

## **How to Write a Proper Paragraph in Academic Writing**

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### **Abstract**

Long paragraphs are often seen in many writings in any language. They are difficult for the reader to capture the meaning quickly. Sometimes, the reader does not want to read the paper when he or she sees the long paragraphs in it. Thus, long paragraphs are an obstacle for attracting the reader's first attention, and the writer cannot achieve what he or she wants to convey to the reader. In response to this problem, this paper proposes a new rule for writing proper paragraphs in an academic setting in order to achieve clear and concise language and attract the reader's attention right away. In light of proposing this rule, this paper observes the causes of writing long paragraphs in Cambodia. The paper finds that Cambodians write such long paragraphs for two reasons: the first is students' general (mis)perception over the organization of an essay. The second is the tendency for Cambodian students or writers to write rhetorically or poetically when authoring an essay or paper. Both factors have contributed to Cambodians writing long paragraphs with several main ideas, which makes it difficult to distinguish the main, supporting, and concluding ideas. In order to improve this, the paper sets a new rule by restricting the number of lines in a sentence and the number of sentences in a paragraph. This suggested rule is not limited to Cambodia, but also other countries that find it useful in writing a proper paragraph in an esthetic and balanced way.

### **I. Introduction**

When a native English speaker reads an essay or paper written in English by Cambodian students, he or she often expresses a feeling of confusion and frustration and does not want to read it. Why is that so? Apart from grammatical mistakes,<sup>2,3</sup> what is surprising to other

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<sup>2</sup> One common source of grammatical errors in English writing by Cambodians is the mis-use of indefinite and definite articles (a, an, and the): this concept does not exist in the Khmer language. Thus, Cambodians may not use these appropriately when directly translating from the Khmer language into English.

<sup>3</sup> Other common mistakes are found in the use the context of single or plural nouns, and the need for a verb agreement. In the Khmer language, there is no change for the plural form of a noun and thus no

readers is that the paragraphs written by Cambodian students are frequently very long and contain several ideas. This is contradictory to an English paragraph that has clear components to follow.

The contradiction leads to doubts by foreigners whether Cambodian students know how to write a paragraph or know the components of a paragraph when they write an essay or paper. Thus, paragraph writing using clear and concise language is a challenge for Cambodian students today. The purpose of the present paper is to identify the causes of why Cambodian students and other writers use such long paragraphs and to propose a new rule for writing proper paragraphs in academic writing in, but not limited to, Cambodia in the future.

## **II. Principles of Paragraph Writing**

Observationally, a long paragraph can exist in any language, including English too, but this can vary and depends on the type of writing and the generation of the writer. Previously, a number of writers were inclined to write long paragraphs. Reading books or journal papers that were written a long time ago, one would see many long paragraphs in them. A number of writers of different nationalities still use long paragraphs in their papers to this day.

However, the current generation tends to write a short paragraph, which focuses on using clear and concise language. (Zinsser, 2001, pp. 7-8; McKerihan, 2015, Part 1). Many academic writing instructors teach students how to write short paragraphs (Starkey, 2004, p. 15; Cooper, 2013, p. 343). Likewise, many contemporary scholars also write their papers in this way (Hartley, 2008, pp. 3-4). Clear and concise language is that which a writer uses to make it easy for a reader to read, capture, and understand the content of an essay or paper quickly (Zinsser, 2001, p. 9; Sant, 2008, p. 64). To do so, an author usually writes his or her paper avoiding long sentences and paragraphs (Kane, 1988, pp. 262-263; Zinsser, 2001, pp. 7-8; Starkey, 2004, p. 15). That is a standard for writing an academic essay or paper today.

Therefore, understanding the components of a paragraph is essential for writing an essay or paper using clear and concise language. In principle, a paragraph is a group of relevant sentences that describes a main idea. A paragraph contains a central idea that needs to be further developed or illustrated within that paragraph (Oshima and Hogue, 1991, p. 100; Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 11; Robitaille and Connelly, 2007, p. 21; Wingersky *et al.*,

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need for a verb agreement. A noun and verb do not have a suffix, especially verbs when they use a singular noun as a subject. However, in the English language, a singular noun needs a singular verb and a plural noun needs a plural verb. Thus, Cambodians face these problems, as the two languages differ structurally.

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2009, pp. 28-29; Connelly, 2012, p. 35). In general, adding several supporting sentences to the body of the paragraph is enough to develop or illustrate the main idea (Howe and Willoughby, 2005, p. 73; Wingersky *et al.*, 2012, p. 37).

In standard practice, a paragraph has three main components: (1) a topic sentence, (2) a supporting sentence(s), and (3) a concluding sentence (Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 12; Robitaille and Connelly, 2007, p. 55). These components are the core of a paragraph when writing an essay or paper. The reader expects to see these parts or expects the writer to follow these components in his or her essay or paper.

First, the fundamental component of a paragraph is a topic sentence, which can lie anywhere within the paragraph – the beginning, middle, or end (Howe and Willoughby, 2005, p. 73; Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 12; Wingersky *et al.*, 2009, p. 29; Connelly, 2012, p. 37; Folse *et al.*, 2014, p. 5). However, in order to grasp the reader's attention right away, a topic sentence should be placed at the beginning (the first sentence) of a paragraph (Kane, 1988, p. 89; Howe and Willoughby, 2005, p. 73; Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 12). This makes it easy for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought and capture the main idea of the paragraph in an essay or paper.

After reading a topic sentence, which is the main idea of a paragraph, the reader expects to see various supporting sentences in that paragraph. Supporting sentences can be a sentence or a group of relevant sentences that further describe or develop the topic sentence by providing supporting evidence or illustrating examples (Howe and Willoughby, 2005, 73; Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 12; Robitaille and Connelly, 2007, p. 61; Connelly, 2012, p. 37; Folse *et al.*, 2014, p. 5). These sentences must be related to the main idea of that paragraph; otherwise, they are considered irrelevant and must be taken out.

The last component of a paragraph is a concluding sentence, which usually lies at the end of a paragraph. This sentence can be called a "closing sentence" of a paragraph, meaning that it summarizes the paragraph or gives a final comment or interpretation about the topic of a paragraph (Howe and Willoughby, 2005, p. 73; Zemach and Rumisek, 2005, p. 12; Robitaille and Connelly, 2007, p. 71). However, a concluding sentence is optional in a paragraph. Not every paragraph should have a concluding sentence; it depends on two premises: (1) the complete idea and (2) a logical transit.

A complete idea of a paragraph, in this paper, refers to a separate, single idea that is closed by such a paragraph. In this sense, the main idea of that paragraph does not need more

explanation to describe the idea in the next paragraph. In this case, this paragraph needs to be concluded with a concluding sentence.<sup>4</sup> If the description or development of a complete idea prolongs a paragraph, such a long paragraph should be separated into two or more subparagraphs by a logical transit. A logical transit, in this paper, refers to a logical indentation of a paragraph into another without a concluding sentence of the first one. In this case, a writer instead makes a logical transit of similar ideas from one paragraph to another. A concluding sentence can be made for the last subparagraph when it reaches a complete idea.<sup>5</sup>

In short, a paragraph can have two or three components depending on whether it has a complete idea or logical transit in an essay or paper. When a paragraph has these components, it complies with this paper's thesis.

### **III. Challenges of Paragraph Writing for Cambodian Learners**

As described in the Introduction above, Cambodian students or writers face challenges in writing paragraphs. This section will give an overview of the challenges and factors that have contributed to the writing of such long paragraphs. The first part will cover the challenges, and the second part will focus on the factors that contribute to these challenges.

#### **1. Challenges of Contemporary Paragraph Writing**

The above-described components of a paragraph are standard for writing paragraphs in any language, in particular, in English. However, paragraph writing can, observationally, be varied in Cambodia depending on the background of a Cambodian student or writer's education. There are three noteworthy premises that contribute to this variety.

A Cambodian student or writer who has studied abroad and undergone extensive training in academic writing, generally produces appropriate papers and follows the components of a paragraph. If he or she studies in Cambodia and has undergone appropriate academic writing training, his or her paragraph writing is also good, accordingly. However, if he or she has

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<sup>4</sup> This type of paragraph can mostly be found in a standalone essay. In the standalone essay, each paragraph often has a separate, complete idea. It follows most patterns by using the subsequent ordinal number such as first, second, third, etc. The idea of each subsequent paragraph is a separate, complete one. You usually complete an idea in the first paragraph and then continue to the second one. In this case, before continuing to the second paragraph, you need to conclude the first one with a concluding sentence.

<sup>5</sup> This type of paragraph is mostly found in writing a long paper like a thesis, research paper, or book. To bear in mind, writing a section of this work is similar to writing a standalone essay, but most paragraphs in this section needs a logical transit rather than a concluding sentence.

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never studied abroad, or has never received extensive academic writing training, his or her paragraph writing generally faces structural problems.

The structural issue often seen in Cambodian writing is long paragraphs that contain more than one main idea, which is contradictory to the components of a paragraph. Appendix A gives such an example of a paragraph extracted from a fourth year Bachelor's student's essay on the 'Perception of Judicial Independence' in one of the author's classes.

It is a body paragraph of an essay but it is very verbose and contains several main ideas. This long paragraph should be separated into several paragraphs in order to be more effective. This example showcases that this student does not follow the components of a paragraph as mentioned above. However, the problem lies not only with this individual student, but rather with most Cambodian students observed by the author. The question is why do most Cambodian students face such problems when it comes to paragraph writing.

The present paper will try to answer this question based on the author's own experience in teaching academic writing and methods to write a graduation project (a report, research paper, or thesis) in both Khmer and English for several years at the university level in Cambodia.<sup>6</sup> This paper will discuss a number of paragraphs written by Cambodian university students as well as Cambodian writers that face structural issues related to paragraph writing.

### **2. Factors that Contribute to Writing Long Paragraphs in Cambodia**

As mentioned above, the current generation and trend of academic writing focuses on clear and concise language (Zinsser, 2001, pp. 7-8; McKerihan, 2015, Part 1). Therefore, a writer tries to avoid writing long sentences and paragraphs in his or her papers (Kane, 1988, pp. 262-263; Zinsser, 2001, pp. 7-8; Starkey, 2004, p. 15). However, a long sentence and paragraph, especially a long paragraph with several main ideas, still dominates contemporary academic writing in Cambodia today. This is contradictory to writing a paragraph using clear and concise language, which needs to be addressed and improved to secure a better future of academic writing in Cambodia.

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<sup>6</sup> The author has taught a course on research methodology that focuses on how to write reports, research papers, and thesis papers (graduation project) at the university level since 2015. In this course, the author always tests students' writing skills and ability before the class begins; therefore, the author sees structural problems of paragraphs and essays in most students' writings. As a result, the author has decided to write this paper in order to show the flaws and causes of contemporary Cambodian students' writing and suggests a new method for improving academic writing in Cambodia in the future.

This paper finds that Cambodians write such long paragraphs for two reasons. The first is students' general misunderstanding of essay organization, and the second is the tendency of Cambodians to use a rhetorical or poetic way of writing, which is common in the Khmer language.

First, students' misunderstanding of the organization of an essay is a factor that is attributed to Cambodians writing such long paragraphs. Cambodian students have undergone training on how to write an essay, which is known as "composition" in the course of Khmer Literature mainly in secondary and high schools. In Cambodia, students learn different composition techniques depending their teacher's knowledge and efforts, and of course the effort of each student.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is hard to assume students' general perception on composition because of the variance in how they have learned to write compositions at general education schools in Cambodia.

However, students' general perception of composition or essay writing can be realized under the author's academic writing classes when they enter into university. The author has taught how to write reports, research papers, and theses (graduation projects) for several years at universities in Cambodia. In this course, the author uses various methods to teach students how to conduct research, collect data, use citations, and utilize specific writing techniques for reports, theses, and research papers.

The author often recalls that writing a graduation paper well demands a good understanding of the proper methods to write paragraphs and essays, as these methods are the core of academic writing. The author, before starting a new class, always tests the students' writing abilities. The author often asks students general questions concerning essay writing. When the author asks students about the organization of an essay, most students understand that it has three parts: (1) Introduction, (2) Body, and (3) Conclusion. When the author continues to

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<sup>7</sup> Lessons on composition writing are in the textbooks at secondary and high schools, but techniques to execute this composition depend on the real context of teaching and learning in Cambodia. Schoolteachers, in addition to teaching obligatory sessions in full-time classes, can teach part-time classes (charged hourly) to their students. Due to this, many schoolteachers do not pay enough attention to teaching their full-time classes, and instead they keep some parts of lessons or techniques to teach in part-time classes for extra pay from their students. Thus, students' knowledge also depends on this. If students have money to pay for and attend part-time classes, they may gain better techniques in writing a composition than other students who do not attend these extra sessions. In preparation for passing the national high school examination, students can strive to learn from other experienced teachers besides their teachers at school. This helps them prepare better than other students.

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ask students about the composition of essays, especially the number of paragraphs in the body, most students are reluctant to answer or unsure of the answer.

The three-part essay composition, as mentioned above, can be realized in most students' essays. The author has noticed that most students try to complete their essays in three parts, namely, introduction, body, and conclusion, regardless of the thesis statement or the main idea of an essay.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the three-part essay approach usually results in long paragraphs that contain several ideas, especially in the body.<sup>9</sup> Appendix B is an example extracted from a fourth year Bachelor's student's essay on the 'Right of Ownership under the Cambodian Land Law' in one of the author's classes.

This example shows a students' general perception over an essay organization that they tried to complete their essay in only three parts. Reading through the introduction, the thesis statement clearly indicated three controlling ideas that should have been described in the body. Thus, the body should have been broken up into three basic paragraphs, but instead the student put them all in only one paragraph. Thus, the body paragraph is too long and contains several main ideas.

Second, this style of writing paragraphs can also be attributed to a way of rhetorical or poetic thinking that is common in the Khmer language. In Cambodia, poem writing carries a sense of pride and deserves respect because it is believed that someone who can write a poem has high knowledge. Such a mindset makes many Cambodian scholars write their papers using poetry rather than prose. Looking through old-time writings, many famous Cambodian scholars have left their works in poetry form for the next generation to read.

Notably, poem writing in Khmer does not require paragraphs or follow the components of a paragraph. It demands rhetorical or poetic linking among words, phrases, and sentences to produce a pretty and rhythmical melody. Such thinking and writing becomes a hindrance though when he or she writes an academic essay or research paper that requires following the components of a paragraph using prose. This is illustrated in Appendix C, a one-paragraph introduction extracted from a paper written by a Cambodian scholar in 2016.

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<sup>8</sup> Some students' essays in the author's classes do not have an indentation at all. Students wrote paragraphs continuously from beginning to end. Despite this, the author checked the meaning of their essays and they also had three parts: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. It seemed likely they forgot to indent these parts or they got confused while writing.

<sup>9</sup> When students write an essay, in their mind, they try to achieve only three parts, which are thought to be enough for an essay. In this context, they have one paragraph is for the introduction, another is for the body, and the last one is for the conclusion. Students tend to try and put everything in the body. As a consequence, the body paragraph is often very long and contains several main ideas.

Reading this paragraph, one can perceive that the writer tried to be rhetorical in his words. Thus, he jumped from one idea to another immediately without taking into consideration the components of a paragraph. Reading this long paragraph will make one out of breath and makes it difficult to capture the meaning of the paper immediately. It would be easy to understand the meaning of this paragraph if it were separated into several subparagraphs.

This method of writing gives rise to a noteworthy consequence; the difficulty to distinguish the main idea of the paragraph. The reader sometimes has difficulty distinguishing which ideas are the main, supporting, or concluding ones because they all look similar. This is illustrated in Appendix D, a paragraph extracted from another Cambodian scholar's work in 2017.

In this example, the ideas seem relevant; thus, the writer puts them together to produce a long paragraph. However, reading through this paragraph, the main idea is difficult to find. This paragraph has several similar ideas, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the main and supporting ideas. Taking a closer look, it appears that the writer composed these paragraphs using the Khmer free-writing style.<sup>10</sup>

In short, this way of rhetorical or poetic thinking prompts Cambodian students or writers to write papers using the Khmer free-writing style. Currently, most Cambodian students or writers are using and are accustomed to such a writing style, which needs to be improved.

#### **IV. Suggestions for Improvements**

The above-mentioned factors make paragraph writing in Cambodia look inappropriate. In order to improve this, this paper suggests a new rule for paragraph writing for a more appropriate way, but not limited to, in Cambodia in the future. This paper also suggests three important things that are needed to do from now in order to improve the academic writing in contemporary Cambodian education. The following section will describe these suggestions.

##### **1. A New Rule for Paragraph Writing**

In order to avoid writing such long sentences and paragraphs, this paper puts forward a new rule to enhance academic writing that will be more effective and clear. This suggested rule

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<sup>10</sup> The Khmer free-writing style is a way of Khmer writing that Cambodian scholars use that does not pay much attention to paragraph structure or components, but rather focuses on the use of rhetorical or poetic writing as the foundation of their writing. Thus, in an attempt to produce poetic writing, the writer jumps from one idea to another immediately without thinking of following the proper paragraph components. As a consequence, a paragraph is long and contains more than one main idea.

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focuses on two points. First, it restricts the number of lines in a sentence. Second, it restricts the number of sentences in a paragraph (Sras Hem, manuscript in preparation).

Regarding the number of lines in a sentence, this paper suggests that a sentence should not be longer than three lines. In this context, a sentence may last between one to three lines, which is appropriate for reading. If a sentence exceeds three lines, it should be separated into two sentences. In this case, writers must ensure that the separated sentences have a complete and clear meaning. However, this can be extended if there is a need for a transition, or reducing the number of lines in a sentence affects the overall meaning. In that case, the sentence may be kept as is.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of the number of sentences in a paragraph, this paper suggests that a paragraph should contain between three to five sentences. The reason that a paragraph should start from three sentences is because it can comply with the three main components, namely, a topic sentence, a supporting sentence, and a concluding sentence.<sup>12</sup> In the three-sentence paragraph, one is a topic sentence, another is a supporting sentence, and the other is a concluding sentence. In the five-sentence paragraph, one is a topic sentence, three are supporting sentences, and the last one is a concluding sentence. In case that a paragraph does not have a concluding sentence, the rest will be supporting sentences under this suggested rule.

However, under this rule, the maximum number of sentences in a paragraph is not restricted to only five sentences. The maximum of five sentences is a common standard for achieving a

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<sup>11</sup> This rule also takes the font size of a language for consideration. The font size of some languages can be smaller or bigger than others. The restriction of three lines under this suggested rule varies in compliance with the font size of that language. For instance, the Khmer font size is bigger than the English one; as a consequence, some compound or complex sentences may extend over three lines. In this case, you can keep your sentence if it has a complete meaning. However, you should try to avoid such long sentences whenever possible. If your sentences and paragraphs are lengthy, you cannot achieve clear and concise language in your essay or paper.

<sup>12</sup> There are some exceptions in writing a paragraph that can have less than three sentences, as suggested in the minimal rule in this paper. Some academic writers assert one sentence can serve as a paragraph when it has unity and a complete meaning. The present author agrees with this assertion, but suggests this case can exist only in some introductory and concluding sentences in your work. When an introductory sentence or concluding sentence has unity and complete meaning, it can act as an independent paragraph. However, bear in mind that a one sentence paragraph cannot exist in an explanatory paragraph, where there needs to be more description of the topic sentence or main idea. In the case that the paragraph should have more than one sentence; the author suggests you should apply the suggested rule in this paper in order to satisfy the components of a paragraph and make your paper look esthetic and balanced. In order to avoid short paragraphs, the author suggests that you can further develop an introductory and concluding paragraph with more than one sentence. It would be best if you can reach the minimum sentences as suggested in this paper, so you achieve an esthetic and balanced paragraph in your work.

good esthetic and balanced paragraph under this suggested rule. Nevertheless, there may be some exceptions to this rule, and good paragraphs can extend to six or seven sentences when the meaning of a paragraph is not complete without the extra information, or some sentences are short (less than three lines).<sup>13</sup> In this case, one or two more sentences are added to this paragraph can still look balanced when compared to others.

In short, the suggested rule in this paper is a standard for writing a sentence and paragraph in clear and concise language. This rule is not only applied to paragraph writing for Cambodia, but also for other languages where it is deemed to be appropriate and useful.

## **2. Ways to Improve Academic Writing in Contemporary Cambodian Education**

For improving academic writing in contemporary Cambodian education, this paper suggests three mechanisms. First is improving the methods taught in secondary and high schools regarding writing sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Second is strengthening research paper and thesis writing at higher education institutions. Third is improving the nexus of writing methods between general and higher education in Cambodia.

In order for students to have better writing skills when they enter higher education, the suggested rule in this paper should be emphasized at general education schools. Students should be trained and learn the basic rules, especially how to write a sentence, paragraph, essay, and understand their development. When students enter into university after having a strong fundamental knowledge of paragraph and essay writing, they will not find difficulty in writing research papers and theses. Thus, strengthening paragraph and essay writing training at general education schools is a prerequisite for paving the way for better writing skills at higher education institutions.

For the current higher education level, reinforcement of academic writing, especially for paragraphs, essays, and thesis writing, is necessary in Cambodia. Academic writing classes must be held at the university level, especially for those who are required to write a research paper or thesis for graduation.<sup>14</sup> Some universities have a course on academic writing or

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<sup>13</sup> The author suggests that you should not add more sentences than this; otherwise, your paragraph will become lengthy again. You should try to avoid adding sentences as much as possible, except for some cases where it is necessary to give the paragraph complete meaning.

<sup>14</sup> Currently, not all universities in Cambodia require students to write a research paper or thesis (graduation project) at the Bachelor's level – some universities require it, and some do not. For universities that require it, only outstanding students, based on the top-ten principle, write a graduation project at the Bachelor's level. At the Master's level, there are two options for students: they can either write a research paper or thesis. If students choose to write a research paper, they only submit it to the school. They are not required to make an oral defense in front of a school

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research methodology, but do not require students to write a research paper or thesis for graduation. This does not help students much on research and writing skills. Instead, it can make students feel as though it is not compulsory to attend this course.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in order to strengthen a culture of research and writing in Cambodia, universities, especially at the Bachelor's level, should provide an option for students in every field to write a research paper or thesis for graduation. This should be on a voluntary basis. Students who prefer to write a research paper or thesis should be allowed to do so; other students should be allowed to take an exit examination for graduation. If every field of study complies with this strategy, it will inadvertently cultivate and increase research and writing in Cambodia.

In addition to these suggestions, the nexus of writing methods at general education schools and higher education institutions should be taken into consideration. The disparity of writing methods between them causes difficulties for students to adapt to the university level, and university teachers must spend valuable time correcting students' writing behaviors and mindset when they could be covering more substantial content. For instance, composition writing at general education schools generally focuses on rhetoric and playing on words. Students are given high scores when their rhetoric and word play are done well, even when their arguments are not true or are exaggerated.

However, higher education writing requires the use of research-based arguments and evidence. Rhetoric without proper evidence or exaggeration using word play is not appropriate for writing research papers or theses at the university level. Thus, students who are accustomed to composition writing at the general education level feel it is difficult to adapt and learn new writing methods at the higher education level. Therefore, in order to avoid this, both levels should have consistency, at least to some extent, in the writing methods taught. Changes to writing methods in general education should be made in order to prepare students for higher education writing.

In summation, these suggestions are a cohesive way to improve current academic writing in Cambodia. Achievement of these suggestions will make Cambodian writing methodology

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committee, but they need to sit for an exit examination. If students choose to write a thesis, they submit it and make an oral defense in front of a school committee. At the Ph.D. level, students must write a thesis (doctoral dissertation) and provide an oral defense.

<sup>15</sup> Students may find this course unimportant for study because he or she is not obliged to write a paper for graduation after they have completed the course. In order to change such a mindset, students should be required to write a paper for graduation. Therefore, a number of higher education institutions should take this into consideration.

consistent from general to higher education. Thus, Cambodia will stay on the track in cultivating appropriate academic writing.

## **V. Conclusion**

Academic writing, especially a research paper or thesis, is not the same as writing a novel or poem. It requires following proper rules and components of a paragraph, essay, research paper, and thesis. Learning methods to write these is the proper way to be successful in academic life. Academic writing evolves in time. A learner must update himself or herself to such involvement, not only in his or her own country's educational system, but also international norms. Likewise, the writing methodology of one country also needs to update itself to the development of the world; otherwise, it will be left behind and become outdated. The current trend of academic writing focuses on clear and concise language, which avoids long sentences and paragraphs.

However, academic writing, especially paragraph writing, using clear and concise language is a challenge in contemporary education in Cambodia. Cambodian students or writers still write long paragraphs with several main ideas using the Khmer free-writing style, which needs to be improved. The suggested rule and recommendations as indicated in this paper will be a helpful paradigm to address this issue. From now on, a comprehensive framework for orienting academic writing, especially focusing on paragraph, essay, research paper, and thesis writing should be a prerequisite for Cambodia. For general education schools, appropriate methods of writing sentences, paragraphs, essays, and their development should further be strengthened, while higher education institutions should reinforce this with research paper and thesis writing. The nexus of writing methods should be consistent between both levels, only differing with the level of writing and ideas.

Training methods to write an essay or paper in an appropriate academic way is an arduous and time-consuming task for educators. However, it is a right odyssey for nurturing young generations to be proper academic writers and cultivating a culture of researching and writing in Cambodia. Then, Cambodian history and culture will be crystallized under the hand of Cambodian scholars.

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### Appendices

*Note for Appendix C and D:* to avoid misunderstandings, the author respects the original writer as a fellow Cambodian scholar, and thus does not wish to disclose the source of this text to protect their overall reputation and privacy. As the author is sure that they are aware, there is the need to advance the development of education in Cambodia, in legal as in other spheres; they should thus not take this use personally, but rather view it from a broader perspective. In anticipation of potential requests of the original sources, the author will identify them upon being given an appropriate reason.

#### **Appendix A**

The following is a paragraph extracted from a fourth year Bachelor's student's essay on the 'Perception of Judicial Independence' in one of the author's classes.<sup>16</sup>

The judiciary shall have jurisdiction over all issues of a judicial nature and shall have exclusive authority to decide whether an issue submitted for its decision is within its competence as defined by law. Everyone shall have the right to be tried by ordinary courts or tribunals using established legal procedures. Tribunals that do not use the duly established procedures of the legal process shall not be created to displace the jurisdiction belonging to the ordinary courts or judicial tribunals. The principle of the independence of the judiciary requires to ensure that judicial proceedings are conducted fairly, and rights of the parties are respected. In

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<sup>16</sup> On file with the author.

accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, members of the judiciary are like other citizens entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. However, that in exercising such rights, judges shall always conduct themselves in such a manner as to preserve the dignity of their office and the impartiality and independence of the judiciary. In paper 168 of Cambodia Constitution, “The Judiciary is an independent power. The Judiciary shall be impartial and protect the rights and freedom of citizens. The Judiciary shall consider all legal cases including administrative cases. This power shall be vested in the Supreme Court and in all courts of all sectors and levels.” The principle of an independent of Judiciary has its own origin in the theory of separation power\_ Executive, Legislature and Judiciary that are the form three separation branches of government to check and balance the power for the society. The separation power must be able to exercise their professional responsibilities without being influenced by the Executive, the Legislature or any other inappropriate sources. It can be fulfilled efficiently. The public must have full confidence in the ability of the Judiciary to carry out its functions in this independent and impartial manner. The principle of independence of judges was not invented for the personal benefit of the judges themselves, but it was created to protect human beings against abuses of power. The judges cannot act arbitrarily in any way by deciding cases according to their own personal preferences, but their duty is remains to apply the law. A legal system based on respect for the rule of law also needs strong, independent and impartial prosecutors willing resolutely to investigate and prosecute suspected crimes committed against human beings even if these crimes have been committed by persons acting in an official capacity.

### ***Appendix B***

The following is extracted from a fourth year Bachelor’s student’s essay on the ‘Right of Ownership under the Cambodian Land Law’ in one of the author’s classes.<sup>17</sup>

Cambodia is one of the oldest countries in East Asia, rich in tradition, custom, and culture across the country. Over the centuries, these traditions, customs and cultures have formed the conceptual foundations for Cambodian law. Although

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<sup>17</sup> On file with the author.

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the Cambodian legal system has been influenced by the French legal system since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, fundamental Khmer legal concepts still survived. In here, right of ownership that have mentioned in Land Law is a topic that going to discuss. In addition to the right, ownership also carried certain obligations, primarily obligations on the part of the owner of land to fence and maintain his property. Ownership is generally defined by law divided into three different types and used in three different forms. In order to define ownership or proprietorship, the 2001 Land Law sets out the elements of rights of a proprietor which include the right of use, the right of enjoyment and the right of disposition.

Proprietorship is the absolute right over land including the right of use, the right of employment and the right of disposition. However, there are no legal standards which determine the content or scope of each right all that is known is that these definitions are gotten from the French legal system. Right of use could be deemed the right to use property in a simple and legitimate way at the choice of the right holder, the right of enjoyment could be deemed the right to use one's property for production and to obtain the benefit of that production; and the of disposition could be deemed the right to dispose of the property, to transfer full ownership to another as well as the right to change or transform the structure of the property. Under the right of use, the proprietor is free to carry out whatever farming, planting, organizing and building as he or she wishes to do and such activity is not prohibited by the law. Insofar as the right of enjoyment is concerned, the proprietor has title to all produce from the property including natural produce that grown on the land or produce which derives from acts of people such as rent or other income generated from the property. The proprietor also has rights over the increase of produce as a result of natural such as by construction, plantation and farming. The proprietor is free to lease or exchange his and her right to produce enjoyment, to sign usufruct agreements, provide easement over the land in question and to use the right as collateral. In the case of right of management, the proprietor may organize or change the type and natural form of the property in line with his or her wanted use so long as any activity to this effect is in compliance with the law. This right extends to digging on the land, cutting forest, planting crops, filling land, and mining, extracting soils, minerals or rocks, as well as using agricultural land to create industrial zones or building factories upon the

land. The only limitation on the proprietor's freedom to carry out these activities is that the activity in question must be permitted by law. The proprietor can sell, exchange, and transfer the right of disposition. The owner of the land shall be the owner of the underground and of anything that maybe extracted there from except statues, and something remained from ancient or any type that found there. Such works from part of the national heritage. The owner of the land is also the owner of the space situated directly above his or her property. He may take fruit from those branches. However, title over land shall be implemented by the law and in legitimate ways. Proprietors must avoid property use in bad faith and should not use it in such a manner as to disturb third parties, especially neighbors. Each type of ownership carries different rights and responsibilities and is governed according to a specific legal regime. However, this law did not provide a clear definition of and full guarantee for private land ownership since its scope was still narrow and unclear. Therefore, the scope and content of proprietorship rights as provided for in the 1992 Land Law was still limited and unclear. The new state's constitution 1993 recognizes and ensured the right of private ownership of all Khmer citizens to private land ownership in Art 144 in following terms:

*“All persons, individually or collectively, shall have the right to ownership. Only Khmer legal entities and citizen of Khmer nationality shall have the right to own land. Legal private ownership shall be protected by law. The right to confiscate properties from any person shall be exercises only in the public interest as provided for under the law and shall require fair and just compensation in advance”.*

All in all, from the previous time, there has been broad reform of land rights and institution in Cambodia. During this period, Cambodia has come a great distance in putting content to the rights that were previously only acknowledged in principle by successive governments. Ownership rights recognized by the Constitution and guaranteed by the Land Law can assure full effectiveness to citizens if those rights are supported by strong and clear institutions.

The following example is a paragraph extracted from a paper written by a Cambodian scholar in 2016.

Economic rights have different practical implications for different societies, families and individuals. There is not yet a complete universally-accepted list of economic rights *[footnote deleted]* and sometimes it is unclear whether some rights should be considered economic or social rights *[footnote deleted]*. This chapter does not pretend to argue that there is a universally accepted definition for economic rights nor does it try to suggest any hint toward that end. However, it seems necessary to establish a useful referential framework in which economic rights can be discussed in a way reflective of the realities and needs of a particular social and historical context. In a general sense, economic rights may be about property rights including ownership, the right to choose a profession or a business, the right to have access to resources, especially common resources *[footnote deleted]*. From a liberal economic perspective, economic rights guarantee the free participation of individuals in the wealth making process, with minimum or no state intervention which may distort the process of wealth accumulation and distribution *[footnote deleted]*. But from socio-economic perspective, economic rights are not only about the State's non-interference into private economic activities, but also the State's obligation to put in place a system of reciprocity between individuals and society in which they belong, such as through the establishment, or facilitation of the establishment, of some sort of social safety net that may help a significant part of the population who failed in the competition for wealth accumulation and redistribution to survive their economic hardships and to have a decent living condition *[footnote deleted]*. In the case of a developing country such as Cambodia, where a proper market with all the necessary fundamental rules for its operation and settlement of disputes is just being established and the presence of a social safety net is not yet sufficiently felt across the country, a discourse of constitutional economic rights should not be confined to the narrow scope of protection of property rights. Fundamental constitutional economic rights in this context should be for the interest of both the privileged and the underprivileged in an emerging market economy, the haves and

the have-nots alike, the potential winners and losers in the continuously changing waves of competition for wealth accumulation and distribution.<sup>18</sup>

*Appendix D*

The following example is a paragraph extracted from another Cambodian scholar's work in 2017.

In the heart and soul of every father and mother, there is one thing in common without any exception. They wish “a bright future for their children.” If there are any signs, even though they are insignificant, showing that, “the future of their children may not be certain”, the father and mother of those children would try to hide the sadness and unhappiness in their hearts during the time, which their children have no clear path [*in-text note deleted*]. Even they have the same wishes but not all parents have the same will, attention and method to guide and support their children to achieve bright future. According to (Bhikkhu, 2000) “in order to build and support the children to ensure them having good and prosperous future, parent should bear in mind three principles: 1) Wholesome deeds in the previous existence, 2) Wholesome deeds in the present time and 3) Wholesome deeds in the future time”. We are the one who took action: Our deeds now will be Pubbakamma (past deeds) then. Our deeds today will be Pubbakamma tomorrow. Our deeds this month will be Pubbakamma next month. Our deeds this year will be Pubbakamma next year, our deeds this existence will be Pubbakamma next existence [*in-text note deleted*]. Therefore, besides wishing for their bright future, parents have to guide, orientate and support their children by the right. Many parents have destroyed their children on account of love. That kind of destruction is done without knowing. Such as in the case of the parents, who love and protect their children too much, giving them too much freedom to the point that they don't know how to look after themselves. Everything seems to depend on the parents [*in-text note deleted*]. Your words should be used to teach your children. Teach them and teach them again. By nature, the children are active and they always do things. They still don't know whether their action is right or wrong. A duty of the parents should include paying attention always to the actions of your children. When they see that the children are making any mistake, be sure to tell

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<sup>18</sup> The footnotes have been removed by the present author.

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them immediately. You should talk to them nicely and with a cool heart. Do not speak in anger because teaching someone when you are angry will never produce good result *[in-text note deleted]*.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The in-text notes have been removed by the present author.