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Factors affecting the English language proficiency of students majoring in English at a rural university in Cambodia

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Abstract

While a demand of the English language at the tertiary level in Cambodia is growing, the levels of students' English language proficiency are found to be different from one student to another. Students from poor families are believed to possess lower English language knowledge and skills than those from the rich. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and (i) their socioeconomic status (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The data were collected via a set of questionnaires adapted from the general theory of language learning of Spolsky's (1989) model. Fifteen undergraduate students, majoring in English language at a rural public university in Cambodia were the study sample. Spearman's correlation was used as an analysis tool to determine if there was any significant relationship among the variables. The findings indicated that students' motivation and learning attitude had a strong correlation with students' English language proficiency level compared to other variables. These findings emphasize the importance of motivation in English language education.

Keywords: English language proficiency levels; socio-economic status; motivation and attitude; learning opportunities

I. Introduction

The changes in the Cambodian political and economic landscapes during the 1990s urged the government to signify English as the second language for academia, communication and trade (Clayton, 2008). The necessity of English language capacity for Cambodians is increasingly obvious due to the integration of Cambodia into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This association, whose official language policy and communication is English, requires Cambodian representatives and delegates to be able to understand and use English (Clayton, 2007). While the expansion of English learning and teaching in Cambodia is swiftly emerging (Clayton, 2007), the enduring constraint of limited financial and human resources has hindered the quality English language teaching (ELT) in

the country (Neau, 2003). In addition, the difficulties in learning English for Cambodian students have become visible and even more for those who reside in the rural areas where the dispersion of ELT resources proves to be insufficient. Poverty is a major obstacle to ELT in Cambodia, where quality English lessons exist in expensive and privately run schools (Channel NewsAsia, 2013). Poor students are demotivated and have minimal access to English education services. It is necessary, therefore, that an investigation needs to be conducted to determine the factors associated with challenges faced by students in rural areas in Cambodia.

II. Literature Review

While “English is learnt and taught in many different contexts and in many class arrangement” (Harmer, 2009, p.12), the reasons of learning English vary significantly to learners of all age groups across the world. Many research findings indicate that there are many factors thwarting students from learning English effectively. Those factors range from class sizes, learning and teaching resources, learning and teaching practices, motivations, and students' education background.

Spolsky's (1989) general model of second language learning model suggested that social contexts play major roles in producing linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes for the learners. It described several factors affecting students' second language learning outcomes. Those factors include students' social contexts, attitudes, motivation, age, personality, capabilities, previous knowledge, and learning opportunities in the form of formal and informal education. Only three main factors ; (i) student's socio-economic status, (ii) student's motivation and attitude and (iii) student's learning opportunities are selected for this study because the researcher would like to understand the relationship between these three factors and students' English proficiency levels at a rural university, Mean Chey University, in the northwestern part of Cambodia.

1. Socio-economic context

Students' social background factors are linked to different levels of students' educational access and outcomes (Crawford, 2014). Students' social background includes their racial origin, family income, family structure, the level of parental education and the level of students' English proficiency. The impact of students' socio-economic and surrounding

environments on students' learning performance have long been discussed. Ross and Wu (1995) made a generalization that once the social status and their family's income are increasing, students tend to progress better in their academic performance. This is highly likely to happen in most developed nations. An increase in students' socio-economic status provided them with better accessibility to lifestyle and health care factors (e.g., nutrition, recreation, learning environment) and social psychological factors such as emotional stability, self-regard, and assertiveness (Olaitan, 2012). Academically, socio-economic factors have a close link to the chances of what kind of schools students are attending. In other words, what and how they are educated in such schools depend on their socio-economic status (Olaitan, 2012).

2. Learning attitude and motivation

Students' learning attitudes and motivations are integral to the success in second language studies (Mat & Yunus, 2014). The term "attitude" refers to "the way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way" (CollinsDictionary, 2015). The learners' attitude toward learning English has a strong impact on their English language academic performance. As argued by Lightbown and Spada (2001), the study of a second language can be fun and enrich learning motivations according to the learners' attitude. This type of learning attitude occurs, for instance, when students feel happy or proud to speak English with native speakers and to see others being able to speak English. Meanwhile, the achievement of second language students depends primarily on their motivation. A teacher notices motivated students by their active participation in class, their strong interest in subject matters, and their efforts (Lightbown & Spada, 2001). As in the field of second language acquisition, second language students not only learn the language for task comprehension and completion, but also for instrumental reasons, employment opportunities, social communication, or academic purposes (Al Rifai, 2010). In most cases, success in learning a second language is consistently associated with their motivation of career choices (Zang & Hu, 2008). In contrast, students without motivation have shorter attention spans, and even sometimes, they do not reflect what they hear. Al Rifai (2010) provided some examples concerning these sorts of students that once they are given in-class or take-home assignments; they work on them in order to pass the grade, not to get the real knowledge or skills from those activities. Some of them may be serious about getting good grades, without being interested in the unit content they are studying.

3. Learning opportunities

In Spolsky's general model of second language learning, students' opportunities to study a second language can be formal and informal (Mitchell & Myles, 2001). Second language students with more access to schools and resources seem to be more successful than those without. Their accessible opportunities to those resources are mainly in the classrooms where academic activities represent the methodology of the syllabus, being designed to meet a variety of students' needs and at the appropriate levels of their existing language proficiency (Mitchell & Myles, 2001). Language teachers are the significant actors to make these happen in the classrooms. Clear guidance, instructions, encouragement and support are paramount for L2 students to deal with their learning problems and reassure them in performing the tasks better (Li, 2009). In addition, teacher-student communication most frequently takes place in the classroom where, meanwhile, the teachers take these opportunities to exert their influences to motivate students, coordinate in-class activities, homework/assignment, and ensure language input quality (Ross & Wu, 1995). Importantly, language-teaching outcomes depend mainly on the use of learning and teaching materials and teaching styles (Harmer, 2007). The Teaching methodology is highly likely to have direct effects on learning behavior and teaching result (Wang, 2013).

The assistance of visual materials in teaching, moreover, can arouse student's eagerness to learn vocabulary and to promote students' opportunities to apply language items to express how they think and how they feel (Nguyen, Warren & Fehring, 2014). Further, different learning styles can be another factor that contributes to the level of academic success in English language classes (Castro & Peck, 2005). The appropriateness of using learning styles leads to a higher level of language proficiency (Mohammadia, Moenikiab, & Zahed-Babelan, 2010). As a result, successful language learners are able to adjust their learning strategies to their own cognition style, learning task, and so on in the classroom (Li, 2009). Negatively, learning opportunities remain academically problematic for rural students; they showed their regrets for lacking chances to learn English from their early age (Canagarajah, 2001).

III. Research Methodology

1. Research design

This is a quantitative research study which applied correlational research method design to answer the research questions below. According to Howitt and Cramer (2014), correlational research design is used to measure two or more factors to identify or examine whether they are associated and to what extent they are correlated.

2. Research questions

This study aims at investigating the main factors that affect the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural public university in Cambodia. The study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between socio-economic status and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?
2. Is there any relationship between students' motivation and attitude and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?
3. Is there any relationship between students' learning opportunities and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural university in Cambodia?

3. Context of the study

Mean Chey University (MCU) is a Cambodian public higher education institution, located in a rural province, Banteay Meanchey, which is known for high rates of youth migration to Thailand for better employment. The majority of MCU students are Cambodian government scholarship awardees, who are selected based on their grades from their National High School Exit Examination.

4. Population and sample

The target population of this study was Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 students who are enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in English Language at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages at Mean Chey University in Cambodia in the academic year 2015-2016. Fifteen students of

122 were selected as the study sample on a voluntary basis. The selection of sample based on the purposive sampling approach, which is a process of selecting a sample that is believed to represent a given population (Gay, Mills & Airasain, 2011). Due to time constraints and the small-scale nature of the study, however, the study sample size is relatively small, thus limiting the generalizability of its findings.

5. Research instrument

The data were collected through a 5-point Likert-type scale survey questionnaire, which was adapted from Spolsky's (1989) general model of second language learning. Its main design was to discover the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The questionnaire had four main sections (See Appendix A). The first section contained eight questions, asking the participants about their demographic profile such as their name, gender, age, parents' education level, parents' profession and their family economic status. The second, third and fourth sections were designed to uncover the relationship between students' socio-economic status, learning attitudes and motivations and learning opportunities and their level of English proficiency. These three sections asked participants to rate their overall agreement in the form of Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

6. Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the actual data collection in order to uncover any issues related to the feasibility and the usefulness of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Three students from the target group were selected to pretest the survey questionnaire in early November 2015. After pretesting the survey questionnaire, the researcher reworded, changed the meaning and changed the structure of the questionnaire in Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3, for clarity and better understanding.

7. Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were entered into the Statistical Package for Statistical Sciences (SPSS 21.0) for coding and analysis. The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation. The descriptive statistics analysis

was then used to describe the demographic information of the participants such as the measurement of mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage.

Spearman's rho correlation was used to calculate the relationship between students' levels of English proficiency and (i) their students' socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is a numerical representation of the degree, which is used to indicate the relationship among the variables ranked order in size (Howitt & Cramer, 2014) by indicating whether correlation coefficient (r_s) matches its level of significance. The variation of correlation coefficient (r_s) is between -1.00 and +1.00. When the correlation coefficient is zero, there is no relationship between the two variables. The stronger the correlation coefficient's absolute value, the closer the relationship between two variables (Creswell, 2009).

The following table is the interpretation of the level of correlations between the variables.

Table 1. *Interpreting a correlation coefficient*

Size of the correlation	Coefficient general interpretation
0.8 to 1.0	Very strong relationship
0.6 to 0.8	Strong relationship
0.4 to 0.6	Moderate relationship
0.2 to 0.4	Weak relationship
0.0 to 0.2	Weak or no relationship

Source: Salkind (2014)

IV. Findings

As indicated in Table 2 on the next page, more than two thirds of the students are from families with their parents' educations being at lower and higher secondary school levels. Almost 50% of their parents are farmers. Approximately, half of them are from the well-to-do families, and around one third of them are from poor families.

Table 2. A summary of the education levels and the occupations of students' parents

Description	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
1. Qualification				
Lower secondary school	5	33.3	10	66.7
Higher secondary school	6	40.0	3	20.0
Bachelor's degree	2	13.3	2	13.3
Master's degree	2	13.3	-	-
Total	15	100	15	100
2. Occupation				
Civil servant	2	13.3	-	-
NGOs	4	26.7	2	13.3
Farmer	7	46.7	7	46.7
Seller/Business person	1	6.7	6	40.0
Other (Deceased)	1	6.7	-	-
Total	15	100	15	100
3. Family economic status				
	Frequency	Valid Percent		
Well-off	3	20		
Well-to-do	7	46.7		
Poor	5	33.3		
Total	15	100		

The next sections present the results of Spearman's rho correlation in response to the research questions.

Question 1. Is there any relationship between socio-economic status and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?

As can be seen in Table 3, the parents' professions and family environment have a weak or no relationship with students' English language proficiency ($r_s = -0.026$, $p = 0.928$) and ($r_s = 0.069$, $p = 0.807$). However, among the above three sub-questions, the correlation between family income and their learning English language is the strongest, but is still in a weak relationship with students' English language proficiency ($r_s = 0.207$, $p = 0.459$).

Table 3. Spearman's correlation coefficient (r_s) between students' socio-economic status and their English language proficiency

Description		
Parents' profession vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	-.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.928
Family environment vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.807
Family income vs Learning English	Correlation Coefficient	.207
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.459

Question 2. Is there any relationship between students' motivation and attitude and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students in a rural university in Cambodia?

Table 4. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient (r_s) between students' learning attitude and motivation and their English proficiency

Description		
Students' Interest in learning English	Correlation	.611*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016
Importance of English to students	Correlation	.567*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027
Students' need of English in the future	Correlation	.127
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651
Students' confidence in using English	Correlation	.698*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
English for employment opportunities	Correlation	.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.624
English for country development	Correlation	.613*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
Students' attitude towards users of English	Correlation	.211
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.451
Students' activeness in class	Correlation	.824*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Students always submit assignments on time	Correlation	.583*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (N = 15)

Table 4 above shows that the students' activeness in the classroom has the strongest correlation with students' English language proficiency ($r_s = -0.824$, $p=0.00$). Students' interest in learning English, their confidence in using English, and their perspectives towards the importance of English for the country's development share a similar and strong relationship with the English proficiency of the students, with ($r_s = -0.611$, $p=0.016$), ($r_s = -0.698$, $p=0.004$) and ($r_s = 0.613$, $p=0.015$), respectively. Based on the findings, students' attitudes concerning the importance of English to them and their timely assignment submission are moderately correlated with their English proficiency levels ($r_s = 0.567$, $p=0.027$) and ($r_s = 0.583$, $p=0.023$) respectively. However, students' needs of English in the future and students' motivation of English for their employment have a weak or no relationship with their levels of English proficiency. Contrastingly, students' attitudes towards users of English has a better, but still weak, association with their English proficiency levels ($r_s = 0.211$, $p=0.451$). The analysis reveals that students' activeness in the classroom has a huge effect on their English proficiency levels.

Question 3. *Is there any relationship between students' learning opportunities and the English language proficiency of non-English speaking students at a rural university in Cambodia?*

Table 5. *Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between students' learning opportunities and their English proficiency*

Description		
Students have sufficient time to learn English	Correlation	.472
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076
Curricular fits students' needs	Correlation	.632*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012
Extra-curricular are supportive to students' learning English	Correlation	.585*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
Teaching techniques appropriate to students' ability level.	Correlation	.665**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
Teaching methods encourage students to learn English.	Correlation	.515*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050
Teachers are approachable and supportive.	Correlation	.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.880
Teaching and learning materials are stimulating.	Correlation	-.068
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.811

Teaching and learning materials are updated.	Correlation	.309
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.263
Teaching and learning materials are limited.	Correlation	-.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.583
A language lab functions well.	Correlation	.330
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.230

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (N = 15)

As illustrated in Table 5, a responsive curriculum and appropriate teaching techniques to the students' needs are strongly correlated with the students' English proficiency ($r_s = 0.632$, $p=0.012$) and ($r_s = 0.665$, $p=0.007$), respectively. Sufficient time, supportive extra-curricular activities and motivational teaching methods to students' learning English have a moderate correlation with their proficiency of English ($r_s = 0.442$, $p=0.046$), ($r_s = 0.585$, $p=0.022$), and ($r_s = 0.515$, $p=0.050$), respectively. However, the results of the analysis reveal a weak linkage between teachers' approachability and supportiveness and the students' English proficiency levels. The findings of the study also demonstrate that teaching and learning materials have a weak or no correlation to the levels of students' English language proficiency.

V. Discussion

1. Relationship between students' socio-economic status and their English language proficiency

The findings of the current study reveal that students' socio-economic status, as measured by their parents' education level, family environment and family income, has no significant effect on students' learning English. Similar to a study on "Parental involvement and students' achievement in Cambodia" by Nguon (2012), the family social background had no relationship with students' academic achievement. This study's findings, however, strongly contradict the previous study by Ross and Wu (1995) and Olaitan (2012) which found a strong correlation between students' family background and their academic achievement.

In this regard, there are two possible arguments that help explain why Cambodian students' socio-economic status has no significantly correlation with their English language proficiency. First, in the aftermath of the genocidal regime in Cambodia in 1979, many people have been afraid of starvation. People are actively engaging in earning money to support their

families. A materialistic society has emerged. Either being highly educated or lowly educated, many parents are paying least attention to their children's education. Most students have struggled for their academic survival and achievements by relying on their own efforts and teachers in schools. Many students from the well-off families are seen spending most of their time outside schools gambling and drug abusing. Therefore, the general assumption is that the more wealth they have does not mean the more education their children receive. Second, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has been continuing to provide equitable access with quality education and education opportunities to all kinds of students, particularly to students from disadvantaged and remote areas (MoEYS, 2014). Parents in response to this equity of access to education start relying on the teachers. In this case, teachers in Cambodia and their pedagogy play a crucial role in making positive impacts on students' English language proficiency.

2. Relationship between students' motivations and attitudes and their English language proficiency.

The indication from Table 4 proves that there is a very strong correlation between students' motivation and attitude and their levels of English language proficiency. This indication is parallel with the previous studies conducted by Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) and Al Rifai (2010). One interesting finding is that students' activeness has a tremendous effect on their English language proficiency; it is the strongest positive correlational factor. As mentioned earlier, many Cambodian students, particularly the ones in remote and disadvantaged areas, are making their uttermost efforts for their educational survivals and achievements. The reasons why most Cambodian students learn English variously are owing to the fact that they felt the vitality of English to their personal and country development (Neau, 2003).

As shown on Table 4, however, the need of English for their employment and for their future has weak or even no relationship with students' English language proficiency. This finding is contrary with the study conducted by Al Rifai (2010). This is probably due to the presence and frequency of English language used in the region. As Mean Chey University is located in a province that shares a border with Thailand, the Thai language is relatively used more than English language for business and everyday communication. Many people in this region migrate to Thailand for employment opportunities, which are better paid

than those in Cambodia. Thus, the Thai language is their better choice for their present and future survivals. In addition, due to the geographical location, there are very few companies or organizations mandatorily seeking their employers with high English skills. Therefore, English is not really necessary for the students there.

3. Relationship between students' learning opportunities and their English language proficiency

Among the items pertaining to students' learning opportunities, the present study reveals that there is a strong relationship between students' English language proficiency levels and extra- curricular activities that are responsive to students' needs and is supportive to their learning. The prior study conducted by Harb and El-Shaarawi (2006) shares some similarities with the current study. They argue that once students' learning preference was largely fulfilled; there would be more and more positive impacts on students' learning performance. However, a slight correlation between teaching and learning material and the levels of students' English language proficiency found in this study contrasts with the previous study conducted by Abebe and Davidson (2012).

The present findings are also inconsistent with findings by Ly (2009). As seen in Table 5, the teachers' approachability and supportiveness have a slight correlation to students' English language proficiency levels. In contrast, Li (2009) argued that explicit instructions, clear guidance, inspiration and consistent assistance are integral to second language learners to cope with their academic challenges, and reassure them in doing their tasks better. The communication between teachers and students, which most frequently happens in the classroom settings, provides teachers with more opportunities to exercise their influences to encourage their students and facilitate academically related activities in and outside the class to bolster the quality of language inputs (Ross and Wu, 1995).

Though the findings of this study show that there are some points which are inconsistent with Li's (2009) findings, there are several claims that can explain why teachers' characteristics of being approachable and supportive is slightly correlated to the levels students' English language proficiency. Firstly, in Cambodia, even though teachers are approachable and supportive, they sometimes cannot help students to solve their problems academically. Neau (2003) revealed that a large majority of teachers of English in

Cambodia had limited English proficiency and improper pedagogical trainings to be teachers. He further argued that the provision of English language teaching in Cambodia was severely under-resourced. From his argument, it can be inferred that teachers' support are highly likely to be little if the teachers have limited English skills and academic resources. They cannot help student to master their language learning activities. Secondly, teachers' personal life problems can be another cause that hinders students' trust on them. Their low salaries, for example, lead them to do multiple jobs. As a result, a large number of teachers take advantage of their students by selling handouts and giving fee-paying extra classes to them. Students' respect and trust for the teachers are therefore decreasing, which in some cases leads to hatred. Students may have negative feelings to their teachers and do not see any significance of their teachers' supports.

Furthermore, it is interesting to find in this study that there is a slight correlation between teaching and learning materials and the levels of students' English language proficiency. This opposes to (Harmer, 2007) who states that language teaching outcomes depend mainly on the use of learning and teaching materials and teaching styles. As indicated by Neau (2003), the most seen challenges in learning and teaching English in Cambodia are the resources constraints. In this study's context and setting, students are studying at a rural university. They routinely learn with textbooks and in grammar translation method classes. They may not have chances to expose themselves to a variety of teaching and learning resources. Thus, they cannot see any difference of learning with or without materials.

VI. Conclusion

This study aimed at discovering the relationship between students' English language proficiency levels and the three affecting factors to the language proficiency. Spearman's rho correlation was used in this study to determine the association between students' levels of the English proficiency and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. There are three major findings from the study. First, the correlation between students' learning motivation and attitude and the levels of their English language proficiency was the strongest among the other variables. Second, there was a moderate relationship between students' learning opportunities and their levels of English proficiency. Last, the association between students' socio-economic status and their levels of English proficiency was weak or almost

zero. Therefore, it could be inferred that learners' motivation and attitude has played a crucial role in English language education at Mean Chey University. The findings were similar to many research findings conducted on the significance of motivation in learning second language (Hu, 2011).

1. Implications and recommendations

The summation of the study provides readers with a better comprehension about English language learners in the rural areas of Cambodia. It gives them some glimpses of challenges that the students at rural universities face or any difficulties that prevent them from mastering the English language. Moreover, this study may inform other universities in the similar contexts in Cambodia. Therefore, the educational policy makers and curriculum designers should modify ELT policy and curriculum to help rural students learn English more successfully. Specifically, the result of this study would encourage the curriculum designers to pay attention to the actual needs of the students during the curriculum renewal or development process.

The study suggests pupils' parents, teachers, administrators, and educational policy makers seek for more measures to increase students' motivation. From the findings, the importance of English should be visible in their communities. That is, more employment opportunities, which require English language, should be increased in the communities. Students will then be more motivated to learn English.

2. Limitations and directions for further research

There were two major limitations in this study. Firstly, the researcher only discovered the relationship between the three independent variables, namely students' socio-economic status, their motivation and attitude, and their learning opportunities and the dependent variable, the students' levels of the English language proficiency. There should have been more variables included to make it a more holistic study. For instance, English language curriculum, learning and teaching practices and students' external supports should be taken into consideration in future studies. Secondly, the study was only carried out at Mean Chey University, representing a context and setting of rural areas of Cambodia. Therefore, this study is only applicable to the Bachelor's degree of English Language at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Languages at Mean Chey University. The research findings may not be applicable to

other universities in Cambodia, particularly in the capital city where most universities are located. Finally, these research findings cannot be generalized to other contexts and settings outside the scope of Mean Chey University. To help students to better progress in their English language proficiency, there should be more studies concerning the curriculum and instructions of BA in English language at both public and private universities in rural and urban areas in Cambodia. Future research should also include larger samples and involve data triangulation – looking at the phenomenon from various angles, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

Factors affecting the English language proficiency of students majoring in English at a rural university in Cambodia

Dear students,

I am carrying out a study whose main objective is to establish whether there is a relationship between students' levels of the English proficiency and (i) their socio-economic status; (ii) their learning motivations and attitudes; and (iii) their learning opportunities. The participants are undergraduate students, majoring in English at Mean Chey University. You have been selected as one of the respondents for the study. The information you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used purely for research purposes. The findings and recommendations from this study are likely to benefit Mean Chey University in areas of teaching and learning English. Please spare some of your valuable time to answer these questions.

YOUR HONESTY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE APPLICABILITY OF
THE RESEARCH FINDINGS.

Thank you.
Yours faithfully,

Sokwin Phon
Vice-dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Languages
Mean Chey University

Please tick or fill in as appropriate.

Section A: Demographic Profile

Name: _____(Optional)

1. Sex:

Male Female

2. How old are you? _____

3. Year of Study:

Year 2 Year 3 Year 4

4. What is the highest educational level of your father or male guardian attended?

- Lower secondary school
- Higher secondary school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Other. Specify _____

5. What is the highest educational level that your mother or female guardian attended?

- Lower secondary school
- Higher secondary school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Other. Specify _____

6. What is your father's or male guardian's occupation?

- Civil servant
- NGOs
- Farmer
- Seller/Business person
- Construction/Factory worker
- Other. Specify _____

7. What is your mother's or female guardian's occupation?

- Civil servant
- NGOs
- Farmer
- Seller/Business person
- Construction/Factory worker

Other. Specify _____

8. What do you think about your family economic status

Well-off Well-to-do Poor I don't know

Section B: Socio economic status

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
9a	Your parent profession affects your learning English performance.					
9b	Your family environment affects your learning English performance.					
9c	Your family's income affects your learning performance.					

Section C: Learning Attitude and Motivation

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	You are interested in learning English.					
11	English language is important to you.					
12	You will need English in the future					
13	You are confident in learning and using English.					
14	Knowing English well is better for employment opportunity with high salary					
15	The development of our country is possible mainly by educated people who know English well.					
16	When I hear someone speaks English well, I wish I could speak like him.					
17	You are active in the class activities					
18	You always do homework or assignment and submit them by the due date.					

Section D: Learning Opportunities

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Statements		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
19	You are given enough time to learn English.					
20	English Curricular fit your needs.					
21	There are extracurricular activities that helps students learn and practice English					
22	Teachers of English use a variety of teaching techniques to suit different levels of students.					
23	Teachers of English apply teaching methods that encourage you to use English.					
24	Teachers of English are approachable and supportive.					
25	Teaching and learning materials are stimulating.					
26	Teaching and learning materials are updated.					
27	Teaching and learning material are limited.					
28	There is a language lab that functions well					

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your participation.