

Review Article



Understanding Khmer speakers' difficulties in using English: A linguistic and cultural analysis

Sophal Kao *

Faculty of Social Sciences, American University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Abstract

Khmer speakers often produce other languages with near-native pronunciation, partly due to the rich phonemic system of the Khmer language. However, significant linguistic and cultural differences between Khmer and English create challenges in English use. This article aims to discuss key problems Khmer speakers face when using English and proposes possible recommendations. The article adopts a qualitative research design, drawing on a phenomenological approach and a literature review. Two main problems are identified: the influence of the Khmer language and Khmer culture. Regarding the linguistic influence, difficulties arise in pronunciation and grammatical structures due to differences between the two languages. As for the cultural influence, certain Khmer norms shape communication styles, which may lead to misinterpretation or miscommunication with native English speakers. The article offers practical suggestions for teachers and learners to improve English teaching and learning. It also calls for further research to enhance instructional quality at both public and private schools, strengthen students' motivation, and address limited resources to better support Khmer speakers in learning and using English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Difficulties in using English; Khmer speakers; differences between Khmer and English; L1 interference; cultural influence

* Sophal Kao ✉ s.kao@aupp.edu.kh 📍 Faculty of Social Sciences, American University of Phnom Penh, No. 278H, Street 201R, Kroalkor Village, Sangkat Kilometer 6, Khan Russey Keo, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Introduction

English is spoken by hundreds of million native speakers and a few billion non-native speakers around the world (Crystal, 2008; Oeun & Heng, 2024; Patel et al., 2023; Pennycook, 2017). Due to globalization, English is broadly used in different domains, including education, science, employment, tourism, business, technology, and social media (Oeun & Heng, 2024; Pandarangga, 2015; Pennycook, 2017). In Cambodia, English is often used for similar purposes such as communication, education, employment, technology, social media, and international relations (Clayton, 2002; Hashim et al., 2014; Hum & Heng, 2024; Ngel, 2022).

Although English is spoken by many Cambodian people across the country, using it as a foreign language is complicated for Khmer speakers because of two main reasons. The first is the impact of the Khmer language, including pronunciation and grammatical structures, on English (Brown, 1994, 2000; Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 1982; Reddivari, 2021; Sriprabha, 2015). The second is the impact of culture on language (Reddivari, 2021; Shukurova, 2024). These two major impacts cause many problems for Khmer speakers when speaking English. Misunderstanding or miscommunication sometimes occurs when Khmer speakers try to communicate with either native English speakers or other foreigners in English. This is because Khmer speakers, like many non-native English speakers, tend to use inaccurate grammatical structures, mispronounce English words (Keuk, 2008; Moore & Bounchan, 2010a), misuse vocabulary and structures in wrong contexts and situations (Em, 2022; Oeun & Heng, 2026; Sermsook et al., 2017), and lack an understanding of other cultures (Sou & Wannaruk, 2025). A study conducted in Indonesia, which is a similar context to Cambodia, concluded that cultural awareness plays a significant role in improving English language acquisition among students who learn English as a foreign language (Zulfariati et al., 2025).

Against this background, this article aims to focus on key problems that Khmer speakers face when using English as a foreign language. Two key problems are discussed, including the influence of the Khmer language and the influence of Khmer culture on the English language. The article also examines possible solutions and recommendations for tackling these problems to help teachers, Khmer learners, and Khmer speakers of English in general so that they can

improve their English teaching and learning as well as use English more effectively.

Methods

This article adopts a qualitative research design in which a phenomenological approach and a literature review method are implemented. First, the phenomenological approach is relevant because it intends to develop a better understanding of individuals' daily experiences (Manen, 1997; Patton, 2002), particularly the researcher's own daily experiences of the real world. Thus, this article is written based partly on the researcher's linguistic knowledge and experiences of using and teaching English as a foreign language for many years. Second, a literature review method is utilized in this study because it is one of the research techniques which can be conducted independently (Wee & Banister, 2016). Paré and Kitsiou (2017) claimed that literature review can give an overview of articles written about a particular topic, show latest trends or patterns that emerge in a certain research area, collect secondary research data to support current studies, create new theoretical frameworks, and find research gaps for further studies.

Due to the fact that the nature of all aspects of both Khmer and English languages remain unchanged, various relevant sources including books and empirical research articles that are chosen for review are not limited to their publication dates. The information collected from those sources is described, compared, explained, analyzed, and discussed to highlight how the two languages, Khmer and English, and their cultures are different, causing confusion for the Khmer speakers. Through these methods, key problems are identified, and actions that can be taken by teachers and educators to help Khmer speakers enhance their English language proficiency are discussed. Therefore, this qualitative research design is deemed relevant for this study.

Findings

Khmer which is the first language (L1) and English, the second language (L2) for Khmer speakers are completely different in four main ways, including their alphabets, spelling, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. The differences between the two languages cause significant problems for Khmer speakers when using English as a second or foreign language. Moreover, the cultural differences between Khmer and English greatly impact the way Khmer speakers use English, which can lead to misunderstandings and

miscommunication. The impact of culture on language has been extensively discussed in the literature (Bose, 2014; Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Kleinjans, 2004; Krashen, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001). This paper examines the influence of the Khmer language and Khmer culture on English. Regarding linguistic influence, it discusses pronunciation and grammatical problems caused by differences between Khmer and English when learning and using English as a foreign language. For cultural influence, this paper focuses on various cultural aspects related to politeness and impoliteness in both English and Khmer.

The influence of the Khmer language

The pronunciation problems

Khmer speakers tend to have English pronunciation problems (Keuk, 2008; Moore & Bounchan, 2010a) when using English although the Khmer language covers most of the English phonemes. Khmer has 151 phonemes in total (33 consonants which consist of 22 phonemes of /ɔ:/ sounds [soft consonant sounds], 22 phonemes of /ou/ sounds [strong consonant sounds]; 32 subscript consonants; 24 dependent vowels which consist of 31 phonemes of soft vowel sounds, 31 phonemes of strong vowel sounds; 9 independent vowels and other 4 special consonant-vowel combinations) (Huffman & Proum, 1978). In contrast, English has only 26 letters of the Latin alphabets (5 vowels and 21 consonant letters), which consist of 44 phonemes (24 consonant sounds and 20 vowel sounds: 12 pure vowel sounds and 8 diphthong sounds) (Kao, 2019; Kelly, 2000), while American English has 46 different sounds (24 consonants, 15 vowel sounds, and other 7 vowel sounds followed by letter 'r') (Dauer, 1993). It is true that some particular sounds of English may not exist in Khmer, and that is why the Khmer learners or speakers are not used to forming them. Therefore, they tend to substitute the nearest equivalent sound of the mother tongue they know (the substitution of /d/ for the English *th* /ð/ as in *that* is a typical example) (Keuk, 2008; Reddivari, 2021; Ur, 1996).

A mother tongue, or L1, very often has great influence or interference on L2 (Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Kenworthy, 1987; Krashen, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001). According to Brown (1994), the native language will be the most influential factor affecting a learner or speaker's pronunciation. He also stated that if a person is familiar with the sound system of a learner's native language, he or she will be able to diagnose students' problems better. In other

words, the influence of the Khmer language's characters and phonemes results in some particular problems with the English language and its pronunciation features for the Khmer people when using English. [Avery and Ehrlich \(1992\)](#) similarly claimed that the second language students very often transfer sound features of L1 to the target language of L2 which could cause some pronunciation problems.

Based on my real experience of teaching and using English, there are several problems related to English pronunciation that the Khmer speakers face. These problems are discussed below.

Consonants

Regarding the consonants, Khmer speakers usually have problems related to final consonant sounds and some similar consonant sounds such as /v/ and /w/, /θ/ and /ð/, /s/ and /z/, and /ʒ/ and /ʃ/.

The final consonant sounds: With the letter 's,' when it is put at the end of a word, Khmer speakers often fail to pronounce the 's' sound. For example, Khmer speakers often say, 'He *swim* well' instead of 'He *swims* well.' With letters 'ce,' with words such as dance, sentence, or importance, Khmer speakers often say, 'dan, senten, or importan.' With the letter 'x,' with the words ending with x, like box, six, etc., Khmer speakers usually say, 'bok, sik, or sick' instead of 'box, six' with the /s/ sound at the end of these words. Khmer speakers generally face the same problem of mispronouncing other final English consonants of words. For instance, instead of saying, 'paint, important, bank,' Khmer speakers often say, 'pain, importan, bang.'

The problem for Khmer speakers of mispronouncing the final consonants or sounds of English words is because of the influence of the Khmer language ([Brown, 1994](#); [Reddivari, 2021](#)). The Khmer speakers do not pronounce the final consonants or speak with the final sound of letters. For example, in the Khmer language សិស្ស /ses/, meaning student, is spelled with an initial and final 'ស្ស' which is pronounced /saw/ with an /s/ sound. When the Khmer speakers read or speak the Khmer word សិស្ស /ses/, they read or say, 'se' with no /s/ sound at the end. This shows a great impact of the Khmer language on English with a final consonant sound of a word.

In contrast, Khmer speakers often find it strange when foreigners, for example, the English speakers, who learn the Khmer language try to pronounce words with the final consonants. For example, foreign speakers tend to read or say these words with the ending sound, បង /bong/ /-ng/ (older brother or sister), រោ: /seis/ /-s/ (horse), រាំ /rom/ /-m/ (dance).

The consonant sounds of /v/ and /w/, /θ/ and /ð/, /s/ and /z/, and /ʒ/ and /ʃ/: The letter 'v' is one of the English consonants that the Khmer speakers usually fail to pronounce it correctly, as the Khmer language has more or less a combination sound between a letter 'w' and 'v.' A /v/ sound is produced by the upper teeth biting the bottom lip and then releasing the bottom lip. There is no letter in the Khmer language, which has a similar sound or way of producing this /v/ sound. Therefore, the letter 'v' causes pronunciation errors for the Khmer speakers.

Another two of the most difficult English consonant sounds for Khmer speakers are the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ for the 'th' letter. Khmer speakers usually mispronounce these two sounds although they are aware and have practiced them extensively because these sounds do not exist in the Khmer language (Reddivari, 2021). The /θ/ sound is produced by releasing a sound when the tongue is touching the upper teeth, whilst the /ð/ sound is produced by the tongue touching the upper teeth then pulling the tongue backward. With the /θ/ sound, the Khmer speakers usually confuse this with a /s/ sound, and the /ð/ with a /d/ sound.

Some Khmer speakers usually confuse the /z/ sound with an /s/ one. For example, some Khmer speakers pronounce the word 'zero' as /serou/ and the word 'zoo' as /su:/. However, the Khmer speakers can pronounce this /z/ sound well when they practice them well enough.

Most Khmer speakers confuse a /ʒ/ sound for the letters 'ge' with a /ʃ/ or /s/ sound for the letter 'sh' and 's'. For instance, some Khmer speakers pronounce the word 'garage' as /ga:ra:ʃ/ or /ga:ras/, but not /gəraʒ/. If a teacher can demonstrate the different sounds between /ʒ/ for 'ge,' /ʃ/ for 'sh' and /s/ for 's' for the Khmer learners, they can learn to pronounce each sound accurately.

Sentence stress

In English, in general, information words in the sentence (usually nouns, the main verb and the last word in a sentence) are stressed (Dauer, 1993). These words are emphasized while the rest of the words become weak forms. For example, she **lives** in a **flat** by the **bank** at the **top** of the **hill**. The words in bold are emphasized or stressed as they carry the message of this sentence.

In the Khmer language, on the other hand, sounds are quite flat (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b) compared with English. This indicates a difficulty for Khmer speakers when speaking English. There is no doubt that the lack of stress in sentence in the Khmer language has an influence on English language rhythm.

Linking sounds

In the English language, according to Dauer (1993), linking happens when words are combined smoothly together without extra sounds or dropping final consonant sounds. Words within a pause group (a group of words or a chunk of speech that is said together without stopping, followed by a brief pause) should be joined or blended to make it sound like one word. For example, when one word ends in a consonant and the next word begins in a vowel, or a 'y,' the last consonant of the first word is linked to the first vowel of the next word (Dauer, 1993). For example, 'Would you like a cup of tea or a glass of water?' Another example is 'There are some onions in the fridge.'

As far as linking is concerned, the Khmer language is a phonetic language but has no phonemic linkage from a final consonant of one word to a vowel of the next one in a sentence. In the Khmer language, a single word is formed by a consonant and a vowel (e.g., ដាំ/dam/), a consonant with a vowel and another consonant (e.g., ដេក /dek/ យើង/yerng/), a consonant with a consonant (e.g., ដក់ /dork/, យក់/yoak/). In the Khmer language, although a sentence is formed by many single words put closely together one after another, the sentence is still read or said word by word with no phonemic linkage from a final consonant of one word to a vowel of the next one like in English. For example, យើងជាប្រជាពលរដ្ឋកម្ពុជា តែងតែខិតខំព្យាយាម is read in Khmer as /yurng chea prochea polrot kampuchea tangte kitkom pyea yeam/. Because of the different ways that the Khmer language is structured in both grammar and phonetics, Khmer speakers usually speak or read English the same way as they speak or read Khmer (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b). In other words, they tend to speak or read English

word by word, which could sound unnatural for English native speakers. However, Khmer speakers can really speak or read English naturally like English native speakers if they are taught how to link a final consonant of one word to a vowel of the next one in a sentence, and they are encouraged to practice as much as possible.

Syllable stress

English words with two or more syllables have one of their syllables stressed. Sometimes this shows the difference between the noun and the verb when they are spelt the same way (Dauer, 1993; Ur, 1996). For example, *produce* as a noun and *produce* as a verb are stressed differently. A change in the stress syllable of a word can also change its sounds (Dauer, 1993; Ur, 1996). The word *subject*, for example, has the stress on the first syllable when it is a noun or an adjective, and the stress is on the second syllable when it is a verb. This creates a noticeable difference to the sound of the vowels: *subject* as a noun or adjective is pronounced /sʌbdʒekt/, as compared to *subject* as a verb which is pronounced /səbdʒekt/ (HarperCollins, 1995).

Sometimes, when the syllable stress falls on the first syllable, the next immediate vowel usually creates a weak syllable which is unstressed (Dauer, 1993). According to Dauer (1993), "In some very common words, when two or three unstressed syllables follow a stressed syllable, the unstressed syllable immediately after the stressed syllable is dropped altogether. This is especially common before letter 'r'" (p. 81). The following example illustrates this point:

chocolate, secretary, literature, victory, interesting, evening, vegetable, family, comfortable, etc.

In the Khmer language, on the other hand, single words are more likely flat (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b). The lack of stress in syllables of the words in the Khmer language often makes Khmer speakers forget to put a stress or hesitate to put a stress on the right syllable of the words when speaking English. The syllable stress in the English language also usually confuses most of the Khmer speakers, and as a result, the listeners sometimes cannot understand the words that the Khmer speakers speak. Gilbert (2008) claimed that when second language learners or speakers did not pay attention to stress patterns, it could not only cause pronunciation problems but also comprehension problems.

Although there are some rules for syllable stress in English pronunciation, there are always exceptions which make Khmer speakers confuse. Therefore, Khmer learners or speakers must check up words in a dictionary and try to recognize the stress of the words and practice drilling and saying them accurately again and again to ensure that they can pronounce English words correctly.

Sound and spelling

Unlike the Khmer language, English is unlikely a phonetic language because a lot of English words are spelled differently from how they are pronounced ([Dauer, 1993](#)). There are many silent letters in English, which cause a problem with spelling and pronouncing the words for Khmer learners when learning to speak and write English. Below are examples of some common English words spelled with some letters that are silent.

~~k~~nock ~~p~~psychology ~~k~~now ~~au~~ght ~~ei~~ght ~~si~~gn ~~plou~~gh ~~com~~b ~~de~~bt ~~colu~~mn

Intonation

English is a very intoned language whilst Khmer is not intoned very much. The intonation of English is the rising and falling tone, or high and low pitch when speaking it ([Dauer, 1993](#); [Kelly, 2000](#)). Intonation is one of the important aspects of pronunciation in English, often making a difference to meaning or implication ([Dauer, 1993](#)). Intonation does not only indicate certain meaning of things spoken but also lets listeners know about the attitude of the speaker while speaking ([Gilbert, 2008](#); [Kelly, 2000](#)). For example, from the high or low voice that the speaker is using during a conversation, the listener knows well how he or she feels. In other words, the listener may know whether the speaker is happy, sad, tired, disappointed, or angry ([Kelly, 2000](#)). A native speaker usually has little difficulty in hearing intonation changes in his or her own language. However, non-native speakers of English like Khmer speakers may not find it so easy.

In terms of intonation, the impact of the Khmer language on English causes a challenge for Khmer speakers ([Reddivari, 2021](#)). According to my experience and observation, a slight rise or fall in intonation that the Khmer speakers try to make sometimes sounds a bit strange for other listeners, such as native speakers of English, as the intonation might have been made at a wrong position in the sentence. Khmer speakers sometimes have the actual sounds

right but have not learned the stress patterns of the word or group of words in English, or they are using an intonation pattern from their mother tongue which is inappropriate to the target language. As a result, they may speak in a foreign-sounding accent, but it creates possible misunderstanding because in Khmer, the intonation always rises at the end of all types of questions. The following examples illustrate this point:

តើអ្នកចង់ញ៉ាំអី? /*Teur neak jong nham ei?*/ (What do you want to eat?) ឆ្នាំមុនតើ
គាត់បានទៅលេងសៀមរាបទេ? /*Chhnam mun teur kot ban tov leng Siem Reap tei?*/
(Did he visit Siem Reap last year?)
តើអ្នកបានដឹងឬទេ? /*Teur neak ban dung rue tei?*/ (Have you known it or not?)

In English, on the other hand, the intonation rises at the end of yes/no questions and some kinds of question tags if we really want to know something and are not sure of the answer. For example:

Do you like ice-cream? You have eaten your lunch. Haven't you?

The English intonation normally falls at the end of any wh-question and question tag if we are sure of the answer (Dauer, 1993). For example:

Why did you do that?
What is your name?
It's a beautiful day, isn't it?

The grammatical problems

Having discussed the pronunciation problems, I now turn to discuss the grammatical problems. No doubt, English grammar is another major problem for Khmer speakers when using English. Researchers have identified key issues, such as poor English backgrounds, poor grammatical structures, and limited vocabulary, that contributed to poor essay writing for Khmer students (Oeun & Heng, 2025a, 2025b). Moore and Bounchan (2010b) found nine areas of English grammar that are difficult for Khmer speakers. Some of those include plural nouns, verb forms, tenses, articles, and prepositions. The way the structures of both languages are formed is mostly different. For example, the word order between English and Khmer is different: *one good man* in English is

said as មនុស្សល្អម្នាក់ /*monus la-or ma-neak*/ or *man good one* in Khmer. The differences between English and Khmer include the differences of word order, tenses, parts of speech, and articles. The following grammatical aspects show the differences between Khmer and English structures, and the use of English between English native speakers and Khmer speakers.

Word order

Surprisingly, Khmer and English share the same basic sentence structure: *subject + verb + object* (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b). For example, the English sentence: *I eat breakfast* is written in the same Khmer sentence structure: ខ្ញុំញ៉ាំអាហារពេលព្រឹក /*Khnhom nham aha peilproeuk*/. However, when a Khmer phrase is formed by a noun + adj1 + adj2 + number នារីក្មេងស្អាតពីរនាក់ /*neary khmeing sa-art pi-neak*/ (women young beautiful two)], English phrase is formed by number + adj2 + adj1 + noun (two beautiful young women). When an English speaker says or writes 'a notebook,' a Khmer speaker says or writes 'booknote' (សៀវភៅសរសេរ /*siev pov sor-say*/). The word order of the English compound nouns is opposite to the Khmer ones. However, English and Khmer use the same word order with the phrases like verb + adverb. For example, the phrases like 'talk too much; talk a lot; sing prettily; play much, etc. In general, the word order between English and Khmer languages is opposite to one another except the phrases of verb + adverb.

Parts of speech

Parts of speech of the Khmer words, which have equivalent meanings to the English ones, are sometimes different from the English ones and could lead to some confusion for Khmer speakers when they try to transform the meaning of the interpretation or translation from Khmer to English. For example, the Khmer words ខ្លាច /*khlarch*/ which means *afraid* in English, ខឹង /*khueng*/ which is *angry* in English, ឃ្លាន /*khlean*/ which is *hungry* in English are verbs in Khmer when they are used in the same form as the following examples: English: I'm afraid of snakes (subject + to be + adj. + of + noun, while in Khmer, people say: ខ្ញុំខ្លាចពស់ /*Khnhom khlarch pos*/ which is directly translated into English as *I afraid snakes*. However, the words ខ្លាច /*khlarch*/, ខឹង /*kheng*/, ធាត់ /*thort*/ can be adjectives when they are used in the form like មនុស្សខ្លាច /*monus khlarch*/ (*afraid*

person), គោធាត់ /kor thort/ (fat cow), មនុស្សខឹង /monus khueng/ (angry person). The Khmer speakers transfer the use of a Khmer structure pattern when speaking English (Kleinjans, 2004), which is incorrect.

Sentence structures with infinitives and prepositions

Most Khmer speakers tend to make many mistakes with English prepositions (Moore & Bounchan, 2010a) when using English. For example, while native speakers say, 'I want to go to school,' some Khmer speakers say, 'I want to go school' because in Khmer they say: ខ្ញុំទៅសាលា /Khnhom tov sala/. With a statement like 'I'd like to eat out,' some Khmer speakers say, 'I'd like eat out.' It is clear that L1 (Khmer) interferes with English (Bose, 2014; Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Krashen, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001). The listener can understand those statements spoken by the Khmer speakers, but they are grammatically incorrect.

The incorrect use of -s or -es ending

Most Khmer speakers fail to pronounce /s/, /z/, /is/, /iz/ sounds with the verbs used in a simple present tense with a third person singular subject and plural nouns (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b), as this ending sound does not exist in the Khmer language. This leads Khmer speakers to misuse it when they speak English. For example, some Khmer speakers say, 'Thida speak English well,' rather than 'Thida speaks English well.' Or they may say, 'I don't like snake,' but not 'I don't like snakes.' They may also say, 'There are some glass on the table,' rather than 'There are some glasses on the table.' Khmer speakers have this grammatical problem due to the interference of Khmer, the mother tongue (Kleinjans, 2004).

Vocabulary followed by a preposition

Another main problem for most of the Khmer speakers is when using English prepositions (Moore & Bounchan, 2010a), which are put after a verb (excluding phrasal verbs), a noun, and an adjective. They very often use wrong English prepositions with some English vocabulary. When English native speakers say, 'Listen to me, Don't look down on her, He's confident about his job,' some Khmer speakers may say, 'Listen me, Don't look down her, He's confident with his job.'

Tense

English has 12 grammatical tenses (present simple, present progressive, present perfect, present perfect progressive, future simple, future progressive, future perfect, future perfect progressive, past simple, past progressive, past perfect, and past perfect progressive), while Khmer has no grammatical tense system. This is because Khmer is an analytic language that does not use inflection to mark tense. In analytic languages, grammatical relationships are expressed through separate or independent words rather than inflectional morphology, such as verb endings in English (Comrie, 1989). Similarly, Khmer conveys meaning analytically through context, temporal expressions, and particles (Enfield, 2003) such as កំពុង /*kampong*/, which marks ongoing action; បាន /*barn*/, which indicates completed action; and នឹង /*ning*/, which signals future action (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b). English tenses are very complicated for Khmer speakers or learners (Keuk, 2008) because in Khmer, Khmer speakers just add particles and specific time expressions that express each different tense to a normal core statement. For example, a normal core statement is ខ្ញុំទៅលេងខេត្តសៀមរាប /*Khnhom tow leng khat Siem Reap*/ (I visit Siem Reap province). To form past tense, Khmer speakers simply add បាន /*barn*/ to the sentence: ខ្ញុំ(បាន)ទៅលេងខេត្តសៀមរាបកាលពី ខែមុន /*Khnhom (barn) tow leng khat Siem Reap kalpikhemun*/ (I visited Siem Reap province last month). While English uses past or past participle forms of both regular and irregular verbs with time expressions for past, present perfect, or past perfect tenses, Khmer uses a word 'barn' before any Khmer verb with past time expressions to form its past tense. The word 'barn' (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b) is additionally used to make speech of the past tense stronger. However, the Khmer speakers rarely put the word 'barn' before the Khmer verbs to form the past tense most of the time because in an informal speech, when this word is excluded in a statement, it still makes sense for the listeners. For instance:

ម្សិលមិញខ្ញុំ(បាន)ទៅលេងកំពង់សោម /*Masel minh khnhom (barn) tow leng Kompong Som*/ (Yesterday I went to visit Kompong Som)
 ធីតាបានរស់នៅខេត្តកោះកុងកាលពីឆ្នាំមុន /*Thida (barn) ros now khat Koh Kong kalpi chhnammun*/ (Thida lived in Koh Kong last year).

Likewise, for a future tense, some Khmer future expressions, such as ទៅថ្ងៃមុខ/ពេលមុខ/ពេលក្រោយ /*tow thngai/peil muk/kroy/* (in the future), ឆ្នាំក្រោយ /*chhnam kroy/* (next year), ខែក្រោយ /*Kha kroy/* (next month), សប្តាហ៍ក្រោយ /*sabadar kroy/* (next week), ថ្ងៃស្អែក /*thngai sar-ek/* (tomorrow) are used to express the future tense. The word នឹង /*ning/* (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b) is also put before the Khmer verbs to additionally make the meaning of a future statement stronger. For example:

ថ្ងៃស្អែកខ្ញុំ(នឹង) ទៅសៀមរាប /*Thngai sar-ek khnhom (ning) tow Siem Reap/*
(Tomorrow I am going to Siem Reap).

On the other hand, it is similar to the word បាទ /*barn/* which is not often added to the Khmer verbs to form past tenses, the word នឹង /*ning/* is also often dropped in an informal speech. From this habit of dropping these two words when talking about the past and future tenses, the Khmer speakers often use or transfer the same habit of speaking in Khmer into English (Bose, 2014; Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Krashen, 1982). The interference or influence of the mother tongue on English causes the Khmer speakers to have such English grammatical mistakes.

Another main challenge of tenses for the Khmer speakers is the English verbs which take the 's, es' when they are used with the third person singular as a subject like he comes, she goes, Sok smokes and so on which is completely different from the Khmer language. As a result, many Khmer speakers, even those who speak English fluently, usually forget to put the 's, or es' to the verb which is used with a third person singular pronoun as a subject in the present simple tense. For example, instead of saying, 'Thida speaks English well,' the Khmer speakers normally say, 'Thida speak English well.' This clearly shows about the interference of the Khmer language on English for the Khmer speakers (Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Kleinjans, 2004; Krashen, 1982).

The confusion with the use of 'used to'

Many Khmer speakers use 'used to' as direct translation from their Khmer language by using the word ធ្លាប់ /*thlob/*, while /*thlob/* in Khmer can be used in a few different contexts. In English, 'used to' is used for past habits or for the

past action that was repeated many times in the past, but if an action happened only once, or how long it took, 'used to' is not used (Swan, 1995; Ur, 1996). Nevertheless, in Khmer, the word ធ្លាប់ /*thlob*/ is used to talk about an action or a thing that happened once or more than once in the past, or to talk about past habits or states which are now finished. For example, in accurate English, people say, 'I visited Bangkok last year, while some Khmer speakers say, 'I used to visit Bangkok last year.' Accurate English speakers say, 'Thida visited Vietnam five times in the last two years, while some Khmer speakers say, 'Thida used to visit Vietnam five times in the last two years.' English speakers say, 'Mary lived in Paris for 10 years,' while some Khmer speakers may say, 'Mary used to live in Paris for 10 years.' In this case, Khmer speakers speak or write in an accurate English form, but the context and meaning of 'used to' that they want to express in English is completely wrong.

The way Khmer speakers tend to use 'used to' in this context is incorrect and inappropriate. In fact, the structure of the present perfect tense for experiences and the simple past tense for a completed action may work better and are more appropriate. Thus, instead of saying, 'I used to visit the USA' or 'Thida used to visit Vietnam five times in the last two years,' it would be better to say, 'I've visited the USA' or 'Thida has visited Vietnam five times for the last two years.' However, because the present perfect tense is very complicated for the Khmer speakers, as this tense does not exist in Khmer, and 'used to' is translated into a closer meaning of the word ធ្លាប់ /*thlob*/ in Khmer, they automatically use 'used to' without considering how and why 'used to' should properly be used. In other words, from the above discussion and examples, a Khmer language structure and meaning have an impact on English as a second or foreign language (Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Krashen, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001).

English articles

English articles (a, an, the) are another challenging grammatical aspect for Khmer speakers because they do not exist in Khmer (Moore & Bounchan, 2010b). Although there are some rules of how articles are structured and used, even the Khmer speakers who have learnt the rules well happen to forget and sometimes misuse them because of three main reasons. First, the influence of the Khmer language on English (Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Kleinjans, 2004; Krashen, 1982), as articles do not exist in the Khmer language. Second, in general, when English is spoken or written, more attention is obviously paid to

how the content and meaning could come across rather than how the articles are used. Finally, English article rules have some exceptions which often confuse the Khmer speakers. For example, according to [Swan \(1995\)](#), one of those exceptions is some normal uncountable nouns can be treated as a countable noun to express the meaning of 'a type of' or 'a portion of.' Those uncountable nouns such as shampoo, knowledge and so forth can be treated as countable nouns in these examples: I need a shampoo for my dry hair. That company needs someone who has a knowledge of IT ([Swan, 1995](#)).

As far as the articles are concerned, Khmer speakers tend to put articles between some parts of the statements or speeches where they are not meant to, whilst they are not put in some parts where they are necessary, or they do not use articles correctly ([Keuk, 2008](#)). For example, in the context where the listener knows what the speaker means, some Khmer speakers might ask, 'Did you lock a door?' instead of 'Did you lock the door?' One of the possible ways for the Khmer speakers to reduce mistakes of the misuse of articles is to keep learning their rules by heart and keep practicing them.

The use of negative questions and question tags

When English speakers ask a question like 'Haven't you had your lunch?', the positive answer is 'Yes, I have,' while the negative answer is 'No, I haven't.' It is the same when asking the question tag like 'You don't like ice cream, do you?' The correct positive answer is 'Yes, I do,' while the negative answer is 'No, I don't.' In English, if you answer 'No,' it indicates a negative response, and if you answer 'Yes,' it indicates a positive response. On the other hand, the Khmer speakers respond to this kind of questions differently. For instance, when an English native speaker asks a Khmer speaker like 'Don't you like coffee?' The Khmer speaker might answer: 'Yes,' which means 'I don't like it' in Khmer; or they may answer like 'Yes, I don't like it.' This is what [Moore and Bounchan \(2010a\)](#) identified as a feature of Cambodian English, which is used by some Khmer speakers.

In short, what has been discussed above is aligned with [Kleinjans' \(2004\)](#) claim that non-native speakers were more likely to transfer their native language's phonological, grammatical, lexical, semantic, and sociolinguistic habits into the second language learning or acquisition. For example, Khmer speakers attempt to speak English and make mistakes in phonology or grammar or use the

language inappropriately in some sociolinguistic situations because they tend to transfer linguistic habits in Khmer into English.

The influence of Khmer culture

Misunderstandings or miscommunication do not arise solely from errors in phonological, grammatical, lexical, or semantic aspects made by foreign or second language speakers; they also occur due to cultural differences that both native and non-native speakers bring with them. According to [Shukurova \(2024\)](#), “Different cultures have unique grammatical rules, vocabulary, and syntax that reflect their values, beliefs, and social norms” (para. 2). In some cultures, speakers may consider that politeness and formality in oral communication is important, while other people in other cultures may focus more on directness ([Shukurova, 2024](#)). [Altarriba and Basnight-Brown \(2022\)](#) also claimed that the processes of both knowledge acquisition and communication are driven by the influence of peoples’ identity, language, and culture. Apart from the problems of the pronunciation and grammatical aspects discussed above, it is important to examine the cultural influence of Khmer on English and vice versa.

The use of the negative questions and question tags

When someone asks a Khmer speaker either a negative question or a question tag, he or she usually responds with ‘Yes’ to indicate the negative answer ([Moore & Bounchan, 2010b](#)). This is because of the influence of the L1 culture on English ([Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Krashen, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001](#)). In Khmer culture, to be polite, the Khmer speakers normally answer បាទ /bart/ (Yes) for men, បាទ /chas/ (Yes) for women before the next detailed response. It shows clearly that when Khmer speakers speak English, they transfer the way they respond in their native language, Khmer, to how they answer in English ([Brown, 1994; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Kleinjans, 2004; Krashen, 1982](#)). [Kleinjans \(2004\)](#) also indicated that because of the different social and cultural distributions, this could also mean the people from cross-cultures may share a similar phonological and grammatical knowledge of the English language, but, at the cultural level, they are not part of the same community because of the content of their culture and differences in their cultural norms.

Politeness and impoliteness

This is another crucial problem for Khmer speakers when using English, whether in a spoken or written form. Obviously, either Khmer or English has its own ways, distinct grammatical structures, and vocabulary for expressing politeness and impoliteness. From my work experience with English native speakers and non-native ones, we sometimes have problems related to how we speak or write to each other rather than what we speak or write about. It does not mean that we, the Khmer speakers, are not polite or do not know how to speak politely in our own language, but there are different ways and different words used in both English and Khmer. Like many other non-native English speakers, Khmer speakers fail to interact effectively at a pragmatic level (Alaoui, 2011) because of cultural differences. The non-native English speakers, including Moroccan speakers, tend to speak in either a direct or declarative way, while the English speakers tend to speak more indirectly which cause some misinterpretation and misunderstanding between them (Alaoui, 2011).

From my point of view, both Khmer and English speakers can be polite and impolite to one another when interacting. Each party might somehow feel normal and might not notice when everyone speaks or writes to one another in either a second or foreign language, but not in their mother tongue. This does not only show a problem of language usage but also unawareness of different cultures (Zulfariati et al., 2025) between L1 and L2 because language and culture always stick together (Yan, 2015).

The Khmer language style influences the English style when Khmer people speak or write in English. In general, Khmer speakers use affirmative forms when asking for permission, making requests, apologizing, and so on. When they speak English as a second language, they automatically transfer the Khmer language styles or forms to the English language (Kleinjans, 2004), which sounds a bit strange to English native speakers. For example, when one person wants to go to a toilet, he or she might ask his or her teacher or boss in this way: *'May I go to the toilet or bathroom, please?'* But Khmer speakers usually use a statement rather than asking a question. Khmer speakers might say, *'I want to go to the toilet or bathroom, (please).'* Khmer speakers transfer from the way the Khmer language is used: ខ្ញុំចង់ទៅបង្គន់/បន្ទប់ទឹក / *Kjom chong tov bongkun/bontub tuk/* (I want to go to the bathroom) (Kleinjans, 2004), which sounds normal and not rude to the way Khmer is spoken, while native English speakers might

consider this as being rude. Another example is that students might ask their lecturer with one of these questions, 'Dr., would you mind explaining that again, please?' Or 'Could you explain that again, please?' Or they may use this statement, 'I wonder if you could explain that again, please.' Khmer students usually speak to the professor in this way, 'Dr., I want you to explain that again, please.' This is similar to what [Alaoui \(2011\)](#) found about Moroccan people who speak English as their non-native language.

Offers and acceptance in Khmer and western cultures

In Khmer culture

In general, to be polite, Khmer people are more likely to reject an offer when it is offered the first time. However, the person who is offered something usually expects that that thing to be offered at the second or third time. He or she will accept the offer then. On the other hand, if the person who offers things to another person just offers only once, he or she is not considered to be either kind or polite enough. Thus, the Khmer people culturally know this and tend to offer the same thing a few times to someone even though he or she rejects them once or twice.

For example, when you are invited to have a meal with a Cambodian family, the host and hostess always ask you to have some more food, and at the same time the food which is offered is being served straight away. After the second or third time of the food being served, the host and hostess will know that their guest must have enough food or must be full, and then they will not offer the food anymore. And to be polite, the guest also accepts those offers although he or she says *No*. The host or hostess sometimes just give things to the guest or puts some more food on a guest's plate or bowl without saying anything. The host or hostess sometimes says, "Have some more, please," but at the same time they put some more food on the guest's plate or in the bowl.

In western culture

In the English culture, the way food or other things is offered is different. After living with an English host family for three months and working with some of my British colleagues for a longer period of time, I noticed that the British people usually speak very politely when offering things to someone. However, when a guest rejects an offer by saying, 'No, thank you.' even sometimes after

the first-time offer, the host or hostess does not usually expect the guest to take some more food at all.

For instance, one of my friends who was living with one of the English families had an experience of using a wrong reply when a hostess wanted to offer him another piece of roast chicken. During dinner, a small piece of the roast chicken was put on my friend's plate, and he finished the first bit immediately. Suddenly, the hostess asked him, *'Sophar, would you like some more chicken?'* He immediately answered, *'No, thank you.'* Then she asked again, *'Are you sure?'* He answered, *'Yes.'* The hostess then took the roast chicken away, but she offered something else. Sophar said he was looking at the roast chicken which was taken away from the dining table and felt very sorry for the wrong response of not having any more of it.

Sophar was just trying to be polite to the host and hostess. In fact, he really wanted some more of it as he was not yet full at that time, but he confused the Khmer cultural norms with those of the English culture. He then responded to the English hostess in his own habits, which is in the Khmer cultural norm. He automatically transferred his response from Khmer to English as he had experienced it from his young age. This is related to [Karpava's \(2025\)](#) claims that "L1 linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence expression of politeness" (p. 1). Such influences are often difficult to change. As a result, miscommunication occurred between the hostess and Sophar.

Discussion and recommendations

To have communication taken place properly and understandably between native and non-native speakers, both should know well not only how language, including its formality and politeness which play a very important role in sociological communication, is used, but also the cultures of both speakers behind the language because language and culture work closely together ([Kleinjans, 2004](#), [Yan, 2015](#)). If both speakers of different cultures do not learn or consider each other's culture well, they may use the second or foreign language in the way their cultures are practiced.

As far as teaching English as a second or foreign language is concerned, English teachers should have good knowledge of a mother tongue language and some cultural aspects of their students so that they can identify characters and cultural aspects of L1 that may have an influence and interference over L2.

Then, they can find good materials, methods, and techniques that can be used to teach their students more effectively.

Dealing with the pronunciation problems

Improving Khmer speakers' English pronunciation

For the Khmer learners and speakers, they need a lot of oral repetition and drilling to improve their English pronunciation. They should do more self-study. They should use some audio devices or materials like YouTube videos to play for them so that they can imitate the videos or practice each pronunciation feature on their own. They should also try to speak English with foreigners, especially English native speakers such as tourists, co-workers, and so forth. In addition, they should listen to some English radios and English social media influencers or watch English movies to get their ears used to natural English.

As far as English teaching is concerned, English teachers should learn how to teach English pronunciation effectively. They should apply pronunciation techniques with their students in class and make sure that their students practice a lot in class. During a presentation, the English teachers need to make a clear model of the target language for their students (Ur, 1996). If they cannot make a good model of the target language like a native speaker, they can use audio or video tapes to play for their students to listen to and practice orally again and again (Harmer, 2001). Below are some further suggestions for improving Khmer learners and speakers' English pronunciation:

Practicing English consonant sounds

In general, it is still possible for Khmer speakers to say the sounds of /w/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, and /ʒ/ accurately although they sound quite difficult for them. The Khmer speakers have to follow the procedures mentioned earlier or watch their teacher's demonstration carefully and practice them again and again. Khmer students and speakers who mispronounce these letters: g, sh, th, x, and z as /s/ and v as /w/ could pronounce the sounds ge /ʒ/, sh /ʃ/, th /θ/, ð/, x /ks/, z /z/, and v /v/ accurately after imitating their teacher's demonstration and taking their models and then practicing them. Teachers should keep checking and paying attention to the pronunciation of these consonants or sounds when meeting any word written with any of these letters to enable students to get used to their accurate pronunciation.

Getting learners to imitate the right model

Ur (1996) mentions that the first thing to do is to check that the learner can hear and identify the sounds we want to teach. The same goes for intonation, rhythm, and stress. The teacher should make sure that the learners hear the difference between how a competent or native speaker of a language says a word, phrase, or sentence and how a foreigner says it. This can be done by requesting imitation, by seeing if learners can distinguish between minimal pairs (such as ship vs. sheep, thick vs. tick, or sing vs. thing), or by contrasting acceptable with unacceptable pronunciation through recordings or a teacher's demonstration.

Telling learners what to do

The learners should be told exactly what they are doing wrong, and what the correct answer should be. For sound formation, it may actually help to use a mouth demonstration and describe the pronunciation of a sound in terms of lips, tongue, teeth. It is also important to show a difference between voiced and unvoiced consonants by using a hand to touch the throat. On the other hand, for other aspects of pronunciation, a brief explanation is sufficient, followed by a demonstration, and the class should then be asked to imitate and practice it (Ur, 1996).

Practicing other pronunciation techniques

Finally, when the learners are able to identify some pronunciation problems and follow a teacher's model, further practice activities should be done to consolidate and establish the habits of accurate pronunciation. According to Kelly (2000), to improve English pronunciation effectively, it requires teachers' competent knowledge of English pronunciation, effective pronunciation teaching techniques and skills, and sufficient classroom practice. Here are some suggested pronunciation practice techniques to help the Khmer learners improve their pronunciation:

- Imitation of a teacher or recorded model of sounds, words, and sentences
- Recording of learners' speech, contrasted with a native speaker model
- Imitation drills: repetition of sounds, words, and sentences
- Varied repetition of drills (varied speed, volume, mood)
- Chaining (Kelly, 2000)
- Learning by heart of sentences, rhymes, etc.

- Tongue twisters
- Self-correction by listening to recordings of one's own speech
- Listen and say
- Using pens, pencils, or markers (e.g., confidence  (Kao, 2019)
- Mark and say (CAMSET, 1997; Ur, 1996).

Dealing with the grammatical problems

From my experience and observation, if problems and difficulties of either English pronunciation or grammatical structures can be identified by any Khmer speaker, and that person is willing to improve his or her English proficiency, he or she will definitely be able to produce better and more accurate English. In addition, a great deal of English practice and its daily use are required to build up a user's confidence and competency. Besides, the person who can identify problems and difficulties in their mother-tongue language will be more careful when using the second or foreign language. As a result, mistakes and problems can be tremendously reduced. Below are some more suggestions for Khmer learners and speakers to improve English grammatical aspects discussed earlier.

Word order

To deal with the English word order, Khmer students and speakers should know that the simplest way is when they speak or write English. They should try to swap the order of the words in a sentence or phrase from the Khmer pattern. They need to continue practicing it both independently and in class, where they will engage in guided and communicative practice activities.

Parts of speech

To tackle the problem of English parts of speech, first, Khmer learners and speakers should memorize the English structures, sentence patterns, and functions of vocabulary. Second, Khmer students and speakers should check English vocabulary with an English dictionary, whether online or in print.

Sentence structures with infinitives and prepositions

Regarding the problems with infinitives and preposition, Khmer learners and speakers should make some notes and memorize them. They should compile lists of verbs that take infinitives, gerunds, or prepositions, as well as adjectives which are used with prepositions. Studying collocations of English words can also help a great deal. In addition, within the classroom, more oral and written practice should be incorporated to help develop learners' language proficiency.

Words ending in -s or -es

To overcome the grammatical problems related to words ending with -e or -es, Khmer speakers should be aware well of this grammatical feature that can greatly influence their English-speaking accuracy and pay more attention to the accurate English forms in order to avoid or reduce such grammatical mistakes. A great deal of practice is needed in both contexts, the classroom and the real world.

Vocabulary followed by a preposition

According to Browne (2008), using flashcards and vocabulary games in ESL or EFL classrooms help motivate learners to learn new vocabulary better even though flashcards often make them bored. Extensive reading of graded reading materials also helps increase readers' vocabulary bank and motivation (Browne, 2008). Moreover, one strategy to help Khmer speakers use English vocabulary with relevant prepositions correctly is to learn by heart, keep checking with a dictionary, and try to practice them as much as possible.

Tenses

By comparing the tenses, structures, and other grammatical aspects of English and Khmer, and by emphasizing the mistakes that Khmer speakers commonly make when speaking English, teachers can help learners pay more attention to the identified problems. Students can gradually improve their English and speak it more accurately. They should also do self-reflection of what problems they have with English tenses after they talk to other people. Then, they should check them with any good English grammar book immediately when they get back home. By doing that, they can remember them longer, allowing them to learn them well later on. In ESL or EFL classrooms, sufficient mechanical drills and communicative practice are required to develop learners' English proficiency and confidence. In areas where Khmer learners have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, extensive communicative practice should be provided in the classroom to support English learning and acquisition.

Confusion with the use of 'used to'

English teachers should be careful when teaching the form of 'used to' to Khmer learners. The proper use of 'used to' for past habits and states, and the use of the present perfect tense for past experiences should be clearly presented, emphasized, and distinguished when teaching grammar at any appropriate

level so that the Khmer learners will not get confused. Moreover, extensive, well-designed communicative practice with the target language item, such as 'used to,' in the classroom can help the Khmer learners a great deal.

English articles

In order to learn and use English articles more effectively, the Khmer speakers and learners should be aware that they need time, a great deal of practice, and a lot of self-study. To reduce mistakes related to the misuse of articles, they should memorize the rules and practice them independently. Extensive reading, speaking, and writing practice should be done both inside and outside the classroom so that the learners can notice and learn how the articles are naturally used. In addition, the Khmer speakers or learners can improve their use of English articles by independently completing exercises or practice activities written in English grammar books.

The use of negative questions and question tags

To help Khmer learners not to get confused with the use of negative questions and question tags, they should be told that when it is a negative answer to both affirmative and negative questions and question tags, a response must be 'No' and then add details. In contrast, when giving a positive answer to any of the above questions, we respond with 'Yes' and then provide additional details. In ESL or EFL classrooms, a great deal of communicative practice with the above target language items should be provided.

Dealing with the cultural differences

As far as communication is concerned, we should think of whether politeness or impoliteness of the language is necessarily more important, or whether the comprehension or effective communication is more important. In my opinion, if a second language is used between native and non-native speakers, as far as communication takes place, politeness and impoliteness in this situation is not necessarily important. I also think that this is part of the cultural influence because one person may feel differently from another person when communication is taken place between people from cross-cultures.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication caused by cultural differences, apart from teaching English language as a second or foreign language in general, English language teachers should pay more attention to teaching cultural aspects associated with the English language,

including its registers and politeness. Both native and non-native speakers should be aware of and anticipate some cultural problems behind the language when they try to communicate with one another so that both parties do not feel offended, and their good relations can be built and strengthened. With proper awareness and understanding of each other's culture, speakers and learners of L1 can communicate in L2 properly, meaningfully, and confidently.

Conclusion

Khmer speakers and learners tend to face two major problems when using English: the influence of the Khmer language and the influence of Khmer culture on their use of English. Since Khmer does not share some common language roots with English, there is L1 influence and interference when it comes to pronunciation features such as consonants, especially the final consonant sounds and the consonant sounds of /v/ and /w/, /θ/ and /ð/, /s/ and /z/, and /ʒ/ and /ʃ/; sentence stress; linking sounds; syllable stress; sound and spelling; and intonation. The influence of Khmer on English pronunciation features makes Khmer speakers have many problems with English pronunciation when they speak English as a second or foreign language, which often leads to misunderstanding between the Khmer speakers and other English speakers.

Due to the fact that Khmer and English grammatical structures are completely different, except a basic structure of 'subject + verb + object,' Khmer speakers tend to have problems with these English grammatical aspects including word order, parts of speech, sentence structures with infinitives and prepositions, the incorrect use of -s or -es ending, vocabulary followed by a preposition, tenses, the confusion with the use of 'used to,' English articles, and the use of negative questions and question tags. Thus, Khmer speakers usually have English pronunciation and grammatical problems because they very often transfer their native language's phonological, grammatical, lexical, and even sociolinguistic habits into the second or foreign language they are using.

Culture is another burden for Khmer speakers of English when using English for their communication purpose. Cultural aspects of both native and non-native speakers also create misunderstanding or miscommunication between them when they interact with one another in the English language. Although the language is phonologically, grammatically, and lexically accurate, some English native speakers tend to mind their appropriate culture when using

English with other non-native speakers, which may create some offenses between them. In some cultures, speakers may consider more about politeness and formality when they communicate with one another in either oral or written communication, while in other cultures people tend to pay more attention on how to get clear and right messages rather than consideration of the cultural aspects (Shukurova, 2024). Therefore, not only the phonological and grammatical aspects of English mentioned above cause problems for Khmer speakers when using English, but the cultural influence of Khmer on English and vice versa also causes problems for both Khmer and English speakers.

Since this paper relies only on secondary data, personal experiences, its findings could not be generalized. Thus, further studies on this topic and other related areas such as English teaching and learning quality, student's motivation, limited teaching and learning resources which may contribute to the problems for Khmer speakers when using English as a foreign language are strongly recommended. Those areas are recommended to be studied further due to the fact that English is officially taught at primary and secondary schools throughout Cambodia, and it is also taught at private schools. The Khmer learners who are taught at either private or public schools can speak English very well if their English teachers teach them effectively. For example, teaching English pronunciation and grammar requires well-trained teachers who are able to teach and facilitate teaching and learning very well using effective teaching and learning techniques, methods, and approaches. Thus, those recommended areas are worth studying further.

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The author(s)

Sophal Kao holds a PhD in Education from the Pāṇṇāsāstra University of Cambodia. He is an Associate Professor at the American University of Phnom Penh (AUPP). He specializes in English language teacher training, English language teaching, school monitoring and evaluation, and the development of English language curricula and materials. He has previously held a number of positions, including Dean, Associate Dean, School Director, and Training Manager in both private and public higher education institutions. He also served as an Education Specialist and Consultant for international NGOs, as well as a National English Language Teacher Trainer and Supervisor for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in Cambodia for several years. Moreover, he is an inspiring public speaker on self-leadership, motivation, and teacher education. He is also the author of *Practical Methodology in TESOL*. His research interests include teacher education and professional development, TESOL, school monitoring and evaluation, and school management and leadership.

Email: s.kao@aupp.edu.kh

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