukists and Son Sann's KPNLF); formed in 1982.

Champa— kingdom of the Cham people, located in part of what is today Vietnam.

classifier— see *noun classifiers*.

cognitive/academic language proficiency— Language skills associated with literacy and academic achievement. Includes greater vocabulary, more complicated syntax, and a higher level of abstraction than does "basic interpersonal communicative skills".

communicative-based English as a Second Language— One approach to teaching English as a second language; student progress is measured by ability to communicate messages in English; the focus is on language function and not on formal grammar; the "natural approach" is one such approach.

comprehensible input— Language that enters the learner's brain (listening or reading) which is largely comprehensible; the teacher provides an environment, materials, and strategies that increase the comprehensibility of the language. Examples include using realia, photographs, gestures, etc. Krashen holds that language acquisition takes place when there's comprehensible input.

diphthong— two vowels, like *oy* or *au*.

Founan— empire located where Cambodia is today; lasted until the 6th century.

FUNCINPEC— acronym for French name of Sihanouk's resistance group (in English, "National United Front for an Independent, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia"); 1981 to present.

grammar-based English as a Second Language— One approach to teaching English as a Second Language which is based on teaching the grammar of the language; student progress is measured by how well they form grammatically correct language output (speaking or writing). Examples of this approach are the grammar-translation method, the audiolingual method, and the cognitive code.

immersion program— An organized curriculum in which the students study in a second language, including literacy in the second language and subject area study via the second language; native language development is also part of the program; in addition to the regular school goals, an additional goal is that of proficient bilingualism. English speakers living in French Canada often participate in immersion French programs.

Indochina, French— Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; colonies of France.

Indochina— Geographic region between India and China: Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma.

IPA— International Phonetic Alphabet

Kampuchea— transliteration of the Khmer word; also transliterated as 'Cambodge' (French) and 'Cambodia'.

Kampuchea, Democratic— official name of the communist government under the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot; 1975-79; recognized government by the U.S., UN, and other nations.

Kampuchea, People's Republic of— official name of the communist government under the Vietnamese occupation; 1979-present; not recognized by many nations.

Kampuchean— synonymous with *Cambodian*.

Khmer— ethnic group that makes up the majority of Cambodians; the language spoken by that ethnic group.

Khmer Empire— great civilization of the Khmer people; 802 AD to 1431 AD; the "golden age".

Khmer Republic— government under Lon Nol, first time without a monarch; 1970-75.

Khmer Rouge— literally 'red Khmer'; communist movement that gained control of Cambodia in 1975; headed by Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan; in power until 1979, resistance force after that time.

KPNLF— non-communist resistance group headed by Son Sann; Khmer People's National Liberation Front; 1979 to present.

liquid— A class of consonant sounds, including [l] and [r].

limited bilingualism— A form of subtractive bilingualism; the learner is not an educated native speaker of either the native or the second language; basic interpersonal communicative skills in the two languages, but the cognitive/academic skills in neither.

long vowel— vowel which has longer duration than its short counterpart; often designated by doubling the vowel, as 'aa'.

monitor— The "watchdog" of spoken or written language; the process by which a person processes, stores, and retrieves conscious rules of languages.

morpheme— The smallest part of a word that has a meaning. The word *potato* has one morpheme; the word *misspelled* has three morphemes: *mis-* + *spell* + *-ed*.

morphology— Principles of word-formation.

mutual assistance association (MAA)— This is the term most commonly used to describe membership and service organizations in the United States operated by and providing services for refugees.

noun classifiers— A set of words, in some languages, that are used with nouns and that typically express a semantic class to which the noun belongs, e.g., human, round, long, flat.

numeral classifiers— Same as *noun classifiers*

partial bilingualism— Level of proficiency in two languages in which the learner has native-like proficiency (able to comprehend, speak, read and write) in one language but not the other.

Phanat Nikhom— Reprocessing center near Bangkok, where refugees bound for the U.S. undergo six months of language training, cultural orientation, and health screening.

proficient bilingualism— Level of bilingualism in which the learner has native-like proficiency (ability to comprehend, speak, read, and write) in two languages.

refugee— a class of persons recognized by the international community as needing protection; a person who cannot return home because of persecution or death due to his race, religion, social or political status.

serial verb construction— The use of two or more verbs, with no conjunction between them, in a single clause. English example: "Let's go eat."

sheltered English classes— One approach to teaching subject matter through a second language (English), in which the language input is made more comprehensible; this approach uses techniques like grouping students with similar English proficiencies, altering the complex reading material to fit the students' level, and teaching the aspects that pertain to second language learners, but not native speakers.

short vowel— a vowel whose duration is less than that of its counterpart long vowel; often designated by a single symbol or diacritic.

Southeast Asia— Region of Asia: Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines.

submersion classes— Second language learners in regular subject matter classes; the language is "native to native", with few alterations in materials or methods to make the language input more comprehensible.

submersion program— An organized curriculum that is designed for native English speakers (the "regular school program"), but

that is often used with second language learners.

subscript— in Khmer, a second form of a consonant symbol which is placed under another consonant to designate a blend.

subtractive bilingualism— A form of bilingualism in which the acquisition of one language (usually the native language) is interrupted or suppressed; the learner has poor proficiency of the native language, or a complete loss of the native language.

tone, lexical— Distinctive voice pitch associated with a word or morpheme, by which one word may be distinguished from another.

transitional bilingual education program— An organized curriculum in which the native language (Khmer) is used in a systematic way for some period of time after the learner enters school.

voiced— pronounced with vocal cord vibration (“voicing”), like English *v, d, m, l*, etc. All vowels are voiced.

voiceless— pronounced without vocal cord vibration, like English *f, t*, etc. People who pronounce *Y* (or *wye*) and *why* the same have voiced *w* (*wh*) in both; people who pronounce them differently have a voiceless *w* (*wh*) in *why*. Also called “unvoiced”.



Southeast Asia Community Resource Center
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