

Socio-cultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students
in Vietnam

by

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ABSTRACT

Socio-cultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam

This qualitative study explores socio-cultural and ecological factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. Its objective is to assist the Khmer ethnic minority in learning English, thus helping teachers of English, Khmer students and their parents, the Soc Trang Department of Education and Training, the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, the government of Vietnam, and other stakeholders to better understand and act to improve the learning situation for Khmer students in particular and other ethnic minority students in general.

Fifteen Khmer students and four teachers of English who were studying and teaching at a secondary boarding school in Vietnam constituted the target population. The data collection methods included two rounds of focus group interviews with teachers and students, nine classroom observations, and field-notes. Content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts of the interviews, and the data were collected, interpreted, and analyzed by applying a sociocultural constructivist framework through four theoretical-interpretive lenses: Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development, Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning, Norton's identity theorizing, and Janks' critical literacy.

The findings in this study produced two chronosystems in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory – 2000 and 2015 – and revealed a number of new factors influencing the learning of English by Khmer students. At the microlevel, the findings revealed that Khmer parents and families could be seen as models of multilingualism and were able to offer financial and spiritual support in learning English while continuing to hold a strong sense of Khmer minority identity,

traditional values of culture and language. Moreover, the research found that in the more recent chronosystem, Khmer parents seemed to place more value on schooling and had higher hopes for their children to be more successful in their schooling. At the mesolevel, as compared to the first chronosystem, the results of this study indicated that the participants placed more value on education and now consider English as playing an important role in Vietnam's participation in the global economy. Furthermore, the study revealed that the student participants, but not their teachers, recognized the absence of the official minority group home culture in the textbook in Vietnam, suggesting a desire for inclusion. Meanwhile, all the student participants in this study acknowledged and appreciated their teachers' assistance in learning English. The study results also indicated that Khmer students seemed not to have many opportunities to gain access to using Vietnamese or English outside the school due to the boarding school structure and regulations. Additionally, the research found that teachers of English at this boarding school felt under pressure to cover the curriculum in teaching English, which admittedly limits their attention to their students' needs. Further, this study found that all the study participants expressed an awareness of the economic value of English for both communication and economic growth in Vietnam. In the exosystem, the findings indicated that English had a powerful influence on the imagined future careers of participants; they believed that English will create greater further education opportunities for them both personally and socially and is essential for improving the socioeconomic status of Vietnam. Finally, at the macrolevel, the research findings indicated the indirect effects of global trends on the students and the government. Language policies in Vietnam brought students, teachers, schools, and the whole society both opportunities and challenges. More importantly, the research findings suggest that Khmer living in urban areas had more access to English than their counterparts in rural areas.

This study also provides some educational suggestions for policy makers, textbook authors, school administrators, and teachers as well as for future research.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Tai Van Vo. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project name “socio-cultural and ecological factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam”, No Pro00058041, November 12, 2015.

DEDICATION

To my Supervisor, Dr. Olenka Bilash, with a great debt of gratitude.

DEDICATION

To my wife and lovely daughter, Tran Ly and Kim Vo, with love

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Chapter One

Introduction

As a language teacher, I have always been passionate about learning additional languages and have an ambition to study as many languages as possible. I am, so far, trilingual and have acquired two additional languages in instructional settings. I have had good opportunities to study and travel in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Having studied languages taught in several countries, I have observed that multilingualism has increasingly become a social phenomenon in the world. In Vietnam, minority language speakers such as Khmer, Cham, H'mong, and Thai speak their mother tongues (L1) at home, learn instructional Vietnamese as a second language (L2) at school and study English (L3) as a subject. This is similar to the situation of L1 Quechua and Aymara speakers who study Spanish L2 and English L3 in Peru, or Basque L1 speakers studying French L2 and English L3 in France. Another parallel situation can be seen with the French immersion programs in Canada. Minority group speakers such as Chinese, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish or Ukrainian speak their own language as L1 at home, communicate with other people in English L2 in their community and study French L3 at school. However, in contrast to the published research on L2 or L3 in Peru, France or Canada we know very little about English language acquisition among the disadvantaged minority group of Khmer (for whom English is a third language) in Vietnam. Such will be the focus of my dissertation.

Vietnam, like most countries in the world, has indigenous peoples/languages and takes seriously the Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of the United Nations¹. Vietnam wants to maintain its national language

¹ The Declaration in the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities was adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1992/16, 21 February 1992 and by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/135 on 18 December 1992. (<http://www.unesco.org/most/lnlaw7.htm>)

while preserving its 54 minority languages such as Khmer, Tay, Thai, and Nung. Although all members of these groups are Vietnamese citizens and have the right to fully participate in society, each group also has its own cultural characteristics. In this research paper I will use the term “Khmer” to refer to Vietnamese citizens of Khmer origin and Vietnamese to refer to mainstream unilingual members of Vietnamese society. While both groups participate in Vietnamese society, factors such as poverty and ideology have led to marginalization of all minority groups, even in their home areas where they are sometimes the majority in number. At the same time that minority language groups are being granted language rights around the world, English has emerged as an international language of macro trade and economics. Accordingly and simultaneously, Vietnam strives to develop and maintain this economic language and has recently seen economic success as the sixth strongest economy in southeast Asia. This global economic trend encourages the need for English and finds minority groups such as the Khmer in Vietnam acquiring English. This trend applies to 53 countries of Asia² with over 2300 minority languages³.

Research shows that in comparison with mainstream language students, bi- or tri-lingual learners face certain unique challenges, primarily because schools reflect the beliefs and culture of the mainstream society. Ogbu (1992) noted that children who are not from majority groups routinely experience educational challenges that are not faced by those in mainstream society (pp. 355-356) such as cognitive potential issues in the process of L1, L2, and L3 learning and issues in linguistic and cultural identities. These challenges of the trilingual have been confirmed by research. According to Blake and Van Sickle (2001), First Nations (FNMI) students do not

² See <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/asia.htm>.

³ See <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/languages.htm>.

become fluent in standard English for some time after entering school. In Sterzuk's (2003) study with four English-speaking First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students and three non-standard English-speaking children in grade 3 in a semi-urban community in Saskatchewan, Canada, he concluded that FNMI students were below grade level in language arts. Five years later, Sterzuk (2008) found that "lack of fluency in a school-valued language variety may cause interruptions and delays in a student's mastery of literacy skills, and subsequently, subject matter" (p. 14).

Students who study English like the Khmer in Vietnam no doubt face challenges. Although I am not of Khmer origin, I have had occasion to teach Khmer students English, as my biotext below will reveal. Since my first contact I have become aware of their cultural differences and as a teacher I realized that I needed to teach and scaffold my lessons differently to help Khmer students learn. In my own study travels I have also become aware of other marginalized groups in society (e.g. in Hawaii and Canada) and become interested in how education can create more social equality, and in how limited access to education and diversity of cultural resources influence learning additional languages.

After my MATESL training in psycholinguistics at the Hawaii Pacific University, I came to Canada for doctoral studies and became immersed in sociocultural perspectives on learning and language learning. This has led me to try to integrate psycholinguistic and sociocultural theoretical perspectives on language acquisition/learning. To do so I draw upon Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory and now strive to map the ecological factors that influence the English acquisition/learning of Khmer students. Bronfenbrenner describes the complexity of human development through four systems that are simultaneously at work: the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- systems. While the microsystem describes relationships with

direct contact to the child or learner, the mesosystem focuses on the connections or relationships between members of a child's microsystem, such as the extended family and neighbourhood. In turn the exosystem refers to the 'invisible' structures which influence the child's interactions in the society such as values and beliefs. The macrosystem identifies a broader cultural context in which the child grows up, such as culture, policy, ideology, economic influences, public opinions. More details about ecological theory will be provided in Chapter Four.

In my research I will explore *What sociocultural and ecological factors influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam (for whom English is a third language)?* I will apply sociocultural and critical literacy theory to explore and explain sociocultural and ecological factors influencing the learning of English of Khmer students by using multiple sources to map out these systems including the voices of Khmer students and their teachers, language policy, and demographic data about the Khmer people and their culture. Interviews with teachers and students and classroom observations will help me to gather evidence about the invisible structures that influence the Khmer students' learning of English – the obstacles, drivers, imagined language communities, identity, motivations and personal investments in general. I will, in particular, explore deeply the identity of Khmer students towards English in order to understand how their identity towards English influences their English language learning.

In this dissertation, I will first locate myself in this chapter and further define the research question. In the next chapter, I will describe the legal context of language learning in Vietnam and provide a description of the socio-economic-educational context of the Khmer people. Chapter Three includes a literature review about the third language acquisition/learning phenomenon from psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives. In Chapter Four I present four

theoretical lenses through which I will interpret the data (Urie Bronfenbrenner's sociocultural ecological theory, Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning, Norton's identity theorizing, and Janks' critical theory). Chapter Five focuses on the methodology I employed to acquire data for this study. Chapters Six and Seven will present results of the research question and critical interpretation of data. The final chapter of this dissertation, Chapter Eight, will conclude and offer suggestions for policy makers, textbook authors, school administrators, and teachers and for future research.

Locating myself

Atkins and Wallace (2012) stated that "locating yourself and your research on a continuum will help you to determine the extent to which you are an insider/outsider and the possible implications that this has for your research" (p. 49). My aim in this chapter is to situate myself in relation to the subject field and my research interest by providing the constellation of particular life events and experiences that have contributed to how and why I have developed my research focus as well as the nature of my identity as a researcher in the world. In order to paint a general picture about my educational background, in the following section, I shall describe the key moments that have influenced my perspectives, and research interests. I will first describe how my mother sparked my interest in studying before moving towards my excitement about studying English, how failure taught me a valuable lesson and the challenges of finding resources. Additionally, I will detail my interactions with Khmer people and their culture. Finally, the last section will present the issues faced in my multilingual classroom. Woven throughout these vignettes is my experience with poverty and the role that education, particularly English played, in overcoming it.

Education will better my life: My mother sparked my interest in studying. Living in an environment where there was no real motivation for me to keep focussing on my studies, I am grateful to my mother for her encouragement to continue to pursue my academic studies.

I was born and grew up in a remote area of Tien Giang, a southern province of Vietnam where there are two seasons: dry and rainy. Friendly rivers flow around my village, so farmers cultivate rice as a major crop for their livelihood in rainy seasons. Legumes and other kinds of vegetables are also grown in dry seasons. Agricultural jobs have not brought the farmers wealth in my area. On average a family earned less than five dollars each single day. Young adults and males usually left school early and migrated from rural areas to big cities in search of work to improve their life. My family was not an exception. My father owned a quarter of hectare of land to cultivate rice. We had two crops a year. After harvest time, we had nothing to do except keep pigs in the dry seasons. After school in my primary level, I had to pick wild vegetables to feed pigs, which we sold for meat about a year later.

Due to such poverty, schooling was not given much attention. Many children left school early to help their family earn a living. My three brothers were among of them. One left school at grade 6, the other two at grade 8. After leaving school, my brothers worked for other people who had more land in my village. They grew up and got married and are still farmers in my village. Like other children, my educational development was arduous. I had to walk a long distance to school with a heavy school bag on my shoulders along a muddy zigzag village path in the rainy seasons. When I was in grade 5, owing to the distance from my house to school, I was too tired to go to school and was usually truant because I followed the perhaps not-so-good example of my two older brothers who dropped classes at an early age. One brother who was frequently truant and often unwilling to do his homework taught me many card games. We enjoyed playing

cards though sometimes we fought with one another. Once, my mother accidentally saw this and felt sad. She took a rod and beat us severely. “If you continue doing that, how can we improve our poor life? How can we eliminate our hunger and reduce poverty in our family?” Right after that, she took both of us into her arms, cried, and asked us why we did not listen to her. She beat us though it hurt her, too. But my mother wanted us to live better lives, and felt that studying was the best way to improve them. My mother sparked my interest in studying. I was lucky to have my mother create a great chance for me to access education despite the fact that poverty limited opportunities to access after school and private school education in my family.

“You will study English soon” – new opportunities from studying English. I started to study English in grade 6. My first impression of English was interesting. At grade 6, I went to a school whose distance from my house was further than that to my primary school. On the first day of grade 6, I was in high spirits to go to school. The first thing I saw in my classroom was some strange sentences, which I had never known before in my life. “He is a student. His name is Tom.” I sounded the words letter by letter in this sentence in a Vietnamese way. My friend, who was my neighbour and one year older than me, in grade 7 at that time, could not stop laughing at me. I did not understand why he was laughing. After a while, he told me that the sentences were in English, not Vietnamese and taught me how to read them. I asked him why the sentences were on the board. “This is the test that some students had to redo because they failed the final term in grade 6” he answered and told me “you will study English soon, it is so easy.” I thought in my mind: “I don’t know whether it is easy or not but its sounds are so funny compared with Vietnamese.”

Two days later, I was eager to study English in an English class. I was so surprised when my class teacher, who was also teaching maths in my class the day before came to my English class.

Many of my friends stood up and said “teacher, this is an English class, not a maths one.” She said “good morning class, sit down please” and told us that “the school did not have any teachers of English this year, so I have to take charge of this position and we have three English classes a week in grade 6” and then we opened the English textbook for grade 6 and she taught the first lesson in the book, namely “Introduce yourself and others.” My teacher read the dialogue first and then asked us to repeat after her. Everyone in my class found it hard to pronounce the word /ðis/. They pronounced /dis/ instead because we do not have that sound in Vietnamese. The teacher then analyzed the sentence’s structure in detail. We were very confused about subject, verb, object and had difficulty recognizing the sentence’s function in the dialogue. The teacher got angry and marked that lesson “D” which means “failure” at the end of the lesson because we could not recognize the sentence elements in English.

In the morning of the next day, I got up at 4 am to review my English lesson since English was the first class out of three classes in that week. Unfortunately, I forgot how to pronounce the word / ðis/ and English sentence structure S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object). I felt like a cat on hot bricks because my teacher could call any one of us to read the dialogue in the textbook at the beginning of the class. I told my mother about this issue. “Ask your brothers” she answered. I then woke up my brothers to ask about English lessons, but “I do not know” was their reply. I thought at that time “Oh my ghost, if I am unlucky, my teacher will ask me to read the dialogue in front of the class. What will happen to me?” That thought made me nervous and finally I thought “what will be will be.” At 7 o’clock in the morning, when my teacher of English came into my class, we greeted her and waited to be called to read the dialogue in front of the class and analyze the grammar. “Tai will be the first person” my teacher said. My heart jumped when I heard my name called. I started reading aloud the dialogue in the textbook through feeling, and

said “**She** is a subject, **is** is a verb, and **Mary** is an object.” My teacher applauded my answer and gave me 7 out of 10. “Good job, but practice English pronunciation more at home” she added. “Yes, thanks, teacher” I replied. I actually did not understand the lesson, but admitted I was lucky.

The seven points out of ten I got in my English class made me think that “English is not as difficult as I thought.” I began working harder in my English class and asked my teacher the points that I did not understand and for help with the sounds that are difficult to pronounce. There were several words that I later recognized my maths teacher did not pronounce correctly. A good example is she pronounced /v:rtʃitekt/ instead of /v:rkitekt/ and asked us to repeat these new words over and over. In Vietnamese, we pronounce *ch* like /tʃ/, not /k/. That is why my maths teacher made a mistake in pronouncing that sound, which can be easily explained by the influence of her mother tongue.

My English seemed better over time although I primarily remembered non-contextual vocabulary and grammar points in the textbook. We did not have any other resources to study English. Worse, there was no library for my secondary school at that time. Unlike me, many of my classmates felt bored in learning English. They felt had difficulty pronouncing English words and understanding and remembering difficult grammar. They could not ask anyone else or find explanations of the issues in reference books. However, I realize now that even if there had been reference books in bookstores, my family was too poor to buy them; in fact, we did not even know that reference books for English existed. The teacher was the only source that we could rely on for help with English. The result was that many students ignored English. Teachers in my school knew that but they had no solutions to their lack of qualifications or the absence of English reference sources. Students’ success in studying English was unimpressive in my school.

Once, a geography teacher explained a lesson on an English speaking country and challenged my class that “if any of you can write the word *good morning* on the board, I will give you 10 out of 10 points.” My classmates orally cheered “Tai, Tai, go to the board.” I wrote the word *good morning* on the board as he expected, but he just laughed and said “good boy.”

A year later, I changed my secondary school from the one in my rural area to one in a small town where there were more teachers of English. My new classmates were good at English – at least partly due to the fact that they went to a tutorial class after school. The tutor was my teacher of English at school. He gave my classmates more careful explanation on class exercises and some additional exercises, which were similar to the tests in class. I thought that this was not fair, but I had to study with him. I had no choice because if I did not go to the English tutorial class, my grades would be very low. He sometimes gave us grammar exercises and non-contextual vocabulary quizzes. We were not taught speaking and listening, but I recall him occasionally commenting on my peers’ poor pronunciation. I hardly heard any English spoken sentences from my teacher of English in these classes. I actually did not learn much in this class because my teacher mainly taught to the test, but it did plant seeds about how I imagined that I might someday teach English.

These were some of my own challenges in learning English and upon reflection have lead me to wonder if Khmer students face similar obstacles and how they describe their successes, needs, and desires in learning English. As I can now see how my identity with English grew, I wonder how theirs evolves and how their identity and family conditions influence their English learning given that Vietnam has language policy that directs roles of languages in the community, official language, and language of education and government.

Upon reflection I see that early in my studies of English I developed what Kanno and Norton (2003) call an *imagined language community* or “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (p. 241). Deep inside I was imagining myself as an English speaker although I did not have the words to say so at the time. What attracts young Khmer to English in the 21st century? Do they have an imagined language community? Do they have resistances to English? What ecological factors influence their English studying? How do they identify with English? These are some of the drivers for my research and beckon me to interview young Khmer students and observe their English classes.

Failure taught me a valuable lesson. My first memory of an important lesson in my life was failure on an English test. I myself was surely disappointed by that result, but it turns out that failure taught me a valuable lesson.

In grade 9, I was chosen from a group of gifted students to take part in a regional exam for English for gifted students. Before the exam, my teacher gave us numerous exercises of English to do. Two days before the test day, my teacher gave us a test to do and told us “you may see this test again on your test day.” Luckily, our teacher guessed correctly and we were presented with the test that we had been given before and the results were of course excellent. All of us passed the exam. I was second on the list. This result was not amazing to me because we had practised this test before. The test consisted of grammar, reading, and vocabulary. After the regional exam, we had two months to prepare for the provincial one. We were crammed with grammar and non-contextual vocabulary exercises. Listening was not a focus although my teacher knew the test format consisted of listening, reading, grammar, pronunciation, and writing.

Two months passed. The test day was coming. We all were eager to go to the capital of the province where we had never been before. To us, it was like a travelling tour because we all knew that we could not compete with other students who had better conditions and resources to learn English. A month later, my teacher of English came to us and said “I am sorry to inform you that none of you passed the exam. I am sorry. I have done my best to help you.” This result made us sad, too. This failure actually taught me a valuable lesson in how to learn English better. I experienced that learning English successfully did not mean just focussing on grammar and non-contextual vocabulary, but on all four skills. This provincial test was more difficult than the first as it contained sections on listening and pronunciation, which the first test did not address. Later, when I became a teacher of English, I also added culture to this experience.

It was hard to find resources. I continued studying English in grade 10 in high school. At that time, I was attracted and motivated to learn English because of the appealing sounds of English and the intonation of my teacher (even though I would later learn that her English was far from that of a native speaker). The first positive impression of my teacher of grade 10 English was the image of my beautiful female teacher with long hair who always praised students, although they sometimes pronounced the words incorrectly. She never corrected our mistakes directly. Her major was English, not like the maths teacher teaching English in my secondary school. Half of a semester later, I recognized that her teaching method was the same as the one used in secondary school - grammar exercises and non-contextual vocabulary exercises were the focus. Some writing on completing sentences was sometimes given. Communication was not paid attention to. My teacher’s goal was teaching to the tests. This was also the goals of many students who wished to pass the entrance exam for university. She had been teaching our class for three years.

When I was in grade 12, I recognized that I could not communicate with others in English because my teacher had not taught us to speak English in class. I thought I should have been able to speak English with others by this time rather than just do the grammar and reading exercises given by my teacher in class. Although some people were satisfied with studying English for tests, I personally believed that learning languages is for communication.

Due to the fact that my teacher did not teach me how to communicate, I decided to study English both to improve my own English and to learn to teach English in different ways. Since then, I have tried my best to study English despite the fact that the teacher was the only resource for me to study English and that it was hard to find resources such as reference books or native speakers to practise speaking English in a rural area. I realize now what an eager learner I was, always asking the teacher questions about what I did not understand or what was not addressed in the textbook. My eagerness and curiosity were assets that later as a teacher I was able to identify. I also see the key role that learning resources – print and human – played in my own acquisition/learning.

BATESL and learning the value of patience. My attempts to master English granted me entrance to Can Tho University (CTU) in Southern Vietnam. Before arriving in Can Tho, I expected that I would have a very good opportunity to communicate in English with other people because CTU is a regional university where there are several qualified teachers of English and there are many good students from MeKong delta provinces and other areas in the country. What I thought was true. There were many good students from many other high schools for gifted students there. They spoke English very well. My speaking skill was ranked at the bottom of the list. I felt overwhelmed in my English classes. I later decided to ask my supervisor for advice on how to improve my English. She advised me to attend an English-speaking club organized every

Sunday morning at CTU where there would be a very good English environment for me to develop my communication skills in English.

This was the first time I participated in such a big club where there were more than a hundred people of different ages who spoke English. The guests of that week were two foreign student teachers who were part of a volunteer program from the United States, and four teachers of English from the English department of CTU. There were four parts to that session: an introduction, discussion of the topic of the week, which was the main part, a game corner, and a music corner. I was among the participants in the discussion but understood nothing and was very shy. I just heard the sounds of up-and-down utterances from the two American student teachers. It was my first time to listen to such interesting intonation when speaking English, which was different from Vietnamese teachers of English when they spoke English (even that of my grade 10 teacher). I was at that time like a fish out of water because I neither understood what people spoke nor replied to their questions. At the end of the day, everybody said good bye and went home. On the way home, I thought I had to be patient to be good at speaking English since this was a good environment in which I could practise speaking English.

I decided to participate in this club the following Sunday. Learning from the experience of the previous week, I read the questions carefully in the discussion guides about the topic for that week and used the dictionary to pronounce precisely the words in the answers for given questions. I jotted down all ideas coming from my mind for the answers. It seemed that I was well-prepared for the discussion the following week. When the following Sunday morning arrived, I was interested in going to the club. My thorough preparation for the discussion really enabled me to participate a little bit in the conversation with other students. I still did not understand what everyone said since they used several linking sounds in their utterances.

However, I was still happy at the end of the day because everything that I imagined English to be had started to become a reality - I could say something I wanted to say in English (even though it was not perfect) and, as I can now see, I started to feel like I belonged to that imagined language community.

To learn to be patient, I participated in the English speaking club at CTU every Sunday. Over the year, my English improved progressively. I began to work as a facilitator responsible for organizing group discussions and motivating participants to use English actively in discussion. I then became an active student in not only the English club but English classes as well. I usually asked my teachers broad questions that led to controversial classroom discussion. Additionally, following language rules learned in pronunciation and syntax class enabled me to communicate in English more naturally. My pronunciation was better thanks to speaking English with two American student teachers, as well as Vietnamese teachers and other students. Having a good chance to study with American teachers - one in my speaking class, the other in American culture and society class - I discovered some of the linguistic issues that Vietnamese language learners found hard to study such as consonant clusters, sentence intonation, final sounds, long, and short vowels because of the difference between the two language systems of Vietnamese and English. In spite of having experienced those differences, I still made mistakes in speaking English, perhaps due to the influence of my first language, or perhaps due to “developmental errors”, as Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) would say. Developmental errors are “errors similar to those made by children learning the target language as their first language” (p. 165).

In the last semester I was one of eight in my university to receive a good chance to observe and do my practicum at a high school near my university. What I saw was that students were following a traditional teaching method, exactly the same manner in which I had studied at high

school in my previous four years. Students were crammed with reading exercises, drills, and non-contextual vocabulary. Under the guidance of a supervisor, I also taught lessons with traditional methods to students because my supervisor forbade any new methods in her class, the reason being that this would confuse students after my practicum was done. I therefore did everything under her guidance. My complete obedience to the regulation granted me an excellent result at the end of the practicum. Four years of my university time was finally over and I graduated from CTU with a degree in English language pedagogy.

Becoming introduced to the Khmer. After having finished university, I began to involve myself actively in social life gaining new life experiences through contact with new people and cultures. After graduating from CTU, I went into the army for four months. During that time, I did not have any chances to use my English. To maintain my English abilities at night I listened to news from the BBC radio station and repeated over and over the phrases of the speakers. Afterwards, I was transferred to a military academy in Soc Trang, a southern province about 200 km from Ho Chi Minh City to work as a teacher of English for two years. A lot of Khmer people and Chinese ethnic minorities lived in Soc Trang.

This was the first time in my life to have contact with Khmer people because in my home town, the ethnic minority are Kinh people, who in number are also the majority group. I taught English to eleventh and twelfth graders, and Khmer students accounted for more than 90 percent of the population. My first meeting with Khmer students left a lifelong impression. The first class I was teaching was grade 11. After a short introduction to students, I started teaching a new lesson. While I was standing in front of the class writing the title of the new lesson with my back to the students, I felt that my back become wet. I turned to look at the students who were all laughing. I was, at that time, very upset. I asked, “who has just splashed me with water?”

Looking at my aggressive face, no one dared to say anything. After a short silence, a student stood up and said “I am sorry, teacher!” I asked “why did you splash me with water?” He answered “That water, which I brought from the pagoda, will bring luck to you” I replied, “I don’t know if it will bring me luck or not but now it seems you don’t respect me. You’re not supposed to do that to your teacher.” Still standing there without saying any words, he was close to tears. Other students said, “please excuse him, teacher! Today is the “bathing of the Buddha ritual.”

After class, I went home without thinking about the “lucky water” that a student had splashed on me in the classroom. I was asking myself “What is the “bathing of the Buddha ritual”? Why does that student say that water brings luck to me? Why do Khmer students go to pagoda? What role does Buddhism play in Khmer life?

These questions kept me thinking and reflecting on the situation all afternoon. When a Khmer colleague of mine came to my house later in the day, I told him about what had happened in the classroom and how I was feeling at that time. I said, “such behaviour is totally unacceptable in a formal classroom.” He explained,

most Khmer people are Buddhist practitioners, and today is the “bathing Buddha” ritual, which celebrates Buddha’s birthday. On this day, Buddhist practitioners gather around an image of an infant Buddha using fragrant water to bathe him with the true meaning/intention of cleaning your body to eradicate anger, purify your mind, and cultivate merits and wisdom. Many Buddhist practitioners also take fragrant water to bathe their grandparents, parents, and their loved ones in the belief that they will be brighter and luckier. They also take turns bathing together freely and bathe any one they see with the

true spirit of good fun without being scolded. So, splashing water on you today, that student hopes to bring good luck to you.

Since my critical incident⁴ with Khmer students and my conversation with a Khmer teacher, I have become more aware of Khmer culture and open to welcoming it. I also learned that the pagoda is considered the heart of the Khmer community. It plays an extremely important role in the cultural and spiritual life of the Khmer people. The pagoda is also a place where community members study the Khmer written language, chant sutra, and learn human morality. I can say the spiritual world of the Khmer people is closely associated with the Khmer pagoda. Due to these cultural differences, in my teaching, I had some difficulties in explaining certain abstract concepts to my students in Vietnamese.

In my experience the ecology of a Khmer community can be distinguished from that of the Vietnamese mainstream because the spiritual and linguistic factors that I had to learn in order to teach Khmer students English effectively were different from their Vietnamese counterparts. For example, I scaffolded lessons for them in both Vietnamese and English in order to help them with both languages. I also gave them speaking prompts in both languages to encourage them out of their passivity and shyness, which was unlike what I would have done with the more outgoing Vietnamese students. Also, I usually assigned them to work in small groups in order to maximize their interaction and share instead of asking them to speak/present in front of the class.

Teaching in a multicultural classroom. After two years of army service, I was discharged and worked as a teacher of English and coordinator for the English teaching and learning network for English teachers in Soc Trang province. As in any new position, I

⁴ According to Bilash (2015), “When we from another culture encounter them we may sense confusion, resistance, frustration and incoherence. Certain encounters are more emotionally charged or more significant and beckon us to reflect upon them for many years. They are unforgettable. Psychology scholar Flanagan (1954) called such experiences “critical incidents”

encountered numerous difficulties in planning communicative lessons and using the textbook effectively for crowded, mixed-ability and mixed-ethnicity classes. Those issues were not emphasized in my university education program. Especially, I began to feel a burning sense of injustice with regard to the situation that Khmer children face. They have to study Vietnamese in grade 1 and English in grade 3 while they have to complete the curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Training like other majority children in Vietnamese, when they only begin learning it in Grade 1. As Clark (2006) states, “differences as exist between peoples, particularly their colour, ethnicity, gender, religion and the like ... give rise to inequalities... [and] it would be unjust to treat those unlike in like ways” (p. 279).

Apart from the above injustice for Khmer children, I also noticed additional concerns for the ethnic groups in Soc Trang: they had very limited learning resources for English; the textbooks catered to mainstream culture and did not consider the diversity of Vietnam’s ethnic groups; the large class sizes and traditional teaching approaches such as grammar translation and audio-lingual methods seemed to preclude the students from communicating with one another in English in the classroom; their low level of literacy in both Vietnamese and Khmer further complicated their learning; and the design of English test formats denies or limits access of Khmer students because their level of Vietnamese is low and the instructions of English tests are written in Vietnamese. In visiting classrooms I observed problems like too many students being placed in a group, or an unequal distribution of high and low performing students—characteristics that I would later learn from the literature on cooperative learning as critical to student success (Tinzmann et al., 1990)

To develop students’ communication abilities, a new EFL curriculum was introduced in 1992 based on communicative language teaching (CLT) which was developed in the early

1970's. However, it was introduced with minimal teacher training or support. Over the years, research has produced evidence that this program did not produce desired effects for a variety of reasons. The teaching approach came from the growing dissatisfaction with the disadvantages of such traditional language approaches as audio-lingual and grammar-translation methods, which were the products of behaviourists (Orellana, 2008; Crandall, 1999), and did not consider any socio-cultural variables such as being surrounded by poverty, unemployment, and lack of educated role models, or the role that identity plays in second/foreign/additional language acquisition. These will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Research question

The challenges I faced in teaching English to Khmer students sparked my interest in studying more about their acquisition of English. Learning about their culture and impoverished social conditions has brought issues of social justice to the fore. Thus, driving my doctoral research focus is a desire to create greater educational opportunities and social justice for the Khmer people. Knowing that success in English is a tool for gaining access to many opportunities in Vietnam, I am seeking an understanding of the ecological environment of learning English for the Khmer. Through interviews with Khmer students and English teachers of both mainstream Vietnamese and Khmer backgrounds and classroom observations, I hope to describe this complexity. Results can add value to our understanding of their third language acquisition/learning (TLA/L) experiences, and possibly provide insight as to how other minority groups approach learning English in Vietnam.

The purpose of this study is to explore the sociocultural and ecological factors that influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students who are living in Vietnam. The following research question will guide this investigation:

What sociocultural and ecological factors influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam?

Benefits

Since the number of studies on contextual factors in multilingual acquisition is still very limited (Cenoz, 2000, p. 49), and non-existent on the Khmer in Vietnam, results of my research study will help both international researchers and EFL teachers in Soc Trang province in numerous ways. First, by identifying the ecological and sociocultural milieu of Khmer students learning English, it will give them and their teachers an opportunity to voice their perspectives and decision makers an opportunity to hear them. As such, it will secondly assist Soc Trang's EFL teachers in better understanding the self-perceptions of Khmer students. Third, it will provide a better understanding of how ethnic Khmers see their educational, social, and economic opportunities and allow comparisons between their perspectives and those reported in local or national government documents. Accordingly, results of this study could create better education and socioeconomic opportunities for the ethnic Khmer people in Vietnam. Fifth, another contribution would be that the results may lead to the development of culturally-appropriate materials and teaching methods. Sixth, results will contribute to our understanding of TLA/L for other educators or minority language programs in Vietnam, South-East Asia, or across the globe. Seventh, UNESCO has a policy to value minority languages and encourages every country in the world to take it up. However, when implementing this minority language policy, there are a number of challenges and struggles that we have not yet documented. The results of this research might, therefore, help inform other minority language policy cases in the rest of the world. Finally, the results of this study may shed light on understanding the learning of a foreign

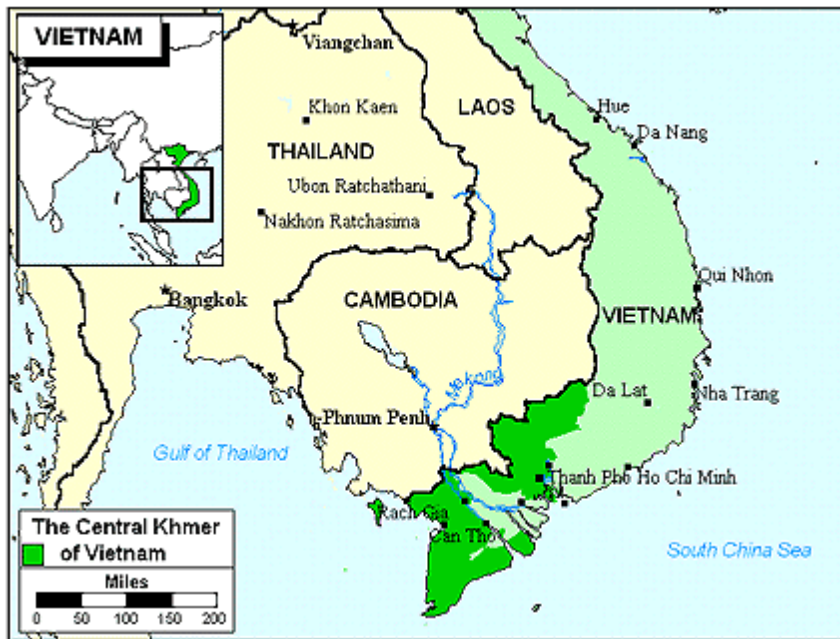
language when language learners have weak first language or second language skills or poor literacy in both languages.

Chapter Two

The Context of the Study

Creating an ecology of English language learning for the Khmer in Vietnam calls for understanding more about the Khmer people and their socio-economic conditions as well as the influence that government policy has had on language learning. Let me begin with two maps that geographically locate where the Khmer language is spoken in Southeast Asia and where the Khmer live within Vietnam. This will be followed by background contextual information about the Khmer people and their living and learning conditions. The chapter closes with an introduction to language policies in Vietnam. This chapter is designed to give background information to the reader who is not familiar with Vietnam. Chapter Three provides a literature review of studies related to my exploration of the sociocultural factors influencing English acquisition.

Map 1: Map of Khmer language spoken in Vietnam



Source: http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12662/VM (Ethnolinguistic map from University of Texas)

Map 2: Map of Vietnam



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam>

The Khmer People in Vietnam

As mentioned in Chapter One, in Vietnam all students are required to study English. For some it is a second language and for others, including the Khmer, a third. In order to create an ecological map for English acquisition/learning of the minority Khmer Vietnamese students, I begin with what I have learned about their background, culture and educational challenges.

Vietnam's Khmer Ethnic Minorities. Vietnam is a multicultural country consisting of 54 ethnic groups (See Appendix C). The Khmer people constitute approximately 1.47 per cent of the population of 93,421,835 (population of Vietnam, 2014). They mainly reside in the provinces of Soc Trang, Tra Vinh, Can Tho, An Giang, Kien Giang (See Map 2). My research will focus on the Khmer people residing in Soc Trang, a southern province of Vietnam.

According to data from the Statistical Office of Soc Trang Province in 2001, the living standards of Khmer households is low. Their poverty rate was 42.92%; in the Vinh Tan commune of Vinh Chau district, the poverty rate of the Khmer was 65.31%, as compared to 8.12% in Chinese households and 26.61% among Kinh families. Poverty “is the biggest obstacle in the development of education in the areas where there are Khmer people living. Poverty prevents children and adults in the Khmer community from having formal education. In contrast, low education goes hand in hand with poverty” (Dinh, 2003, p. 21). As we shall see, poverty greatly influences the education of the Khmer in general and their learning of English in particular. For example, Khmer students cannot afford to buy English learning materials such as books and CDs/videos or computers to better improve their English learning and proficiency.

Although efforts have been made to improve the impoverished situation of the Khmer people, attempted solutions have not yet achieved the desired effects. To improve minority people's lives, many projects such as Vietnam-Canada project were carried out during a five-

year period 1998-2003. However, the efficient use of bank loans with preferential interest rates was not as expected. In most cases the loans were not used effectively. “The reason for this issue is not that the borrowers want to return the bank loan, but because they do not know how to use or are not able to use it effectively” (Ngo, 2011). Often borrowers returned the loans out of fear that they would not have money to repay later. Some borrowers put the bank loan into a piggy bank after receiving it instead of using it for production. Further, it is quite common for the banks not to take back all bank loans and still charge interest, so the project had many unfortunate side effects as well.

Apart from poverty, Khmer people have not completed formal training or education in many areas and face a shortage of qualified or skilled human resources. According to the 1999 census, 98.97% of Khmer people above 13 years of age did not possess sufficient technical skills to enter the labour market. For women, this number is more serious with a rate of over 99 % being insufficiently skilled or unqualified (Phan, 2003). Needless to say, “the Khmer households in poverty have lower levels of education” (Ngo, 2011, Dinh, 2003).

The roots of their unemployment are related to illiteracy. Most Khmer people over 40 years of age are illiterate or only able to write and read at the primary level (Ngo, 2011; Dinh, 2003) and the percentage of those never having attended school is high among the Khmer population (Dinh, 2003, p. 18). According to census results of population and housing in 1999, out of 948,161 Khmer people above 5 years of age, 29.80 percent had never been to school. This compares to 7.41% for the Kinh and 13.38% for the local Chinese populations. Universalization of primary and junior high school at the appropriate age has still not been achieved among the Khmer people (e.g. 28.8% of Khmer students were too old to be in elementary schools in Soc

Trang province). Dinh (2003) reports that although repetition and dropout rates have declined, they are still high.

The academic literature paints a picture of Khmer people living in poverty with low levels of education. Since the sources of these data are rather outdated this research project will offer a more contemporary glimpse of their conditions

Ideology. Ideologies are systems of beliefs that guide our choices and behaviours and, indeed, justify our thoughts and actions (Bailey & Gayle, 2003, p. 2). For Khmer people living in Vietnam, the community, villages, and hamlets form the basic social unit that profoundly governs all aspects of their life. Although all citizens in society work and act under Vietnamese law, Khmer people live together on the basis of compliance with traditional rules and practices under the administration of the elderly, their chief or shaman in the village (Ngo, 2011). The traditional rules, therefore, play a major role in shaping Khmer people's perspectives and behaviours, and influence directly their ways of thinking and actions.

Beach (2012) considers an ideology as an inherent aspect of culture. It is not only a set of values, oral language system, or a set of social standards but also a way of living and the primary way we interpret reality. It is also one of the means through which social organization occurs (p. 15). In ethnic Khmer and Cham, according to Ngo (2011) "the religious leaders have strong influence on the community" (p. 16). Interpersonal relations of Khmer people emphasize unity and solidarity, and their community spirit is high. Living in such an environment and creating relationships with community cohesion, Khmer people live and die within their community and do not want to leave it:

people cannot leave the community for a certain period of time to attend courses to enhance their levels. Thus, if in traditional societies, the cultural values of ethnic minorities

played an important role in community cohesion, it turns out, in modern society, to be a hindrance to restrict development of human resources in the minority. (Ngo, 2011)

Education of Khmer People

Apart from poverty and community illiteracy, Khmer children usually arrive at school with little to no knowledge of Vietnamese, thus having major difficulties understanding anything in school:

In the case of Khmer students, they start school with the language that they do not know—that is Vietnamese. Thus, they have a hard time understanding even what is happening in the classroom, such as instructions or the use of words. Words that they acquired in early childhood which is from their cradle till seven years old are suppressed. (Son, 2008, p. 13)

This disadvantage continues throughout their schooling. Dinh's 2003 study noted that the level of Vietnamese of Khmer high school students in Soc Trang, "even twelve graders, at boarding schools is weak." (p. 20). Further, the "quality of teaching Vietnamese to ethnic students is low. Since Khmer students' Vietnamese level is not qualified enough, it affects directly both understanding other subjects at school and being able to pass entrance exams for higher levels of education" (Dinh, 2003, p. 24). This puts Khmer students at a disadvantage in Vietnamese and English instruction and minimizes the value of learning materials, especially in comparison to their Vietnamese counterparts. Furthermore, only about 4 per cent of teachers in Khmer schools are of Khmer origin or speak their language so providing additional tutoring or support is very limited, even for those families with the means.

Khmer language and culture

Each of Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority groups has its own culturally distinctive characteristics which contribute actively to greater diversity of the country. The population of the Khmer people is now approximately 1,300,000 or 1.4 per cent of the total population of Vietnam according to the 2008 census by the Department of Ethnic Minorities.

Khmer is the first language for students who live in the Khmer community in Vietnam and it is completely different from Vietnamese. While Khmer has been influenced considerably by Sanskrit and Pali, Vietnamese belongs to the family of Austroasiatic languages. The Khmer script is formed mainly by Sanskrit and Pali while written Vietnamese is formed by Latin script. Unlike Vietnamese, Khmer is not a tonal language and stressed on the final syllable, so Khmer words conform to a typical Mon-Khmer pattern of a stressed syllable that is preceded by a minor syllable. Another difference between the two languages is that consonant clusters are present in Khmer but not in Vietnamese. This helps explain why Khmer students do not have problems with pronouncing consonant clusters in English, but also why learning Vietnamese is a challenge.

Many Khmer students, at different ages, learn written Khmer at Khmer pagodas. Some students probably start to study written Khmer at the same time that they start learning Vietnamese. Others begin to study formal Khmer only when they are in secondary or high schools. Some of them do not learn formal Khmer at all. In recent years some secondary and high schools opened specifically for the Khmer ethnic minority and students there could study both Vietnamese and Khmer. However, these schools are populated only by Khmer students who were selected because they performed well in select Vietnamese public schools and although

they can learn Khmer as a credit subject at schools, Vietnamese is still used as the language of instruction for other subjects.

With regard to culture and cultural symbols, there are some noticeable differences between Khmer people and the mainstream Vietnamese people. For example, Khmer people celebrate their New Year's Day in summer when they complete their harvests (Thach & Hoang, 1988) whereas Vietnamese people organize their New Year's Day when spring arrives. On the level of cultural norms, or ways of behaving and ways of talking, Khmer people are known for their shyness as well as silence. They rarely give opinions or raise questions in class or in public even though they sometimes know what to say. The differences in culture on both levels make it hard for Khmer students, especially those who live in the countryside, to understand some readings in Vietnamese as well as in English and to perform well without individualized attention and support from teachers. This research is designed to provide additional detail on the ecological milieu for learning English for the Khmer people.

Vietnamese Government Language Policies

Language policy and learning are closely associated with government planning, which is believed to “influence, if not change, ways of speaking or literacy practices within a society” (Baldauf, 2005, p. 1). The way that the language education policy of a country is perceived and implemented has had a profound impact on the culture education in that country. Vietnam is a country whose society has been multilingual and in which language planning has existed. It is useful to survey the available literature to inform my study.

Although Vietnam has had a long history as a geographic area, its national language history is short. Since its declaration of independence from a French colony on September 2nd 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (before 1975) and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

(after 1975) have had a language policy (Bui, 2003). My aim in this section is to 1) provide a brief description of what language policy and planning in Vietnam looks like; 2) describe how language policy supports minority languages in general and Khmer in particular, 3) present the position of foreign languages in Vietnam, and 4) form a foundation for my discussion of Khmer learners learning English in Vietnamese context. In what follows, I offer a brief history of language policies in Vietnam, minority language policy, and foreign language education policy. A summary of this contextual history will be revisited in Chapter Four using Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning.

A brief language history. "History in Vietnam also illustrates a reality in those countries which have undergone foreign domination: The fate of a national language is closely intertwined with that of that nation" (Do, 2006). With its strategic location to many countries, Vietnamese language policy and use have been influenced by other countries.

According to Vasavakul's (2003) study, under the Chinese invasion from 111 B.C.E to 939 A.D., the spoken and written language was borrowed from China. In the thirteenth century, the Vietnamese created their own language based on Chinese characters called ideographic Vietnamese (*Nom*). The Vietnamese in this period of time spoke two main languages: *Nom* and Chinese. In the mid-seventeenth century, the romanized Vietnamese script (*Quoc ngu*) was introduced to Vietnam by Alexandre de Rhodes, a Catholic commissary. During French colonialism from 1884 to 1945, French dominated the Viet daily life and became the official language. *Nom*, Chinese, and French were used in oral exchanges while *Nom*, Chinese, *Quoc ngu*, and French were used in writing. Pham (1991) indicates that in this period there was "a mixed education system with French schools, Franco-Vietnamese schools and Confucianist feudalist schools and classes existing side by side" (p. 6). In the early twentieth century, *Nom*

and Chinese disappeared from both spoken and written languages (Pham, 1991). In this period, Do (2006) notes that

The official examinations at all levels of education were, however, administered in French by French authorities. Although there were strong movements against the use and spread of the French language and its domination (French was considered the language of the devil at that time), to pass these exams and then gain access to social mobility, French was strictly required. (p. 3)

Quoc ngu became the national and official language only after 1945 and continues into the present days since Vietnam won independence.

The period from 1945 to 1954 was recognized by the return to a French colony. French was again used as the official language until the end of the colonial period (1954) (Do, 2006, p. 3). After the Geneva Accord in 1954, Vietnam was divided into two different regions, namely the North and the South, with different political orientations. In the North, Vietnamese was the official language used at all educational levels (Pham, 1991). Meanwhile, the formulation of the national language policy was slower to evolve in the south. Do (2006) notes “Vietnamese was used as early as the late 1950s as the only medium of instruction in public education, except in foreign-run schools as well as in some subjects at universities” (p. 4). Apart from Vietnamese, French and English were used in the South of Vietnam for the purpose of political and economic cooperation with other capitalist countries (p. 4).

After independence from the U.S., Vietnam was united and Russian was encouraged to be studied in most schools. However, since the fall of the Soviet Union, English has become the new trend to be learned by many Vietnamese alongside other languages such as Chinese, Japanese and French (Vasavakul, 2003, pp. 222-224).

Minority language policy, 1945-present. According to Vasavakul (2003), after independence in 1945, Vietnam was named the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese language was used as the official language in the country. The government of Ho Chi Minh considered *quoc ngu* as an important identity for the country. Simultaneously, “minority languages are said to be the cultural property of the entire nation, and the government has recognized the right of ethnic minorities to use their spoken and written languages” (p. 211). This acknowledgment has been translated into policies to develop Romanized writing systems for many minority languages (See Appendix D).

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (before 1975)- the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (after 1975) has developed its minority language policy through steady stages since 1945. For minority languages of ethnic minorities, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam government in 1960 stated “every ethnic group had the right to maintain or change its customs and habits, use its language and script, and develop a culture of its own” (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 227). In 1961, the Romanized and reformed minority writing systems for the Hmong, and Tay-Nung languages and the reform of the Sanskrit-based Thai script were taught in primary schools as a part of bilingual programs, and books were published in these scripts. The renovation of writing systems was initially given to minorities with large populations like the Thai and to those with potential political problems such as the Hmong for the purpose of maintaining minority groups’ customs and using their spoken languages and scripts. (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 229).

Unlike the government of Ngo Dinh Diem in the South who “closed down minority schools where classes were taught in native dialects” to cope with the expansion of the North communists, the Vietnamese government in the North was continuously concerned about its language policy for ethnic minorities. In 1963 American advisers examining a communist

document describing a number of policies that had been included in the North's Liberation Front program of 1960 suggested that "the government in Hanoi was more respectful than Saigon of minority customs" (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 227). The Democratic Republic of Vietnam promoted the romanization of minorities' scripts for the Hmong, Tay-Nung languages, and the Thai and developed its policies for minority languages and writing systems. According to Bui (2003), the 1960 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam stated: "All the peoples have the right to use their spoken languages and scripts, maintain and bring into full play their traditional customs and habits and their fine cultures." (p. 7)

In the 1960s, ethnic language scripts were taught in primary schools and the local authorities in mountainous areas in the North began to develop programs for teaching minority writing systems. After Vietnam was reunited in 1975 this policy was still applied nationwide, but limited: only "13 out of 20 provinces continued to teach minority scripts; every other province had abandoned the project." "Between 68 per cent and 85 per cent of primary school students did not know *quoc ngu* [kwuək ŋu], the Romanized Vietnamese script, instructors thus had to rely on minority languages to teach it" (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 231).

Since "the number of ethnically mixed communities in minority-inhabited areas grew throughout the country," language policy in Vietnam changed. In 1980, the 1980 Decision 53-CP was issued stating that Vietnamese would be the common language for every ethnic group in the country. It endorsed bilingualism but called for improved proficiency in both Vietnamese and ethnic languages (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 233).

Decision 53-CP also declared that

Efforts to teach the Vietnamese language and to continue the romanization of ethnic languages would be expanded; languages with ancient scripts (e.g., Cham, Thai, and

Khmer) would be part of this endeavor. The study of Vietnamese was to be compulsory, but the romanization of ancient scripts and spoken languages was voluntary. (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 233).

Vasavakul (2003) criticized the 1980 Decision 53-CP: “The Viet-minority bilingual language program, however, was not a realistic option for some minorities because Vietnamese was not the only language available as a medium for regional communication” (p. 236).

Decision 53-CP created difficulties for overburdened primary-school children who had to learn Vietnamese as well as minority scripts. In the 1981–82 academic year, for example, schools in Dac Lac Province instituted an Ede-Vietnamese bilingual program. The program faltered, however, because students found it difficult to study two languages at the same time. Linguists voiced their disapproval, arguing that it was impractical for minority children to study two languages at such an early age. They also pointed out that parents wanted their children to study Vietnamese because minority languages were not used outside of school, and thus learning them was not a productive use of their time (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 236).

The 1981 Constitution later states:

The state of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a unified state of all the peoples living in the territory of Vietnam and they all have rights and obligations... All the peoples have the right to use their spoken languages and scripts, maintain and bring into full play their traditional customs and habits and their fine cultures. (Bui, 2003, p. 7)

With this bilingual policy, fewer minority students attended schools. For example, the results of a survey in the early 1990s showed that only 4.8 % of Khmer children, 5.6 % of Hmong children, 6.5 % of Yao children, and 10.5 % Muong children attended school (Vasavakul, 2003,

p. 231). This issue had raised a question for Vietnamese policymakers and linguists: “who should be taught minority-language writing systems and who should teach them?” (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 232). Some linguists have suggested that “scripts should be taught to children in secondary school or as upper-level subjects only after they have learned *quoc ngu*. Adults who have learned these scripts are more likely to encourage their children to follow their lead.” (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 232). Others have suggested that the teaching of ethnic-minority languages and writing systems should continue beyond primary-school level; they should also be used in daily affairs (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 232). This bilingual policy is also mentioned again in the 1992 Constitution. Article 4 of Primary Education Law in 1991 affirms: “Primary education is carried out in Vietnamese. The minority peoples have the right to use their own spoken languages and scripts together with Vietnamese to achieve primary education” (Bui, 2003, p. 7).

Despite the challenges of implementing the bilingual policy, in reality, Decree 2/2010/NĐ-CP on 15/7/2010 (Vietnamese Government, 2010) still prescribes teaching and learning ethnic minority languages. This Decree applies to ethnic minority language teachers and learners who have already established their own minority languages in public schools and regular education centers within the national education system. The state investment focuses and prioritizes teaching and learning ethnic minority languages for ethnic minority people. Ethnic minority people can use their own scripts in correspondence and transactions in relation to the application of state agencies. State agencies are responsible for receiving and solving their issues.

There is neither detailed research nor a systematic overview of the spoken and written languages of minority groups, but the available materials indicate that some ethnic minority groups have been able to maintain their own spoken and written languages such as is the case

with the Cham and the Khmer, which have developed their own written language systems based on Sanskrit. Some other minority groups maintain only a spoken language (see Appendix D).

While this decree is useful to preserve and promote the culture of ethnic minority groups, which contributes to the richness and diversity of Vietnamese culture, the bilingual policy appears to be an academic burden to ethnic students. Khmer children have to study Vietnamese and Khmer at grade 1, and English at grade 3 (Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Prime Minister, 2008) and complete the national curriculum like other majority language children. This is a challenge for Khmer children at the age of nine (Son, 2008) who have to study three languages at the same time at an early age compared with other majority language students of the same age. Additionally, the textbook is only developed and issued by the Ministry of Education and Training. The reference books and other learning resources for language study developed by private publishing houses are available mainly in big cities, but not in the school libraries. Moreover, these books are usually expensive, so students from poor families usually cannot afford to buy them. Thus language learning resources are limited to students and teachers despite the fact that Khmer children are equipped with textbooks and pay no tuition fees in public schools (Dinh, 2003). Son (2008) suggested that “the urgent support for language study is needed for Khmer children because language scaffolding at an early age will provide a solid foundation for Khmer children to move to the next level of their education” (p. 45)

Foreign language education policy. We learned in the previous sections that Vietnamese language policy and use have been influenced profoundly by ideas from foreign countries. Apart from Vietnamese, the official language, the Vietnamese government has made efforts to preserve and promote endangered minority languages. In this section, I will examine the foreign language education policy in Vietnam.

Since Vietnam was ruled by China for more than a thousand years, its national language was dramatically influenced by Chinese government policy. Wright (2002) notes that in the period from 111 BC to 938 AD, “education [in Vietnam] was in Chinese and followed the Chinese model” (p. 226). Despite independence from China, Chinese had a profound influence on Vietnamese society until the French colony established its colonial government in the entire nation of Vietnam in the late middle of the eighteenth century. French was, of course, made the official language in Vietnam until the end of the colonial period in 1954 (Wright, 2002).

After the French announced the withdrawal of its troops from Vietnam in 1954, English became more popular in the South of Vietnam, but still limited in use in education in the North, which was greatly supported by Russia and China in the period from 1954 to 1975. Russian and Chinese were taught in schools instead of French in this period in the North. Four languages - English, French, Chinese, and Russian - were taught in schools in the South (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007).

When Americans began to be involved in the south of Vietnam in the early 1960s, English was emphasized in language education. As Wright (2002) notes, “the foreign language learning statistics for south Vietnam for the period 1958 to 1968 revealed the shift from French to English” (p. 235). On April 30, 1975, after the fall of Saigon, Vietnam proclaimed independence and has since been reunified. After the resistance war against America, English and French almost disappeared from language education in Vietnam. In 1979, diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China worsened due to the Chinese war along their shared border and Chinese was replaced by Russian in schools in this period. Wright (2002) confirms that Chinese along with French and English “almost completely disappeared” (p. 237).

After 1986, Vietnam decided to open its doors to the world and adopt a market-oriented economy. With these new policy reforms, English became widely used in the entire country (Do, 2006). Since English has become the *lingua franca* in many parts of the world, English language teaching earned a higher status in Vietnam (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007)

In response to these societal demands, English has been taught in school as a foreign language since 1990 at the primary level (Nguyen, 2012, p. 116). Since then, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has issued foreign language policies to facilitate the process of teaching English as a foreign language.

Note No. 6627/TH dated 18 September, 1996 provided a guideline on foreign language teaching in primary schools. According to this Note, foreign language was taught at grade 3 as an elective subject starting in the second semester with two 40 minute-periods a week.

Decision No.50/2003 QĐ-BGD&ĐT, dated 30 October 2003, specified that pupils in primary schools could learn a foreign language as an elective subject from grade 3 to grade 5 for two 40-minute periods per week, where there are adequate teaching conditions as well as demand from pupils and parents.

Decision 1400/QĐ-TTg dated on 30 September 2008 of the Prime Minister approved the scheme on foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system in the 2008-2020 period. The 1400/QĐ-TTg dated on 30 September 2008, known as Project 2020, is the most important foreign language policy to come into effect, enabling students to learn a foreign language at grade 3 throughout the country.

Decision 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT, dated on 12 August 2010, also provided a clearer guideline on implementation of pilot English language programs at the primary level.

Lastly, the most recent foreign language policies in 2011 issued MOET guidelines for purchasing teaching aids for primary level and teaching plans and incentives for English teachers. In general, Project 2020 provides an ideal plan to enable “the majority of young people graduating from colleges and universities [to] have the capacity to use language independently and be confident in communicating, learning, and working in an environment of integration, multiple languages, and multiple cultures. Foreign language will be the strength of Vietnamese, serving the industrialization and modernization of the country” (Decision 1400/QT-TTg). Additionally, learning resource development for learning foreign languages is also planned and includes continuing to build special language classrooms, audio-visual rooms and multimedia classrooms for schools and colleges. Simultaneously, Project 2020 specifies to “continue recruitment, training, retraining, and improve language skills of foreign language teachers at the school level and other levels of training” (Decision 1400/QT-TTg). See the summary of policy changes in Table 1. To date and to my knowledge there is no policy specifically made for ethnic minorities.

Decisions	Date of Validity	Major Changes
Note No. 6627/TH	18 September, 1996	Foreign language could now be taught at grade 3 as an elective subject.
Decision No.50/2003 QD-BGD&DT	15 November 2003	Pupils in primary schools could now learn a foreign language as an elective subject from grade 3 to grade 5, where there are adequate teaching conditions as well as demand from pupils and parents.
Decision 1400/QT-TTg	30 September 2008	Students were now expected to learn a foreign language in grade 3 throughout the country.
Decision 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT	12 August 2010	Additional guidelines were introduced for

		<p>implementation of pilot English language programs at the primary level such as requirements for purchasing teaching aids for primary English.</p>
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Table 1: Decisions on foreign language education policy

This context provides information that assists me in beginning to create an ecological map of language use in Vietnam, a topic to be further elaborated in Chapter Four when Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory is summarized. In the next chapter I present a literature review relevant to further mapping the ecology of learning English for the Khmer in Vietnam.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

In this chapter, I review bodies of research literature to become better informed and develop a perspective for this study. It includes a review of 1) the lack of cultural resources for Khmer students; and 2) recognized factors influencing multilingual acquisition including teachers' and students' beliefs, attribution theory and a sociocultural perspective on investment and motivation in learning additional languages. A review of issues in learning English for the Khmer can be found in Appendix B, based on research among the Khmer in Cambodia. My aim in this chapter is to give readers an overview of studies related to my own.

Lack of Cultural Resources for Khmer Schools

In addition to linguistic difficulties, Khmer learners of English residing in Vietnam also struggle with non-linguistic problems. This section will examine Khmer cultural and social awareness and cultural aspects covered in English textbooks for Vietnam, which I mainly base on the work of Son (2008); Mckay (2002); Ruitenberg (2011); and Smith (2013).

Despite the fact that Khmer students live in a community where their traditional culture is still imbued with their identity, English textbooks tend to focus on Vietnamese culture; there is little or no reference to Khmer culture. (Son, 2008). For example, when students study the lesson on celebrations in English textbook 11, the book does not suggest comparing Vietnamese New Year's Day and Khmer New Year's Day, such as Cholchnamthmay (New Year's Day) or Okombok (Mid-autumn festival). As a result, most Vietnamese teachers do not have an opportunity to learn about cultural and social differences between their Khmer students' culture and Vietnamese culture. And yet, Khmer students have to take the same courses and use the

same materials as Vietnamese students. In terms of teaching English as an international language, clearly learners' culture should be included in textbooks.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) distinguished three kinds of cultural information that can be used in language textbooks and materials: "source culture materials", "target culture materials", and "international culture materials" (as cited in McKay, 2002, p. 88). There is no connection to the source culture in Khmer's English learning, and in addition, the target culture, which for the Khmer is a second culture, is treated as a source culture (for Vietnamese students) in the textbook. McKay (2002) added that to be helpful in teaching English as an international language, it is important to encourage students to reflect or share relationships between their culture and others and to establish a sphere of interculturality, instead of just providing information on various cultures (p. 88). Furthermore, since every culture has its own values and characteristics, we should not "harmonize all of the different traditions into a single voice" (Smith, 2013, p. 44). Instead, we should look at all of them to "allow each tradition to speak to us as directly as possible." (Smith, 2013, p. 44). In terms of "source culture" alone, it is necessary that Khmer culture as well as cultures of other ethnic minorities be included in Vietnamese textbooks to help them relate their culture to others in learning English. Without the local culture and having to learn the third language through the filter of a second language and culture, it would be difficult for them to understand and use the English language. As Ruitenbergh (2011) notes, "the spaces of education are not their [teachers'] spaces, spaces they own should consider under their control, but rather spaces into which they have been received and whose purpose is to give a place to students" (p. 34).

Factors Influencing Multilingual Acquisition

In this section I will review factors influencing multilingual acquisition. Different bilingual and multilingual learners may learn a language differently in the process of bilingual and multilingual acquisition. This process of learning is influenced by many internal and external factors. In what follows, I try to identify what contemporary research reports about factors that affect the process of learning additional language(s) through sociocultural perspectives.

Recognized Factors

Research in the literature identifies a variety of factors that affect the process of learning an additional language accurately. Some of these factors are: the amount of target language exposure (Dewaele, 1998b, 2001; Stedje, 1977; Ringbom, 1986; Mackay, Meador, & Flege, 2001); age of the language learner at the time of learning a language (Cenoz, 2000, 2001; Mackay, Flege, & Imai, 2006; Aoyama, Flege, Guion, Akahane-Yamada, & Yamada, 2002); proficiency (Williams & Hammarberg, 1998; Fuller, 1999; Hammarberg, 2001; and Dewaele, 2001; Ringbom, 2001; Modirhamene, 2006, and Cummins, 1996); educational background (Fuller, 1999; Lightbown and Spada, 2006); context (Cenoz, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Dewaele, 2001); bilingualism (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Bild & Swan, 1989; Thomas, 1988; Sanz, 2000; Cenoz, 2013); language typology (Cenoz, 2001; Ringbom, 2001; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998; Möhle, 1989; Singleton, 1987; Clyne, 1997); culture (Son, 2008; Tsai, 2012); and attitude and motivation (Rifai, 2010; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981a; Huitt, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Nikolov, 1999; Chung & Huang, 2010).

In addition, teachers' and students' beliefs, attribution theory and investment and motivation also reveal influences on the process of the learning of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. These factors may influence the process of learning English of Khmer students in

Vietnam, but they do not tell the whole story. The influence of teachers, their beliefs and attitudes as well as the sociocultural milieu outside of school also influence a students' English learning.

Teachers' and students' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs on how to teach and what to teach greatly shape their classroom teaching practices and educational programs, and consequently student learning and performance. "Teachers' beliefs represent important influences on teachers' ways of thinking, understanding, and acting" (Johnson, 1994, p. 439). Williams and Burden (1997) agreed that teachers' beliefs and attitudes are crucial concepts for us to understand their thought processes, instructional practices, and change in learning to teach (p. 76). Johnson (1994) added that research on teachers' beliefs share the following three assumptions:

First, teachers' beliefs influence both perception and judgment which, in turn, affects what teachers say and do in classrooms. Second, teachers' beliefs play a critical role in how teachers learn to teach, that is, how they interpret new information about learning and teaching and how that information is translated into classroom practices. And third, understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and professional teacher preparation programs. (p. 439)

Language learners' beliefs also highly shape their expectations in learning. Oxford (1994) claimed that learners' beliefs play an important role in choosing appropriate strategies needed to learn a foreign language. A number of studies have investigated the influence of accordance of learners' and teachers' beliefs in second/foreign language learning (Kern, 1995; Schultz, 1996; Peacock, 1999; Davies, 2003; and Siebert, 2003). For example, while Kern's 1995 survey of 288 students and 12 instructors of French as a foreign language in the United States and their beliefs about language learning showed that there is a congruence between learners' and their

instructors' beliefs in general, he also found that the learners in his study seemed to be unrealistic about the length of time they take to become more fluent in the foreign language.

Schultz' (1996) study focussing on form in foreign language classrooms, revealed that the 340 students enrolled in various German language courses at the University of Arizona showed a more favourable attitude towards a focus on form in second /foreign language learning than their teachers. Also, there were disagreements between students and teachers in terms of error correction (the rates of differences were from 4 to 56 per cent).

Peacock (1999) who used questionnaires and interviews to survey 202 EFL learners and 45 teachers found that there was a significant number of discrepancies among learners' and teachers' beliefs. Learners tended to focus more on vocabulary, grammar learning, and excellent pronunciation while their teachers did not. Also, they preferred practice in the language lab.

Similarly, Davis' 2003 study on teachers' and students' beliefs regarding aspects of language learning investigated the mismatch of 18 teachers' and 97 learners' beliefs in a tertiary institution in a small territory of Macao. The author found that there were great differences between the groups of participants. The author concluded that basing their views on a different theoretical underpinning from that of their teachers, students tended to seek a safer and more structured approach. This led teachers to support different classroom practices.

Similar results were obtained by Siebert (2003) who explored the beliefs of 156 ESL students and 25 teachers about language learning at institutions of higher education in the Northwest region of the United States. The author found that students placed more emphasis on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary learning and translation. Learners' and teachers' beliefs especially differed in terms of appropriate and effective language learning methods.

Attribution theory. Over the 1950s and 60s research about beliefs and attitudes evolved into attribution theory, or how people attribute their successes and failures in achieving behavioural goals. According to Weiner (1995), attribution theory originated in the writings of scholars such as Fritz Heider (1958), Julian Rotter (1966), and Edward Jones et al. (1972). Heider argued that there are two main categories of factors people usually use to explain why their behaviour or that of other people or events happened - internal (dispositional such as personal effort) and external (situational or environmental circumstances such as bad weather or luck).

Examining behavioural changes, Bandura (1982) noted that behaviour is closely associated with self-efficacy. “If self-efficacy is lacking, people tend to behave ineffectively, even though they know what to do” and that “the higher the level of perceived self-efficacy, the greater the performance accomplishments. Strength of efficacy also predicts behaviour change. The stronger the perceived efficacy, the more likely are people to persist in their efforts until they succeed” (p. 127).

Later Weiner (1985) expanded the notion of attribution by developing an attributional theory of motivation and emotion emphasizing causes of success and failure in achievement-related contexts using the basic properties of these causes, or the structure of causal thinking determined from both a dialectic and an empirical perspective. Weiner (1985) discovered three causal dimensions: locus, stability, and controllability such as ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum, 1971), which determined the perceived causes of success and failure. The structure of causal thinking was then revealed to be associated with emotion and motivation. Lastly, Weiner (1985) revealed that changes in expectation of

success are influenced by the perceived stability of causes and all three causal dimensions influences many forms of common emotional experiences.

A number of language scholars have implemented attribution theory in their research. Gray (2005) used attribution theory to understand how 104 Japanese and 71 Chinese students in China explained what helped them to learn English by completing self-report questionnaires, answering open-ended questions, and responding to a vignette. Among the Japanese students 64 per cent attributed their success in learning English to effort while only 44 per cent of Chinese students attributed their success to effort. Other attributions included high motivation, good luck, talent for languages, and the teacher. Sixty-five per cent of Japanese students and 45 per cent of Chinese students attributed their failure to a lack of effort. Other factors contributing to failure included lack of effort, bad luck, no talent for languages, and the teacher. Gray (2005) concludes that in the Asian school system students believe that success in school is a product of effort rather than ability.

Similarly, Besimoğlu, Serdar, and Yavuz (2010) explored learners' perceptions of successes and failures of English as foreign language learning at a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. The participants were 240 volunteer university students, 110 female and 130 male, between the ages of 17-22 who were enrolled in English classes. Besimoğlu et al. (2010) collected data by a questionnaire adapted from Williams, Burden, Poulet and Maun's (2004) work. The result suggests that internal attributions (91.75 %) to success in learning English are strategy, interest, effort, background knowledge, attendance, and ability while external attributions (8.24 %) are teacher, English speaking environment, classroom atmosphere, and educational policy. As for failure in learning English, internal attributions (9.57 %) are strategy, lack of interest, insufficient effort, background knowledge, attendance, and anxiety while

external attributions (8.42 %) are the teacher, English speaking environment, classroom atmosphere, and educational policy. Moreover, gender difference is also attributed to success and failure of learning English. The authors conclude that among all factors, strategy use appears to be the most common attribution of success or failure in learning English.

Additionally, Peacock (2010) explored the connections between attribution and proficiency, gender, and academic discipline. The author collected data by interviewing 60 students and 40 EFL teachers and surveying 505 students in class about the origin of their attributions. Data analysis was carried out by using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The results suggest that teacher and student opinions on success and failure of learning English are different. For example, “teachers attributed student success to effort, while students attributed success and failure to luck” (p. 189). The author concludes that “more proficient students attributed success to their (controllable) efforts, and less proficient students attributed both success and failure to factors outside their control” (p. 189).

Lastly, Hashemi and Zabihi (2011) investigated the role of EFL learners’ attributions for success and failure in learning a foreign language and their performance on placement tests in Mashhad, a city in north-eastern Iran. The participants, ranging in age from 15 to 38 years of age, were ninety-six female Intermediate EFL learners. Data were collected from the two questionnaires analyzed by utilizing the SPSS version 16.0. The authors found that “ability attributions were significantly predictive of learners’ achievement scores” (p. 959) and task difficulty attribution was associated with low scores in proficiency.

In this study, I would like to learn about the beliefs of English teachers and Khmer students with regard to students’ English acquisition/learning. I also believe that it will be informative to learn how Khmer students face difficulties in learning English and will also ask them and their

teachers (both Khmer and Vietnamese) to what they attribute student successes and failures in learning English. After obtaining such data through interviews with students and their teachers and through observations of specific tasks in their English classrooms, I will integrate it into an ecological map.

Sociocultural Perspective

Much can be learned from sociocultural approaches to better understand my investigation. In this section, I will present factors affecting the multilingual acquisition process from a sociocultural perspective including investment and motivation in learning additional languages.

Investment and motivation in learning additional languages. We have learned from the previous sections that there are a number of factors influencing multilingual acquisition, including motivation. Sociocultural theorists have complemented and enhanced the notion of motivation and call it learner investment (Norton, 2013, p. 3). The notion of investment addresses the desire of the language learner to engage in an activity and places the responsibility for learning with the learner. Furthermore, “an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (Peirce, 1995, p. 18). While the concept of investment is associated with the socially and historically constructed relationship between language learning and power and identity, the notions of instrumental and integrative motivation refer to the desire of language learners to study a second language for utilitarian purposes such as job opportunity and successful integration with the target language community respectively (Peirce, 1995, p. 17).

Below I outline previous studies on investment and its precursors - instrumental and integrative motivation.

From a sociocultural perspective investment emphasises the sociocultural roots of learning and cognition, and stresses the importance of joint collaborative activity, the social context of learning and thinking, and social mediation (Dörnyei, 1999, p. 9). As early as 1972, Gardner and Lambert discussed two social orientations to motivation: 1) integrative motivation, refers to “a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132) and 2) instrumental motivation refers to “the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as to get a better job or to pass a required examination” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 132). I am interested in the orientation to which Khmer students feel comfortable.

Research has shown that language learners have their own reasons for studying a new or additional language. The following table summarises all of the reasons given collectively from the studies reviewed.

<i>Psychological Perspective</i>		<i>Sociocultural Perspective</i>	
<i>Intrinsic motivation</i>	<i>Extrinsic motivation</i>	<i>Instrumental motivation</i>	<i>Integrative motivation</i>
- It is good/fun/easy/interesting (Nikolov, 1999) - I like it (Nikolov, 1999) - Enjoying learning language through games (Chung and Huang,	- Parents’ wish, encouragement or/and pressure (Nikolov, 1999; Bernaus et al., 2000) - Rewards (Nikolov, 1999)	Communication (Abu-Rabia, 1998; Ho, 2008) - Personal and professional aims and goals (Marten and Mostert, 2012)	- Engaging with culture through music (Marten & Mostert, 2012) - Talking to friends (Marten & Mostert, 2012)

<p>2010)</p> <p>- Enjoying getting praises or encouragement from teachers or parents (Chung and Huang, 2010)</p>		<p>- Education opportunities (Gao, 2010)</p> <p>- Success in the future career (Gao, 2010)</p> <p>- Achievement (Bernaus et al., 2004)</p>	<p>- Travelling or spending time in an English-speaking place (Chung and Huang, 2010)</p> <p>- Pursuing a better life in the future (Chung and Huang, 2010)</p>
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Table 2: Summary of reasons for learning a new or additional language

Integrative motivation. Most studies on integrative motivation have shown that learners are interested in learning a new language in order to get to know people and culture, and to travel. Marten and Mostert (2012) conducted a longitudinal study of 28 learners studying Zulu at a beginning level in higher education in the UK. The participants who studied Zulu as an additional language had knowledge of three of four languages.

Our main finding with respect to learners’ reasons and motivation for studying Zulu is that integrative motivation, relating to symbolic and identity values of Zulu, is high, and engagement with Zulu culture through music an important means of contact with the language during studying. (p. 118).

With respect to integrative motivation, it is noteworthy that Zulu carries a wider symbolic function than strictly relating to Zulu speaking culture. A number of respondents studied Zulu because of prior linguistic experience with southern African languages other than Zulu, and many saw studying Zulu as important for future plans in South Africa, and not necessarily in a Zulu speaking area. (p.118)

Fourteen out of 28 subjects said that they used Zulu in order to listen to South African music (p. 112). The participants also expected future use of Zulu when travelling in South Africa, while work, further study and fieldwork were also mentioned frequently (p. 113). Marten and Mostert (2012) also state that integrative motivation relates to learners' engagement and identification with Zulu speaking culture and society. One of the reasons the participants chose to study Zulu was because they wanted to learn another South African language with linguistic knowledge of Zulu. From this point, the authors claim that "Zulu is probably the most visible South African language and so is easily seen as useful for, for example, plans to work in South Africa in general" (p. 118). Finally, the authors conclude that the results for language use show that concurrent use is mainly listening to music and using the language with friends.

In a long-term study on attitudes and motivation of Hungarian children between the ages of 6 and 14 from different backgrounds and status studying English as a foreign language in Hungary, Nikolov (1999) notes that the older children (ages eight to fourteen) say that they learn English because of its usefulness when travelling. Younger students (ages six to eight) report that they learn English because "my mother said if we want to go Italy I would interpret," "I am teaching my mother/sister/brother," and "my brother/sister/cousin also learns English" (pp. 42-43).

Similar results were obtained by Chung and Huang (2010) who conducted a mixed method research study with a total of 300 elementary students of the fifth and sixth grades from six different elementary schools in both the urban and countryside areas in Pingtung County, Taiwan. They state that

integrative motivation is the most commonly found factor that urges students to learn English. The participants in this study generally have strong interests in foreign people and

desire to broaden their vision by travelling or spending time in an English-speaking place. Students agree that English is a useful tool for them to pursue a better life in the future. (p. 444)

In a study of Jewish students from two Jewish high schools in northern Israel, the 16-17 year olds had Hebrew as their first language, English as a foreign language and Arabic as a third language. Abu-Rabia (1998) found that students studied Arabic as a third language mainly to fulfill their military conscription. Also, integrative motivation such as for communication with others in Arabic was high. In a similar study of integrative motivation, Wharton (2005) who conducted an online survey of 708 students in Singapore about factors influencing student's foreign language choice and interest, notes that students choose a foreign language because of desire for travel, their interest in its culture, and employment opportunities. Related results were found by Chung and Huang (2010), who note that

a large percentage of students want to learn English because they want to “talk to foreigners”. They believe learning English helps them to go abroad and travel abroad without difficulties. Many of them talked about their dreams of going abroad someday or having a chance to talk to English-speaking people. (p. 443)

In this qualitative study, I will interview teachers and students as well as observe their interaction in classrooms in order to explore the motivations of Khmer students for learning English.

Instrumental motivation. Studies on motivation have shown that most language learners are motivated to learn a new language because of career advantages, academic opportunities, and professional development. Ho (2008) conducted a mixed method study on code choice in Hong Kong from bilingualism to trilingualism with 52 university students in Hong Kong with

Cantonese L1, English L2, and Putonghua L3. She concluded that “tertiary students have very strong instrumental motivations for developing their English and Putonghua proficiencies” (p. 13). Most students said they studied English for communication at school and studying Putonghua for communication when working as part-time sales-persons or tour-guides with Putonghua-speaking customers. Similar results were obtained by Marten and Mostert (2012), who focused on learners’ motivation and reasons for studying Zulu as an additional language or L3 language. They notice that their participants had instrumental motivation to learn Zulu as an additional language or L3 language was related to their personal and professional aims and goals. Gao (2010) also proved that non-Korean learners were motivated to learn Korean due to further education opportunities, success in their future career, cultural interests, and positive attitude towards Korean in an ethnographic study with a group of non-Korean children studying in a bilingual school in Liaoning province, China in 2010. Similarly, Bernaus et al. (2004) conducted a study in Catalonia with 114 pupils (58 females and 56 males) who registered in a public secondary school in Barcelona (62% of the students in this study speak Spanish as an L1, and the other 38% speak other languages including Arabic (24%) and Punjabi, Urdu, Chinese, Tagalog, Bangladeshi, English, Portuguese and Romanian. They study Catalan and Spanish as L2 and English as L3). They found that motivation was positively related to achievement (p. 87). They also note that there are many factors in addition to motivation that could influence achievement. They suggest that differences in these other characteristics could mask the influence of motivation on achievement (Bernaus et al., 2007, p. 87). Interviewing a mixture of strong, average, and weak tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders, Vietnamese and Khmer Vietnamese teachers of English in this study will reveal factors influencing their motivation to study English.

In reviewing literature about factors known to influence language acquisition (such as TL exposure and use, age, proficiency, educational background, context, bilingualism, language typology, culture resources, attitude, self efficacy, and motivation), socio-cultural factors (such as identity, motivation, investment, ideology, language policy, poverty, illiteracy and bicultural ambivalence) and contextual factors (such as identity in a new language, ideology, poverty, and illiteracy) I have identified possible factors influencing the acquisition of English among Khmer students. My intent in this study is to explore these and other factors mentioned in the next section of the paper, or still others, that students and teachers report about the acquisition/learning of English by Khmer students in Vietnam. This background knowledge will guide my focus group interview protocols and my observations. The data collected will then be interpreted through the theoretical lenses discussed in the next chapter.

After obtaining such data through interviews with students and their teachers and through observations of specific tasks in their English classrooms, I will integrate it into an ecological map.

Chapter Four

Theoretical-Interpretive Lenses

In this chapter I review four theoretical-interpretive lenses for this research study: Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning, Norton's theorizing on identity, Urie Bronfenbrenner's sociocultural ecological theory, and Janks' critical literacy. These theories serve to help interpret the literature review and findings.

Nancy Hornberger's Frameworks and Models in Language Policy and Planning

In a multilingual society like Vietnam, status, functions and roles of different languages need to be made clear and explicit in the society. It is language planning that directs decisions about the roles of languages in the communities, the national and/or official language, and the language of education and government (Eastman, 1983, p. 36). To clarify relationships among policy and planning types, it is useful to examine Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning.

According to Hornberger (2006), there is a close relationship between language policy, community, and family. It is, therefore, necessary to have language policy developed and provide long-term financial, infrastructural and human support for language planning and policy for people. However, she notes that it is not language planning types and approaches themselves that carry out a political direction but the language goals assigned language activities that determine the direction of the change envisioned. Language planning goals are, therefore, set in a sociopolitical, cultural, and economic context. Hornberger (2006) created a six-cell matrix to discuss language policy and planning by using two approaches including cultivation planning and policy planning approaches and three types of planning for each of those approaches such as status planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning (see *Figure 1*).

Cultivation planning studies the way that people maintain and/or revive a language. A good example of this is the revival language programs in schools such as the Māori language revival in New Zealand or Aotearoa; Sámi and Kven in Norway; Hebrew in Israel; and Breton and Corsican in France. Policy planning considers implementing the decisions about functions and roles of languages in a particular society, country, or specific context. For example, examining the roles and functions of languages in Vietnam or in its language education systems helps us to see which language is used as a social tool to interact with others in Vietnamese society and at schools. Vietnamese is the sole official and national language used for social interaction and main medium at schools. Vietnamese is the first language of the majority of the Vietnamese [Kinh] population while it is a second language for ethnic minority groups in the country.

Hornberger (2006) refers to status planning as “efforts directed toward allocation of functions of languages/literacies in a given speech community” (p. 28). Political leaders of a country determine which language is used as a national language for that country. This selection seems not to be easy because it involves choosing among rival languages. Cooper (1989) notes that status planning considers a language or dialect in a political way so as to change its status in a multilingual society. For example, status planning addresses the function of languages in a multilingual society such as official and/or national language, community language, or language of education, including as a second or foreign language. Status language may take place at both the community and governmental levels (p. 32). In Vietnam, Vietnamese was chosen to be the national/official language for the society while still maintaining bilingual programs at boarding schools such as Khmer, Tay, Thai, H’mong. In school year 2012-2013, there were 294 boarding schools in 50 provinces in Vietnam. In Soc Trang, there were nine boarding schools in the school year 2012-2013 (Soc Trang People’s Committee, 2012). The second type of planning is

acquisition planning which Hornberger (2006) considers as “efforts to influence the allocation of users or the distribution of languages/literacies, by means of creating or improving opportunity or incentive to learn one of them or both” (p. 28). This type of planning determines which types of programs are suitable in certain school systems for the teaching and learning of the language to the community (Cooper, 1989, p. 32). Cooper (1989) then adds that acquisition planning is “directed toward increasing the numbers of users- speakers, writers, listeners, or readers” of a language (p. 33). For example, a language institution like the British Council is active in acquisition planning which plans more the number of students who study their language abroad. In Vietnam, Vietnamese is the main medium of instruction at schools where all students including minority and majority ones have to study. Acquisition planning applies to Khmer students in Vietnam. Khmer students have to study Vietnamese for all subjects at school, learn Khmer language for two forty-five minute classes a week and English for three forty-five minute classes a week.

The last one is corpus planning. Hornberger (2006) refers to it as “efforts related to adequacy of the form or structure of languages/literacies.” Cooper (1989) notes that corpus planning is involved in making changes in the structure of a language. A good demonstration of this is the introduction of new expressions, new communication functions, new words, new orthographic reforms, new dictionary, or grammar rules and political goals from a linguistic institution (p. 32). Vietnamese, like many languages, has seen the introduction of new phrases relating to technological inventions. The corpus planning is available for Khmer in Vietnam. They study Vietnamese grammar rules, words and word formation, phrases, clause, communication functions, meanings of words, communicative language. New words and

structures and communication functions in Vietnamese are updated during the process of learning Vietnamese literature.

To effectively carry out the language planning framework, Hornberger (2006) explains: a planning activity that not only selects a national official language, but also seeks to extend its use into interlingual communication by providing opportunity and incentive for people to learn it as a second language through domains of religion, work, and education, and as well as ensures that its writing system is standardized and its lexicon is modernized, offers far greater promise of success. (pp. 32-33)

The language framework is available for Khmer students. Due to hard living and environmental conditions, students' knowledge about society in Vietnamese is limited. To improve this problem, apart from the textbook, teachers are encouraged to collect documents, materials related to the real life and local culture to evoke Khmer students' national pride and excitement formation and motivate their learning in their lessons. The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in Vietnamese are embedded in communicative activities for Khmer students to develop their communication skills in Vietnamese not only in classroom but outside the classroom as well. Each new word and each new grammar point are studied in contexts. Therefore, a variety of contextual exercises in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Vietnamese are necessary for Khmer students. My proposed classroom observations will offer insight as to the contexts offered to Khmer students for learning English.

Hornberger (2006) also indicated that language planning and policy development work best when several dimensions are developed simultaneously. For example, working to standardize the corpus of a language has more importance when speakers have official places to use it and educational systems in which to learn it. Similarly, speakers who want to use the language for

official functions need comprehensive vocabulary to be able to do so. In Vietnam, when the government wants to introduce orthographic reforms such as /y/ → /i/ like bác sĩ (doctor) → bác sĩ, they have to update these reforms in the textbooks at schools and official written documents, so that everybody can use them correctly. Simultaneously, Khmer people who would like to fluently learn Vietnamese, their second language, to use it at schools, workplace, or for social communication must learn enough Vietnamese vocabulary in order to be able to do so.

As mentioned earlier in the language policy section, Vietnam has its own language policy, minority language policy, and foreign language policy. On the implementation of these policies, three languages - Vietnamese, Khmer, and English - have been used in Soc Trang. Vietnamese, the official language, is used as the language of instruction in all schools and for social and formal business and government interactions while Khmer is taught to Khmer minority ethnic groups at boarding schools and monasteries and used in the local communities, especially for religious purposes, and English is taught as a foreign language at public schools.

The status of three languages mentioned above has profound influences on members of a community including those of the Kinh, Khmer, and Chinese in Soc Trang. Vietnamese plays an important role in all fields of Vietnamese society. It is the main source of communication at every level for every citizen from different ethnic groups whose language, culture, and tradition are used to study, work, transact business, and exchange culture. More importantly, Vietnamese, which represents the national identity of Vietnam, makes Vietnam a respectable and unique nation. In fact, Vietnamese does more than help people communicate. It helps define Vietnamese culture, history, and the ancestry of the Vietnamese. Therefore, Vietnamese citizens must be able to speak and understand this language of the community and its Vietnamese cultural aspects.

Meanwhile, the Khmer language plays a crucial part of Khmer ethnic group identity. Preserving Khmer language keeps Khmer culture, heritage, and tradition alive. Also, fluency in Khmer will surely enable Khmer people to fully understand their culture and community. The most important role of fluency in Khmer is to help them recognise their identity. While Vietnamese and Khmer are important for both the Kinh and Khmer, English as a world language is essential for everyone in the society since Vietnam has opened its doors to the world. English is considered a key to entering the world and fitting into the global society. As a *lingua franca*, English opens up new opportunities for Vietnamese people to access the world's greatest literature, cultures, global business, international education, and travelling. Further, the language needs of the Khmer are representative of UNESCO's vision for a plurilingual world: everyone should learn at least three languages – a local or community language, a regional or national language, and an international language. In Soc Trang province these would be Khmer, Vietnamese and English respectively. While the rationale for the policies is valid, perhaps even inspiring, what does this look like in practice? Are there obstacles? What seems to be working? What might need improving? These are additional questions that permeate the research.

In sum, Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning serve as a lens for me to consider how the implementation of the language policy in Vietnam affects bilingual identification in the Vietnamese and Khmer languages and the acquisition of English. Moreover, examining acquisition planning in Vietnam will clarify how the choice of language used as a medium for instruction at schools impacts Khmer students who not only learn that language but also use it to learn English.

In light of the language history presented earlier, Figure 1 is adapted from Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning for Vietnam.

Types	<i>Policy planning approach</i> (on form)	<i>Cultivation planning approach</i> (on function)
Status planning (about uses of language)	<p>Officialization: Vietnamese (1945)</p> <p>Nationalization: Vietnamese (1945)</p> <p>Standardization of status: N/A</p> <p>Proscription: N/A</p>	<p>Revival: N/A</p> <p>Maintenance: Some ethnic minority groups try to maintain their own spoken and written languages such as Khmer, Tay, Thai, Chinese, Nung, Cham,...</p> <p>Spread: Vietnamese, English</p> <p>Interlingual communication- International,</p> <p>Intranational: Vietnamese, English, French, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, German</p>
Acquisition planning (about users of language)	<p>Group: Vietnamese is used by 54 ethnic groups</p> <p>Education/School: Vietnamese is taught at school as a main medium. Some other minority languages such as Khmer, Tay, Thai, Nung, Hmong are taught at boarding schools.</p> <p>Literary:</p> <p>Religious: Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, Cham,</p> <p>Mass media: Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, Thai, Mong, H'Mong, Tay, Muong, English,</p> <p>Work: Vietnamese,</p>	<p>Reacquisition: Teaching of Vietnamese in the anti-illiteracy program for minority adults</p> <p>Maintenance: Some ethnic minority groups speak their own languages such as Khmer, Chinese, Cham, Tay, Nung, Thai, Hmong at home, in their communities.</p> <p>Shift: The Yao switched to Choang and were later called the Cao Lan or Han Quang Dong people. The Tong (Giong Dong Thai) abandoned Tay-Thai to speak Yao (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 236)</p> <p>Foreign language/second language/literacy: English, Russian, Chinese, French, Japanese, German, Vietnamese, Khmer, Tay, Nung, H' mong, Thai ...</p>
	<p>Selection</p> <p>Language's formal role in society</p> <p><i>Extra-linguistic aims</i></p> <p>Vietnamese was chosen to be a sole official language in 1945.</p>	<p>Implementation</p> <p>Language's functional role in society</p> <p><i>Extra-linguistic aims</i></p> <p>- Spoken and written Vietnamese is the main medium used by government, school systems, other agencies and social communication.</p> <p>- Minorities in many areas had to use three languages. Those who spoke Vietnamese would</p>

		<p>continue to do so, but they also had to use the regional ethnic language. Those who spoke a regional ethnic language had to study Vietnamese and their own ethnic language. Those who spoke only their own language and resided in remote areas had to study Vietnamese (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 234).</p>
<p>Corpus planning (about language)</p>	<p>Standardization of corpus: Vietnam has had its standardized terminology to let people from different areas and ethnic groups communicate easily.</p> <p>Standardization of auxiliary code: Vietnam has standardized marginal, auxiliary aspects of language like signs for the deaf, place names, or rules of transliteration and transcription.</p> <p>Graphization: writing symbol changes from Chinese characters to Romanized one (Quoc ngu)</p>	<p>Modernization (new functions): Using new words in science like CD, DVD, google to keep up with the advancement of technology and development of society. Vietnam has experienced rapid lexical expansion to meet the demands of modernization.</p> <p>Lexical: adaptation of new words used by Vietnamese journalists and the youth.</p> <p>Stylistic:</p> <p>Renovation (new forms, old functions)</p> <p>Vietnam has deliberately changed in specific aspects of language such as orthography, spelling, or grammar; simplified language usage in lexicon, grammar, and style by modifying the use of language in social and formal contexts; and developed unified terminologies, primarily in technical domains in order to facilitate its usage.</p>
	<p>Codification</p> <p>Language's form</p> <p><i>Linguistic aims</i></p> <p>Vietnamese writing system was developed using Romanized alphabets with their own grammatical rules, the assignment of styles and spheres of usage of words.</p>	<p>Elaboration</p> <p>Language's functions'</p> <p><i>Semi-linguistic aims</i></p> <p>Vietnam expands its terminology and style to meet the wide range of cultural demands.</p>

Figure 1: Adapted from Hornberger's 2006 language policy and planning goals: An integrative framework

Sociocultural theory. While Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models focus on language policy and planning, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Norton's theorization of identity, and Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory emphasize human development. Vygotsky (1978) conceptualized that thinking and meaning-making of children are formed via social interaction with their environment. His social constructivist theory or sociocultural theory has widely been used in the field of second language learning (Donato, 1994; Haas, 1996; Swain, 2000; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Using sociocultural perspectives researchers view language learning as an active process of interaction with the environment. This section will review the three main Vygotskian concepts of mediation, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and scaffolding as historical grounding before presenting Norton's theorization of identity and Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory.

Mediation. According to Vygotsky (1978), human relationships with the outside world are not merely made through direct stimulus-response reflexes but through the "use of tools" (p. 55) to make indirect connections and mediate their relationship, which is generated by human cultures and transferred from generation to generation. In his discussion on sign and tool, Vygotsky made it clear that "the tool's function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity; it is externally oriented; it must lead to changes in objects. It is a means by which human external activity is aimed at mastering, and triumphing over nature" (p. 55). A child's learning and abilities can be mediated and improved by different "psychological tools" (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 136). Language is among those important tools that help the child to solve a problem. Vygotsky (1981) added that individuals use tools to direct and control their physical and mental behaviours.

Second language researchers have embraced Vygotskian perspectives. For Lantolf and Appel (1994) “tools are created by people under specific cultural and historical conditions” (p. 7). They are used to achieve specific goals.

psychological tools are artifacts, including mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbols, diagrams, schemas, and, of course, language, all of which serve as mediators for the individual’s mental activity... individuals use technical tools for manipulating their environment... directing and controlling their physical and mental behaviour (p. 8).

Thus, the psychological processes “have to be explained as part of active participation in the everyday world, and not in the world of an experimental laboratory” (p. 7).

As for language, Haas (1996) proposed that technologies are used as psychological tools or semiotic signs to mediate human-environment interaction. She noted that “Vygotsky’s theory helps us see tools, signs, and technologies as ...systems that function to augment human psychological processing” (p. 17).

Lantolf (2000) also considered the human mind to be mediated (p. 1) and the mediated mind as the most basic concept of sociocultural theory. He also regarded language as a symbolic tool: “languages are continuously remoulded by their users to serve their communicative and psychological needs” (p. 2). Lantolf (2000) then classified mediation in terms of others, self-regulation and artifacts such as technology or task.

Similarly, in discussing collaborative dialogue and second language learning, Swain (2000) regards language as a mediating tool (p. 104). Her explanation of how language helps knowledge-building supports Vygotsky (1978)’s sociocultural theory of mind. Swain (2000) concluded that “as a tool, dialogue serves second language learning by mediating its own

construction, and the construction of knowledge about itself. Internalization of process and knowledge is facilitated by their initial appearance in external speech” (p. 112).

Addressing the relationship between *mediators*- psychological tools such as language, technology, or task- and learning, William and Burden (2009) showed that mediators can help enhance a child’s learning “by selecting and shaping the learning experiences presented to them” (p. 40). According to William and Burden (2009), mediation has a close relationship with social interaction. Thanks to interacting with people such as parents, peers, and teachers with different levels of knowledge, learners find learning effective and encouraged to move to the next level. In this sense, mediators play an important role in helping learners be more active in achieving knowledge through interacting with peers, learning materials, tasks, and context, and becoming more self-directed. To make this happen, needs, affective factors of learners and the role of mediators should be taken into account in the learning process.

Zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) together with mediation have important implications in the language learning process. Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86)

Harvard (1997) considers ZPD as “the distance between the child’s independent capacity and the capacity to perform with assistance” (p. 40) while Mitchell and Myles (2004) refer to ZPD as “the domain of knowledge or skills where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning, but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help” (p. 196). From these two interpretations, we can see that the ZPD encompasses other factors such as help and feedback from other people. This is what learners do not have before being self-directed.

Vygotsky (1987) emphasized the relationship between learning and development. Learning through “interactions between the child and persons in her environment.... provide the source of development of a child’s voluntary behaviour.” (p. 90). As for learning and development, Vygotsky (1987) noted that these processes do not occur at the same time. Learning comes first and results in development through participation and internalization. We can see here that it is interaction with people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers that helps to activate learner’s learning in the ZPD and that social factors play a crucial role in activating and stimulating learning in the ZPD.

A number of scholars have emphasized the importance of social interaction in language learning. Van Lier (1996) argued that it might be more beneficial for learners to interact with language learners of similar or lower level than to interact with those of higher levels because it might “encourage the creation of different kinds of contingencies and discourse management strategies” (p. 193). Similarly, Mitchell and Myles (2004) emphasized the sequence of *social* and *individual* in the learning process. They stated “all learning is seen as first social, then individual, first inter-mental, then intra-mental. Thus, learners are seen as active constructors of their own learning environment, which they shape through their choice of goals and operations” (p. 221). In this study, Khmer classroom interaction such as group, pair, and individual work is something I am looking for in my classroom observations and interviews. Taken together in a sociocultural perspective, it is important to note that interacting with both capable and lower or equal language learners should be taken into account in the process of language learning in the ZPD.

Scaffolding. Scaffolding plays an important role in language learning within the ZPD. A number of scholars have studied this concept. For example, in analyzing the functions of tutoring

in many learning contexts, Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) proposed the features of scaffolding as follows:

The results indicate some of the properties of an interactive system of exchange in which the tutor operates with an implicit theory of the learner's acts in order to recruit his attention, reduces degrees of freedom in the task to manageable limits, maintains "direction" in the problem solving, marks critical features, controls frustration and demonstrates solutions when the learner can recognize them. (p. 99)

In an investigation into social interaction between mothers and young children, Bruner (1983) defined scaffolding as “a process of ‘setting up’ the situation to make the child’s entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it” (p. 60). Similarly, in a study concerned with collective scaffolding in second language learning of three students of French at an American university to investigate how non-native speakers co-construct language learning experiences in the classroom setting and how second language develops in a social context, Donato (1994) found that “collective scaffolding may result in linguistic development in the individual learner” (p. 51) and “scaffolding occurs routinely as students work together on language learning tasks” (p. 52). He concluded that “it is useful, therefore, to consider the learners themselves as a source of knowledge in a social context” (p. 52). From Donato (1994)’s findings, we can see that learners can help and scaffold each other during the time of exchanging the linguistic artifacts. Therefore, to improve language learners’ performance, it is necessary to take social interaction such as peers into account in providing various learning tasks and in creating a language learning environment inside and outside of the classroom. Thus I will observe classrooms and also record observations in my field-notes about the types of social interaction I observe.

Vygotsky's work has established that second language learning is a social practice and sociocultural theory provides a comprehensive framework to examine and interpret the interaction of language learners in the learning process. The work of Norton (1995, 1997, 2000) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) build on this foundation.

Norton's Theorization of Identity in Second Language Learning

When we have a positive identity toward something, we tend to become self-motivated to learn about it. This section reviews identity formation in a new language. It begins with introducing the notion of identity according to Norton's perspective (1997) before moving towards research studies on identity and language socialization and concludes with a description of Cummins' (1984) notion of bicultural ambivalence.

Norton (1997) considered identity in relationship to the world and referred to identity as "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). By creating a friendly and comfortable environment, I will encourage my research participants to tell me the pieces of their life story associated with their identity in the social world. In short,

Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation. (Norton, 1997, p. 410)

From this point of view, Peirce (1995) argued for a conception of *investment* rather than *motivation* "to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (p. 9). Norton (2000) later noted:

The concept of motivation does not capture the complex relationship between power, identity and language learning. The concept of investment, which I introduced in Peirce (1995), signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it ... The notion of investment conceives the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desire. (pp. 10-11)

Here, we can see how investment differs from motivation. Motivation is only associated with desire or willingness of someone to do something. Investment refers to the development of an identity toward a social activity such as learning English. Learners invest (or not) time and agency and acquire symbolic capital in developing a feeling of belonging to a community that engages in that social activity. Norton (2000) concluded that “identity relates to desire - the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety” (p. 410).

A number of research studies have been conducted on identity and language socialization (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Gunderson, 2000; Chang, 2010; Rezaei, Khatib, & Baleghizadeh, 2014). For example, in a longitudinal case study on social identity, investment, and language learning conducted with five immigrant women at Ontario College in Newtown, Canada, Peirce (1995) and Norton (2000) examined the relationship between social identity, investment, and language learning. Analyzing data collected from diaries, questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and home visits in the period of twelve months in 1991, Peirce (1995) argued that second language learning has a close relationship with the social identity of the learner and this “social identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change” (p. 9). Five years later, in *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*, Norton (2000) argued that “each learner’s investment in English must be understood with reference to her

reasons for coming to Canada, her plans for future and her changing identity” (p. 17). Drawing from her data of five immigrant women’s English learning experience indicating that their English investment has a close relationship with their changing and multiple identities influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, and class, Norton (2000) claimed that second language learning is closely related to larger social networks of relationships. In her implications for second language learning, Norton (2000) notes that it is necessary for teachers to put understanding of students’ investments in the target language and take their changing identities into account in their teaching.

Similarly, Gunderson (2000) studied voices of the teenage diasporas with about 35,000 immigrant students who spoke 148 first languages, came from 132 countries, and represented all socioeconomic levels. Gunderson (2000) uncovered themes such as students’ feelings of racism related to socioeconomic issues and struggles with new environments; difficulties in interacting with native speakers for different socioeconomic reasons; abilities of students to learn language and differences in their own cultures and target culture at school; and students’ socioeconomic status. Gunderson (2000) noticed that students whose socioeconomic status is lower have positive motivation to study English courses because they can see the role that English plays in their jobs and future education opportunities even though many students also find it challenging to succeed at schools with their limited English ability. Further, Gunderson (2000) found that “many students are lost in the spaces between various identities: the teenagers, the immigrant, the first language speaker, the individual from the first culture, the individual socializing into a second language and culture, the individual with neither a dominant first or second culture, but not of either culture” (p. 702). He suggested that secondary teachers should take an interest in

students' languages and cultures to avoid language learning failure. These results will help me to design my interview protocols.

In line with the research results of Norton (2000), Chang (2000) conducted a research study on the cultural identity of Korean students learning English. Data were collected through surveys of the para-linguistic features and socio-cultural characteristics of Korean English through analysis of words' connotations, syntactic differences, non-verbal actions and gestures, address terms, interpersonal relations among Koreans, communicative behaviours, pragmatic features of Korean English, and emotion. The objective of this study was to investigate the cultural identity of Korean English learners and how to make the intercultural communications among non-native speakers contribute to learning English. The author found that English is needed "to meet local needs of cultural expressions and identities" (p. 141) and suggests that "the main function of English as an international language is to play a role as a communication tool in a divergent environment. In this environment, it is very important to understand the cultural differences among divergent countries" (p. 141).

With the same interest in language identity, Rezaei, Khatib and Baleghizadeh (2014) conducted a study on language identity among Iranian English language learners: a nationwide survey with 1851 Iranian EFL learners who hold different academic degrees, from different age groups, genders, language proficiency levels, language schools and colleges, and cities in Iran. Data were collected through questionnaires in this study and imported into SPSS to be analyzed. Rezaei et al. (2014) reported that "there was no difference between the language identity of male and female participants in this study but age and English language proficiency were influential in the language identity of these participants" (p. 534).

We have seen so far a number of factors that influence students to study additional languages. Most studies on the effect of motivation to study other languages mainly focus on a second language. Fewer examine third language acquisition. Since different contexts yield different results, no studies have been conducted in Vietnam on the acquisition of English among minority language groups in order to find out what motivates minority Khmer Vietnamese students to learn English. It is hoped that conducting research on minority Khmer Vietnamese students studying English (as their third language) in the Vietnamese context will contribute to understanding their identity formation as imagined and emerging English speakers.

Bicultural ambivalence. Minority students' home language and culture play an important role in recognizing and further developing positive minority group self-identity and cognitive development. Without this individuals develop what Cummins (1984) called bicultural ambivalence (or lack of cultural identification). Therefore, providing minority students with more empowerment is essential. Cummins (1986) argued that "students who are empowered by their school experiences develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically" (p. 661) because "they participate competently in instruction as a result of having developed a confident cultural identity as well as appropriate school-based knowledge and interactional structures" (p. 661). Otherwise, they "do not develop this type of cognitive/academic and social/emotional foundation" (Cummins, 1986, p. 661). Cummins (2001) added that "curriculum and instruction [should focus] on empowerment, understood as the collaborative creation of power, start by acknowledging the cultural, linguistic, imaginative, and intellectual resources that children bring to school" (p. 653). Cummins (2001) further illustrated this point with an argument that when educators or teachers "discourage or prohibit students from using their home language in the school, this echoes the societal discourse that proclaims

“bilingualism shuts doors” (p. 652). Further, Cummins (1986) revealed that “for dominated minorities, the extent to which students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success” and that “students’ school success appears to reflect both the more solid cognitive/academic foundation developed through intensive L1 instruction and the reinforcement of their cultural identity. (p. 662)

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory

Like Vygotsky and Norton, Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory emphasises the social dimension of human development. I will use this ecological model to further interpret the research findings from this study.

To evaluate a child’s development, we cannot only look at his/her immediate environment, but must also consider the interactions within the larger environments in which the child develops. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) four systems of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- system help address this issue. While the microsystem describes relationships with direct contact to the child, the mesosystem focuses on the connections or relationships between members of a child’s microsystem. In turn the exosystem refers to the ‘invisible’ structures in which the child interacts in the society, but does not have direct contact. The macrosystem identifies a broader cultural context in which the child grows up, such as culture, policy, ideology, economic influences, public opinions.

A number of scholars have implemented Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory in their research. I describe three such studies here. First, Campbell, Pungello, and Miller-Johnson’s (2002) longitudinally examined early childhood and concurrent factors associated with adolescents’ self-perceptions of scholastic competence and global self-worth. The participants were 88 African American adolescents aged from 12-15 from low-income families. They were

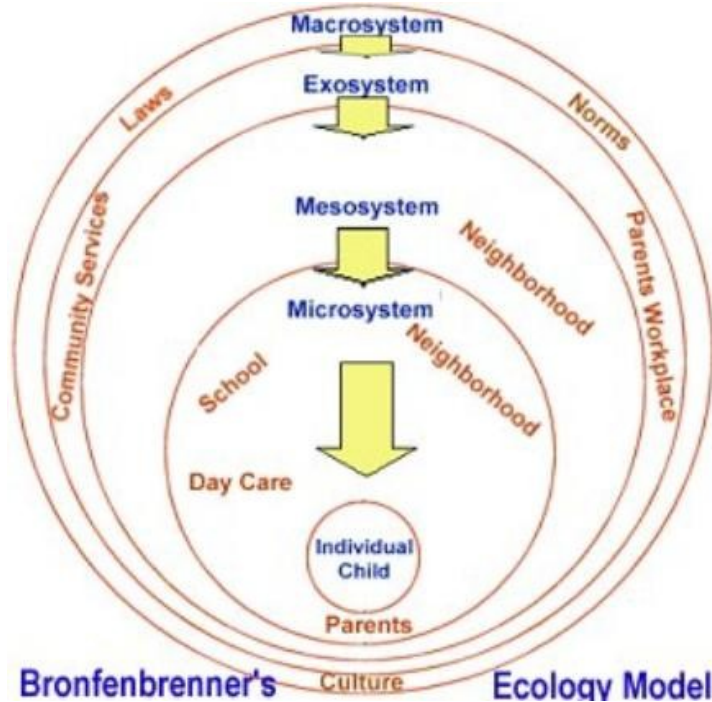
students who enrolled in the Abecedarian Project in a southeastern American university community. To compare learners' scholastic self-concept, 44 individuals in the preschool treatment group and 40 individuals in the preschool control group participated. Based on "Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) ecological model in which interactions among personal characteristics, proximal processes, contexts, and time combine to affect developmental outcomes" (Campbell et al., 2002, p. 278), the authors analyzed data by using two models. General linear models focused on function of the age of the child, and parental and contextual factors within our high-risk, longitudinal sample. The initial models emphasised the two-way interactions with age, gender, and preschool and school-age treatments. The results showed that the influences of the early home environment were stronger in earlier adolescence than in middle adolescence and were moderated by early childhood educational intervention. The authors concluded that "Achievement (a personal characteristic), educational intervention (representing both process and contextual factors in this study), and family factors (also representing both processes and contextual factors) all appeared to contribute to adolescent scholastic self-concepts" (p. 298).

Second, adopting the bioecological model of development proposed by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci in 1994, Riggins-Caspers, Cadoret, Knutson, and Langbehn's (2003) biology-environment interaction and evocative biology-environment correlation: Contributions of harsh discipline and parental psychopathology to problem adolescent behaviours found that the children's current expression of problem behaviour was influenced by both childhood predispositions and the level of their adoptive parents' psychopathology. The authors concluded that "the manifestation of problem behaviours was greatest when the parent-child interactions of

interest reinforced the biological tendency for problem behaviour and the additional risk factors were present in the environmental context in which these interactions occurred” (p. 218).

Finally, similar results were obtained by Adamsons, O'Brien, and Pasley (2007) who examined an ecological approach to father involvement in biological and stepfather families with 68 stepfathers and 68 biological fathers of first-grade children so as to determine whether or not contextual factors which were associated with involvement differed between the two groups. The results showed that it is family processes that made stepfamilies and biological families different. As for biological fathers, higher hours of maternal work were closely related to lower quality of father engagement. For stepfathers, marital satisfaction was closely associated with amount of involvement in childrearing activities.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory serves as a theoretical-interpretive lens through which to interpret my study's findings and can help me to offer insights for teachers, schools, and education.



Source: <http://www.catherineshafer.com/theorists.html>

Figure 2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory reveals many factors that influence how a child develops and is socialized. "The person's development is profoundly affected by events occurring in settings in which the person is present" and "a child's ability to learn to read in the primary grades may depend no less on how he was taught than on the existence and the nature of ties between school and the home" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p .3)

Each layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological system has an influence on a child's development. The interaction of factors within the environment such as family, community, and socio-political landscape has influenced his or her development. Therefore, to study a child's development, it is necessary to consider the child himself/herself within both the immediate environment and surrounding environment.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecological environment is conceived as a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained in the next including *micro-, meso-, -exo-, and macro-systems*.

Microsystem. The *microsystem* can be described as “a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). It is obvious that microsystems refer to all settings where a child is engaged and directly influenced. The child may have many Microsystems at a time. For example, at home with his or parents, he is in one microsystem. When with his grandparents, he is in another microsystem. If he goes to a daycare center and interacts with teachers and classmates, he is in still another microsystem. Other microsystems include going to the family doctor when s/he is sick or playing with neighbours in the local park. All of these surroundings influence his development and personal experience dramatically. Some may have a profound impact on the child while others have minor influence. Such surrounding environments contribute to the child’s socialization and interaction, which helps him/her form cognitive skills, and personal experience.

The microsystem is the immediate environment where a child is living. The child’s microsystem includes any relationships or organizations in which the child interacts. The way the child grows mutually influences the ways that relationships or organizations such as home, school, caregivers, daycare center, and classmates interact. The development of children in modern society has been influenced significantly by status, stability, and the types of their parent’s jobs. The subsequent development and behaviour of children are influenced by parents who are affected directly by different cultures in society and economic conditions. The financial conditions in the family also impact children’s development either positively or negatively.

Neighborhood and religious settings such as churches or temples are other examples of the child's microsystem environment. In this structure of the environment, a child's parents and others affect his or her belief and behaviour and vice versa.

Berk (2000) admitted that the microsystem which has the closest environment for a child's development includes the structures that maintain the child's most direct contact. At this level, the child's development happens in a mutually supportive relationship between children themselves and other entities in the same environment where the child interacts (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). A good example of this is parents who influence their children's behaviour and beliefs and vice versa. This influence is known as a bi-directional one and this relationship exists in all environments. The microsystem is considered to have the largest and greatest effect on a child's development together with the outside impact of other layers of the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A child's relation happens "whenever one person in a setting pays attention to or participates in the activities of another" known as *dyad* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 56) or with third parties called an N+ 2 system in a social network (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 81). Such interaction influences the child's development.

From my literature review we can already see factors in the microsystem that influence third language acquisition in general. They are age, proficiency, amount of target language and use, motivation and attitude, context, and educational background.

Mesosystem. The mesosystem is a "set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 209). It can be seen that the mesosystem is a system of two or more microsystems. For example, parents take a child to the park where he can meet other children with their parents, who are his neighbours; so home and neighbourhood, two microsystems, create a mesosystem. Another

example is that when a child has a picnic at a childcare center, his parents go with him and meet other parents and teachers. They talk and have lunch with one another. Another two microsystems have come together to create a mesosystem.

Following Bronfenbrenner (1979), Paquette and Ryan (2001) explained that a mesosystem has connections between the child's microsystems such as between the child's teachers and his or her parents, or the child's church and his or her neighbourhood. The mesosystem plays an important role in a child's development since it contributes to a positive influence on a child's development and is a bridge between two microsystems. For instance, a child grows up at home with his or her own family tradition, belief, culture, and behaviour. When he goes to school where disciplines, styles, and expectations may be different from home, so the child has to adjust to these issues gradually.

Bronfenbrenner classified four types of mesosystems:

1) **Multisetting participation.**

This is the most basic form of interconnection between the two settings "since at least one manifestation of it is required for a mesosystem" (p.209). For example, a child spends his or her time at both home and the day care center. Bronfenbrenner called this period of time an *ecological transition* because the transition occurs from this setting to another. The developing person participating in two different settings is called a primary link and other persons who participate in the same setting are called supplementary links.

2) **Indirect linkage.**

When the same person does not actively participate in the two settings, a third party, an intermediate link, will connect between the two. The meeting in this situation is

through a second order network instead face-to-face. A good example of this is the connection between the child's teacher and his parents or between his/her place of worship and his/her neighbourhood.

3) **Intersetting communication.**

The messages are transmitted from one setting to the others via persons in other settings. There are many ways of transmitting information such as face-to-face communication, telephone conversations, messages, notices, social network and the like.

4) **Intersetting knowledge**

That is "information or experience" that exists in one setting about the other such as books in the library.

Collectively these four types of mesosystems serve as a theoretical lens for me to interpret my research data. They help me see the influence of Khmer students' families on their English learning. From this we can see how their identity and investment in the English learning and how they aspire to become members of an imagined language community.

When a developing person participates in multiple settings, he or she is required to "adapt to a variety of people, tasks, and situations, thus increasing the scope and flexibility of his cognitive competence and social skills" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 212)

At the sociological level, Bronfenbrenner (1979) hypothesized that "the positive developmental effects of participation in multiple settings are enhanced when the settings occur in cultural or subcultural contexts that are different from each other, in terms of ethnicity, social class, religion, age group, or other background factors" (p. 213). If this hypothesis is valid, it means that a person who has grown up in the two cultures, and participated actively and widely

in each society tends to get higher levels of cognitive function and social skill, and experience in an educational setting compared with the one who has grown up in one setting.

This line of reasoning can be also applied at the level of a dyad, a two-person system known as *transcontextual dyad*. From an ecological perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that “the occurrence of transcontextual dyads in the life of the person may operate to enhance the person’s capacity and motivation to learn” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 214)

Apart from the positive influence on a child’s development, the mesosystem may cause “stress” to children. To demonstrate, parents celebrate a four year-old child’s birthday and they invite their friends, caregivers, neighbours, teachers, and grandparents. How is the child expected to behave towards the guests? At this moment, the child is juggling his roles in at least four different Microsystems. Is he supposed to follow his father’s rules or his mother’s? Is his behaviour expected to be different at the party or the same as regular days? It is obviously challenging for a young child to recognize how to behave accordingly unless his parents tell/guide him as to what to do.

Based on the literature review factors in the mesosystem that influence third language acquisition include lack of cultural resources, bilingualism, target language exposure and use, interaction with people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers, help and feedback from other people, praises or encouragement from teachers or parents, needs, affective factors of learners, positive attitude and role of mediators.

Exosystem. The exosystem consists “of more than one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in that setting” (Bronfenbrenner ,1979, p. 237). In other words, the exosystem refers to situations or events where a child interacts indirectly but still gets the effect

from them. For example, parents, for various reasons, sometimes cannot pay the rent or buy food for the family and this may have a negative impact on the child. In contrast, the child will have a better quality of life if his or her parents get promotions at work.

My literature review identifies the following factors in the exosystem as influences on third language acquisition in general: poverty, illiteracy, language typology, orthography, grammar, and pronunciation, natural and formal contexts, majority and minority language, socioeconomic status, education background, further education opportunities, success in the future career.

Macrosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the macrosystem refers to “the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form and content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (p. 258). It can be seen that the macrosystem is a “societal blueprint” for a specific culture, subculture, and other social contexts.

In a child’s lifetime, his/her ways of thinking, style, and behaviour have been influenced by many events, relationships, and activities through microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems. The child was born in a family with particular traditions, values, socioeconomic status, educational background, and beliefs. This influences his beliefs and values. He grew up in a community with social cultures and forms of government, which influence his beliefs, values, and religious and political ideologies.

There are many factors that influence a child’s macrosystem. One of them is social change which affects the child’s psychological growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 261). A child who comes from a particular cultural or ethnic background is influenced by values and ideology in that society. The high spirit of Khmer people is influenced by religion in their community, as a

good example. When s/he goes to another environment, say going to school, the disciplines and expectations at school influence their values and beliefs. Other factors such as the child's gender, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, political ideology, socioeconomic status, educational background, and income of his family, and culture also influence the child's developing macrosystem.

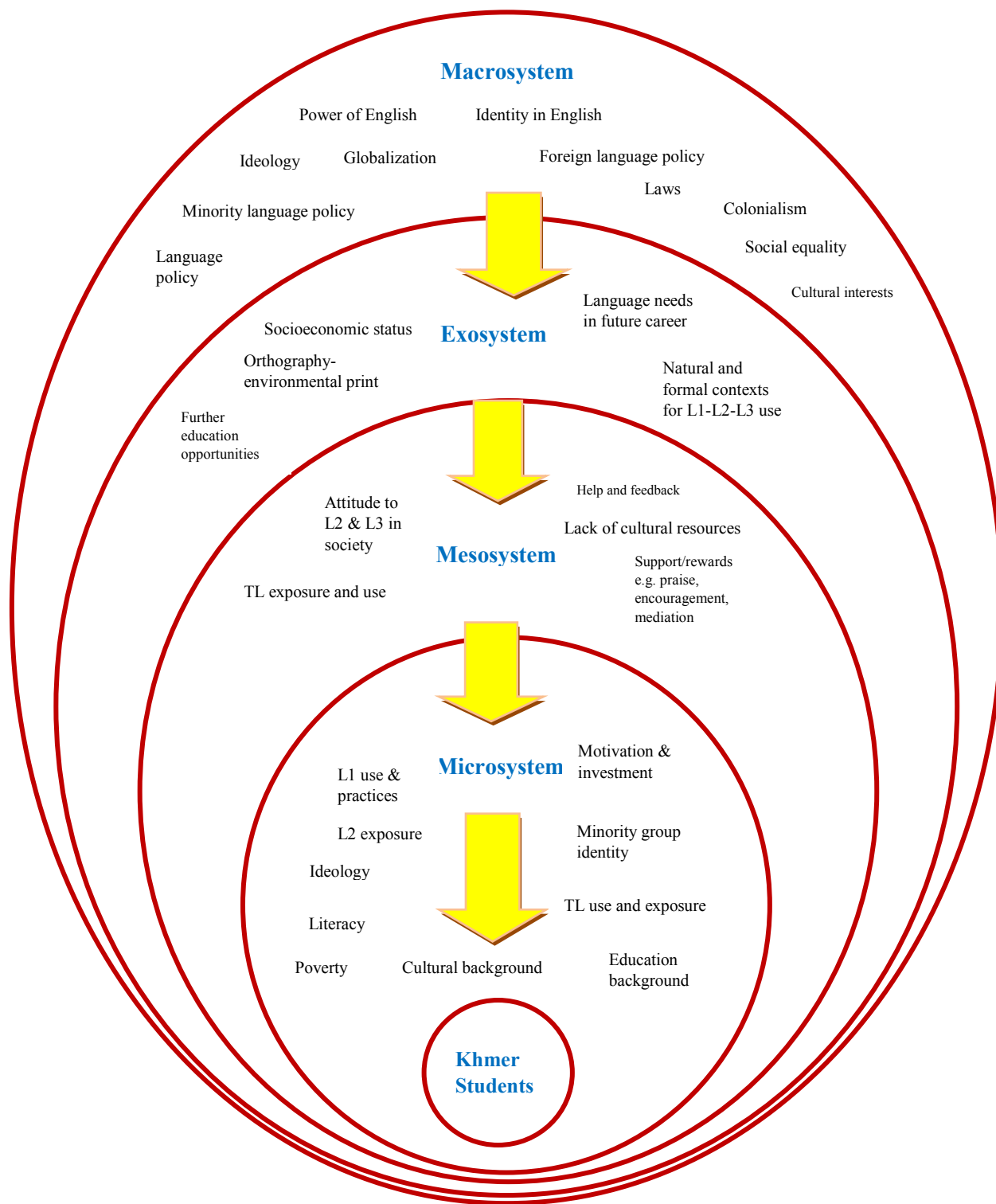
From my literature review factors in the macrosystem that influence third language acquisition in Vietnam are ideology, power of English, identity formation in a new language, cultural interests, language policy, minority language policy, and foreign language policy and social equality, laws, globalization, and colonialism.

Chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the chronosystem “encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also in the environment in which that person lives” (p. 40). It is made of the environmental events that occur throughout a child's life including any sociohistorical events. Also, it shows the progression of external systems throughout the years. This system contains the transitions that are made throughout a person's life. Paquette and Ryan (2001) note that elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal like the physiological changes occurring with the aging of a child. When a child gets older, he or she may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence him or her. The chronosystem can help us see changes over time and examine the influences on such changes. For example, the literature painted a picture of Khmer families living in poor conditions twenty years ago. At that time children in these families received minimal education due to poverty. However, twenty years later, with changes of laws in Vietnam, the socioeconomic conditions of minority people, including Khmer, have improved.

With a record of conditions described in the literature review, data from this study might help us understand if, and how, this economic improvement might have influenced how Khmer parents value and support their children's education today.

Based on my literature review and my own experience, some factors in the four systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development might be mapped out as in Figure 3. Interview data and classroom observations in Vietnam will enhance and enrich this initial ecological map.

Figure 3: Adapted Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in Vietnam



Critiques of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development. A number of scholars (Lerner, 2005; Swick & Williams, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, Alvarez, & Henderson, 1984) have positively reflected Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development. Lerner (2005) stated that "Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979) formulation had a broad impact on the field of human development, promoting considerable interest through the 1980s on the effects of ecological systems on the life course of the individuals" (p. xiv). Lerner (2005) considered the 1979 book, *The Ecology of Human Development*, as a "classic" book to the understanding of human ontogeny because Bronfenbrenner explained the importance for human development of interrelated ecological levels, conceived of as nested systems (p. xiv). Lerner (2005) also added that the 1979 book "made an enormous contribution to such a conception of human development by giving scholars conceptual tools to understand and study differentiated but integrated levels of the context of human development" (p. xiv)

As for the ecological positions concerning the relations between the individual and environment, Tudge, Gray, and Hogan (1997) noted that Bronfenbrenner (1979) "provides a much more differentiated and complex sense of the different "systems" that influence the developing person and the interrelations between them" (p. 88) and Bronfenbrenner (1979)

portrayed the developing child as being at the center of an interconnected set of contexts, including those that directly impinged on the child (context at the microsystem and mesosystem levels) and those that affected the child indirectly, mediated by those with whom the child came into direct contact (context at the exosystem and macrosystem levels). (pp. 88-9)

However, Tudge et al. (1997) commented that "Bronfenbrenner's position is less clear" as he "focused almost exclusively on environmental influences on development" (p. 88) and "paid

little attention to aspects of the developing individual and leaving chronosystem effects quite implicit” (p. 90). They added that “to view Bronfenbrenner’s position as espousing a simplistically unidirectional model of development would be totally incorrect” (p. 90)

Finally, in line with other scholars on the positive impact of Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development, in an analysis of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological perspective for early childhood educators, Swick and Williams (2006) stated that “all of the systems influence family functioning, they are dynamic and interactive - fostering a framework for parents and children. Our understanding of the ‘contexts’ in which family stressors occur can help us in being effective helpers” (p.373). Similarly, in a study on *working and watching, Maternal employment status and parents’ perceptions of their three year-old children*, Bronfenbrenner, Alvarez, and Henderson (1984) examined whether the mother’s work status influences her perception of her three- year-old child. The participants were 152 Caucasian two-parent families who were randomly selected and identified through a door-to-door survey. The authors found that mothers with better education beyond high school had more favourable attitudes towards their children. Nevertheless, the opinion of the children by the mother was impacted by both her work status and the gender of the child. Educated, full-time working mothers had the highest opinions of their girls while educated, part-time working mothers had the highest opinions of their boys.

In summation, Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development is appropriate for the interpretation of results from my study for a number of reasons. First, this model enables acknowledgement of complexity, multiple perspectives, and the roles of family, school, policy and practice. More specifically, it acknowledges the differences between the multiple communities of the minority language and ethnic group of the Khmer. Second, it helps me interpret bi-directional influences of relationships and interaction between the family and school

of Khmer students at the microsystem level. Third, at the mesosystem level, this theory helps me see how rapport between teachers of English and Khmer students motivates their English learning as well as their attribution to success or failure in learning English. Fourth, analysis of language policy in the macrosystem helps me see how this policy impacts Khmer students' learning English. Finally, the chronosystem may assist me in seeing the impact of changes taking place in one system on others. Bronfenbrenner's theory serves as a lens for me to see how Khmer students' culture, poverty, illiteracy, ideology, custom, language identity, investment, imagined language community influence learning English.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy theory will be the fourth lens through which I shall interpret the results from my data collection. Critical literacy is about the relationship between language and power. Janks (2010) reveals that "critical literacy works at the interface of language, literacy and power" (p. 22). To reflect factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in a broader sociocultural picture, I will look at different sets of key orientations towards literacy, mainly domination, access, diversity and design in the work of Janks (2000; 2010; 2012).

Domination. Critical literacy highlights the role of power and power relations. Authors in this orientation see power as the domination of language and how language is used as a means to maintain power (Janks, 2000, p. 176). Power differences in society impose some domination over some individuals or minority groups. In Vietnam, policies for national language, minority languages, and foreign languages have been implemented so far. The primary intent of Vietnamese language policy was to create more equality in society. However, it seems that it has not created equality in society in reality. A good example of this would be the Khmer case. In comparison with their Vietnamese counterparts at other public high schools, Khmer students at

boarding schools have to study Khmer language for two forty-five minute classes a week as a compulsory subject. Other majority students can learn Khmer if they wish but not at public schools. They all study English but there is no additional support to help Khmer students. Therefore, more or less, this inequality of implementation of language policy in Vietnam may affect Khmer students to study English.

Access. Access refers to being able to participate in the dominant discourse as a result of being involved in dominant forms of language use (Janks, 2000, p. 176). We see in Chapter Two that poverty hinders Khmer children from pursuing education. Some families are too poor to pay school tuition and other educational fees at higher levels of education. Critically, if a child is smart, but his or her family does not have enough money to send him or her to school, the child will not have any opportunity to gain access to school and therefore, of course, no access to literacy in Khmer, Vietnamese, or English.

“(D)ifferent ways of reading and writing the world in a range of modalities are a central resource for changing consciousness” (Janks, 2000, p. 177). To discuss the importance of diversity in school, Kress (1995) argues that it is an important means to make students

feel at ease with continuous, intense change; comfortable with sharp differences of culture and social values met every day; treat them as normal, as unremarkable and natural; and above all, as an essential productive resource for innovation rather than as a cause for anxiety and anger (p. 6).

Diversity. In Vietnam, Khmer students begin school with their own culture, identity, and ideology. However, when they study English, Khmer culture is not embedded in the English textbook for inclusion and scaffolding. As mentioned in the background information about the Khmer people; there is no connection to the source culture in the English textbook for Khmer

students (Son, 2008). Therefore, Khmer students may not feel comfortable, or may even feel challenged, to study English. Diversity is denied by not using Khmer cultural sources in teaching English, which is another modality of cultural literacy. Further, Vietnamese students learn nothing about a minority group in their country through the textbook.

Design. Design refers to language created for the purpose of maintaining and producing power (Janks, 2000, p. 177). The process of teaching English in Vietnamese and the examination system seem designed to challenge or disfavour Khmer students whose literacy in Vietnamese is weak. The research results of Dinh (2003) and Son (2008) presented in *Education of Khmer People* section shows that the low level of Khmer students' Vietnamese hinders the process of studying English.

Janks (2000) argues that the four orientations of domination, access, diversity, and design are important and critically interdependent in literacy education. Janks adds that

Critical literacy has to take seriously the ways in which meaning systems are implicated in reproducing domination and it has to provide access to dominant languages, literacies and genres while simultaneously using diversity as a productive resource for redesigning social futures and for changing the horizon of possibility. (p. 178)

Taken together, it is essential for me to examine factors influencing Khmer students' studying English in the broader sociocultural context. Thus, during interviews, observations and when analyzing the focus group summaries I shall pay attention to narratives of domination, access, diversity, and design.

Figure 4 summarizes possible factors that influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam in the research literature and my own experience that will assist me in interpreting the data collected in this study.

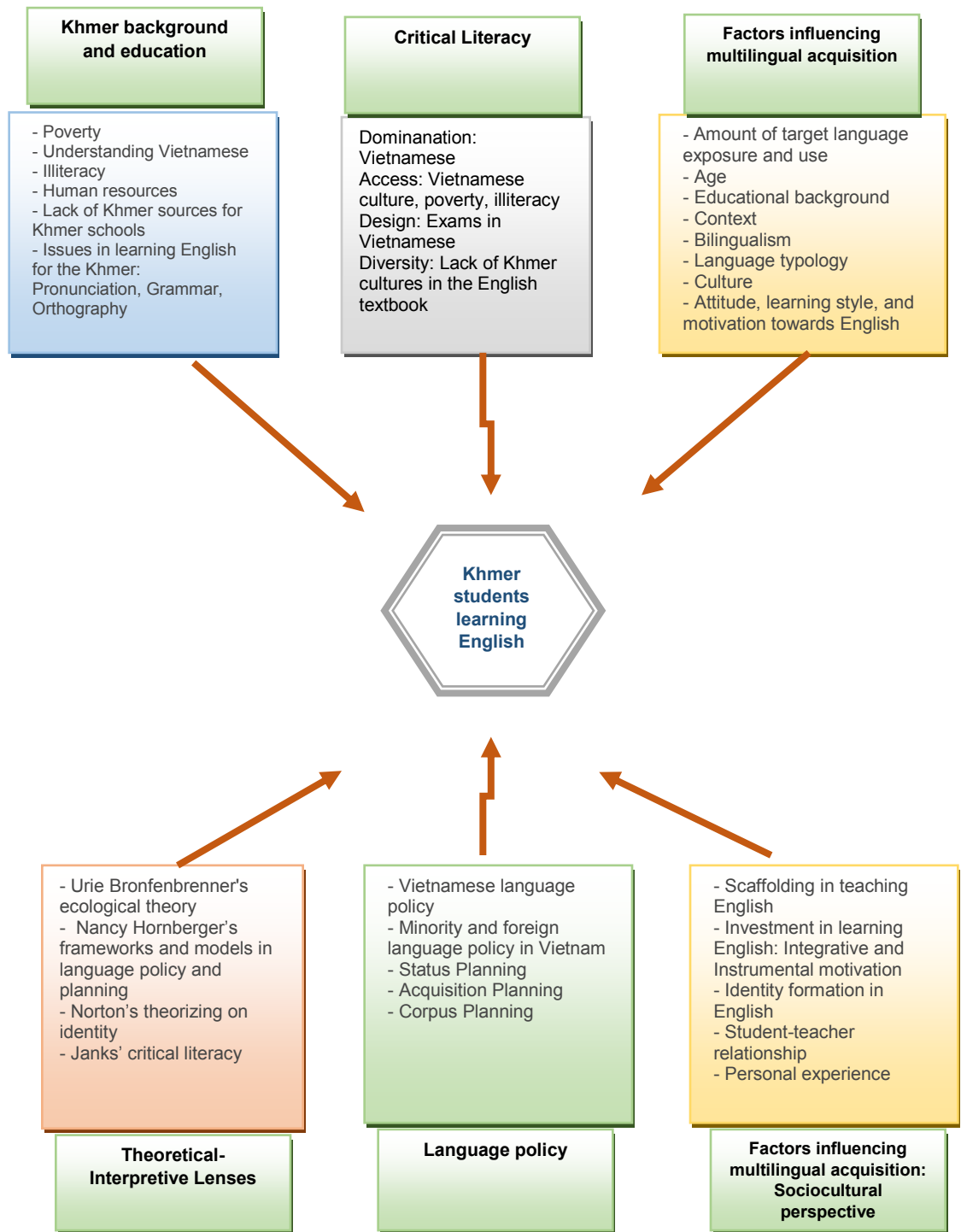


Figure 4: Possible factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam

Chapter Five

Research Methodology

In chapter One, I stated the research question that guides this study:

What sociocultural and ecological factors influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam?

This chapter begins with a section describing qualitative research including interpretative analysis and the role of the researcher. Following this, the research design section includes a description of study participants, ethical practices, data collection tools and data analysis. Timelines of this study are also mentioned in the last section of this chapter.

Qualitative Research

This qualitative research study explored the factors influencing Khmer students' acquisition of English in Vietnam. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research and explain its process and context of data collection as follows:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field-notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

In order to learn a language successfully, learners' attitudes, motivations and identity towards that language are important. Many internal and external factors influence the motivation to learn a language. Internal self-esteem and curiosity contribute to desire to learn. External factors also contribute to desire to learn, such as language policy and planning, social status of the language, social and economic opportunities offered by the language, family conditions, parents' ideology, and home culture. These factors may influence a child's language learning either directly or indirectly.

The language learning process takes place throughout interactions in the classrooms and society. Martella, Nelson, and Marchand-Martella (1999) state that "qualitative researchers are concerned with how people feel about classroom procedures, what they believe about instructional methods, how they process information, and what meanings they attach to experiences....understanding the context in which behaviour occurs" (p. 256). Following a constructivist perspective on learning (Vygotsky, 1978), this qualitative research study aimed to explore the factors that influence Khmer students' acquisition of English in the Vietnamese sociocultural and ecological context.

Accordingly, in this study the researcher sought to learn about the Khmer students' perspectives of learning English, their third language. The researcher observed Khmer learners in their English classrooms and interviewed them in focus groups in their dormitory residence and also learned about how their teachers perceive their strengths and challenges. Data were collected, triangulated and interpreted from all three sources.

Role of Researcher

According to Addison (1989), "a researcher's interpretation is a part of a co-constructive process in building meaning with participants" (p. 42). Interpretive research is appropriate in my

study because I sought to understand the factors that impact minority Khmer Vietnamese students' challenges in studying English. I interacted with a variety of Khmer students and teachers. Moreover, I strongly believe that my understandings of the research issues presented in the first two chapters served as a foundation for me to engage, observe and converse with my participants, and thus led to a fuller and deeper understanding of the research issues. Since research is demanding and challenging, as a young researcher, in the process of conducting this research, I remained open to learn, listen, observe, and even change my perspectives. I experienced that research is associated with discovery and curiosity. In what follows, I will describe more about interpretive analysis and the role of the researcher.

Interpretive analysis. According to Bernard (2000), interpretive analysis is interpreting texts to understand their meanings and their directives or searching for meanings and their interconnection in the expression of culture (pp. 439-440). Getting data prepared is an essential step for interpretive analysis. In the process of preparing for data analysis, I first transcribed focus group interviews and observational notes and then interwove them with one another by using different fonts so that my voice could be clearly distinguished from that of the participants. Following this, I read and reread the whole data set so as to get a whole picture of the studied phenomenon and noted some first insights and understandings of the data for future analysis. I also insured that I deleted unimportant digressions, repetitions, and obvious redundancies in the data.

The next step was to code the data into distinctive meaningful units, that is, information meaningful to the reader even if standing out of the context (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988; Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Then I categorized the meaning units. Next I abstracted the findings by using tables, figures, narratives, and diagrams and looking at the easiest way to fully depict

factors influencing Khmer students' studying English. The use of triangulation of my data collection also added to the validity of this study as Marthison (1988) notes that the reason why triangulation should be employed is that it helps increase validity of research or evaluation findings, eliminate bias and "allow the dismissal of plausible rival explanations such that a truthful proposition about some social phenomenon can be made" (p. 13). Finally, the findings are presented in the sociocultural context in Vietnam so that they might be useful for further research.

Role of the researcher. As a researcher and data collector, I am aware of my particular theoretical positions and biases such as the factors influencing the acquisition of additional languages reviewed in the literature and assumptions of language teaching and learning that may influence the collected data. In other words, as Creswell (2012) notes "interviews provide only information "filtered" through the views of the interviewers" (p. 218). Holding a constructivist perspective and looking at the research through a sociocultural lens to study factors that affect the acquisition of English of Khmer students, I tried to explore various factors influencing the third language acquisition of Khmer students in the specific Vietnamese sociocultural context. My findings therefore do not reflect post-positivist or pragmatist perspectives but simply provide an in-depth overview of how sociocultural and ecological factors affect Khmer students' learning of English in relation to the micro-, exo-, meso-, and macro- systems.

Since my study took place in Vietnam, I had to bear in mind Vietnamese culture and protocols for group formation and meeting. For example, I had to dress formally when going to school where I treated other colleagues and students with great respect. Additionally, I was really aware of the taboo of eating in the classroom since this is a cultural nuance of respect and also had to ask formally for permission for having group meetings at the school. In playing the role

of an interviewer, I have knowledge of multilingual acquisition since I studied two languages and am motivated to study an additional language. To get Khmer students to talk about their English learning experience, I first briefly told them my personal story studying multiple languages and helped them to focus on the main points of the interview. To begin the focus group session, I first gave participants about fifteen minutes to chat and settle into a group. Afterwards, I welcomed the participants, offered them food or beverage and helped them complete pre-group paperwork such as signing the assent form and completing the demographic survey. After everything was done, I used a prepared script (approved by ethics) to welcome the participants, reminded them of the intent of the focus group and also set the ground rules. Once everyone was ready, I began with the first engagement question. I proposed using an open-ended question to encourage as much open discussion as possible. Creating a comfortable environment helped me develop student-interviewer rapport and encourage Khmer students to speak freely during the focus group interviews. This follows Creswell (2012) who notes “when conducting a focus group interview, encourage all participants to talk and to take their turns talking” (p. 218).

Language

My research was conducted in Vietnamese because this was the language that the students and I had in common. I also transcribed all interviews and then translated them into English. The translations were later verified by a graduate student colleague from Vietnam. After each focus group interview I also shared findings and consulted my Supervisor. Such mentorship allowed me to refine my interview strategies.

Research Design

In this section, I describe in detail the research design including participants, data collection tools, and data analysis for this study.

Participants. Creswell (2012) notes that participants for qualitative research are selected through purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, “researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). Creswell also notes that the researcher should choose participants so that they are best able to provide information which is essential for the study.

This qualitative study drew upon 19 participants – 15 students and four teachers. The pseudonyms for these students are as follows: the five 12 graders are Ty [F], Suu [F], Dan [M], Meo [F], and Thin [M]; the five 11 graders are named Ti [F], Ngo [F], Mui [M], Than [M], and Dau [M]; the five 10 graders include Tuat [F], Hoi [F], Thanh [M], Truc [M], and Ma [M]. The four teachers of English include three Khmer teachers named Hoa [F], Mai [F], and Cuc [F], and one Vietnamese teacher called Hue [F]. The fifteen student-participants were volunteers nominated by the teachers. Although they were identified by their teachers as strong, average and weak students, they all came from the school’s advanced classes. Thus, their English proficiency was at different levels.

The student participants, all between 16 and 18 years of age, studied the new English curriculum for grades 10, 11, and 12 as set by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. They are also all active members in the school’s Youth Union. Since they usually participate in the school activities, they are articulate and comfortable expressing their opinions. The students come from different villages in the province, thus have diverse backgrounds. Also coming from different regions of the province, the four teachers of English reflect diversity.

However, since they have been teaching together in this school for at least two years, they understand each other well. With these good relationships with one another in this boarding school, they felt comfortable speaking in focus group contexts.

Bernard (2000) notes that a small group is easy to manage during the interview so I chose to interview about five students per group. Creswell (2012) notes “the larger number of cases can become unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives. Moreover, collecting qualitative data and analyzing it takes considerable time, and the addition of each individual or site only lengthens that time” (p. 209).

Participation was voluntary. Among volunteer students, first, I sent information letters and consent forms to their parents to ask permission for their children to participate in my research study. I then asked teachers to choose from among those students with consent forms from their parents. The criteria of this selection was based on the academic results of the previous school year, so the participants included strong, average, and weaker performing Khmer students. The identity of all participants was anonymous in this research. The diversity of backgrounds of subject participants included age, gender, students’ level of competence in English, their hometowns, and teachers’ experiences of teaching helped ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

As for teachers, they were all full-time teachers and each had a minimum of five years of teaching experience. Before teaching English at this boarding high school, they had taught English at other public schools. Among them, one taught grade 10 students; one taught grade 11 students; the other two taught grade 12 students. By inviting a Vietnamese teacher of English who cannot speak Khmer and three Khmer-Vietnamese teachers with good oral literacy in Khmer to volunteer to participate in the study, I was able to gain perspectives of both “insiders”

and “outsiders”. Both gave me their rich perception of how Khmer students attribute their success and/or failure in learning English.

The first focus group interview for teachers of English was postponed because one teacher was in a car accident and the other was ill. We scheduled the interview for another day but the Vietnamese teacher was still ill. I finally decided to conduct this focus group with three Khmer teachers. The second focus group interview for teachers was conducted with the participation of all four teachers.

The focus group interviews were conducted between the second week of November and the first week of December. Everyone at this boarding school was under the pressure of taking the first term exam. Students were busy preparing for exams of thirteen subjects and teachers were busy reviewing English knowledge for their students. That was why the principal refused to let me observe some weaker classes at this school during this period of time. Moreover, due to the exam period, I was unable to conduct the interviews over a long period of time, thus giving the participants more time to reflect. Additionally, the stress of the exam period may have influenced their comments.

Emic and etic. Emic and etic are two approaches to research human beings. An emic approach is also known as “insider,” “inductive,” or “bottom-up” research. Lett (1990) explains: “Emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviours are being studied” (p. 130). A researcher who takes an emic approach usually does not pay much attention to prior theories or assumptions so as to let the participants and data occur naturally and allow themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge. This approach is often used when research topics have not yet been much theorized.

In contrast to the emic approach, an etic approach is known as “outsider,” “deductive,” or “top-down” research. This approach uses prior theories, hypothesis, perspectives, and concepts from outside of the setting being studied. Lett (1990) states: “Etic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers” (p. 130). A researcher who takes this approach uses existing theories or concepts to see whether or not they apply in the new context.

Although my study follows an etic approach, I acknowledge how my own prior experiences teaching Khmer students English influences my perceptions. Mostly, I used critical literacy (Janks, 2000, 2010, 2013) together with Hornberger’s (2006) frameworks and models in language policy and planning, Norton’s identity theorizing, and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development as theoretical lenses through which to interpret the findings in my study.

Ethical approval. Creswell (2012) notes that “all educational researchers need to be aware of and anticipate ethical issues in their research” (p. 22). Additionally, Creswell (2012) cautions that “in all steps of the research process, you need to engage in ethical practices” and “it is important to respect the site in which the research takes place. This respect should be shown by gaining permission before entering a site, by disturbing the site as little as possible during a study, and by viewing oneself as a “guest” at the place of study” (p. 23).

Because the study was conducted with students and teachers as research subjects, the researcher submitted an application for approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Alberta and obtained ethics approval from the principal, teachers, students and their parents in a school in Vietnam before collecting the data.

The process of interviews and classroom observations did not upset or harm Khmer students and teachers. All participants voluntarily participated in this study. Students were invited to talk about their English learning experience. Teachers talked about their experience in teaching English to students. In classrooms, I observed how students engaged in classroom activities and learning materials. I received permission from all of the stakeholders before conducting interviews and classroom observations at this school.

Data Collection Tools. After obtaining ethics approval, I began collecting data by using data collection tools, such as those suggested by Creswell “including observations, interviews and questionnaires, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). In what follows, I describe in detail purposeful sampling and my data collection tools of focus groups, observations, and field-notes.

Purposeful sampling. Patton (1990) notes that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). We can see that the purpose of selecting samplings such as people, things, or places is to provide the most detailed information to help answer the research questions.

Creswell (2012) states that “in qualitative research, we identify our participants and sites on purposeful sampling, based on places and people that can best help us understand our central phenomenon” (p. 205). In this study, the participants are Khmer students in grades 10, 11, and 12 and their teachers of English. They are all in a boarding school in Soc Trang province (see Appendix H for more detail about the context of the Soc Trang boarding school for high school students). Such a school is a typical one for youth from ethnic minorities and families in the mountainous and rural areas. This school is also considered a central resource for minority

students (Khmer), providing specially trained staff and facilities to create a cultural, scientific, and technological center for the local authorities.

Observations. I observed each class of grades 10, 11, and 12 students three times, making nine observations in total. My purpose was to collect examples of actions and words that suggest student desire (or not), investment (or not) and identity formation and motivation, and to see if/how teachers adapt the English curriculum for minority Khmer students. Determining the role of an observer in the process of data collection is important. There are two types of observers: the participant observer and the nonparticipant observer (Creswell, 2012, p. 213). To conduct this study, I played the role of nonparticipant observer- “an observer who visits a site and records notes without becoming involved in the activities of the participants” (Creswell, 2012, pp. 214-215). As an “outsider” sitting at the end of the classroom, I had a chance to see how the students participated in class, how the students engaged with the materials, how the teachers interacted with the students, and the languages and translanguaging used. Observations also assisted me in understanding the focus group interviews with Khmer students and teachers (presented in detail in the next section).

Interviewing. Dexter (1970) refers to an interview as a conversation with a purpose. Lincoln and Guba (1985) list several purposes of doing an interview such as obtaining here-and-now constructions of persons, events, activities, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns (p. 268). Kvale (1996) called this “stories of the lived world” (p. 4). In conducting interviews with participants in my study, I did not simply ask questions and await responses. Instead, I tried to encourage students and teachers to tell their stories of learning and teaching experiences as well as express their voices about English acquisition. “[I]nterviewing provides access to the context of people’s behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of

that behaviour” (Seidman, 1998, p. 4). In order to encourage students’ and teachers’ real storytelling, I kept my voice neutral, used open-ended questions, and avoided leading questions including predisposing questions, leading probes, or loaded questions when interviewing because these leading questions affected the direction of students’ and teachers’ answers either to correspond with what they thought as socially desirable answers or as the answer they might expect me to expect of them (Seidman, 2006). A broad open-ended starting question is an effective approach to eliciting participant storytelling.

Focus group interviews. This section begins with definitions of focus groups and then moves towards its history.

According to Creswell (2012), a focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six in number (p. 218). Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) define focus groups as:

group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The group is ‘focused’ in that it involves some kind of collective activity - such as viewing a video, examining a single health promotion message, or simply debating a set of questions. Crucially, focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of group interaction to generate data. Instead of asking questions of each person in turn, focus group researchers encourage participants to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view. (p. 4)

To conduct this focus group interview in this study, as a non-Khmer Vietnamese teacher, I spent the first week establishing relationships and trust with Khmer students and teachers, getting to know them and playing sports with them. Additionally, I created a friendly environment by

telling personal stories about how I succeeded in learning English from my poor background and encouraged Khmer students to share their personal narratives. My sharing of personal stories helped identify commonalities and thus built relationship and trust with participants. When trust had been established, the Khmer minority students and teachers felt comfortable to talk freely.

Focus group interviews have been used as early as 1946 in fields of studies such as sociology (e.g. by Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton) and marketing. Researchers at Columbia University's office of Radio Research used focus group interviews in 1946 to conduct a study on the social and mental effects of mass communications on the general public (Bernard, 2000, p. 207). The result of this research was an article entitled *The focus interview* published in the *American Journal of Sociology* in the same year.

Alfred E. Goldman used focus group interviews in the commercial world to conduct a research on advertising and marketing. His article, *The Group Depth Interview*, was published in *The Journal of Marketing* in 1962. Later, Thomas Greenbaum, one of the leaders in the development of the focus group method expanded and refined the approach through publications such as *The Practical Handbook and Guide to Focus Group Research* in 1990; *The Handbook for Focus Group Research* in 1997; *Moderating Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Group Facilitation* in 1999.

The focus group interview offers both strengths and limitations. According to Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook (2007), using a focus group interview offers us a number of benefits: 1) to “better understand the group dynamics that affect individuals’ perceptions, information processing, and decision making; 2) to “allow observations of how and why individuals accept or reject others’ ideas”; and 3) to “generate more information than individual interviews would provide” (p. 13). However, focus group interviews still have some limitations. One issue is “the

influence of group members' demographics, personality, and physical characteristics" (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 14). "Loud speakers" may dominate others in conversation. Thus, the role of the moderator is important to make sure every participant has equal opportunity to converse without being individually dominated. Another issue is that "focus group discussion guides tend to include too many questions, which often makes the experience more like a within-group survey than an interactive discussion" (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 15). Additionally, responses in focus group interviews may be influenced by the "artificial environment" which depends on the behaviour of the interviewer. Lastly, focus group interviews may not be as effective on sensitive topics due to personal hesitation to express such views in public.

Moreover, the small number of participants in the interview will be easier for the researcher to manage and offer the best opportunity for discussion. Also, if too many individuals are interviewed in the focus groups, the researcher and/or transcriptionist will find it challenging to take notes during the interview and recognize the voices of participants in transcribing later (pp. 218-219).

I planned to conduct focus group interviews in September 2015 since this period was the best time of year for participants and this period of time was the beginning of the school semester and neither students nor teachers were busy with standardized tests. However, for administrative reasons, the interviews were delayed until November 2015. I employed in-person semi-structured interviews to better understand the factors affecting Khmer students' learning of English. In total I conducted eight focus group interviews: two with each of three groups of students and two with the four participating teachers. Each structured interview lasted from 60-90 minutes, and were recorded with a good digital recorder and subsequently transcribed and translated by myself and then verified by a graduate student colleague from Vietnam who is also

a professional translator. Transcription was estimated to take three hours for every hour of recorded data. Thus I allotted three to four and a half hours to transcribe each interview. For reasons of authenticity all of the pauses and fillers remain in the text.

As an interviewer, I first asked the students' parents to sign a consent form and then an assent form before the interview. Before the interview, I first explained the general context and purpose of the study and emphasized that the data would be used for research only and that the participants' identities would remain confidential and anonymous. I also let student-participants know the interview protocol in advance and answered all of their questions. In the hierarchical administrative context of Vietnam it was necessary to have support of the school principal and to meet regularly with him during the period of data collection. He was able to resolve any concerns and acted as a bridge between me and the teachers and the students and their families, if required. My prior working relationship with him assisted in building trust and confidence (gaining entry) in this study.

To conduct a successful interview, it is important for the researcher to carefully prepare an interview protocol. According to Creswell (2012), "an interview protocol is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interviewee" (p. 225). Following Creswell (2012), I designed an interview protocol consisting of five general types of focus group questions: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions (See Appendices E and F). The researcher asked one question at a time during the interview until the last one.

I followed the interview protocol consistently during the interviews (See Appendix E for student participants, and Appendix F for teacher participants). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) note that the researcher, who conducts semi-structured interviews be guided by a set of

questions or issues whose exact wording or order can be changed or omitted, may add other questions during the interview to “probe unexpected issues that emerge” (p. 124). During the interview, Bernard (2000) notes that “leading a focus group requires the combined skills of an ethnographer, a survey researcher, and a therapist” and reminds the researchers that “you have to watch out for people who want to show off and close them down, without coming on too strongly. You have to watch out for shy people and draw them out, without being intimidating” (p. 210). Following this advice, I strove to maintain a friendly discussion environment and managed the conversation so that the interviewees could talk freely about their experiences in studying English so as to elicit as much data as possible. Once the conversation started to slacken off, probes, sub-questions under each question that the researcher asked to elicit more information, were used to clarify points or to have the interviewee expand on ideas or explain the answer in more details (Creswell, 2012, p. 221). I finally concluded the interviews with my appreciation of the participation of interviewees and answered any questions they had.

The questions had been designed to build on the literature review. Thus, some questions might confirm or challenge what prior research was reported while others sought greater detail to build a more comprehensive model of issues impacting third language acquisition of Khmer youth in Vietnam.

As for interviewing Khmer students and teachers, I first observed Khmer students of grade 10 for the first day and interviewed them on the second day. A similar process applied to Khmer students of grades 11 and 12. Teacher focus group interviews were held after the focus group sessions with the Khmer students (refer to Appendix I for more detailed timelines of this study).

Member checks. I engaged in methods of member checks (Creswell, 2014) to confirm my findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that a member check is employed to “provide evidence

of credibility- the trustworthiness criterion analogous to internal validity in conventional studies” (p. 374). Creswell (2014) adds that member checking is used to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative finding through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they care accurate” (p. 201). Lincoln and Guba (1985) conclude that a “member check is thus of critical importance to the inquirers, the respondents, and the consumer of the inquiry report” (p. 374). Through member checking, I asked participants to review the accuracy of transcribed interviews and asked for their permission to cite their personal quotes directly in both my written or verbal reports of the study. Further, in the second round of focus group interviews, I asked group(s) to discuss the points that may have been raised by other focus groups.

Observations. This section begins with a definition of observation in the process of data collection before moving towards a description of the role of observers. A detailed observational protocol can be found in Appendix G.

I observed nine English classes over a five-week period. Each class included the teachers and students I interviewed. According to Creswell (2012), observation is the process of gathering open-ended, firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site. (p. 213). Observation offers the researcher an opportunity to record the information as it occurs in a setting and to study actual behaviour. However, as an “outsider,” observing makes it difficult for the researcher to develop rapport with individuals and requires good listening skills as well as careful visual attention (Creswell, 2012, p. 214).

To conduct a successful observation, a carefully designed observational protocol is essential. An observational protocol is “a form designed by the researcher before data collection that is used for taking field-notes during an observation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 227). I also took

some photos to help me remember the visit. Following Creswell (2012), I developed an observational protocol (See Appendix G) including a series of questions for me to observe teacher-student and student-student interactions, language use in classroom, materials used in classroom, attitudes of students towards learning English and attitudes of the teacher towards students learning English. As stated in Chapter Three, these could be factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students. Student-teacher relationship building influences profoundly student language learning. The closer rapport the teacher has with the students, the better the teacher can facilitate their language teaching. The bottom part of this protocol was an organized space for me to record and reflect what happened in the classroom on a specific day. Most qualitative researchers usually record what they observe in the classroom in the form of field-notes, which will be explained in the next section.

Field-notes. Creswell defines field-notes as “text (words) recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study” (Creswell, p. 216). I recorded both descriptive and reflective observational field-notes. Descriptive field-notes were used to summarize in detail what I saw and heard in the classroom in the left-hand column with my subjective comments in the right-hand column. The reflective comments allowed me to express my feelings, thoughts, and values and in re-reading to be able to increase my awareness of how these might influence my observations. This reflection was done soon after and within 12 hours of each classroom observation.

Data Analysis. Data analysis and interpretation included a discussion of my theoretical framework including interpretive lens, triangulation, trustworthiness, transferability, and timelines for this study.

Interpretive lens. “The interpretation of meaning can only be pursued with a constant movement back and forth and the web of meaning within which that expression is embedded” (Smith, 1993, p. 187). Ellis (1998) argues that in interpretive research, data analysis and interpretive process cannot be separated and planned ahead because the issues or concerns that researchers bring to the questions and the human solidarity they are seeking direct the interpretation. In other words, the data analysis process takes place alongside data collection (Merriam, 2002). Following Merriam (1998), during the first interview with students and teachers, I took note of the key points and words carefully to discuss with the participants as I tried to seek clarification, confirmation or contradiction from the participants. This preliminary analysis of data guided and directed our conversations.

At the end of the data collection, I transcribed all the interviews with students and teachers and observational notes and put them into two separate folders. I then read all of the transcriptions line by line and paid attention to the exact words and expressions of the participants in order to start coding the data. In order to code and thematize my data, I followed six phases of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1) transcribing data, reading and rereading, and noting down initial ideas; 2) coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and collating data relevant to each code; 3) collating codes into potential themes, and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme; 4) checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis; 5) continuously analyzing to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme; and 6) selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis

(p. 87). The themes were then analyzed based on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of human development, Hornberger’s frameworks and models in language policy and planning such as language policy, age, gender, economic status of family, teacher, curriculum, and culture, Janks’ critical literacy and Norton's identity theorizing.

Triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that triangulation is a technique employed to improve “the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible” (p. 305). Mathison (1988) argues that triangulation should be employed to improve validity of research and reduce bias. Creswell (2012) refers to triangulation as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field-notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (p. 259). Triangulation was used in this study to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings: I explored the acquisition of English of Khmer students by drawing on perspectives of teachers, students, and observations, as well as my field-notes. (See Figure 5)

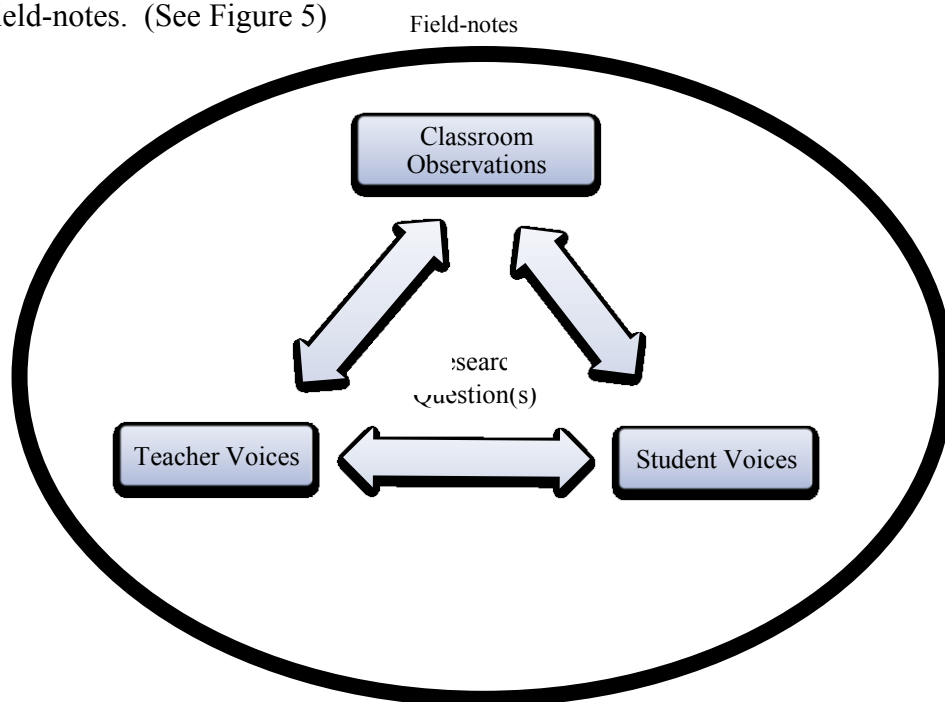


Figure 5: Triangulation of data collection tools

Trustworthiness. I adopted the following strategies to establish the trustworthiness of this study. First of all, the issue of credibility of the information received was addressed through the triangulation of my data. Multiple focus group interviews of students and teachers as well as classroom observations were used in triangulation. The different data sources from students, teachers, and classroom practices helped me understand better the multileveled context at micro-, exo-, meso-, and macro levels, which helped render better interpretations of the data. Secondly, member checking was conducted to establish the trustworthiness of this study. Finally, I also developed detailed descriptions of the contexts which helped enhance transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the degree of transferability as a “direct function of the similarity between the two contexts” (p. 124), what they called fittingness. The authors refer to fittingness as the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts. If the two contexts are sufficiently congruent, working hypotheses from the sending context may be applicable in the receiving one (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). I collected thick descriptive data by providing detailed descriptions of different contexts about teachers and students that opened comparisons of the Khmer context in Vietnam to other possible contexts because “in order to establish transferability, similar information must be available for both sending and receiving contexts” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 217).

As this is a qualitative study, I am conscious of the transferability. Following Lincoln and Guba (1985), I developed thick descriptive data, specifying “everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the finding” (p. 125) so as to let other possible contexts be compared with my study context. In other words, I developed detailed descriptions of factors influencing Khmer students’ motivation to study English such as economic, education, society,

culture, language policy, curriculum, and teacher. Providing detailed and thick description of several cases therefore may enhance the transferability. Also the contextualization of descriptions help the readers determine if the findings can be transferred to other contexts or not (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 297, 316).

Timelines. In the six weeks of my data collection in Vietnam, I observed nine classes (three per grade group) and conducted eight focus group interviews (two per group). I gained trust and curiosity among students and staff at the boarding school by interacting with students in the dormitory during my first week. I also distributed and collected ethics forms and offer clarifications to students and staff. In addition, I took daily field-notes and then transcribed interviews for member checks, as appropriate.

All interviews were recorded with a digital recorder for accuracy and then transcribed and translated them and sent them to my Supervisor for discussion. We discussed the procedure so that I could improve my interview skills for subsequent interviews. I then sent a transcript of the interview to the students of the focus group (within one to two days following the interview). They had a week to review and add, delete or change the transcript as desired.

I carefully reviewed the transcripts of all three interviews before requesting a second interview. In that way, I could insure that I was drawing comparable detailed information from each group. For example if one group discussed a point that the other groups did not discuss, I asked the other groups about that point during the second interview. Member checks for the second focus group meetings were carried out in the third week of the study.

The first classroom observation was conducted in a grade 10 class on Tuesday of the second week of my stay, after a week of having seen me around the school. Observations also sparked examples or queries for probing during the focus group interviews. Classroom

observations allowed me to observe activities that Khmer students might not be able or willing to share with me in the interviews. (Refer to Appendix I for more detailed timelines of this study.)

Chapter Six

Results for the Research Question

In Chapter One the research question guiding this study was stated: *What sociocultural and ecological factors influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam?* Identifying factors that affect Khmer students' learning of English, often their third language, will be essential in assisting the Khmer minority ethnic group to acquire English, a language necessary for secondary and post secondary education in Vietnam. The results of this study can, therefore, help teachers of English, Khmer students and their parents, Soc Trang Department of Education and Training, Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, the government of Vietnam, and other stakeholders better understand and act to improve the learning situation for Khmer students.

Khmer people, like everyone in society, are influenced by push-pull or force-demand factors. Push factors are circumstances that make people want to leave their current homes. For example, when Khmer people cannot find a job in their rural area or their crops fail due to severe drought, they tend to leave their home village to look for a better life somewhere else. Pull factors are the advantages that make a place appealing to people to live or move there. For instance, Ho Chi Minh City, the fastest growing city in Vietnam, offers a huge pull factor for people from all over the country, including Khmer, to live and work. With the promise of employment, people can easily improve their life there.

As noted in Chapter Three and based on the limited literature available, I identified some factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students. This chapter will restate factors that influence the learning of English by Khmer students and also describe additional factors which emerged from the data collected in this study. The data from Khmer students and their

English teachers, as well as an investigation into recent language planning policies, is presented using the four systems of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development. These factors enrich the initial ecological map presented in Chapter Four.

Further, as this chapter will highlight, a new chronosystem has emerged among the Khmer in southern Vietnam. The snapshot presented from prior literature described conditions of abject poverty, limited educational opportunities and struggles of the Khmer to learn Vietnamese, let alone English. The current image suggests inroads in these areas, perhaps the results of new policy and implementation designed to improve conditions of minority groups; however, interpreted through Janks' lens of critical literacy and access, design, domination and diversity, much work still remains. The chapter begins by reminding the reader about the chronosystem as described by Bronfenbrenner. It continues with detailed descriptions of factors that influence Khmer students' English acquisition integrated into Bronfenbrenner's four micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- systems.

Chronosystem

As seen in Chapter Four, Bronfenbrenner (1994) defined chronosystem as "change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also in the environment in which that person lives" (p. 40). The literature review in Chapter Three presented a snapshot of the chronosystem of about 10 to 20 years ago. Using this as a baseline, as incomplete as it might be, factors collected in this study suggest considerable changes to the micro- and meso-systems of the Khmer in Vietnam.

As presented earlier, from the literature review, I was able to identify some factors influencing Khmer students' English learning. From data collected in this study, I am able to confirm the presence of some of these factors, the disappearance of others, and also identify

some new and additional factors affecting their English acquisition. Due to limited data about the previous chronosystem, this chapter does not intend to compare the contemporary chronosystem with that of the chronosystem of 10-20 years ago. Instead, the objective of this chapter is to describe current factors that influence Khmer students' learning English, thus creating a deeper understanding of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- level factors that influence language learning in Vietnam.

The literature review identified factors influencing Khmer students' learning English under each system of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The amount of target language and use, motivation and attitude, context, and educational background belong to factors in the microsystem. A lack of cultural resources, bilingualism, target language exposure and use, interaction with people in their environment and in cooperation with their peers, help and feedback from other people, praise or encouragement from teachers or parents, needs, affective factors of learners, positive attitude and role of mediators are factors of the mesosystem. Meanwhile, living in natural language (SL) vs formal language (FL) contexts, learning in a majority and minority language context, considering socioeconomic status, and educational background, having further education opportunities, and imagining success in one's future career are factors in the exosystem. Finally, ideology, power of English, identity formation in a new language, cultural interests, language policy, minority language policy, and foreign language policy and social equality, laws, globalization, and colonialism are included among the factors in the macrosystem.

Microsystem

As we see from Chapter Four, the microsystem describes factors or agents which have direct relationships on and with the child or learner. This system is very important for child

development because it refers to all settings in which the child is directly engaged and influenced. Data collected in this study confirmed the presence of previously mentioned factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. For example, although more students are able to pursue secondary education, the impoverished conditions of Khmer families continue to hinder their children's chances to get costly supplemental English language education through after school classes and the absence of reference to their identities in Vietnam in the English textbook remains contentious. Further, parents/older siblings are able to model use of Vietnamese and since Khmer students learn English in Vietnamese this seems to have positively affected Khmer students' understanding of English lessons. While the literature review revealed these factors as affecting the acquisition of English of Khmer students, new findings from students and teachers shed light on three additional factors currently influencing Khmer students learning English in contemporary society. They include parental background and values, financial support and encouragement from the family, and the students' self-awareness.

Parental background and values. The direct interaction between Khmer parents and children is very important for Khmer students to constitute the engines of their development since "it is by engaging in these activities and interactions that individuals come to make sense of their world and understand their place in it, and both play their part in changing the prevailing order while fitting into the existing one" (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 68). This immediate environment was what Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) called proximal processes or the key factors in development. Khmer parents' language, educational attainment and value of schooling, their improved living conditions, and recognition of the value of English directly influence their children's development.

Language. According to the participants in this study, their Khmer parents, the generation that were children when the earlier studies were conducted, now speak both Khmer and Vietnamese; a few of them also speak Teochew. The participant students described their parents as speaking Khmer to their Khmer neighbours in the village and Vietnamese to the Kinh people in their communities. Being immersed in Khmer in their home communities, many students wish to continue their bilingual identities alongside learning English. They described their farmer parents' multilingualism:

My parents speak two languages: Khmer and Vietnamese. Um, my father can speak Teochew. He taught me some Teochew and I speak a little. Um, my father speaks Teochew to his friends. Located in the central area of my commune, my parents speak Khmer to Khmer people and Vietnamese to the Kinh. My parents are farmers. In the past, my father studied Khmer very well, so I was affected by his knowledge. (Meo [F], grade 12)

Here it is possible for us to see that although Khmer parents may not be able to directly help their children with English due to their low literacy levels, they are still models of multilingualism for their children. As Khmer students hear their parents speak Vietnamese, Khmer, and/or Teochew to their neighbours, they may comfortably embrace the study of another language, which is English at school.

The student participants also reveal that their parents are one of their “first teachers” of Khmer and supporters of their multilingual development. For example, Ma [M], a grade 10 student describes the way his father taught him Khmer: “my father taught me Khmer at home. My father told me “just study what I taught you, now concentrate on learning Vietnamese well. At the boarding high school, you will have more chances to learn Khmer language.” Similarly, Meo [F], a grade 12 student states that her father taught her Khmer according to the knowledge

he learned at school: “My parents are farmers. In the past, my father studied Khmer very well, so I was affected by his knowledge.” These students’ descriptions suggest that their parents may be models of multilingualism and thus supporters of language learning.

Educational attainment and the value of schooling. Recent data suggests that the Khmer families more likely appreciate the value of public education and support their offspring in attaining more educational opportunities. For example, the school where this study was undertaken shows an increase in high school graduation rates from 74 per cent in 2008 to 100 per cent in 2014 as well as an annual increase in student enrollment.

Students’ comments also help to see the value parents place on education. Thanh [M], a grade 11 student, provides a good description of this change when he describes his family: “I see that although my parents do not know English, they create conditions for me to learn it. My parents bought me a computer, allowed me to take part in an English contest, and spiritually support me in learning English.”

Although their parents’ levels of educational background vary - from primary to high school - Khmer student participants in this study reported that their parents paid close attention to their children’s education. Hoi [F], a grade 10 student, describes how her Khmer-speaking family values education:

My father speaks Khmer and Vietnamese but uses Khmer more than Vietnamese. Khmer is spoken in everyday life and in the village. My parents are farmers. Um, due to family conditions, my father dropped out of class in grade 3. My parents speak Khmer well, so rarely speak Vietnamese. Although my parents did not get much education, they create good conditions for me to study. I am the only one studying in my family. (Hoi, [F], grade 10)

Although some Khmer parents have a limited educational background, they still value education for their children. They are likely aware of the importance of their children's education in improving their life and have high hopes for their children to improve their own lives. For example, Tuat [F], a grade 10 student, describes her family:

I have two brothers. My first brother dropped out of school at grade 6. My second brother finished grade 9. I am my family's hope, so they create all good conditions for me to study. Apart from my parents, my two brothers who are working also support me more or less.

This description also reflects cultural nuances of mainstream Vietnam. A happy family in Vietnam is based on strong and quality relationships among its members. That relationship gives families security to overcome the difficulties and challenges of modern life. Thin [M] also shares a narrative similar to that of Tuat's about his family:

My family supports whatever I would like to learn. Um, my parents did not get much education. My brother got better education and encouraged me to learn English. Um, my parents do not hinder or create pressure for me to learn English. My parents wholeheartedly support something um related to my learning as long as I have a passion for it. (Thin, [M], grade 12)

As Tuat and Thin state above, the levels of education of elder siblings also form a type of family support for their learning. The older children help parents and younger family members to see the advantages of education, including the learning of English, for future employment and family security. The older children help parents and younger family members to see the advantages of education, including the learning of English, for future employment and family security.

In addition, the student participants repeatedly described the value that their parents placed on schooling as well as the hopes their parents placed in them for the family's future. For example, Ngo [F], a grade 11 student, describes how her mother reacted when she did not want to go to school:

My mother took me to school every day but I did not want to go. Um, I hid behind the bushes along the pathway in the countryside. My mother took me out and asked me to go to school. My mother severely punished me and said "you can do whatever you want as long as you go to school.

This description shows a Khmer mother's great determination to encourage her children to go to school.

Improved living conditions. The above descriptions suggest that the impoverished conditions of Khmer families in Vietnam have improved since the studies reported in my literature review (Ngo, 2011; Dinh, 2003). Although a full report of the changes in living conditions is beyond the scope of this study, a number of recent laws and policies and the ensuing practices are worthy of mention and may have had an impact. For example, Programs 135 (2006) and 143 (2001)⁵ focused on the infrastructure, exemptions and reduction for health and fees, support for farming techniques, skills, health, knowledge, and housing targeted to poor or ethnic minority households while Program 134 (2004) provided water programs in the most disadvantaged geographic areas. The result of these changes is that "Over time, as economic growth raises living standards throughout Vietnam, a shift away from location based targeting, to policies and programs in which the ethnic minorities and other poor groups are specifically

⁵ Vietnam has a large number of policies and programs specifically designed to assist ethnic minority development. These programs and policies have paid attention to a wide range of socio-economic issues related to ethnic minority development and are targeted in different ways. Some programs (such as the infrastructure component of Program 135 and 143, the water systems component of Program 134) have focused on the construction of hard infrastructure target in extremely difficult (Region 3) areas (Baulch, Pham, & Nguyen, 2008)

targeted [for improving their economy] is occurring” (Baulch, Pham, & Nguyen, 2008, p. 6). However, despite some positive sides of economic improvement of minority families, data collected from interviews with Khmer students and their teachers reflect that there are still wide discrepancies between the socioeconomic improvement of Khmer families in the urban areas and those in rural areas. Some Khmer families seem to be able to invest in their children’s English learning, such as by buying laptops while some of them in rural areas do not seem able to afford to send their children to learn English in a center for foreign languages⁶. This will be elaborated in the section on macrosystems.

Recognition of the value of English. The participants in this study also describe the role that English plays in long-term individual economic success and how the responsibility they felt toward meeting their family’s educational expectations acted as a motivator for them. Than [M] explains: “my parents pin their hopes on me in learning English, which is a real motivation for me to learn English. That is a good thing.” (Than, [M] grade 11). Similarly, Tuat [F] and Hoi [F] agree that English is a good means to develop communication and business with people in foreign countries as the following statements reflect:

With good English, we can study abroad and keep pace with other countries. um, I think English helps people in many ways. For example, it helps us broaden our knowledge, especially ESL and easily communicate with other people in foreign countries to exchange knowledge and life experience. (Tuat, grade 10)

⁶ A teacher participant also acknowledged the poor living conditions of some of her Khmer students, stating that they were unable to study English in after school classes or in the summer at a center for foreign languages.

Learning English well help us apply what we read to our real life as well as exchange business with people in foreign countries, so we need to speak English. (Hoi, [F], grade 10)

The teacher participants in this study also describe a change of attitude among Khmer students towards learning English. For example, Hoa [F], a teacher of English, describes a change of Khmer parents' attitude towards learning English in her classes:

For me, the attitude of Khmer students' parents towards learning English has dramatically changed as compared with that of five years ago. In the first few years, when I taught here, parents seemed not to care for their children's learning English. They did not think of how to force their children to study. However, their attitude towards learning English has recently changed. Khmer students' parents in my classes have shown their excessive interest in English since the society has developed and reached a certain level. They had other children who used to study here tell them the value of English, which makes them aware of this subject but this awareness is not deep enough. They just simply hope that I [their teacher] will encourage their children to study English well so that they can apply for jobs easily later.

Perhaps these descriptions reflect that changes in both the microsystem and the macrosystem have influenced students in their attitudes toward learning English while seeing their Khmer heritage as additive to their identities. More direct changes to the macrosystem include advancements in language policy and will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Financial support and encouragement from the family. The higher value Khmer parents place on education is another characteristic of the 2015 chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner and

Morris (1998) called this change between the previous chronosystem and the 2015 one macro-time:

the form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes affecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person; of the environment—both immediate and more remote—in which the processes are taking place; the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration; and the social continuities and changes occurring over *time* through the life course and the historical period during which the person has lived. (p. 996)

Twenty years ago, due to impoverished family conditions, elder Khmer siblings likely received minimal financial support from their parents. However, twenty years later, with changes in legislation, and improved economic conditions, Khmer families seem more aware of the value of education and are more able to provide support for education. Twenty years ago, due to impoverished family conditions, elder Khmer siblings likely received minimal financial support from their parents. However, twenty years later, with changes in legislation, and improved economic conditions, the Khmer families in this study seem more aware of the value of education and seem to have the means to provide more support for education. With these changes, we see how the reciprocal interactions between Khmer students and members of their families exert strong influence on Khmer students' development. Students talk about how their parents help them in three ways: teaching them Khmer language (already discussed), encouraging them to study English, and buying learning tools for them.

Encouraging them to study English. According to the student participants, getting the support of their parents is a great encouragement for them to learn English. For instance, Thin [M], a grade 12 student reveals, “My family supports whatever I would like to learn. This

motivates me more to learn English.” Tuat [F], a grade 10 student explains why her parents want her to study English:” My parents don’t know English but create good conditions for me to study English because they don’t want me to live a poor life like them.” Similarly, Dau [M], a grade 11 student, shares: “Although my family does not know anything about English, um, they still encourage and pin their hopes on me to learn English better.” The students’ statements suggest that their parents recognize the value of English in helping their children secure better employment in contemporary society. Therefore, investing in their children’s English learning is grounded in the hope that their children may advance economically and socially.

Buying learning tools. In addition to linguistic modelling and encouragement, the student participants state that their parents financially support their English learning by buying reference books, ipads, or computers for them as Thanh [M]’s narrative illustrates: “I see that even when my parents do not know English, they create conditions for me to learn it. My parents bought me a computer, allowed me to take part in an English contest, and spiritually support me in learning English.” (Thanh, grade 10). Khmer parents invest in the education of their children in general, but they also pay attention to their children learning English, a language they have never known or heard before. Being able to buy Ipads and computers is possibly additional evidence of the increase of family income among some Khmer families and an indication in improved economic conditions since 2004.

The above descriptions indicate that Khmer parents now, in the 2015 chronosystem, may have a better awareness of the value of English in society. This understanding of the role of English in education and the economy of Vietnam seems to have lead to a positive attitude towards English and the ensuing financial and temporal investment in their children’s learning English with much hope for their bright future. The impoverished conditions of some Khmer

families might have recovered and better living conditions have perhaps helped some Khmer parents to provide greater support for their children's education. Greater security in their own personal identity, the result of a change of attitudes and support of minority groups in Vietnam, may also contribute to the support of Khmer parents for their children's learning English. This support once again proves the immediate influence of family members on Khmer students in the microsystem of this ecology.

Students' self-awareness. The previous sections reveal the direct impact of family members on Khmer students. This bidirectional interaction may result in the increase of awareness of the value of education among Khmer students since their parents and elder siblings encourage them in learning all subjects, including English. This section presents the influence of Khmer students' awareness about their Khmer identity.

Khmer identity. As described in Chapter Four, Bronfenbrenner stated that achievement, educational intervention, and family factors all contribute to adolescent scholastic self-concepts (p. 298). With 95 % of students in the boarding school coming from a Khmer background in small towns and villages aspects of their Khmer identity are strongly reinforced. In addition to sharing an imaginary that they want to succeed in learning so that they can help their families, the student participants reveal that they are proud of being Khmer when interacting with other people in mainstream society. Truc [M], a grade 10 student, states that knowing and preserving Khmer customs and traditions is something to be proud of:

I am happy when speaking Khmer since I am Khmer. Um, I need to know Khmer traditions and cultures. When I was in primary school, I practised writing Khmer. My grandpa knows Khmer well. My sister only learnt Khmer in grade 1 or 2, so my parents want me to study Khmer well to inherit and promote the traditions of my family.

Similarly, Mui [M], a grade 11 student, shares his pride in speaking Khmer and Vietnamese: “I feel confident and proud of speaking Khmer and Vietnamese since I can speak my mother tongue and another official language.”

Living in a mainstream society, Ti [F] usually communicates with others in Vietnamese but she is still aware of her ethnicity. She states: “For Khmer, I don’t hardly speak Khmer these days, sometimes a sentence a week but I will try since it is my mother tongue and I am Khmer. Um- um, I am proud of speaking Khmer” (Ti, grade 11).

Based on the data collected for this study, a 2015 microsystem of Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development might be mapped out as in Figure 6. Note that factors that seem not to be relevant in the 2015 chronosystem have been crossed out and new factors written in red. For example, the participants in this study did not mention certain factors of relevance twenty years ago such as impoverished conditions of Khmer families, Khmer parent’s low literacy, Khmer ideology, or lack of exposure to Vietnamese. Although there was no data from this study to confirm or refute these factors, it is possible that some of these factors may still apply; however, they were not mentioned by study participants. Such factors appear in green in Figure 6. On the other hand, new factors emerged as influences on Khmer students’ English acquisition. For example, the student participants see their parents as models of multilingualism and sense their encouragement and financial support to embrace their English study at school while simultaneously embracing their Khmer language, culture, values and identity. The parents seem to place greater value on schooling and have higher hopes for their children’s educational success. More importantly, all participants have become more aware of the value of English for communication and economic growth of the country.

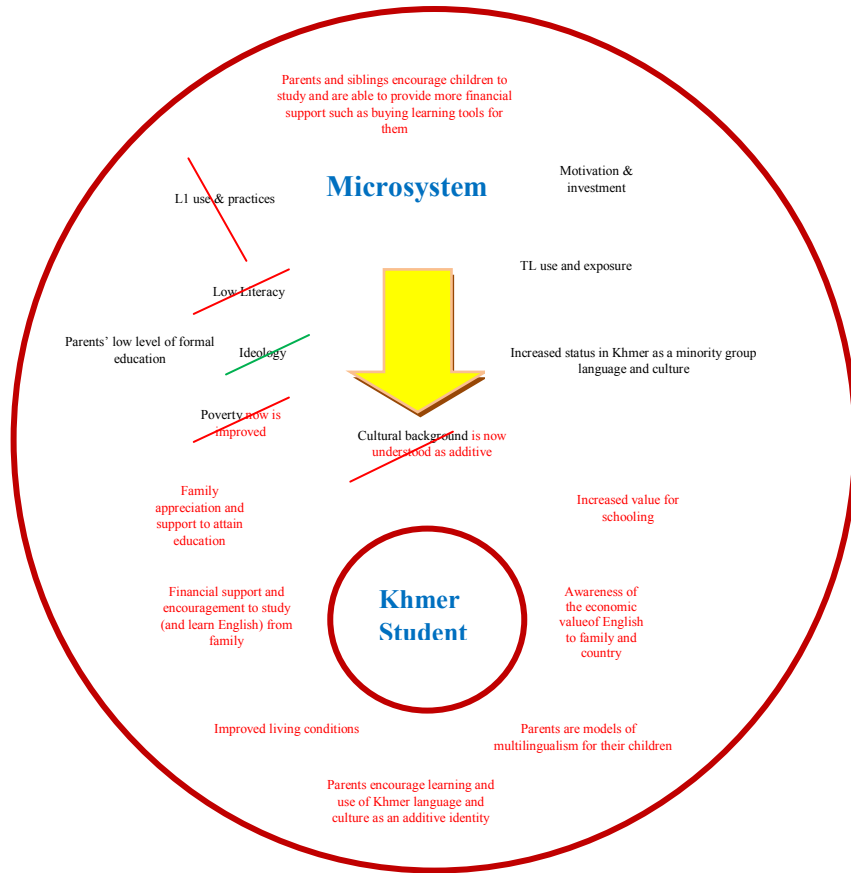


Figure 6: 2015 Microsystem

Mesosystem

As discussed in Chapter Four, Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem refers to the interconnected and interdependent relationships between members of the child's microsystems. This can be seen in the demand-force or push-pull factors in relationships between school life, the neighbourhood and the family. Students discussed lack of exposure to their home culture at school and the influence of teachers' assistance on learning English – factors previously identified in the chronosystem of twenty years ago. They and their teachers also identified the school structure and regulations and pressure to cover the curriculum as constraints in learning English and realized the role of English in the growth of the Vietnamese economy.

Lack of exposure to home culture at school. As stated previously, bicultural ambivalence fails to develop cultural identity, academic success, and social foundation in the process of learning English of Khmer students. A possible solution to this bicultural ambivalence is, as Mckay (2002) argued in the literature review, that teachers should enable students to share or reflect their own culture and establish “a sphere of interculturality” when learning English and not just provide English cultural elements to students.

According to Bronfenbrenner, when interacting with people in different microsystems in society, individuals' “personal stimulus” characteristics such as gender, skin color, and physical characteristics act as immediate stimuli to others, thus influencing initial interactions as both parties form immediate expectations of one another. Moreover, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argued:

Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material

structures that may become relevant to interaction. (p. 606)

In other words, when Khmer students with their own identity (one microsystem) interact with teachers and peers (other microsystems) and other people in mainstream society (another microsystem), their own perceptions and representations may influence and be influenced by others. Such multisetting interactions typically take place in Vietnamese and Khmer students quickly learn how their home language and culture hold a “minority” status. At school, students have the opportunity to learn Khmer as a subject, thus adding some positive value to their Khmer identity. However, as shall be discussed later, the structure of the school and English textbook either reduces opportunities to use Khmer or ignores its existence. As Tudge et al. (2009) noted, “A particular cultural group may share a set of values, but for any particular value system to have any influence on a developing person it has to be experienced within one or more of the microsystems in which that person is situated” (p. 209).

This factor reconfirms what Son (2008) found in his study presented earlier in this thesis, namely, that the textbook has no reference to Khmer culture. However, it is striking that the participant students and not the teacher participants recognized the absence of their home culture in the textbook and classroom. For example, Mui [M], a grade 11 student comments on the textbook:

I think the government should re-compile the textbooks for English to make it more interesting since it is now impractical but um, more intensive. As for culture, um, the textbook usually mentions cultures of foreign countries, which is not close to our experience. (Mui, grade 11)

Through my class observations, I noted that none of the teachers of English related anything about culture to their students. For example, after observing a 10A4 reading class on *Festivals*, my field notes stated:

The teacher did not explore much about the three pictures used to illustrate the festivals. She just asked the students to guess what the holidays were. The three pictures are rich in cultural information. The teacher could have taken the opportunity to introduce them to the students although she did not have any preparation or additional materials to illustrate more about the holidays.

It would be easier for the students to talk about one of their own festivals such as *Dolta*, *Ocombok*, or *Chol Chnam thmay* (Khmer new year) in the follow up activity in groups. This could have been discussed in English. When being familiar with something, they would confidently talk about it or be interested in the topic. This would make Khmer students understand more about diversity of celebrations in Vietnam as well as in the world.

These descriptions imply that Khmer students seriously lack resources of their home culture in both their lives at school and in representations of cultures of Vietnam in their English textbooks. This bicultural ambivalence may, as stated in Chapter Three, lead Khmer students not to develop a “cognitive/academic and social/emotional foundation” (Cummins, 1986, p. 661). Moreover, this lack of home culture presence may be the result of their living conditions and school regulations, which limit their chances to gain access to other cultures or linguistic settings after school, such as visiting the local museum or participating in the national cultural festivals. Additionally, since the textbook does not consider the diversity of ethnic minority groups’ cultures, Khmer students lack cultural space in the process of learning English. This is contrary

to Smith (2013) and Ruitenberg (2011)'s suggestion that to appreciate diversity and the value of different cultures students should see their own spaces in their learning. Additionally, in the mesosystem, Khmer students' interactions take place in different microsystems (home and school). According to Bronfenbrenner, the home environment and school do not function independently but interrelate together; however, the participants reported gaps in the connection between their home culture and the textbook, a factor that could impede their English learning. This lack of interesting knowledge and bridges between school, community and their home culture can distance Khmer students from subject content areas such as English at school. This access without diversity (Janks, 2006) confirms that "difference fundamentally affects pathways to access and involves issues of history, identity and value" (p. 2).

Teachers' assistance on learning English. In addition to interaction with family in their home environment (one microsystem), Khmer students are also influenced by their interaction with others, such as their teachers and peers in school (which collectively form the mesosystem). Students reported that their teachers were important agents of influence in their ability to learn English. Teachers facilitate students to explore as they learn in class and also play a crucial role in assisting students after school, as Meo [F], a grade 12 student states: "My teacher helps me wholeheartedly, and creates interest for students." Ti [F], a grade 11 student, describes how her teacher helped her succeed in learning English:

The factor helping me succeed in learning English is mainly my teacher who creates good conditions for me to study English. At school, um, if I don't understand something, my teacher is willing to answer any questions from the students and teaches grammar as well as pronunciation carefully. Um, my teacher also invests time in her lessons by letting us listen to dialogues with native speaker's voices.

More than that Hoi describes her teacher's care stating "studying here is fun and friendly since my teachers care for me like my parents." (Hoi [F], grade 10)

The student participants' descriptions of their teachers' help concur with the teacher participants' descriptions in this study. For instance, Hoa [F], a teacher of English describes what she did for her students in the hope that they would be able to compete on exams with their Kinh counterparts who have access to more private school resources for learning English:

The students strive to learn English. As you see when you observed classes, they pay attention to the lesson. Their attitude toward English is positive. Um, it is not because they are inattentive to learning but because of their ability. We always find out ways to help them um, in hopes that they will have some knowledge of English as Kinh students at public schools do to continue learning it at a university after three years studying here. I hope so.

Like Hoa [F], Cuc [F], another teacher of English describes how she worked hard to make the lessons interesting and suitable to the level of the students, especially scaffolding for the weaker ones:

There are many different levels of students in class. Ah, for those whose ability is weaker than the others, I spend more time on these students. In class, explaining the lesson is normal and equal for all students but I focus on helping the weaker students. For example, when handing out the exercises, I don't circulate to good students to see how they do but stand next to the weaker students to see how they do the exercises. I can prepare some more exercises for these students - easy exercises for them to review the English they have just learned. Frequently I ask them to recite their lesson, encourage and ask them to recite the lesson in every class. In that way, I can check them after every lesson. Ah, frequently

asking them to recite the lesson could create pressure but I don't use marks to force them. Perhaps, the student may not reach the requirement today, I let them know, or can use additional marks when reciting the lesson, but I do not use marks to create pressure on them.

The above descriptions indicate the crucial role that teachers of English at this boarding school play in helping their students learn English as an additive language and component of their identity. Since English is taught in a “closed” environment, teachers have to work hard to suitably adapt the textbook and update information to teach English to their students, as Hoa [F] describes:

I have to make great effort to redesign the lesson structures from the textbook, going back to the basic level, I have to find out many ways to teach so that when they look at the lesson they can be able to speak right away without looking for how to say it. Um, for speaking, provide them pronunciation and complete ways of speaking to model their speaking. If we give them an outline and ask them to speak, they couldn't do it since their vocabulary is very limited and their grammar is poor as well.

The role of the teachers in this boarding school is more than what Beltrán (2011) noted as, “A teacher is expected to control, instruct, guide, help and discipline pupils” (p. 3). Apart from teaching academic English to Khmer students, “teachers must be on duty at the self-study and eating time of the students. Watching them like a second mom, ah from their housing to sanitation” (Hue [F], teacher of English). The positive relationship with a teacher of a specific subject enhances the student's interest in the subject.

School structure and regulations. The boarding school milieu is another microsystem in which Khmer students closely interact with their teachers and peers. According to my field-notes

the structure and regulations of the boarding school affect the students' behaviour and development. For example, students are required to use Vietnamese in all public spaces, thus during meals in the cafeteria of the school they are required to use Vietnamese. Some students are allowed to go home to visit their family once a month, but on weekends and during the rest of the week, students engage in self-study and participate in school activities, sports, and recreation, also primarily in Vietnamese. The principal appears to be particularly supportive of student learning in general, giving students access to teachers during self-study hours to help them learn. Further, he encourages teachers to learn some Khmer to help their students. However, there does not appear to be an understanding that basic interactional phrases in Khmer do not satisfy students' needs for advanced or academic Khmer explanations and clarifications. As Hoa [F] stated "to do that, the teacher must be excellent in Khmer. Otherwise, it is very difficult to explain the lesson to them. This is difficult for us."

For obvious reasons of safety and security, the principal also restricts students from exiting the school compound. However, this regulation also makes it impossible for students to hear spoken Vietnamese in a variety of contexts or attend after hours English classes with specialist teachers. The latter seems to disadvantage Khmer students in writing examinations in comparison with their Kinh counterparts at other public schools. Due to the lack of outside world interactions, the Khmer students' English learning therefore relies primarily on teachers of English at school. For example, Cuc [F], a teacher of English explains her situation:

Apart from getting English knowledge from the teachers, they have no other English environment for them to study more since they are living in the school dormitory and are not allowed to go out. Letting them study English in a center for foreign languages to help

improve their English or listening to foreigners to improve their pronunciation is impossible.

Similar to Cuc, Hoa [F] compares the learning environment of Khmer students at her boarding school with that of students at other public schools:

Khmer students in this boarding dorm live in a closed environment. They are not allowed to go out to open their knowledge like Kinh students. Students at HD high school or NTMK high school can study English in many centers for foreign languages or tutorial centers after school.

These descriptions suggest that the design of boarding schools, while in the safety interest of adolescents, simultaneously limits opportunities for Khmer students to gain access to other social and material resources after school. Janks (2000) argued that “diversity without access ghettoises students” (p. 178). Lemberger and Clemens (2012) noted that self-regulation of schools “impacts both social-emotional skills and academic success in school contexts” (p. 1). Khmer students at boarding schools lack social interaction with other people in the society after school, such as meeting friends who live outside the school, studying English in foreign languages centers, or visiting an amusement park after classes. With only the indirect support of their teachers for learning English, success for disadvantaged students is limited, as Malecki and Demaray (2006) found. In their study students with lower socioeconomic status who have access to and are able to internalize social supports, such as those described above, had more opportunities to be successful in overcoming the impact of poverty and improving academic performance.

Another aspect of the school regulations worth mentioning is the relationship between parents and teachers. This boarding school has a Parent Association but according to the teacher

participants, Khmer parents did not play an active role in the school. For various reasons, many Khmer parents are unable to attend regular meetings of parents or actively ask teachers for information such as learning about the test results of their children. According to Bronfenbrenner, this weak transcontextual dyad of Khmer parents-teachers could negatively affect Khmer student development.

Covering the curriculum. The curriculum at school acts as another indirect agent of influence on students' academic growth and behaviour. It has three main goals: 1) to gain access to various fields like technology, biology, chemistry, or medicine; 2) to better understand diverse cultures in the world as well as to integrate international influences in communities (Nguyen, 2006); and 3) to enable students to communicate in simple real-life situations at the basic levels of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Accordingly, the new EFL textbooks are designed to enhance "real life" communication through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) .

Clear guidelines for implementing CLT are presented in EFL teachers' handbooks highlighting the combination of learner- centered approaches and the communicative approach for teaching foreign languages (Do, 2006). However, in reality, many EFL teachers still use traditional teaching approaches, the so-called 'dumb & deaf' teaching methods (Nguyen, 2006), or do not implement communicative approaches, including cooperative learning strategies, in keeping up with curricular guidelines. Khmer students are also taught English in a traditional way. Their EFL teachers report having to follow the textbook in teaching English even though it fails to achieve the general objectives. As Hue [F] states:

The textbook is a compulsory curriculum in Vietnam. Therefore, whatever we do, we have to follow the textbook. Apart from the curriculum, teaching the students is necessary but we have to cover the curriculum first. But basically we follow the textbook.

The way the teachers at the boarding school teach English to Khmer students also may exert a strong influence on their learning of English. According to the teacher participants in this study, they are under pressure to cover the curriculum, which they also acknowledge hinders their opportunities to teach the students. As Hoa [F] describes, “We have to ensure that we cover the content in the textbook composed by the MOET and ensure knowledge and time . . . teaching the students and covering the curriculum is related to each other.”

According to teachers because of pressure from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the teachers of English consider covering the curriculum more important than teaching the students. Hue’s remarks capture the perspective of all the teachers said:

it is really hard for the teachers to teach the students since we are required to teach the students with a given textbook. Ah, besides that, students in this school also have their different demands in reality since they are still weak. For me, teaching the students is also important because they need knowledge of English to continue their learning. However, covering the curriculum is more important than teaching the students because it is a must in this school. (Hue [F])

Hue [F], a teacher of English explains in detail what the boarding school expects the teachers to do with students’ needs:

High school students, uh for example students who take high school graduation exam only need to study grammar and writing. Those who choose to be interpreters or go abroad need to improve communication, but I can’t satisfy all of the needs of students. Ummm. Here basically, from the school’s perspective, we help the students to enter a university after finishing grade 12. Uh um, depending on the students’ need, we satisfy them. We will

explain this to them if their need exceeds the responsibility of high school, we limit them since we only help them graduate from grade 12, apply for a job, and enter a university.

From these descriptions, we probably see how the curriculum, which mainly focuses on teaching reading and grammar itself, offers challenges for teachers and students in learning English. Since the teachers cannot help students with communication and the school does not permit them to study English outside of the school, those who would like to learn English for communication may be on the horns of a dilemma. Kesidou and Roseman (2002) questioned whether students can develop deep understandings of the learning goals identified in the national standards with only textbook support. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter Three, to help Khmer students in successfully learning English, as Cummins (2001) suggested, curriculum for Khmer students should be considered as the collaborative creation of power, which acknowledges cultural, linguistic, imaginative, and intellectual resources that Khmer students bring to the boarding school.

The role of English in the growth of the Vietnamese economy. The student participants in this study see the importance of English for their future in modern society, no matter what their level of English proficiency. A good example of this is a description provided by Ma [M], a grade 10 student: “even though my English now is not good, I still see its value for my life in the future, so I will do my best to improve it.”

The response to global needs and changes in legislation may have not only enhanced the position of English, but also resulted in Khmer students’ understanding the role of learning English and in turn developing a positive attitude toward learning English. They can see the value in Vietnam’s financial investment in learning English for a better future, as Ma [M], a grade 10 student states:

English is a common language in the world. Um, it is good for the development and the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. It is also good for communication and students studying abroad. Um, for me, English is helpful for Vietnam and for our studying.

This appreciation of the value of English is not only for themselves but for the country as well. All the participants in this study assert this value. When asked about how English hinders or helps Vietnam, all of them strongly agreed that English would bring benefits for Vietnam's development. Dan [M]'s response is reflective of other participants' views on the value of English for Vietnam.

Like other friends said, our country is at the stage of international integration. Um, it will be too late to learn English after finishing college. It is therefore a good idea to learn English from secondary school to gradually accumulate English knowledge. Moreover, um, as a young economy, Vietnam needs to acquire the experience of other countries. Without English, it makes it harder for Vietnam in the process of using it in the reality of the country. Also, English is the common language of the world, so we must know and learn it from secondary and high school. (Dan, grade 12)

Perhaps these descriptions indicate Khmer students' vision of a world in which they will be living in the future. When discussing their learning of English at school, they explain the important role that English plays in the process of Vietnam's development. They see a strong connection between English and economic growth in the real world as well as the benefits of English for their life in the future.

Khmer students' awareness of the value of learning English is also confirmed by the teacher participants in this study. When describing the attitude of students towards English,

teachers comment that for those who have passion and interest in English, they have a good attitude towards learning it. For example, Hoa [F] states “the majority of students have a good awareness of why they are studying English. Although they do not study English well, I know their effort of learning English is good (Hoa, [F], teacher of English). However, “those who do not take English as a subject in the graduation exam, they do not invest as much time in English as we expect but their attitude towards it in general is good” (Cuc [F], teacher of English).

From these descriptions, Khmer students share a positive attitude towards English, seem to perceive English as important to their future, and also hold a stronger identity toward English. Their identity may change over time to suit the needs of social trends of development (Horst, Kirman, & Teschl, 2006) since they interact with other people in many different microsystems such as family members, teachers, and people in their community.

Khmer students who study English at school are also influenced by their teachers of English. The above quote suggests bidirectional influences between Khmer students and their parents and/or elder siblings, neighbours, peers, and access to their personal interests in English. The relationship between teachers and parents also indirectly influences Khmer students’ learning. The great care and commitment of teachers of English in this boarding school may also positively influence the attitude of Khmer students towards English. Whether English is their favourite subject or not, the students reported positive attitudes toward the subject via lessons at school or through mass media.

Based on the recent data in this study, new factors in the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development might be mapped out as in Figure 7. Note that factors that seem not to be relevant in the 2015 chronosystem have been crossed out and new factors written in

red. Arrows have been added to show some of the interconnections with factors in the microsystem.

As can be seen from Figure 7, the literature review in Chapter Three showed that the attitude of Khmer people toward Vietnamese was an important factor influencing their English language acquisition. However, the participants in this study have now come to more greatly value education and see English as a key to Vietnam's participation in global life, especially economically. They also confirmed other factors influencing their English learning as previously identified in the literature such as a lack of exposure to English and limited opportunities to use it; lack of cultural resources; and help and feedback from teachers. Three additional factors - school structure and regulations, pressure to cover the curriculum in teaching, and the role of English in the growth of the Vietnamese economy - also emerged from the data in this study.

Khmer students begin school with a strong sense of their own cultural identities and perspectives and this strong support of their traditional values and minority group culture continue through secondary school. However, the student participants, not their teachers, also recognized that their official minority group home culture is entirely absent from the textbook, as are any references to Vietnamese culture.

At school, teachers' help still remains an important factor influencing students' learning English as an additional language and component of their identity, a point appreciated by all of the participants.

The school structure and regulations appear to affect Khmer students' behaviour and development. They limit students to gain access to both Vietnamese and English.

The teacher participants indicate that they are under pressure to cover the curriculum in teaching English and recognize how this limits their attention to student learning.

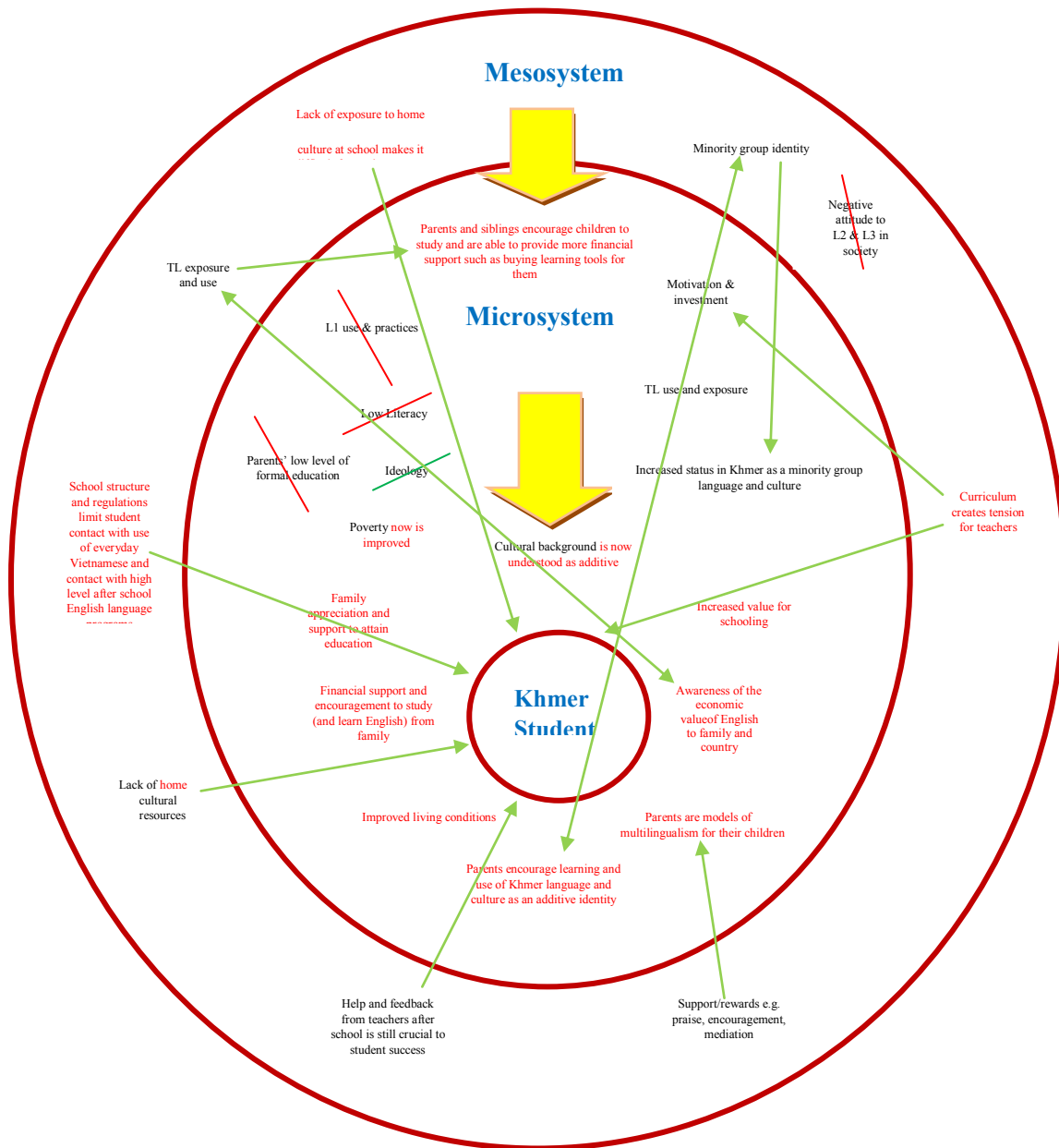


Figure 7:2015 Mesosystem

Exosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1977) notes the impact of the exosystem on the individual: “research on the ecology of human development requires investigations that go beyond the immediate setting containing the person to examine the larger context, both formal and informal, that affect events within the immediate setting” (p. 527). As noted in Chapter Four, the exosystem refers to the “invisible” structures influencing the child’s interactions in the society such as values and beliefs and what Anderson (1983) called the *imagined community*. This layer explains how other social factors indirectly influence Khmer students’ perspectives and development. The data collected in this study confirmed the continued presence of factors identified in the exosystem as presented in the literature review, namely language needs for future careers, further education opportunities, and socioeconomic status. This section will present current exosystem factors that affect Khmer students’ learning English as identified by students and teachers, namely their language needs in their imagined future career, further education opportunities, and socioeconomic status of Vietnam.

Language needs in their imagined future careers. According to the Khmer student participants in this study, English will help them “easily apply for a job in foreign companies” (Suu [F], grade 12). Meo [F], a grade 12 student, recognizes that “working with foreign companies without English” is impossible. Similarly, Dan [M], a grade 12 student, tries to study English well to work for foreign companies since it is better than working for domestic ones. He explains,

The main purpose of learning is to improve our life. Working for the foreign companies offers their workers a higher salary than that of domestic ones. Um, working behaviour and time of workers who are working in foreign companies are stricter. Foreign companies

offer more basic training than domestic ones. Um, infrastructure of foreign companies is also modern. Thus working in these companies brings its workers more experience. Um, whenever we work for domestic companies again, we can apply this working experience to improve the domestic ones.

The necessity of English for future careers seems most apparent to the grade 12 students as students in other grades did not reveal this awareness, or maturity. Since the student participants' perspectives align with those of the teachers in recognizing the value of English for their students after they complete school, teachers may also place more emphasis on this factor in grade 12 than in other grades.

The teacher participants in this study explain how English would help their students to apply for a job. As Cuc [F] states:

students and teachers also acknowledge that English has become popular and a common language in the world. English is therefore helpful for Vietnam and does not hinder our country. After high school, students can continue learning English at a university. English is a means for students to apply for a job uh, after they have finished their university.

Cuc (F) further compares opportunities of students with and without a certificate in English when applying for a job:

English is a means for students to apply for a job uh, after they have finished their university. Um, between two students applying for a job: one with a TOEIC or TOEFL certificate, one without it, employers would always consider, for sure, the one with the TOEIC or TOEFL certificate. Uh, English is required when applying for a job since Vietnam trades with other countries in the world. English therefore brings usefulness, without hindrance to Vietnam.

The descriptions above indicate a correlation between teacher and student participants' views of the benefits of English for the students' imagined future careers. This finding is further supported in the research results that Tran (2013) found on factors affecting teaching and learning English in Vietnamese universities. She concluded that "Most of them [students] suggested that English was essential for any university student who wanted to have a good job and a better future" (p. 141). Moreover, the result of Vietnam's integration with the outside world is that strong English proficiency is needed for job seekers in all sectors of the economy. That helps explain the reason why English is considered a key to helping students enter a desired working environment in the quickly developing foreign investment sectors, which offers much higher quality work and salaries. These social trends could well motivate Khmer students to learn English for a better future. Foreign companies are their imagined community, which may lead them to invest more in learning English.

Further education opportunities. In the exosystem, participants perceived the values to be gained by opportunities for higher education both personally and socially. According to the student participants the current trends of development in Vietnam require information technology and strong English competency for future education and advancement. For instance, Dau [M], a grade 11 student, argues that "with the inevitable trend of development of the country, English and information technology are necessary. Um, I will teach my children English and use my ability to help them acquire advanced knowledge and education for their future." Similarly, Ngo [F], another grade 11 student, asserts the role of English and information technology in the future by stating, "my children must know English in order to help them acquire modern information technology and develop it more perfectly as well as improve education." These descriptions once again indicate that Khmer students probably see English as

an essential means to future education and their future life and reveal how exosystem values act as internal motivators or forces.

The student participants agree with their teachers on the usefulness of English for future education. Hoa [F] believes that English not only helps youth achieve more education, but also facilitates cultural exchanges with people in other countries in the world:

if our society is bilingual in the future, it will be good for our young Vietnamese generation because if they use English as a second language, they will have a great chance to study, perceive new knowledge of scientific technology of other countries, and exchange cultures with different cultures of other countries in the world. Um, it is great for Vietnamese youth. I wish that in 10-20 years, minority students will be changed in a certain way.

From these descriptions, we see that all of the participants in this study hold a strong belief that English offers greater opportunities for future education. This change in attitude since the previous chronosystem was documented, may reflect awareness of the globalization process that has taken place as well as changes in the legislation of Vietnam's trade, business, educational, and political relations with other countries, which have led to a growing role for English. With the Vietnamese government changing its political direction in order to attract foreign investment there has been an increase in the demand for the use of English as a means of communication. Currently, English is being more widely used for international communication and its status has risen since the arrival of more foreigners (Nguyen, 2011). Moreover, the current data suggest that grade 12 students certainly seem to have an understanding of this direction for the future of society.

Improving socioeconomic status of Vietnam. Improving one's socioeconomic status in Vietnam exerts a strong and active influence on Khmer students. They believe that with the

current rate of economic and trade development of Vietnam, the country will develop quickly in the future and English will be extremely essential at that time. For example, grade 12 Thin's [M] prediction reflects the other student participants' perspectives as well:

I think our country will develop to be a trade center in the world. Um, we can exchange and integrate with the world economy, the central investment of foreign capital corporations. With English and our information technology development, um, we can invest in foreign countries, which actively contributes to making our country more developed and modern. I think English helps us very much such as participating in cultural exchanges, introduction of this country to another country or calling for investment in economic development in our country. So teaching English is necessary in our country, um especially in the remote areas.

In this description Khmer students present a vision of the world in which English plays a vital role in the development of economic and cultural exchanges. The country's economic growth and global integration together with changes of laws and influences of these changes in society could well be a lever for the students' changing identity which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Khmer students' ideas are in line with a teacher participant, who predicts:

Vietnam will at that time develop quickly like Singapore, uh, where people have been bilingual for a long time and changed from a poor country. In 10-20 years, bilingualism surely will happen. Uh, the youth may recognize the importance of English in everyday life. In modern society, the youth speak, of course, in several languages. Um, apart from mother tongue, they speak English when hanging out. The demand of teaching and learning English will be increasing and receive more care. Students will have better

awareness of learning English since while they are at school, they don't see the importance of English in society. Uh, when our society is bilingual, learning English will become normal and less challenging for students. (Cuc [F], teacher of English)

Hoa [F], another teacher, is confident to discuss the state of Vietnam's development in the future of their society. She also acknowledges the important role English plays in the future society.

English is considered a lever to help students develop their knowledge. The more advanced their knowledge is, the more they know about cultural identity and want to preserve cultural values of their own. Vietnam will be at that time extremely prosperous, but we cannot say that Vietnamese youth only speak English and forget Vietnamese. No, that will never happen.

While the teacher did not mention Khmer culture, students were aware of the assimilating forces of globalization: "when people focus on westernizing, traditional Khmer dress will not be seen in everyday life except for traditional festivals" (Dan [M], grade 12) and "if we just pay too much attention to English, our cultures will fall into oblivion" (Ty [F], grade 12).

These descriptions show how the power of English has had a strong influence on the development of Vietnam and minority groups like the Khmer. Although Wenger (1998) argues that imagined identity is influenced by both the practices we engage in and those we do not engage in, the teachers seem not to have been influenced by their contact with the Khmer. However, since Wenger also posits that "Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are not" (p. 164), the teachers seem true to both their Vietnamese mainstream identities and perhaps also to the goals of education to increase educational

opportunities for the minority Khmer, all of which must unquestioningly take place in Vietnamese.

Based on the recent data in this study, some factors in the exosystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development might be mapped out as in Figure 8. Note that factors that seem not to be relevant in the 2015 chronosystem have been crossed out and new factors written in red. Arrows have been added to show some of the interconnections with factors in the microsystem and mesosystem.

The literature review in Chapter Three indicated that natural and formal contexts for L1, L2, L3 and orthography and environmental print were important factors influencing Khmer students' learning English. However, the Khmer participants in this study did not mention these factors in the interviews. In fact, they assert that English will bring them great advantages for their future jobs and for Vietnam in general.

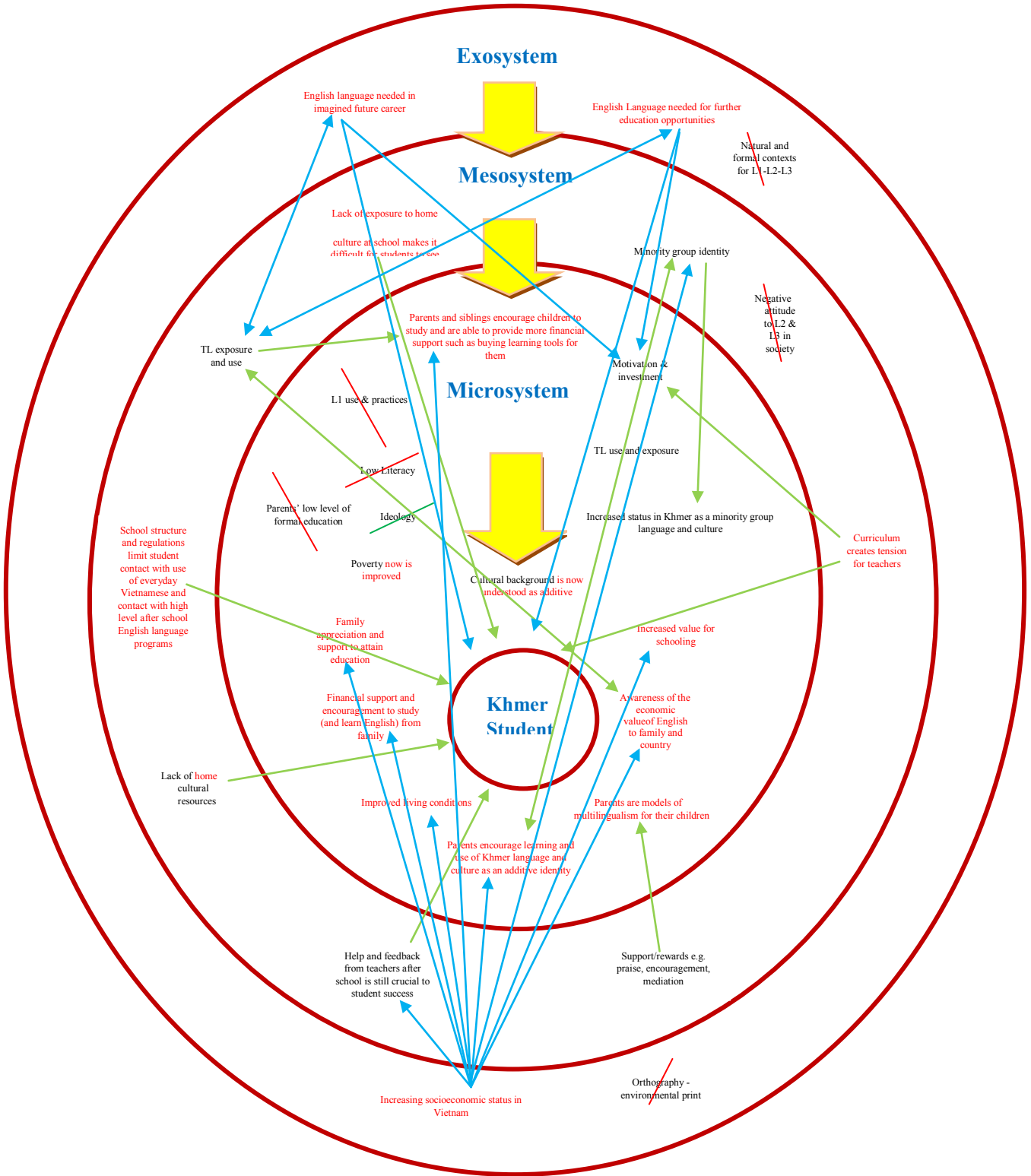


Figure 8: 2015 Exosystem

Macrosystem

As discussed in Chapter Four, the macrosystem refers to a broader cultural context in which the child grows up and includes policy, identity, laws, ideology, and culture. This layer is vital in this study as it reveals the influence on Khmer students' learning English in a broader context. The data collected confirmed factors previously identified in the macrosystem presented in the literature review. This section will describe the current factors influencing Khmer students' English acquisition according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) macrosystem, namely globalization, power of English, foreign language policy, minority language policy, and social equality.

Globalization. The effects of this larger principle defined by the macrosystem may have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers from Khmer students to boarding schools and the government. The global trend of English seems to have forced the Vietnamese government, like others, to change the language policies that affect language instruction at school, where teachers and Khmer students have to follow the curriculum assigned by MOET. According to the participants in this study, these multi-layer effects result in Khmer students strongly believing that English is an essential tool for Vietnam to keep pace with the world; for economic growth and development, Vietnam must open its doors to the world. Khmer students seem to care, understand and concur with the broader aims of the government to enhance their English skills so as to urge international integration of the country. For example, Ti [F] remarks "Vietnam is a developing country. If Vietnam wants to keep pace with the development of other countries, we must know their common language to study their experiences and thoroughly apply these experiences to our country to help its development" (Ti [F], grade 11).

Similarly, Hoi [F], a grade 10 student describes the importance of English in foreign relations, economic development and communication:

English is a compulsory subject in Vietnamese schools because it is a common language in the world, so we have to know it. Um, because each country tends to expand its relationship to other countries, it is therefore necessary for its citizens to study English for communications. Um, as for English, I agree with other friends that learning English well helps us apply what we read to our real life as well as exchange business with people in foreign countries. So we need to speak English. (Hoi [F], grade 10)

The teacher participants in this study are also all in agreement about the importance of English in modern society. For example, Cuc [F] states “I think these are trends in globalization. Among developing countries, Vietnam is in the process of global integration, which requires a means of language for basic communication.” Meanwhile, Mai [F], another teacher of English states:

our country is in the process of global integration. English is a common language and compulsory in Vietnamese schools. Um, it is necessary for not only studying but researching as well. English is necessary for everyday life. For example, when farmers buy fertilizer, they should know this word.

The above descriptions suggest that all the participants in this study are aware of the power of English and its role in the process of the global integration of their country. Mirabela (2001) noted that “the English language is a powerful leveler” for communication and that “this is already happening in that English is becoming the universal language of this global era” (p. 851). Therefore, in order to achieve true and complete globalization, we would have to eliminate language barriers and develop a universal standard according to which everyone could interact at

the same level of understanding (Mirabela, 2001, p. 851). The current data in this study imply that the participants seem to have a great imagined community and imagined identity which may lead to greater motivation, attitude, and investment in English. Giauque (1984) argued that great motivation and positive attitude are considered positive factors leading to the successful process of enhancing English teaching.

Furthermore, this change of Khmer attitude seems to run parallel to the voting of Vietnam for the UNDRIP⁷ in 2007, acknowledging the Khmer as a minority group, among others, and entitling them to learning Khmer in schools. In this same year Vietnam also issued a number of policies and programs especially designed to help ethnic minority development such as Project 2020 on learning English from grade 3 throughout the country as well as the Program to support ethnic minority households in especially difficult circumstances through provincial initiatives which targeted specific ethnic minority groups, especially those having very low populations and living standards. Although some data in this study suggests a positive change in impoverished conditions of the Khmer, there might still be a discrepancy in the socioeconomic conditions between minority families in urban as opposed to rural areas.

Power of English. The power of English may also be considered a part of the outermost layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological map as English is omnipresent in all interactions of the Khmer students. All of the participants in this study agree that English has played a crucial role in the development of modern Vietnam, especially its economic growth and communications. This belief was confirmed in the literature. For example, Do (2006) revealed that "social demands have forged the reemergence of English as the language for broader communication and cooperation. English has thus regained its role as the main foreign language taught and used

⁷ UNDRIP is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the United Nations in 2007. http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

in Vietnam.” Do (2006) further added “English proficiency is now seen as a vital requirement for employment. Furthermore, English has facilitated economic cooperation and development with an ever greater influx of foreign investment, mostly from capitalist countries which require English ability” (p. 2).

Students at all levels seem well aware of the influence of English on their country’s development as the following statements reveal:

in the future, English helps us exchange economic goods and culture with other countries. I think we can reduce the gap in development between our country and other countries. For example, since most of us speak our mother tongue, we can’t communicate with foreign investors, which hinders good foreign investment. (Than [M], a grade 11)

Export products are usually written in English. Um, if Vietnam would like to export any products to the world, we need a common language - English- to communicate and sign contracts with them. This is necessary to keep pace with the development. (Ma [M], grade 10)

English will help the economy of foreign investment, um the joint venture companies will open up with more contracts with each other. Knowing the common language would, therefore, be more convenient for business. Working with foreign companies without English cannot cooperate together to work well. (Meo [F], grade 12)

Seen as a common language in the world, English is considered by teacher participants to be a “leveler” for Khmer students to learn knowledge and exchange culture. With the power of

English in the world, teachers of English think that in the future, both their students and themselves will speak English, not their mother tongue. For example, Cuc [F] states:

I think students and teachers will talk to each other in English, not in their mother tongue, which is interesting, um, helping both teachers and students improve knowledge of each other. One different thing is the youth's point of view. Um, students may think of how to study and speak English well. Our society continuously develops. (Cuc [F], teacher of English)

These descriptions suggest that all of the participants in this study place high value on English not only in education and economic development but in intercultural and communicative interaction as well. This new vision of Khmer students is shaped by changes in legislation in Vietnam, which are explained by Yeo-Chua, Siew Kheng and Baldauf Jr (2011) as follows:

English has been regarded by many as the “ideal” globalised English due to early colonization and the current position of the US, which has enabled English to spread and infiltrate into almost every aspect of societies – institutions, agencies, business, education, science, religion, the media and the military. Moreover, the actors in these various organizations have responded to these global needs and changes by setting up policies, rules, and regulations, and by producing texts that further enhance the position of global languages, especially English. (p. 966)

Foreign language policy. Foreign language policy also belongs to the macrosystem and influences Khmer students indirectly. Even though the student participants in this study may have no idea how the terms of foreign language policy influence their acquisition of English, the teacher participants think that language planning and policy (LPP) have influenced English

language learning in Vietnam. For example, they believe that starting to learn English at a younger age is an asset for the learner and the country. As Cuc [F] states,

A foreign language is taught from grade 3 to grade 12. This foreign language policy helps students get access to a foreign language at an early age, which is a good foundation for them in English in high school. This is an advantage for them.

This description might well reflect the general trend of language policy and planning of the governments in many other countries as Baldauf (2004) revealed:

In many countries around the world, there is a move through LPP to increase exposure at an early age to foreign languages (especially English) in the hopes of increasing proficiency to join the knowledge economy. The development and impact of these programs and their impact on national, minority, indigenous and the teaching of other additional languages is a matter for LPP consideration. (p. 2)

As Chapter Two reveals, the Vietnamese government has changed its foreign language policy to strengthen the demands of society, which may be one of the consequences of globalization. As Hornberger and Vaish (2009) noted “Disadvantaged communities are increasingly demanding access to English so that their children can join a workforce that mandates knowledge of this language” (p. 305). Additionally, Yeo-Chua, Siew Kheng and Baldauf Jr (2011) revealed “LPP made at the international or national level is often tied to the external and wider demands of the society, and these demands are influenced by global needs” (p. 966). With this global trend, Do (2006) illustrated the increasing numbers of students and centers for foreign languages, especially for learning and teaching English in Vietnam’s fastest growing city, Ho Chi Minh City:

Ho Chi Minh City has the biggest number of both teachers and learners all over the country. As estimated by local educational administrators and researchers, there have been nearly 300 language centers with a teaching staff of ten thousand and over 900,000 learners attending different language classes. At the same time, there have been in existence language centers of universities, high schools, professional associations, government agencies, socio-economic organizations and private enterprises. In addition, a large number of foreign and joint venture language schools have been set up. These schools have attracted a good number of learners, mostly from better off families, thanks to their good investment and learning environment. (p. 8)

However, the teacher participants in this study assert that foreign language policy itself has still created a real problem for rural students and schools where there are no conditions for teaching and learning English, such as a shortage of teachers of English and learning facilities. For example, Hoa [F] reveals, “Minority students in rural areas have some difficulties. Vietnam still has some difficulties to train teachers of English for rural communes. The number of these teachers is not enough for current needs of communes.” Consequently, MOET has allowed students from rural schools to take substitute subjects for the high school graduation exam, which means that some students can elect not to write the English exam; this lowers their interest in participating in English lessons throughout the year, which in turn influences the overall classroom climate, not to mention the long term setback this causes in the workforce. Further, with the lack of access to additional resources beyond the school, Khmer students who choose to write the exam are additionally challenged. To illustrate how this is a challenge for teachers of English, Cuc’s (F) remarks:

Khmer students at boarding schools can substitute English for another subject in the high school graduation exam. Um, it is really challenging for teachers of English to teach English to students who take exams in the field of study of English because it is extremely difficult to provide enough English knowledge for the students to take that exam in the limited time provided. I find it challenging when students choose English as a subject in the high school graduation exam, which makes me happy but challenging for both students and teachers of English since it is difficult to help them get enough marks to pass the university entrance exam. (Cuc, teacher of English)

Minority language policy. As with foreign language policy, minority language policy also influences the English acquisition of Khmer students. Although the interviews suggest that the student participants do not know much about the minority language policy of the government, they seem to accept what learning in school offers to them. In contrast, teacher participants in this study appreciate this policy since it helps Khmer students preserve their written language, value traditions, and promote Khmer culture. For example, Cuc states, “As you see, many Khmer students speak Khmer fluently but don’t know written Khmer. Thanks to this minority language policy, they learn how to write in Khmer.” However, in reality, the minority language policy still brings problems to both teachers and students. A good example of this is Cuc’s (F) remark: “They have to spend more time in both languages - English and Khmer. Instead of spending eight hours a day on their learning. Now they have to spend one to two hours more on learning Khmer and English.”

Similarly, Hoa [F] also explains challenges in teaching:

I think I have some difficulties. The level of Khmer of Khmer students is not equal when studying in this school. Some Khmer students study Khmer in primary school while some

study it in secondary school, at home, and/or at Khmer pagodas. Um, this mixed ability class is challenging for the teacher.

Social equality. The previous section stated that there is disparate access to English among Khmer students living in urban and rural areas. Since English nowadays is the key to upward social and career mobility, additional inequalities in access to English are also noteworthy. Some of the students in this study reported that they start to study English in grade 3, others in grade 6, and still others only in grade 10. Khmer students residing in rural areas do not learn English as early as their counterparts in other areas due to a shortage of teachers and learning facilities. This can be verified through Decision No.50/2003 QD-BGD&DT, dated 30 October 2003, which specified that pupils in primary schools could learn a foreign language as an elective subject from grade 3 to grade 5, where there are adequate teaching conditions as well as demands from pupils and parents. The result of this is that many schools in rural areas cannot meet the minimal requirements and thus do not offer English to students. When Khmer students reach high school level, they all sit in the same class; their varied levels of English create challenges for both teacher and students, as Hoa's (F) narration illustrates:

I asked them when they studied English. Some told me they began to study English in grade 8. In grade 9, since there was no teacher of English, they stopped studying English. I began to study again at this school, we use three EFL textbooks introduced in 10th to 12th grade instead of seven EFL textbooks introduced in 6th to 12th grade. I am teaching basic knowledge of English to them.

The literature review of twenty years ago, presented in Chapter Three, identified factors from the macrosystem that influence Khmer students' English acquisition such as policy, laws, ideology and culture. However, the participants did not explicitly mention ideology, cultural

interest and colonialism in the interviews. Yet, their comments imply the presence of processes such as colonialism, Americanization and globalization. For example, “I think {in the future}, everyone will know and communicate with each other in English and use technology from foreign countries well to help develop our country” (Suu, [F] grade 12). Similarly, Cuc [F], a teacher of English states: “I think students and teachers will talk to each other in English, not in their mother tongue.” The study participants’ comments also suggest that the global trends of English have had a cascading effect on both Khmer students and the government. They consider English an important and pervasive tool for economic growth and communication. Further, foreign language policy affects not only the learning of English by Khmer students but by their teachers, schools, and the whole society as well. Meanwhile, minority language policy helps them preserve and promote their traditional values and culture. These two language policies bring both opportunities and challenges for Khmer students, their teachers, and schools. Finally, Khmer students living in urban and rural areas do not have equal access to English and Khmer.

Based on the recent data in this study, some factors in the macrosystem of Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development might be mapped out as in Figure 9. Note that factors that seem not to be relevant in the 2015 chronosystem have been crossed out and new factors written in red. Arrows have been added to show some of the interconnections with factors in the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem.

In general, the data about current factors influencing Khmer students’ learning of English obtained in this study could be used as a baseline of data for future research.

Chapter Seven

Findings as Interpreted through the Lenses of Hornberger's Language Policy and

Planning, Norton's identity theorizing and Janks' Critical Theory

This study was designed to explore factors that influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. Having presented an interpretation of the data through Bronfenbrenner's sociocultural ecological systems theory in Chapter 6, in this chapter, I will now revisit the data about both English and Khmer language learning and critically interpret it through the theoretical lenses of Hornberger's language policy and planning and Janks' critical theory. Into the section pertaining to Hornberger I integrate factors relating to Norton's identity theorizing.

The chapter will begin by using Hornberger's language policy to discuss the issues of current implementation of language policies in Vietnam. The result of changes in legislation suggests a greater appreciation of English by Khmer students. Through a discussion of status planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning, we see an increasing awareness of economic value of English to Khmer families and the country. However, the status of minority languages like Khmer may not have actually risen despite the changes of language policies and laws in Vietnam. The chapter then continues with a discussion of Janks' theory of critical literacy, consisting of concepts of domination, access, diversity, and design, to sociocultural factors influencing English acquisition of Khmer students.

Nancy Hornberger's Frameworks and Models in Language Policy and Planning

In Chapter Four Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning. This section revisits status planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning of

Hornberger's frameworks and models of language policy and planning in light of the new data obtained in the interviews with students and teachers.

Status Planning

As can be seen in Chapter Four, Hornberger (2006) defined status planning as “efforts directed toward allocation of functions of languages/literacies in a given speech community” (p. 28). As we see from the literature review, Vietnam has its own language policies that direct the roles and functions of languages in society. This section will revisit minority language policy, foreign language policy, imagined language community, and investment to critically see how Khmer students' English learning is affected by these factors. The latter two points relate to identity.

Minority language policy. Vietnam, a multilingual country, is in the process of developing its economy and has its own minority language policy targeted at fifty-three ethnic minority groups. The 1980 Decision 53-CP prescribed learning Vietnamese as compulsory. Bilingualism was endorsed. Learning the romanization of ancient scripts such as Cham, Thai, and Khmer and spoken languages was voluntary. Despite some challenges in the practice of implementation, Decree 2/2010/NĐ-CP on 15/7/2010 still prescribed teaching and learning ethnic minority languages. In the case of the Khmer, from the literature review, we see that it is taught at boarding schools and pagodas (places of worship or monasteries) and used in Khmer communities. After voting for UNDRIP in 2007, Vietnam issued a number of programs aimed at minority groups' development. Although not a minority language policy, Decision No. 32/2007/QĐ-TTg dated in 2007 of the Prime Minister on loans for production development in ethnic minority households with special difficulties was considered to be successful in helping improve ethnic minority groups' living conditions. This, in turn, as presented in Chapter Six,

improved the living conditions of minority groups including Khmer people, and seems to have resulted in an increase in the number of Khmer students going to school and having access to higher levels of education.

However, their language status appears to have improved much less since the Khmer culture (and that of other minorities) is still not mentioned in the textbook. In other words, learning Khmer has not yet become an interest for other majority and/or minority groups [except perhaps, for staff working in minority areas who are encouraged to learn Khmer]. To illustrate this point, during the focus group interviews the teacher participants did not think of Khmer seriously. In addition, my field-note observations on Khmer language teaching in Soc Trang shows that there is no public Khmer classes open to Kinh or Chinese people in the communities. Taking Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning into consideration, the recent minority language policy in Vietnam seems to have been issued just to maintain, sustain, and promote minority cultures and traditional values of minority groups in their communities. The changes in policies might have helped the minority groups, including Khmer, to improve their socioeconomic status but the status of minority languages has not yet improved/risen in the mainstream society. Moreover, as stated earlier, the students emphasized national interests instead of individual and local interests, such as minority communities' interests. Since placing national interest above individual and community interest will make minorities and individuals less important and have less opportunities to assert their rights, there seems to be a need for more education within the country about languages, language policies, and the weaknesses of the minority language policy. There is also a need for more data to explore if the impact of the recent minority language policy in Vietnam has sustained and/or increased the vitality of minority languages.

Foreign language policy. As with minority language policy, foreign language policy also influences Khmer students. A number of policies on foreign languages were issued in Vietnam. A policy to open Vietnam to the world is exemplified through the Government Resolution No 14/2005/NQ-CP on substantial and comprehensive renewal of Vietnam's tertiary education in the 2006-2020 period. With the Higher Education Reform Agenda, the Vietnamese government aims to "formulate a strategy on international integration, raise the cooperation capacity and competitiveness of Vietnamese tertiary education" (p. 7). More specifically, the Vietnamese government issued several language policies and planning measures. "Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper, 1989, p. 45). Decision 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT is an example among language policies and planning measures. Decision 3321/QĐ-BGDĐT passed in 2010 provided a clearer guideline on implementation of pilot English language programs at the primary level (refer to Chapter Two for more detailed information on these foreign language policies). In addition to language learning for students, the government has invested in language training for teachers as well. Tran (2013) described how the government has invested in English training:

The Vietnamese government also seems to prioritise this goal when it has signed numerous agreements with foreign partners and also spent its own budget to send English language teachers overseas for training. Many teachers have been back bringing with them new teaching methods and different research perspectives which all potentially contribute to the process of enhancing English language teaching and learning at tertiary level in Vietnam.

(p. 138)

We see in Chapter Six, how the results of the global trends of English and these policies may lead to a significant increase in the number of students and centers for foreign languages in Vietnam. This fact indicates the positive effects that changes in foreign language policy have had on learning English in Vietnam. English is essential for Vietnam to develop its economy and interact with others in today's sociopolitical world. Perhaps, with the effects of language policy changes, more people including Khmer in Vietnam will come to appreciate the important role of English in modern society. The following statements of the participants in this study illustrate this point:

Vietnam is a developing country. If Vietnam wants to keep pace with the development of other countries, we must know their common language to study their experiences to thoroughly apply these experiences to our country to help its development. (Ti, [F], grade 11).

If Vietnam would like to export any products to the world, we need a common language – English - to communicate and sign contracts with them. This is necessary to keep pace with the development. (Than, [M], grade 11)

In my opinion, English is good for us because now our country is at the stage of industrialization, modernization and involved in the international integration process. (Suu, [F], grade 12).

These comments indicate the participants' appreciation of the economic value of English for the economic development of the country. However, there is, as presented in Chapter Six,

evidence that Decision No.50/2003 QD-BGD&DT may result in unequal access to English among students living in urban and rural areas. Therefore, more education is needed within the country about languages and language policies, and their shortcomings, as well as the effects of Anglicization. Khmer students need opportunities to learn English in order to compete with their counterparts in mainstream society, but this should be done without threatening their minority identity.

Imagined language community. As discussed earlier, the language policies the Vietnamese government has passed influence both Khmer students, their teachers, and the whole society. A good demonstration of this in the study is how the participants formed their own imagined language community in learning English. The term imagined community was first introduced by Anderson in 1991, who observed that nations are imagined communities, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Norton (2001) then applied this term in SLA theory. According to Norton and Toohey (2011), communities “include affiliations, such as nationhood or even transnational communities, which extend beyond local sets of relationships. Such imagined communities may well have a reality as strong as those in which learners have current daily engagement, and might even have a stronger impact on their investment in language learning” (p.422). An imagined language community therefore exerts a positive influence on the Khmer students’ learning of English and creates motivation for them to study English. Unlike the research results on motivation to study English presented in the literature review (the subjects in these studies study English because they want to engage with culture through music (Marten and Mostert, 2012), talk to friends (Marten and Mostert, 2012), travel or spend time in an English-speaking place (Chung and Huang, 2010)),

Khmer students are motivated to study English for their future work, study and use, which aligns with the research of Chung and Huang, (2010) who found that their subjects study English to pursue a better life in the future.

This section will discuss current findings on the influence of global trends of English and current language policies in Vietnam on Khmer students' imagined language community. Khmer students describe both imagined personal and professional benefits, including possible career paths that English can offer them. In the Khmer students' imagined community, Khmer minority group identity still exists.

Imagined personal and professional benefits. Both students and teachers describe the new doors that English might open for them and thus their enhanced desire to learn English. Some of their imagined futures are described below.

Being a tour guide. When Tuat [F] was young, she dreamt of becoming a tour guide. “When I was young, I wished to be a tour guide. I wanted to learn English since a tour guide could speak English to his/her tourists So now I do my best to study English” (Tuat [F], grade 10). Her desire to be a tour guide is a powerful motivator for her to learn English and make her dream come true. This strong motivation might lead her to invest in learning English since a desired community “offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 415). This positive change of language identity of Khmer students can be linked to the changes not only in the economy but also in other aspects of Vietnamese society since Vietnam decided to expand its relations with other countries despite their different political systems and to adopt a market-oriented economy in 1986. With such open-door policies, tourism in Vietnam has developed, attracting more international visitors. Thus, Khmer students might have more chances to interact with tourists. This reality of the development of tourism in

current society in Vietnam likely influences Khmer students to prepare for language needs for a future job as a tour guide. The above description suggests that current foreign language policies help Khmer students connect their relationship to the world and understand the possibility for the future via their imagined language community. This appears to be one of the positive impacts of foreign language policies in Vietnam.

Studying abroad. From the previous Chapter we can see that with the effects of the global trends of English and current changes of foreign language policies in Vietnam, there is an increase in the number of foreign languages open to Vietnamese learners to satisfy their language learning needs. Interacting with social and material resources, Khmer students may have more educational opportunities to respond to their needs. This in turn influences their force characteristics, such as a desire to study abroad. Having a plan to study abroad to improve knowledge after high school motivates grade 12 student Dau [M]:

My objective in learning English is to be able to apply for a job after high school and go abroad to improve my knowledge. Um, to achieve this goal, I try to study English to communicate with others in a foreign environment.

In the future, social resources or capital such as knowing English may well help bring great opportunities for students to study abroad. This is something that many of them could not currently carry out due to their limited English proficiency. Khmer student participants in this study might see benefits to students who are studying abroad for the development of the country. Tuat's response is reflective of the other participants' views:

Students at that time will have enough conditions to study abroad easily. Now many students would like to study abroad but their English is not good, so they can't. Um, in a

bilingual society, talented students studying abroad can bring more benefits to our country.

(Tuat [F], grade 10)

Norton (1997) argued identity is the way people understand the possibilities for the future.

The above descriptions indicate the contextual influences on Khmer students' developmental trajectories. The fact that Khmer students see the relationship of studying abroad and serving their country afterwards, suggests a positive change in their identity. This positive language formation of Khmer students might be closely connected to the changes of foreign language policies which prescribed that English is a major foreign subject taught at schools.

Working in a foreign company. From the discussion in the previous section, the foreign language policies have had a positive influence on both individuals, schools, and the whole society. It is further conceivable to suggest that the future might also hold an increase in the need for English in the Vietnamese job market. Interacting in a social context where there are more foreign companies investing in Vietnam may also exert a strong influence on Khmer students' development since these companies will recruit local employees, including Khmer. Thus, getting a job in a foreign company after finishing school is a general objective of many students. According to the participants in this study, working in a foreign company will bring them benefits, so they hope that after graduation they will have a chance to work in a foreign company. To make this dream come true, they increase their effort to study English. For instance, Suu [F], a grade 12 student described her objective:

My present objective of learning English is to do my best to study English for future use.

For example, with English, I can easily apply for a job in foreign companies. Nowadays, English is widely used in many fields such as computers, so I do my best to study English to achieve my objectives.

The above descriptions help us see that language policies and the imagined language community are force characteristics for Khmer students learning English. The more they are motivated to work in a foreign company, the more determined they are to study English in a better way. Both Khmer students and their teachers agreed on the opportunities English brings people in applying for a job. For example, Cuc [F], a teacher of English states, “After high school, students continue learning English at a university. English is a means for students to apply for a job uh, after they have finished their university.”

The needs of future imagined languages. The choice of English as a foreign language taught at schools, prescribed in the foreign language policy, greatly influences education, especially higher education. Languages and plurilingualism have possibly continued to leave their imprint on the society where Khmer students interact. Atasoy (2013) noted that “languages shape how we think about the future, and how we plan for it.” Similarly, Chen (2013) found that languages with obligatory future-time reference lead their speakers to engage in less future-oriented behaviour. On savings, the evidence is consistent on multiple levels: at an individual’s propensity to save, to long-run effects on retirement wealth, and in national savings rates. (p. 46)

Both the student participants and the teacher participants imagine the same influence of English on the future education in Vietnam. They all reveal an appreciation for the value of English for future education as the following statements illustrate:

My children must know English in order to help them acquire modern information technology and develop more perfectly as well as improve education. (Ngo [F], grade 11)

With the inevitable trend of development of the country, English and information technology are necessary. Um, I will teach my children English in my ability to help them acquire advanced knowledge and education for their future. (Dau [M], grade 11)

Speaking English will make communication among people richer in terms of acquiring knowledge from books, newspapers, or mass media in English. Um, With English, we can understand knowledge easily (Mui [M], grade 11).

Our country is in the process of global integration. English is a common language and compulsory in Vietnamese schools. Um, it is necessary for not only studying but researching as well. English is necessary for everyday life. (Mai [F], teacher of English)

The above descriptions imply the effects of language choice in the foreign language education policy on the Khmer students' imagination of the value of language in education in the future. It shows how related systems of home, school, society, and government policies directly and indirectly influence Khmer students. In other words, language policies of the government can bring into play positive effects for individuals, schools, and society.

The imagined language identities of Khmer students also include use of Khmer. Ty [F]'s statement is reflective of all the student participants' views:

I will for sure teach Khmer to my children since I am Khmer. Um, my mother tongue is Khmer, my children have to know Khmer, um, even I would like him/her to know more about Khmer to preserve the tradition of Khmer. (Ty [F], grade 12)

Ty's statement suggests her strong appreciation of Khmer as her identity in her imagined language community, which will be discussed in the next section. This is different from their teachers of English, who did not mention Khmer language use in the focus group interviews. Instead, the teachers imagine that English someday will become a *lingua franca* in Vietnam while the students say they will never get rid of Khmer. "I will teach my children Khmer because I am Khmer, so I have to preserve Khmer identity, language and spirit. I won't let them fade with time." (Thanh [M], grade 10). Norton and Toohey (2011) argued that "context 'pushes back' on individuals' claims to identity, individuals also struggle to assume identities that they wish to claim" (p. 420). The point here is that it is Khmer students, not their teachers, not even their Khmer teachers, who show strong Khmer identity in their imagined language community. This is one of the most striking points I have noted in this study. I am wondering which imagined language community is more realistic and what happens when young people show their strong identity and their imagined community. Khmer is present in Khmer students' imagined language community while their teachers do not think about it except when they talk positively about Khmer such as when they stated that the principal wanted them to learn some Khmer. This appears to be a gap in understanding between Khmer students and their teachers and suggests the need for more education about languages and language policies.

Minority group identity. Khmer students' imagined community in this study includes their Khmer identity. Khmer students begin school with a strong sense of their own culture and perspectives, if not considerable exposure to their language. The role of their home culture is present in all of their interactions with the mainstream culture in society and school, though they may not be aware of how the demand for use of Vietnamese limits their use of Khmer in school. For example, when Khmer students gain access to other cognitive and social resources such as

interacting in the dormitory, requesting or preparing food in the public kitchen at school, participating in festivals organized at school, and engaging in educational opportunities appropriate to their needs, they are expected to use Vietnamese in their interactions. Moreover, different force characteristics such as motivation and persistence also may influence their developmental trajectories in the process of social interaction. According to the participants in this study, both Khmer parents and students have a strong desire to learn Khmer in order to preserve and promote their traditions and customs. An example of this is in the description of how Truc [M]'s parents wanted him to learn Khmer. "My sister only learnt Khmer in grade 1 or 2, so my parents want me to study Khmer well to inherit and promote the traditions of my family" (Truc, grade 10).

If students have a strong minority group identity, they can still learn a third language. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) state, "identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction" (p. 587). "Ethnic identities can change even in the short term as individuals combine and recombine elements from their fixed set of attributes differently" (Chandra, 2006, p. 22). For now, Khmer is spoken among neighbours in the students' home communities. For example, Dau [M] states: "I was born and grew up in a Khmer village. Since they are Khmer, so they only speak Khmer at home and at work. There is almost no English." Living in a Khmer community, communicating with neighbours in that community and feeling a belonging to that community also influence their decision to pass down their own language to the next generation together with teaching them English as grade 12 student Thin [M] states:

I will teach my children Khmer and let them learn English earlier because in 20-30 years, our country will have developed. English will be very necessary at that time. Um, therefore, learning English at an early age will help them improve their English knowledge

for communication, which will be an advantage for them compared with their counterparts of the same age.

Investments. The previous discussions help us understand the close relationship between personal investment and language policies and an imagined language community. Norton and Toohey (2011) noted that this construct “seeks to make meaningful connections between a learner’s desire and commitment to learn a language and their changing identities” (p. 420). According to Bronfenbrenner (2001, 2005), there is a relationship between biological and genetic aspects of a person. Khmer students with force characteristics dealing with differences of motivation may be indirectly influenced by language policy and the global trends of English, as well as the social and historical relationship between language learning and power (Peirce, 1995). The power of English in contemporary society pulls Khmer students to study English. Khmer students with high motivation to learn English for future use may well invest more time in learning the language.

This section will present findings related to how students invest in their English learning, namely, using learning strategies, calling upon teachers and friends, reviewing what has been taught, and taking their own initiative to encounter English through books, music, English websites, and television.

Using learning strategies. In the proximal processes, Khmer students interact directly with their teachers, textbooks, and peers. Their mental and emotional resources such as past experiences, skills, and intelligence are influenced by agents such as teachers, textbooks, and peers. These influences may result in the actors forming their own ways/strategies/processes for learning English. The student participants in this study describe multiple creative ways to improve their English. Not being allowed to study English in after school classes at the center

for foreign languages after school classes, they describe teachers and friends' strategies that helped them overcome confusion and seek clarity. The boarding school milieu makes access to peers, especially capable peers, easy, as grade 11 student Than [M] describes:

When I have difficulties in learning English, uh, I usually ask people who know it such as my teacher in class, older students, and other friends learning English well. Um, I try to learn English harder when doing exercises wrong or getting bad grades.

When studying English, if there were something I did not know, I asked my teacher after class. I messaged my older friends to ask what I did not know at home. Um, once they did not know the answer, I took notes to ask my teachers later in the class.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the learner's investment in the target language seems tightly nested within his/her desire to learn and practice it. As Norton (2013) argued,

if learners “invest” in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. As the value of language learners' cultural capital increases, so learners' sense of themselves, their hopes for the future, and their imagined identities are reassessed. Hence there is an integral relationship between investment and identity, an identity which is theorized as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle. (p. 6)

From Norton's arguments, the investment of Khmer students in learning English is closely associated with their desires to learn this language. They understand that with good English, they may find a good job, have opportunities to pursue higher education, or even study abroad. This is, in turn, good for both themselves and their own country. This likely helps us see that even though Khmer students do not study in a good English environment, they still find their own

ways to invest in English. It is likely the economic value of English that motivates Khmer students to invest in learning English for both personal and social benefits.

Calling upon teachers and friends. Asking friends and teachers is another way that Khmer students invest in learning English since studying in a boarding school milieu, the main source for them to improve their English is their teachers of English and friends. According to the student participants in this study, in class, they paid more attention to the teacher's explanation and asked teachers questions they did not understand after class and friends in the school dormitory. Hoi [F], a grade 10 student, also shares her own way to improve English, similar to that of Than [M]:

To improve my difficulties, I pay more attention to my teacher's explanation and note how to pronounce the words the teacher modeled. Um, at home, I write them down repeatedly to remember them.

The above description indicates that chances to gain access to learning resources outside the boarding school are limited due to the boarding school's regulations. However, despite some restricted resources for learning English, they still invest in their successful learning.

Reviewing what has been taught. Studying in the "closed" milieu of a boarding school, Khmer students have to find their own strategies to succeed in learning English. According to the student participants, before asking teachers of English or friends for help, many reviewed by themselves what they had been taught in class by practising writing, learning vocabulary, and doing homework given by the teacher. For example, Truc [M], a grade 10 student notes, "My learning experience is that after class, when the teacher gives vocabulary and/or grammar exercises, I write those words down and learn them by heart." Similarly, Ma [M], a grade 10 student, describes his own experience in learning English, similar to that of Truc [M]:

When my teacher gave us vocabulary, I wrote them out and put the list on my table to learn it visually. Um, in high school, I don't study vocabulary in that way. Instead, I write new words out repeatedly to remember them.

Similar to Truc and Ma Suu [F], a grade 12 student describes how she learned English through help from her teacher:

I started to listen to English music via many interesting English songs and watched English movies with Vietnamese subtitles to accumulate my vocabulary gradually. Um, besides that I learned five new words a day from a dictionary as my teacher suggested. When forgetting new words, I looked back to review them. I continued studying English in that way until grade 8 and knew a lot of new words. Um, as for grammar, my teacher helped me review tenses, gave me lots of exercises, and recommended many English grammar books to do. I bought a lot of books such as *Quick ways to study English*, *1001 basic English sentences* to read whenever I had free time. Um, since then I was so excited to study English and my English results have improved.

From the descriptions of the participants in this study, it is possible for us to see Khmer students have their own awareness of independent studying and may not rely on their teachers and friends for help, if unnecessary. Their motivation and desires to learn English may lead to more investment in acquiring this language accordingly. We might also infer from the above statements that Khmer students have very limited access to diversity of learning resources, which will be revisited in the next part of this chapter. The above description indicates that chances to gain access to learning resources outside the boarding school are limited due to the boarding school's regulations. However, despite some restricted resources for learning English, they still invest in their successful learning.

From my field-notes it is clear that translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2009) is also a commonly used strategy and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Taking their own initiative to encounter English through books, music, English websites, and television. The above sections indicate the connection between global trends of English, language policies and students' formation of their language communities, all of which contribute to desires to learn English. Their desires to learn English lead them to invest more in learning English. As noted by the participants in this study, apart from reviewing what the teacher taught in class, Khmer students invest their time in studying English via mass media, English websites such as *esllab.com* on the internet, books, and dictionaries. For example, Thanh [M], a grade 10 student, describes how he improved his vocabulary: "I can study English on the internet or television. Um, watching television and listening to music help me improve my vocabulary." Similarly, Dau [M] was interested in doing exercises on an English website: "I try to do some sample tests in English at different levels. A friend of mine recommended a good website (*esllab.com*) for me to practise listening. Um, I find this website useful and interesting" (Dau [M], grade 11).

Similar to Thanh [M] and Dau [M], Suu [F], a grade 12 student, describes how she practices English:

I knew how to study English from websites on Facebook. Um I usually got access to websites to study 30 minutes to study English every day, some questions in English communication, and many other websites. Um, I spent time studying English vocabulary everyday such as vocabulary about trees, flowers, and animals. I improved gradually from studying vocabulary via face book.

These descriptions suggest that Khmer students' interests in learning English develop through interacting with the internet and mass media. In addition to the above descriptions my observation in their dormitory recorded seeing many of them listening to English music via ipods and gaining access to English websites to do English exercises. Also, in the afternoon, many students participated in an English Online Contest in a computer room although the access to this room was limited. Student comments unanimously reported that they spent time on English and had positive attitudes and desires to learn English.

The findings on investment of Khmer students support Norton's (2000) argument presented in my literature review: Khmer students may develop their own identity towards social activities such as living abroad and communicating with others in English via the internet or mass media. Their imagined community and desires to live abroad where people often communicate with one another in English or learn English for future benefits pulls them to invest more in learning English by asking their teachers difficult questions or practicing English on the internet.

In addition to attributing their success in learning English to their positive attitude, serious study habits, access to resources such as websites on the internet, mass media, songs, and an English contest, all Khmer student-participants gave credit for their successes to their teachers. This resembles the external success attributions in the research results of Gray (2005) and Besimoğlu, Serdar, and Yavuz (2010) presented in Chapter Three. Ngo's attribution reflects that of the other students:

The factor helping me succeed in learning English is my teacher, who wholeheartedly teaches English to me, which motivates me to learn English. My teacher creates an

interesting classroom atmosphere for us to learn English, not very stressful. My teacher also helps me a lot. (Ngo, [F], grade 11)

The role of the teacher in students' learning of English is reinforced by teachers as well. Cuc [F], a teacher of English, attributes her students' success as follows:

my way to help my students succeed in learning English is to help them see my enthusiasm in teaching in order to have a better attitude towards learning English and create their interests in learning English. Um, getting angry at them, ignoring them, or not asking them questions makes the situation worse.

Acquisition Planning

In Chapter Four Hornberger (2006) refers to acquisition planning as “efforts to influence the allocation of users or the distribution of languages/literacies, by means of creating or improving opportunity or incentive to learn them or both” (p. 28). The literature review reveals that acquisition planning applies to Khmer students, who have to study in Vietnamese as a main medium at schools. Besides, they also learn Khmer as a reward subject at the boarding high school. It is clear in the macrosystem section earlier in Chapter Six that the implementation of both foreign and minority language policies offer Khmer students and their teachers both benefits and struggles in reality. Knowledge of written Khmer seems to help Khmer students to preserve and promote their own traditions while English remains a key for them to enter and discover the outside world. However, the access to Khmer and English is not equal among students in urban and rural areas, which may pose challenges for those in rural areas to pursue higher education. This point will be revisited later in this chapter in the discussion about Janks' critical theory. It is perhaps a good idea for the Vietnamese government to redesign its language policies to meet the demands of its citizens in contemporary society.

Corpus Planning

Hornberger (2006) refers to corpus planning as “efforts related to adequacy of the form or structure of languages/literacies.” (p.28) This type of planning also applies to Khmer students in Vietnam. They have to learn literature in Vietnamese, which focuses on Vietnamese grammar systems and lexicology. New changes in Vietnamese structure are updated in the textbook for students in learning this subject. Ability to communicate well in oral and written Vietnamese is considered a necessary characteristic/feature of Vietnamese identity and culture, which makes Vietnam a unique country, so students from both majority and minority groups have to study Vietnamese. However, the high status of English in present Vietnam could well reflect the fact that “those who do have competency in English may have a feeling of being excluded from the positions which may lead to power” (Hoang, 2009, p. 17). Due to Anglicization, the status of Vietnamese and other minority languages may be put at risk in the participants’ imagined language community. A good illustration of this is that all of the participants in this study state that English, not Vietnamese or Khmer, will be the language of the future.

Janks’ Critical Literacy

In addition to Hornberger’s (2006) frameworks and models in language policy and planning and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological theory of human development, critical literacy (Janks, 2000, 2010, 2012) provides a helpful theoretical lens through which to critically interpret the findings. This section will discuss some findings from interviews with students and teachers and my field-notes through Janks’ four variables: domination, access, diversity, and design.

Domination

As discussed in chapter Four, Janks (2010) considered domination as “a powerful means of maintaining and reproducing relations.” (p. 176). According to the language policies,

Vietnamese is the main language of instruction used at schools. The main objective of the language policies is to create equality among ethnic groups in Vietnam. However, this is much more difficult to implement. As Mai [F], a teacher of English, describes:

Teaching English to Khmer students in Vietnamese is challenging like Hoa said. Most of them speak their mother tongue, Khmer, in their communication, study Vietnamese in class, and study English. There are therefore some words I try to explain to them but they don't understand since they are familiar with speaking Khmer, and it is difficult to obtain this knowledge without knowledge of Vietnamese. Um, once I taught an English grammar structure in Vietnamese, a student did not understand my Vietnamese explanation. When his friend explained it to him again in Khmer, he understood. "His friend is a better teacher than me" (laugh). (Mai [F], teacher of English)

For teachers, Vietnamese should dominate classroom interaction, even if there is a minority language policy and even if all of the students in the class could use Khmer to better understand concepts and explanations in English. Consequently, some Khmer students do not acquire what is being taught. Adopting a plurilingual approach in which any language can be seen as a tool for learning might benefit the school (and country) because Khmer students show strong support for their minority group identity and value their own culture. As several students state: "if I don't teach them Khmer, it is not acceptable since Khmer must know their mother tongue" (Ngo, grade 10); "I will teach my children Khmer language in order to preserve Khmer culture and identity and never let them fade with time" (Ma [M], grade 10). These descriptions suggest that despite the use of Vietnamese language and culture in learning English, students still recognize the role of language maintenance in the development of their identities and aspire to preserve their mother tongue while learning both Vietnamese and English.

During my classroom observations, I confirmed that Khmer is not used to help students learn English. The teachers tried to explain the lessons in English 10-15 per cent of the time and in Vietnamese for the balance of the class. However, one of the teachers of English implied that she did use some Khmer in class, stating that she “was unable to explain some difficult points of English lessons in Khmer due to [her] level of Khmer proficiency” (Hoa [F])

Access

According to Janks (2000), access refers to the ability to participate in the dominant discourse as a result of being involved in dominant forms of language use. Data in this study show three problems related to access to education of Khmer students: living conditions of Khmer families; access to native speakers; and the boarding school structure and regulations.

Living conditions of Khmer families. As stated in Chapter Six, despite the current improvement of socioeconomic conditions of some Khmer families, there are still a number of Khmer families, especially those in rural areas, who live in poor conditions. Both Khmer students and their teachers describe the poor family conditions of Khmer students. The following statements reveal the issue:

Some students were interested in learning English but their families are too poor to afford to send them to study English at a center for foreign languages in summer or after school.

Um, those who can afford for their children to study English are located a long distance of 20-30 km from their homes to the center for foreign languages in the center of the city. The conditions of students are not the same. (Cuc [F], a teacher of English)

I don't have good conditions to learn more in after school classes. I see that my cousin, who studies English at Vietnamese American language center, studies English well. They teach him adequate skills with the participation of foreign teachers. I do not have the same

conditions to do so. In addition, my learning facilities are very limited. (Meo [F], grade 12 student)

These descriptions suggest that both living conditions and geographical distance of Khmer students to English centres hinder their opportunity to gain access to foreigners and extra practice learning English in after school classes. Despite improvements in overall socioeconomic status of Khmer in rural areas, many families still cannot support their children's studies. Further, within the boarding school, according to my observations, only some students had iPads, thus suggesting some disparity even within the school. Thus, continued inequality suggests varied opportunities to access English among children in three contexts: 1. between Khmer students and their Vietnamese counterparts; 2. between Khmer students in rural vs urban areas; and 3. between Khmer students of different socioeconomic means within the school. This discovery aligns with Gunderson (2000)'s findings that newcomers experience challenges due to socioeconomic issues, struggles with new environments and difficulties interacting with native speakers for different socioeconomic reasons.

Access to native speakers. The participants in this study state that they are interested in talking to native speakers although they do not always understand everything that is said. For example, Ti [F], a grade 11 student, describes her wish to talk to native speakers: "I would like to interview foreigners. I may not understand what they said but just learning English, and listening to what people say and copying it again and translating it will be helpful to me." Similarly, Ngo [F], a grade 11 student, expresses her interests in making and talking to friends in foreign countries via the internet:

Thanks to learning facilities such as movies and social websites, I can chat (speaking and answering) with my friends in a foreign country. It is said that being able to communicate

with other people in English is good. I am very excited about not only speaking but chatting as well.

Ty [F], a grade 12 student, describes how she was excited to talk to a native speaker in her rural village:

I began to study English in grade 6 and was so excited. Um, near my school, there was an uncle, a foreigner who married a Vietnamese wife, here. His family sold smoothies. At the break time, whenever I wanted to study English, I bought a smoothie in order to speak English to him. He asked me some simple sentences like *what time is it?* I could answer his questions and listened to his pronunciation. Um, in general, everyday, I bought a smoothie in order to speak English.

The above descriptions indicate that native speakers provide authentic opportunities for communication and encourage Khmer students to invest in learning English. With greater diversity and choice of learning resources Khmer students could make greater gains in learning English. Limited access to a diversity of English resources continues to deprive Khmer students living in the boarding school as compared to those in cities.

Boarding school structure and regulations. As we have already seen in earlier discussions, according to the participants in this study, Khmer students are not allowed to go out to attend after school classes or additional educational programs. All activities from studying to eating and resting happen in the schoolyard. “Khmer students in this boarding school live in a closed environment, the school dormitory. They are not allowed to go out to open their knowledge like Kinh students” Hoa [F], a teacher of English states. This regulation limits their opportunities to gain access not only to English but also to Vietnamese after school, and without the use of Khmer within the board school, also to Khmer. In other words, this boarding school

limits important interesting communication contexts for Khmer students, and thus their linguistic development.

Following Norton (2000)'s claim in Chapter Three that second language learning is closely related to larger social networks of relationships, Khmer students' position in the boarding school offers some unexpected linguistic limitations. First, while attendance at the boarding school offers students benefits such as having free tuition fees, receiving a monthly stipend, and being provided free textbooks, it also limits connections with their language and culture community. For example, during my field study I did not witness any signs or notes written in the Khmer language on the school campus or in the dormitory. Further, since Khmer-speaking teachers said that they were not allowed to use Khmer in the school compound and also described the limits of their own language use (e.g. Hoa), the Khmer language may be showing signs of endangerment. Might environmental print in written Khmer in the school and dormitory act as an interesting bridge for students? Second, according to my data and observations, Khmer students have limited access to English and almost no access to authentic English. They stated that they consult one another on English homework, like listening to the radio or music, and occasionally ask their teachers about English points they do not understand. Only a few used a computer or ipad, where they would have access to authentic uses of English, and the computer room had limited hours of access. Perhaps the operation hours of the computer room at the boarding school could be extended so that Khmer students could gain access to authentic English?

Janks (2012) argued that because "difference is structured in relation to power, unequal access to resources based on gender, race, ethnicity, language, ability, sexuality, nationality and class will continue to produce privilege and resentment." (p. 150). It is interesting to find that

there is gradually little difference in ratio of Khmer school girls and boys enrolling in this boarding high school. For example, according to the school principal, there has been an increase in girls having access to this high school. In the school year 2011-2012 the school population consisted of 53.19% boys and 46.81 % girls. Although still not equal, in the school year 2014-2015 this ratio changed to 51.99% and 48.01 %, respectively. The statistics indicate that male and female high school Khmer students are gaining almost equal opportunities in education, including English education. However, Khmer students with different force characteristics invest in learning English differently. In addition to their level of investment in learning English, Khmer student participants also acknowledge that English could help society in Vietnam develop in the global marketplace. Further, an increase in education leads to an improvement in living standards, welfare, and quality of life of people in society. However, according to them, this development creates a gap between the rich and the poor. For example, Dau [M], a grade 10 student states, “The gap between the rich and the poor is bigger since the poverty rate in our country is still high.”

It is possible to see that despite the many advantages of the boarding school, its structure and regulations create inequitable access (Hornberger & Vaish, 2009) to English sources between Khmer students at boarding schools and their Vietnamese counterparts at public schools, and among Khmer students in urban and rural areas. More importantly, despite little difference in gender problems in education, cultural absence in the textbook together with inequitable access to English after school may suggest “social injustice” between minority groups and the mainstream.

Diversity

Janks (2000) noted “Different ways of reading and writing the world in a range of modalities are a central resource for changing consciousness” (p. 177). Data in this study reveal that Khmer students face a number of diversity restrictions including a lack of representation of their home culture and limited regulations of boarding schools, as well as limited learning resources that could enhance learning through multiple modalities.

Lack of home culture. As discussed earlier, Khmer students go to school with their own identity and culture, but the textbook does not mention anything about Khmer culture. Mui [M], a grade 11 student, states “As for culture, um, the textbook usually mentions cultures of foreign countries, which is not close to us.” This bicultural ambivalence (Cummins, 1984) was also noted in my classroom observations. For example, in a reading class, I wrote “It seems to me that this teaching style is an exam-oriented one because the teacher focuses on how to help students do the exercises correctly and get good grades on the tests. Exercises in this reading class are designed in a manner similar to the ones on the tests” (November, 28th 2015)

In Chapter Three we discussed that source culture is not present in the English textbook in Vietnam. Instead, Khmer students study the target culture of Vietnamese in English, which is a second culture for them. The absence of this representation may lead to a failure of developing the “type of cognitive/academic and social/emotional foundation” (Cummins (1986, p. 661) needed by Khmer students and, as Gunderson (2000) found, students do not have an opportunity to explore similarities and differences between their own cultures and the target language culture at school. Therefore, in order to successfully learn English, Khmer students might need to use a greater variety of modalities for engaging with cultures since not only is culture a major and

inseparable component of “knowing” Vietnamese and English, it is likely also one of the most enjoyable and motivational aspects of acquiring English.

Regulations of boarding schools. As stated previously, the participants in this study reveal that Khmer students are not allowed to gain access to outside world resources. They do not have any chances to meet native speakers face-to-face, other students in other schools or specialist speakers. They have limited opportunities to read and produce signs that use a wide range of semiotic systems. In other words, Khmer students do not have chances of sharing, reflecting their own cultural values, and perceiving other cultural value systems. Without Khmer culture at school, Khmer students are limited in learning “how to use and select from all the available semiotic resources for representation in order to make meaning” (Janks, 2000, p. 177). In short, Khmer students are not given access to diversity of social interactions (even though the primary purpose of school regulations is to keep Khmer students safe and secure). However, this closed milieu may require revisiting by administrators who likely did not imagine its impact on learning English when designing regulations for boarding schools.

Limited modalities. Khmer students experience a limited range of modalities in learning English. First of all, teachers of English teach English mainly by offering explanations in Vietnamese. From my classroom observations, I noticed that the teachers of English mainly explained the lessons to Khmer students in Vietnamese, with limited English, and no Khmer. For example, in a 12A4 Reading class, I wrote:

the teacher tries to help her students to construct the meaning of the reading passage in the textbook by providing new words with Vietnamese meanings and facilitate her students in learning English by explaining each task in the textbook in Vietnamese and providing

some prompts for them to be able to effectively engage in the classroom activities.

(November, 16th 2015)

I did not see or hear any use of videos or movies, listening to short stories or musical clips to help Khmer students learn English interestingly and effectively. This lack of multi-modal resources in learning English in the classroom hinders Khmer students from stimulating and engaging their interest and could influence their long-term interest in learning English. Secondly, Khmer students have not adequately developed interpersonal skills in communicative learning (another modality). Although some teachers of English offered some interactive tasks for interpersonal learning, I did not notice that these interactive tasks were taken up by all students. Perhaps, the students were not familiar with interactive tasks or did not feel comfortable with group discussion or were shy. Lastly, Khmer students do not have chances to develop social and problem solving skills in English (or Vietnamese) since they are not allowed to interact with others outside the school campus after school, as described in Chapter Six.

Design

Janks (2000) refers to design as the productive and creative potential of power. This concept is conceptualised as a way to challenge and change existing discourse. The design of language policies and boarding schools in Vietnam might exert strong influence on Khmer students' development. This section will revisit language policies and the boarding school structure and regulations to reflect the issue of design.

Language policies. Since Vietnamese is prescribed as the main language of instruction at schools, teachers mentioned that some Khmer students find it challenging to understand abstract Vietnamese in English class. This “side effect” suggests a flaw in the design of language policies in Vietnam. Furthermore, the design of boarding schools leads to reduced access to English

learning resources for minority students in rural areas. In light of these effects, perhaps it is time for the government to examine its language policies since the design and production of messages should always remain open to being remade and transformed by those who “review, comment and engage with it” (Kress, 2010, p. 27). Janks (2012) pointed out,

Equally important are the resources needed for “review.” Engagement is not enough. The interest of the interpreter is not enough. An ability to recognise and critique the rhetor’s interest and to estrange oneself from it is also necessary for re-design. One has to have a sense of how the text could be different and this requires something in addition to engagement. One has to be able to read with and against the content, form and interests of the text in order to be able to redesign it. (p. 152)

Increasing access to quality resources for students learning English in rural areas is not unique to Vietnam. As Canagarajah (2009) noted:

The problems include lack of training for teachers who have not transitioned from traditional pedagogical practices; lack of new teaching materials that promote plurilinguism; and the *de facto* dominance of certain languages and communities which stifle the development of proficiency in less prestigious languages. (p. 20)

Further, Vietnam could benefit from understanding the important role that research plays in policy development and implementation. As van Els (2005) noted, there still seems to be a preference for uninformed laymen (politicians) developing policies without any recourse to empirical findings or advice. This raises issues of covert planning, who are the planners, especially for early foreign language learning as in EFL in Vietnam. It should have targeted plurilingual communication which relies on both a form of knowledge and interaction strategies (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 17). This tends to be a norm of multilingualism in the present world, in

which some countries like India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brunei and others in Africa and the Middle East have adopted forms of education that provide a complementary relationship to languages. In this tendency, languages are not seen as separate entities that are learned separately, but intimately linked entities that cross each other and intermingle in such ways that, when we teach these languages, we should seek the common meanings and frameworks (Canagarajah, 2009, p. 20). This is what Canagarajah (2009) called translanguaging, or “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401), where people and languages are ever mixed and “hybridized.”

Khmer students showed that they used translanguaging in the English classroom, as my field-notes revealed:

Today in the 12A4 Reading class, in a group-work task, I heard some Khmer students speak Khmer to each other. After class, I asked one student about the Khmer language used in this class, she told me that apart from Vietnamese, they usually speak Khmer in group discussions and this becomes their habit. (November, 16th 2015)

Another example of translanguaging by Khmer students occurred on November 20th, Teacher’s Day in Vietnam. I was also offered a bunch of flowers in this 12A4 Reading class when I conducted the classroom observation on this day:

When a student gave the flowers to me, she asked her friends something in Khmer. I understood that she wanted to know was that if the left or right hand is correct when she gave the flower to me. Her friends answered “the left one” in Khmer. (November, 16th 2015)

Taking Canagarajah (2009) into consideration, translanguaging is essential for Khmer students in learning English. Therefore, in order to help Khmer students study English well, translanguaging in Khmer, Vietnamese, and English should be permitted and used in English classes. Such “interlingual communication” (Hornberger, 2006, pp. 32-33) would also act as a constructivist learning tool, as suggested by Vygotsky (1981) and discussed in the literature review. Languages such as Khmer, Vietnamese, and English are tools with which students can direct, control and expand their physical and mental behaviours.

Minority policy plays a crucial role in learning a third language, as Lo Bianco (2010) noted: “Language planning has been directed towards changes either within individual languages or across diverse languages, targeting the communication patterns of a community” (p. 37). This indicates that the effects of language policies on the school curriculum are still negative. The school curriculum ignores the values of minority cultures including Khmer. Minority students are instructed in mainstream culture in learning. They have not got any chances to connect their home cultures with their classroom lessons. In other words, the voice of ethnic minority groups may be faded in the mainstream curriculum. Thus, policy makers should perhaps reconsider this policy to improve the quality of teaching and learning of minority languages to minority students because design and redesign are “backward-and forward-looking” and “it is important to recognise that re-design, like design, can be used ethically or unethically to advance the interests of some at the expense of others” (Janks, 2012, p. 153). Since “designs or redesigns that lack power are unable to effect change” (Janks, 2013, p. 226), policy makers in Vietnam play an important role in designing and/or redesigning policies for learning multiple languages for purposes of national identity, economic development and cultural heritage and inclusion. Hornberger and Vaish (2009) suggest the detrimental effect of education policies: it is not that

“globalization in itself ... is the enemy but the inequitable distribution of its benefits.” (p. 12). English is prescribed to be taught beginning in grade 3 throughout Vietnam. It seems that students receive benefits when learning this common language. However, in reality, it appears to be that not all students receive this benefit from learning English. In fact, the teacher participants mentioned that Khmer students in rural areas do not receive the same benefits of foreign language policy as their counterparts in urban areas. Indeed, they cannot gain access to English in early schooling due to a shortage of teachers of English and learning facilities. If Khmer students could go to an English program after school at a center for foreign languages, they would not only improve their English skills but gain additional benefits as well, such as interacting with native speakers, learning cultures from other countries, and practising English in communicative pairs. Furthermore, students who gain access to English may have better opportunities for employment after completing their studies than those who do not. Finally, if Khmer students started learning English at a younger age through a private language school they might develop a greater comfort and fluency with English and thus level the field between Khmer students in rural and urban areas.

Boarding school structure and regulations. The design of boarding schools also limits opportunities for all Khmer students to gain access to English in after school classes or through native speakers, and to have contact with Vietnamese in the mainstream society, or with teachers/students from other schools. The restrictions of contact and interaction with people in their environment serve to minimize potential ZPD activation (Vygotsky, 1981) for Khmer students. Suu [F], a grade 12 student, reports:

I studied in my tutorial classes to prepare for the high school entrance exam at the end of grade 9. I enrolled in two schools: this school and HD. I was confident that I would enter

this school since I wanted to study in this school. However, despite my high total marks, the result was that I failed to study in this school but passed the exam in HD high school. The enrolling norm for this city was five students. Five other students had a bit better total marks in the exam than mine. Um, this result made me sad although I was ready for studying at HD high school such as having a long dress made.

A limited number of Khmer students are accepted to study at this boarding school in each district in the province. The Khmer students who cannot pass the exam to study in this provincial boarding school have to drop their classes. In fact, the design of boarding schools denies many minority students chances to gain access to education and literacy as well as in their career development. Redesign of the structure of boarding schools may increase benefits to all Khmer students, and perhaps even all minority students in Vietnam.

In conclusion, interpreting the findings from students and teachers regarding Khmer students' English learning in the sociocultural context of Vietnam through Hornberger's language policy and planning and Janks' critical theory adds value to the findings about ecological and sociocultural factors discussed in the previous chapter. Despite the fact that current education policies and laws in Vietnam have brought some benefits to minority groups like the Khmer, much work remains to be done in order to maximize the distribution of benefits resulting from the legislative policies and practices in order to be of advantage to both English language learning and minority language use and maintenance.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study investigated socio-cultural and ecological factors influencing the acquisition of English by Khmer students (for whom English is a third language) in Vietnam. In this chapter, I will: 1) summarize my findings; 2) include my recommendations or suggestions for educational policy and practices for policy makers, textbook authors, school administrators, and teachers and for future research; and 3) state the limitations of the study.

Summary of Findings

In order to answer my research question, I triangulated three sources of information: 1) teacher voices; 2) student voices; and 3) nine classroom observations. Through four theoretical-interpretive lenses for this research study - Urie Bronfenbrenner's sociocultural ecological theory, Nancy Hornberger's frameworks and models in language policy and planning, Norton's identity theorizing, and Janks' critical theory- , I argue that Khmer students need more opportunities to learn English in order to compete with their peer counterparts in mainstream society, while simultaneously not losing their Khmer identity.

My research question - What socio-cultural and ecological factors influence the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam? - identified factors in four levels of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- systems in two chronosystems. Since the first chronosystem of about 20 years ago results of the current study suggest that there are a number of new factors influencing Khmer students' English acquisition. At the microlevel, Khmer student participants indicated that their parents and families could be seen as models of multilingualism and offered financial and spiritual support in learning English while continuing to hold a strong sense of Khmer minority identity, traditional values of culture and language. Moreover, the results of focus group

interviews with Khmer students showed that in comparison with the former chronosystem, Khmer parents seemed to place more value on schooling and had higher hopes for their children to be more successful in their schooling. At the mesolevel, as compared to the first chronosystem, the participants seemed to place more value on education and now see the important role English plays in Vietnam's participation in the global economy. Furthermore, it is interesting that the student participants, not their teachers, recognized the absence of the official minority group home culture in the textbook in Vietnam. Meanwhile, all the student participants in this study acknowledged and appreciated their teachers' assistance in learning English. The study results also indicated that Khmer students seemed not to have many opportunities to gain access to using Vietnamese or English outside the school due to the boarding school structure and regulations. The teacher participants stated that they were under pressure of covering the curriculum in teaching English, which limits their chances to attend to their students' needs. Additionally, all the participants in this study expressed an awareness of the economic value of English for both communication and economic growth in Vietnam. At the exolevel, it was clear that English exerted a powerful influence on the imagined future careers of participants. Further, the study findings revealed that the participants hold a strong belief that English will create greater further education opportunities for them both personally and socially. From that, the participants expressed their strong belief that English would be essential for improving the socioeconomic status of Vietnam. Finally, at the macrolevel, the research findings indicated the indirect effects of global trends on the students and the government. Language policies in Vietnam brought students, teachers, schools, and the whole society both opportunities and challenges. As a compulsory subject taught at school, English is beneficial for economic growth and communication. Meanwhile, the policy of Khmer as an award (credit) subject at school helps

Khmer students preserve and promote their traditional values and culture. More importantly, the research findings suggest that Khmer living in urban areas had more access to English than their counterparts in rural areas.

Suggestions for Educational Practices

In this section, I would like to offer some suggestions for educational policy makers, textbook authors, school administrators, and teachers. I shall also offer suggestions for future research. All of the suggestions that I will make are grounded in the findings of my research. While my study focuses on students of Khmer origin, I believe my suggestions could be applied to all other 53 ethnic minority groups in Vietnam and their educational practices.

Policy Makers

The research findings reveal a number of problems faced by Khmer students learning English and Khmer in their current context. As presented in the previous chapters, the interviews with Khmer students and their teachers of English indicated that there is still inequitable access to English between Khmer students living in urban and rural areas. Some start to study English in grade 3, some in grade 6, and others only in grade 10. Problems in learning written Khmer also align with those of learning English. Some Khmer students study written Khmer in primary schools, some in secondary, even high school, and some in Khmer pagodas. The resulting multilevel classes in Khmer and English challenge both teachers and students. Further, there are still a number of rurally located Khmer families who lack the financial ability to send their children to study English in a center for foreign languages in after school classes or in the summer as Cuc, [F], a teacher of English, states: “some students are interested in learning English but their families are too poor to afford them to study English at a center for foreign

languages in summer.” Therefore, I would offer the following five suggestions for this stakeholder to better improve the situation.

First, there is a need for more education about minority languages, language policies, and how they can create a greater equality among peoples of Vietnam.

Second, educational and language policies are also needed to ensure equal access to educational and linguistic resources that could have a positive influence on students’ language acquisition, especially for those with low socioeconomic status living in disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, in order to be equitable, it is important for the government to implement language and educational policies which can free “societal constraints on an individual’s capacity to imagine a different future” (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 247). As Kanno and Norton (2003) stated “imagination at even the most personal level is nonetheless related to social ideologies and hegemonies” (p. 247).

Third, perhaps scholarship programs could be used to enhance opportunities for language/minority language(s) students, especially socioeconomically disadvantaged students, to gain access to linguistic and non-linguistic resources in Vietnamese, English and Khmer. Equity or levelling the playing field may require special financial assistance for programs for minority groups.

Fourth, funding should be provided to linguistic programs that promote deep understanding of the intercultural, historical, and social aspects of the contemporary communities of the target language so as to educate minority students and teachers about modern day Vietnam.

Fifth, in the process of conducting this research, I could not obtain complete data about the number of Khmer minority students that go to university or post-secondary institutions. Due to

the fact that documents have not fully been collected yet, I cannot, therefore, compare their progress with that of other public schools in Vietnam and the national average/percentage. Therefore, in order to be able to document the next chronosystem and changes and improvements, such statistical data is required.

Textbook authors

To help Khmer and other minority students in learning English, there is a need for their languages and cultures to be embedded in the textbook. Such a bridge between their cultures could be seen as an inclusive collaborative creation of power. In contrast, the absence of Khmer culture in the textbook may contribute to short-changing students of cognitive and social skills (Cummins, 1986, p. 661). Textbook authors, working under directives of the Ministry, should create a textbook that represents the diverse Vietnamese population and appeals to all of its users.

School Administrators

This stakeholder plays an important role in connecting teachers, students, and parents together and in institutionally implementing the curriculum, which directly influences every classroom. There are thus six suggestions I would like to make for school administrators to better improve the practice of learning language(s) based on the findings in this study.

First, in order to respond to the global trends and prepare minority students for their imagined global community, it is necessary to introduce critical need languages (i.e. English) in order to help minority students initiate their investment in a set of skills that will yield adequate symbolic and material resources.

Second, minority students need favourable conditions and influential agents in order to acquire a positive identity toward a language. It may be helpful to offer them some exposure to

teachers, students, and specialist speakers in order to improve linguistic and interactive skills. Perhaps native speaking assistants could be brought into the boarding school community on a weekly basis for communication practice.

Third, the home language of minority students should be used in the English classroom to help them deeply discuss and understand the texts that are currently written in Vietnamese. Without doing so, Khmer students are further disadvantaged over their Vietnamese counterparts who can learn English with the assistance of their mother tongue.

Fourth, schools should reach out to minority parents so that they can concretely support their children to enhance their language learning. This could be done by gathering information from teachers and sending out newsletters with information regarding extracurricular programs in English and their home language.

Fifth, school administrators should ensure/lobby for the study of the products, practices, and perspectives of minority cultures to be embedded in the school curriculum across subjects so that minority students have their own space in the process of learning an additional language. Interdisciplinary work should be encouraged to offer minority students exposure to both the target and home culture and understanding of how intercultural products connect with different subjects.

Sixth, among the school board's committee, there should be an administrator who has linguistic expertise and has a passionate interest to learn an additional language(s) so that this person can supervise and assist language teachers in the process of language teaching and can better represent minority students' interests in L2 and L3 proficiency. Such supervision is indispensable to both ensuring program quality and preventing the loss of minority students' identity.

Teachers

As can be seen from the study findings, it is Khmer students, not their teachers who recognize the absence of minority culture in the textbook and process of learning English. Since teachers play an important role in teaching English to students, there are thus seven suggestions I would like to make for teachers to better improve the practice of teaching this language.

First, teachers need to show awareness of the role of the English culture in the process of learning the target language. By offering another perspective through their interactions with students, teachers can help to educate students on sociocultural cues that are culturally appropriate in the communities of the target language.

Second, teachers should stay in close relationship with students' parents in order to help develop minority students' interests and increase their involvement in English learning. For example, teachers can share information with parents on English programs and cultural activities which can, in turn, give students more opportunities to be in contact with specialist speakers and to develop a relationship with them.

Third, teachers of English should create interactional opportunities such as communicating with their students in both oral and written forms, going on field trips to highlight possible communities of practice, or inviting guest speakers into the class so that minority students can meet their mainstream counterparts in the same age group from other schools through the target language. By doing this, teachers can help minority students develop language proficiency and cross-cultural understandings at the same time.

Fourth, introducing linguistic and cultural resources through media can open another door for minority students to explore their own imagined communities.

Fifth, when integrating non-linguistic resources into the classroom, teachers should connect the minority students' home culture and develop more explicit instruction about target culture, going beyond celebrations and the holidays and delving into products, practices, and perspectives of their home culture. The introduction of the target and home culture can also be integrated into the acquisition of linguistic knowledge.

Sixth, teachers should be aware of the minority students' multiple realities and how to meet students' needs based on those realities. Those should be concerns for teachers if their goal is to optimally educate minority students.

Seventh, instead of exclusively teaching to the test, teachers should put more efforts into designing assessments that can examine to what degree minority students are able to communicate in real-life situations. In this way, the results can offer feedback to minority students on their progress and insights to teachers as to what areas they need to reinforce through instruction.

Future Research

Future studies might expand on this study in five different ways.

First, a future study could focus on the gaps in understanding between teachers' and students' perceptions of learning of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. It would be interesting to learn about how teachers facilitate Khmer students' aspirations to become members of an imagined language community.

Second, more research is required to understand how language policy in Vietnam influences learning English for Khmer and other minority students.

Third, further research is required on how the design of boarding schools can respond to Khmer students' desire to learn English and Vietnamese and maintain their Khmer identity.

Fourth, the student participants indicated that their culture is not reflected in their learning of English in the boarding school. Further, their acquisition of Vietnamese seems limited, especially since they are not allowed to leave the boarding school compound. Additional research is required to explore the impact of boarding schools on the academic and cultural identity of minority language students in their plurilingual evolution.

Fifth, a new chronosystem should be researched in five to eight years. With the proposed suggestions, one could expect progressive changes.

Limitations of the Study

The current study explores factors influencing the acquisition of English of Khmer students in Vietnam. As mentioned in the data collection section, this study adopted purposeful sampling to include the target population and included focus group interviews with students and teachers, and classroom observations. With this sample size, findings cannot be generalized to the whole population. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations as associated with the nature of the study. First of all, three small groups of students and a group of teachers constitute a small sample. Moreover, those who volunteered to participate in the research may be more motivated to share their experiences in learning and teaching English. They do not, therefore, represent the whole target population. Additionally, if data was collected from a different student population (such as Khmer students in weaker classes or rural boarding secondary schools), study results could be different. Further, if the participants were not under the pressure of taking and reviewing their first term exams at the time of this study, their answers might be different. Lastly, the timelines for collecting data was approximately one month and can only offer a snapshot of the research topic. Since language motivation is a dynamic construct that may fluctuate

during the process of language learning, a longitudinal study might better inform understanding any systematic variations.

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The Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities was adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1992/16, 21 February 1992 and by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/135 on 18 December 1992. (<http://www.unesco.org/most/lnlaw7.htm>)

See <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/asia.htm>

See <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/languages.htm>

Appendix A

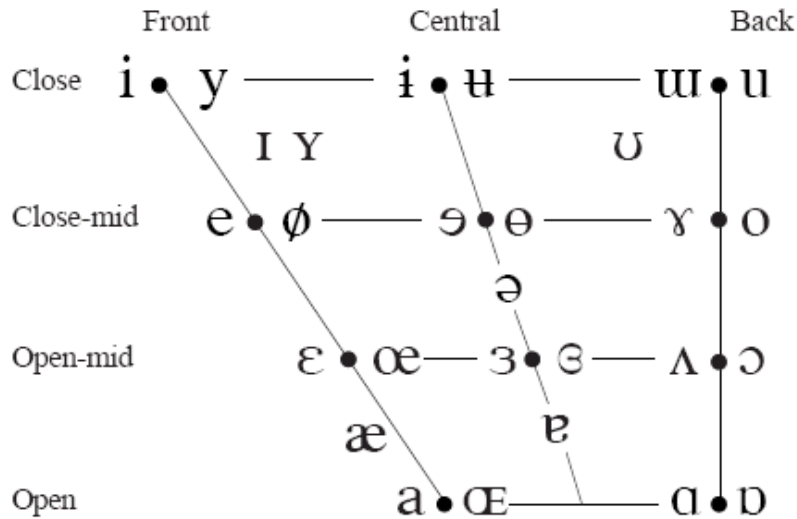
Consonant and vowel charts of English, Khmer, and Vietnamese:

a. English consonant and vowel chart

Manner of Articulation	Place of Articulation						
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop							
Voiceless	/p/			/t/		/k/	
Voice	/b/			/d/		/g/	
Fricative							
Voiceless		/f/	/θ/	/s/	/ʃ/		/h/
Voiced		/v/	/ð/	/z/	/ʒ/		
Affricate							
Voiceless					/tʃ/		
Voiced					/dʒ/		
Nasal							
Voiced	/m/			/n/		/ŋ/	
Liquid							
Voiced				/l/ (/r/)	(/r/)	[ɹ]	
Glide							
Voiceless	(/hw/)						
Voiced	/w/				/y/		

(Source: Celce-Murcia et al, 1996, p. 47)

VOWELS



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

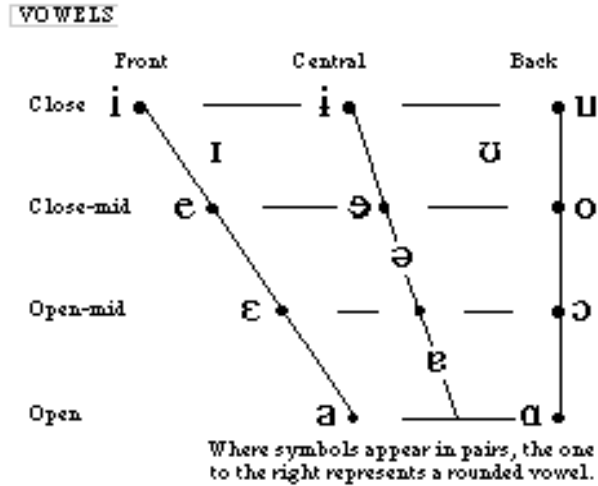
(Source: <http://www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/vowels.html>)

b. Khmer consonant and vowel chart

CONSONANTS
(PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p			t				k			ʔ
Nasal	m			n			ɲ	ŋ			
Trill											
Tap or Flap						ɾ					
Fricative				s							h
Affricate					tʃ						
Lateral fricative											
Approximant		ʋ					j				
Lateral approximant				l							

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.



(Source: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/accent/nl-ipa/khmeripa.html>)

c. Vietnamese phonetic alphabets

	bi-labial	labial-dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
			-asp/+asp			
voiceless stop	p		t / tʰ	c	k	
voiced stop	b		d			
voiceless fricative		f	s		x	h
voiced fricative		v	z		ʎ	
voiced lateral			l			
voiced nasal	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	

(Source: <http://www.de-han.org/vietnam/chuliau/lunsoat/sound/2.htm>)

	front	central	back (-rd)	back (+rd)
upper high	i		ɯ	u
upper mid	e		ɤ	o
lower lower mid	ɛ			ɔ
higher low		ɐ		
lower low	a		ɑ	

(Source: <http://www.de-han.org/vietnam/chuliau/lunsoat/sound/3.htm>)

In the above charts, in terms of consonants, in general, there are some English consonant sounds that are not found in both Khmer and Vietnamese. Some of which are the dental voiceless/voiced fricatives, such as /θ/ and /ð/, the velar stop /g/ which is found in Vietnamese, but it is a velar fricative, and not a velar stop, the palatal voiceless fricative /ç/ and /ʒ/, and the palatal affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. The alveolar fricative voiced /z/ is found in Vietnamese, but not in Khmer. With regard to vowels, most Khmer and Vietnamese vowel sounds are found in English.

In terms of tone, like English, Campbell (2000) stated that Khmer is a non-tonal language and stress tends to fall on the final syllable (p. 298). For example, in the word *RKuncaj* /krun cha-in/ *malaria*, the stress falls on the last syllable /cha-in/ and in the sentence *xJuM QI k,aI* /kh*nyom ch*eu k'bal/ *I have a pain in my head*, the stress also falls on the last word /k'bal/. In contrast to English, Vietnamese is a tonal language (Nguyen, 1997, p. 783), there is no stress on a certain word like that to imply meaning. In order to emphasize the meaning in the two sentences above, Vietnamese speakers use tones (rising / ˊ/, falling / ˋ/, falling glottalized / ˋˊ/, dipping-rising / ˊˋ/, rising glottalized / ˊˊ/, and level /no mark /). For example, in the sentences *Câu ấy nuôi một con chim két* (*He keeps a blackbird*) and *Câu ấy nuôi một con chim đen* (*He keeps a black bird*). Therefore, to mention about one thing, tone marks are used instead of stress, and each tone mark represents one thing, for instance, *chim két* (blackbird), *chim đen* (black bird).

As far as consonant clusters are concerned, Celce-Murcia et al (1996) stated that consonant clusters are not a feature of Vietnamese as is the case for many Asian languages students from many Asian language backgrounds (p. 83) and, therefore, the following are

challenging: *spl-* , and *str-*, in words such as, *split* and *strong*, appear to be the most challenging for many Vietnamese students. As for Khmer students, they may not have such problems because Khmer language has consonant clusters, for example, **sSa** /sla/ *class* or **sVa** /swa/ *monkey* (Campbell, 2000, p. 297).

With regard to final consonants, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996, p. 83) indicate that speakers of many Asian languages may not pronounce final consonant clusters. Khmer and Vietnamese are no exception. They often neglect these final sounds which results in misunderstanding in communication because in Khmer and Vietnamese there is no focus on final consonants. For instance, there is no plural word form, and therefore noun-numeral is used before a noun to indicate a plural noun phrase instead of adding an inflectional morpheme at the end of a word (Nguyen, 1997, p. 785).

Appendix B

Linguistic Issues in Learning English for the Khmer

All generations of Khmer people in Vietnam come from low-income backgrounds in poor neighbourhoods, receive little schooling and have limited proficiency in spoken and written Vietnamese. As many Khmer students have some troubles understanding abstract words through Vietnamese, they also find it challenging to learn English through Vietnamese instruction in school. Surveying the available literature that can inform the study on specific issues that cause problems for Khmer learners learning English is very useful. This preliminary overview of issues Khmer students confront when learning English aims at helping us better understand general challenges that they are currently facing.

To date few studies have been conducted on this issue. Huffman (1970) describes Cambodian writing systems and beginning readers and Huffman and Proum (1983) are concerned with English for speakers of Khmer. Their resource book provides a comprehensible set of materials such as model sentences, pronunciation drills, grammar notes, pattern drills, examples, and indices for both teaching and self-teaching English to speakers of Khmer. Moore and Bounchan (2010) give an overview of some features of English that typically cause difficulties for Khmer language speakers. However, the context of these studies is Cambodia. Being interested in the same issue as Moore and Bounchan (2010), Son (2008) addressed problems Khmer students face in learning English by introducing some brochures and supplementary materials to accompany English textbooks at the high school level to help them catch up with their Vietnamese counterparts. Despite the fact that there are many English and Khmer dictionaries (Seam & Blake, 1991; Smyth & Kean, 1995), these dictionaries provide rich information only on lexicology, not pedagogy.

Due to limited available resources in this field in the context of Vietnam, I review some issues related to learning English for Khmer students based on research from both Cambodia and Vietnam including pronunciation, grammar, orthography, and lastly, a shortage of cultural resources for school, which I mainly base on the work of Huffman (1970), Barratt-Pugh and Rohl (2001), Bounchan and Moore (2010), and Son (2008).

Pronunciation. According to Huffman (1970), Cambodian/[Khmer] is non-tonal and has a high percentage of disyllabic words. It has a relatively complex morphology, forming disyllabic derivatives from monosyllabic bases from prefixation and infixation. (p. 3). Since Cambodian is not a tone language, “this might explain why few Cambodian students have serious difficulty in developing intelligible English pronunciation” (Moore & Bounchan, 2010, p. 113). However, due to some differences between Khmer and English, Khmer learners have some problems pronouncing certain English sounds and stress and intonation.

Khmer students usually confuse some sounds like /ʃ/ as in *shoes*, /tʃ/ as in *teacher*, /θ/ as in *think*, /ð/ as in *the* (Moore & Bounchan, 2010, p. 114) (refer to Appendix A for more information on consonant and vowel charts of English, Khmer, and Vietnamese). Instead of pronouncing difficult sounds like /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /θ/, /ð/, Khmer students pronounce /s/ as /ʃ/ and /θ/; /z/ as /tʃ/; and /d/ as /ð/. Unlike Vietnamese and Thai language learners, Khmer learners rarely have problems pronouncing consonant clusters like /cr/, /pl/, /sm/ because Khmer language has a similar consonant clusters (Moore & Bounchan, 2010, p. 115). However, Khmer speakers may drop final /t/, and /d/ as in *and* and *ant*. In this case, they pronounce these words like /an/.

Apart from problems with above consonant sounds, Khmer students have some troubles with stress and intonation. The structures of Khmer whose scripts are written in uninterrupted strings of words are mainly monosyllables (Huffman, 1970, p. 11, Mooer & Bounchan, 2010, p.

115), Khmer does not have stress on individual words, so when reading English passages aloud, Khmer language learners tend to read them with a flat intonation or may try to pause at every word (Moore & Bounchan, 2010, p. 115-116). On addressing the same problems for Khmer students in three boarding schools and interviewing 24 teachers of English in Tra Vinh province for his MATESL project at Hawaii Pacific University, Son (2008) also found that Khmer students rarely pay attention to stress syllables.

Grammar. Differences between Khmer and English syntactic structures (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010) also influence learners. This section will present some significant differences between English and Khmer in word order, tenses, articles and preposition, plural forms, and pronouns and possessive pronouns.

Word order. In Khmer, an adjective comes after a verb to form an adverb and a noun to describe the state of this noun. For example, they may say:

I speak slow (I speak slowly)

A table small (a small table)

Sometimes, the adjective is repeated to emphasise the adverb, its meaning or to show the plural noun that this adjective describes. For instance, they may say like this:

I speak slow slow

I have only money small small (I only have little money)

Due to this mother tongue's influence, Khmer learners may transfer this knowledge into English. Therefore, they may say the above sentences in English like this:

I speak slow slow

I have only small small money (I only have little money)

Tenses. In Khmer, verb forms do not change to indicate tenses (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Thus, Khmer learners may make some mistakes in using correct verb forms to indicate appropriate tenses. To illustrate:

Past tense: *I see you yesterday*

Future tense: *I finish my study next year.*

For simple present tense, Khmer students are known to make some mistakes in adding *es/s/ies* to indicate subject and verb agreement and omitting copula verb in English sentence construction. For example, Khmer learners of English may say something like this:

My mother work in school

He have three children

What that?

I tall.

I coming.

With questions, Khmer learners of English do not use auxiliary verbs or copula verbs to form questions because Khmer does not have auxiliary verbs to indicate questions or copula verbs to link nouns and adjectives (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Thus, they may say:

How we use that verb?

Why he not go home?

Articles. Khmer learners of English often have some difficulties using correct articles, especially the article *the*, and prepositions because there is no article in Khmer and the result of direct translation into English from Khmer prepositions (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh & Rohl,

2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Thus, they tend to either omit *the* or use it in unnecessary positions. Common mistakes of using incorrect prepositions are made like this:

stay on bed

married with

interested with

Plural forms. Khmer does not change nouns to indicate the plural. Instead, some words such as a few, much, five, some, little etc. are used after a noun to show its plural form (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Therefore, Khmer learners of English also face some problems remembering to add *es/s/ies* to form plural forms of nouns or changing word forms of irregular nouns in English. A few examples of this follow:

Give me some waters, please

She has a cats

Pronouns and possessive pronouns. Pronouns in the Khmer language do not change and there are no specific pronouns to show different forms of gender or plurals (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Instead, they use specific terms to show the gender and status that they are talking to such as grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncle, auntie, etc. Therefore, Khmer learners of English may face difficulties in using correct pronouns and possessive pronouns. Beginner learners of English may use *he* to refer to *he, she, they, it, him, her, or them*. Similarly, *I, mine, my* are appeared to be the same word. Also, Khmer learners may have some difficulties in learning how to use *their* and *theirs, her* and *hers, our* and *ours*.

Orthography. Differences in the punctuation conventions and scripts of English and Khmer cause some difficulties for Khmer learners of English (Huffman, 1970, Barratt-Pugh &

Rohl, 2001, and Moore & Bounchan, 2010). Moore and Bounchan (2010) noted that in Khmer, words are normally written together continuously without any spaces between them in a clause or sentence. In English, a full-stop is used to show a break of idea in a clause or phrase and a comma is used in a list. This practice leads to the fact that Khmer learners of English may construct run-on sentences in English in which an entire paragraph contains only one full-stop. Barratt-Pugh and Rohl (2001) reported that “the visual and manual complexity of the Khmer script made for some difficulties in letter formation and placement, particularly for Year 1 children” and “high reliance on visual strategies in the early stages of spelling in Khmer seemed to have led some children to make visual errors when spelling English words (p. 671-672).

Appendix C

Minority Composition: Groups and local groups

There are fifty-four ethnic groups in Vietnam living from the north to the south.

Ethnic Composition of Vietnam (as of 1994).

Ethnic Group	Population Size	Local Groups
Kinh (Viet)	55,900,000	—
Tay	1,190,000	4
Thai	1,040,000	8
Muong	914,000	2
Hoa	900,000	8
Khmer	895,000	6
Nung	705,000	11
Hmong	558,000	6
Yao	474,000	8
Gia-rai	242,000	3
E-de	195,000	23
Ba-na	137,000	5
San Chay	114,000	2
Cham	99,000	4
Xo-dang	97,000	6
San Diu	94,630	—

Hre	94,000	—
Co-ho	92,000	6
Ra-glai	72,000	2
Mnong	67,000	12
Tho	51,000	7
Xtieng	50,000	—
Kho-mu	43,000	1
Bru-Van Kieu	40,000	5
Giay	38,000	1
Co-tu	37,000	2
Gie Trieng	27,000	4
Ta-oi	26,000	2
Ma	25,000	3
Co	23,000	—
Cho-ro	15,000	—
Ha Nhi	12,500	4
Chu-ru	11,000	—
Xinh-mun	11,000	2
Lao	10,000	—
La Chi	8,000	—
Phu La	6,500	8
La Hu	5,400	4
Khang	4,000	7

Lu	3,700	—
Pa Then	3,700	2
Lo Lo	3,200	2
Chut	2,400	7
Mang	2,300	2
Co Lao	1,500	3
Bo Y	1,450	2
La Ha	1,400	2
Cong	1,300	4
Ngai	1,200	5
Si La	600	—
Pu Peo	400	—
Brau	250	—
Ro-mam	250	—
O-du	100	—

Source: Vietnam: The Land and the People (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2000), pp. 53–62.

Many ethnic groups have histories and cultures different from those of the Kinh (Viet). Many groups share their culture with their neighbors. Studies show, however, that “small ethnic groups were also willing to adopt the cultural practices of larger groups in order to survive” (Vasavakul, 2003, p. 219).

Appendix D

Language families in Vietnam

Language Families, Ethnic Groups, Population Size, and Writing Systems of Vietnam (as of 1994).

Language Family	Ethnic Group	Population Size	Writing System
Austroasiatic			
Viet-Muong Groups			
	Viet	55,900,000	nom; romanized
	Muong	914,000	different romanized systems
	Chut	2,400	none
	Tho	1,000	none
Mon-Khmer Groups			
	Khmer	895,000	Sanskrit-based
	Ba-na	137,000	romanized
	Xo-dang	97,000	romanized
	Hre	94,000	romanized
	Co-ho	92,000	romanized
	Mnong	67,000	romanized

Xtieng	50,000	romanized
Kho-mu	43,000	none
Bru-Van	40,000	romanized
Kieu		
Co Tu	37,000	romanized
Gie Trieng	27,000	romanized
Ta-oi	26,000	romanized
Ma	25,000	romanized
Co	23,000	romanized
Cho-ro	15,000	romanized
Xinh-mun	11,000	none
Khang	4,000	none
Mang	2,300	none
Brau	250	none
Ro-mam	250	none
O-du	100	none

Thai-Kadai

Thai Groups

Tay	1,190,000	nom; romanized
Thai	1,040,000	ancient scripts; proposed romanized system

San Chay	114,000	nom
Giay	38,000	none
Lao	10,000	Sanskrit-based
Nung	5,000	nom; romanized
Lu	3,700	none
Bo Y	1,450	none

Kadai Groups

La Chi	8,000	none
Co Lao	1,500	none
La Ha	1,400	none
Pu Peo	400	none

Hmong-Yao

Hmong	558,000	romanized
Yao	474,000	nom; different romanized systems
Pa Then	3,700	none

Austronesian

Malayo-Polynesian

	Gia-rai	242,000	romanized
	E-de	195,000	romanized
	Cham	99,000	ancient scripts; different proposed romanized systems
	Ra-glai	72,000	romanized
	Chu-ru	11,000	romanized
Sino-Tibetan			
Sinitic Groups	Hoa	900,000	characters
	San Diu	94,630	none
	Ngai	1,200	none
Tibetan-Burman Groups			
	Ha Nhi	12,500	none
	Phu La	6,500	none
	La Hu	5,400	none
	Lo Lo	3,200	ancient scripts
	Cong	1,300	none
	Si La	600	none

Source: Dang Nghiem Van, Chu Thai Son, and Luu Hung, Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2000), pp. 266–275. Information on the writing systems comes from Nguyen Van Loi, “Ngon ngu, chu viet cac dan toc thieu so va chinh sach ngon ngu-dan toc o Viet Nam” [Languages and writing systems of minorities, language policy, and ethnic policy in Vietnam], Institute of Linguistics, National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, May 2000, pp. 63–66.

Appendix E

Draft Interview protocol for student focus groups

Introduction: Please give as much detail as possible when answering questions.

Examples or anecdotes from your experience would be especially helpful.

Opening: (I will ask additional questions such as those that follow in Parts 1-2 if their responses do not include this information)

1. Please tell me about your experiences learning English.
2. Why do you think English is a compulsory subject in Vietnamese schools? How will English help/hinder Vietnam?
3. What are your successes and what helps you to be successful in learning English?
4. What are your challenges in learning English and why are they challenges?
5. What could better help you learn English?

Part 1: Language learning history

1. How many languages do you speak? What is your native language? What languages have you studied?
2. What languages do you speak at home to parents and siblings?
3. Tell me about your family. How many languages do your parents speak? Where do they use each language? Which language do they use at work? In the community? What are their racial backgrounds? What are their occupations? What are their highest degrees in education?
4. What are your friends in school like? What kinds of things do you do when you are together? What language do you speak with them? Do they study English as well?

5. What was it like to grow up in your neighbourhood? Which languages did you hear? Where were they used? Did you ever hear/see English? Do you have any chances to get access to other cultures? To English speaking people? Could you describe it with specific examples?

Part 2: Details of experience with English learning

1. What is it like to learn English? Describe a memorable moment of learning English. What makes English learning hard or easy? Interesting? Boring? Fun? Why?
2. Compared to other subjects, how do you like English?
3. What goal do you have in learning English?
4. When you get something wrong with English, what do you do to try to keep on learning English?
5. What are your experiences outside the school that make you excited or not excited to learn English? Why do you think it might be so? How do you use or see/hear English outside of class?
6. How do you get supports to learn English?
7. What is necessary in order to do well in learning English?
8. How does your Khmer language learning affect your English learning?
9. Is there anything that I did not ask about but you'd like to tell me?

Appendix F

Draft Interview protocol for teacher focus groups

Introduction: Please give as much detail as possible when answering questions.

Examples or anecdotes from your experience would be especially helpful.

Opening (I will ask additional questions such as those that follow in Parts 1-2 if their responses do not include this information):

1. Please tell me about your experiences learning English.
2. Why do you think English is a compulsory subject in Vietnamese schools? How will English help/hinder Vietnam?
3. Please tell me about your experiences teaching English to Khmer students.
4. What are your students' successes and what helps them to be successful in learning English?
5. What are their challenges in learning English and why are they seen as challenges?
6. What could better help you teach them English?

Part 1: Language teaching history

1. How long have you been teaching English? What attracted you to study English and become an English teacher? How many languages can you speak?
2. How would you describe your English teaching?
3. Where and how did you learn English? Was it easy/difficult/fun/challenging?
Describe a memorable moment of learning English. Where did you encounter English outside of the classroom?
4. How do you maintain your English skills?
5. How many languages can your students speak?

Part 2: Details of experience with English teaching

1. What is it like teaching English to Khmer students? As opposed to teaching non-Khmer speaking students?
2. Please describe some positive experiences you have had while teaching English? To Khmer students? Why were they positive/what made them positive? Please describe some disappointing/ineffective experiences you have had while teaching English? To Khmer students? Why were they disappointing/ineffective /what made them disappointing/ineffective?
3. How would you describe students' attitudes towards learning English
4. When a student shows negative attitudes while learning English, what do you do? Why?
5. Is teaching English to Khmer students different from teaching other students? In which ways? Explain?
6. How do you facilitate your students in learning English? What helps them learn?
7. Do you think your students are successful English language learners? Why (not)?
8. How do you think Khmer students' family and local community influence their English learning?
9. What factors do you think influence your students learning English? Why?
10. Does current foreign language policy and minority language policy support your teaching of English? How?
11. Is there anything that I did not ask about but you'd like to tell me?

Appendix G

Observational Protocol

1. What is the nature of the teacher-student interaction? The classroom atmosphere?
The power relations?
2. What is the focus of the teacher in this lesson? Which language(s) does the teacher use in the classroom? When or for what purposes?
3. What learning materials are used in the classroom? Is there environmental print?
4. What are students'/teacher's attitudes/motivations towards learning English?
5. When and how does the teacher address pronunciation? Vocabulary? Grammar?
Learning strategies? Culture? Functions of language? Meaning?
6. How and when does the teacher scaffold students in learning English?
7. When and how does the teacher relate students' Khmer language and culture in learning English?
8. How does the teacher help students access learning materials?
9. Does the teacher focus on helping them solve the problems in learning English? If yes, how?

Reflection:

Appendix H

Context of Boarding High School in Soc Trang

Mission

A boarding high school, a specific type of high school, is established by the government of Vietnam for ethnic minority children residing and studying in areas with socio-economic difficulties in Soc Trang. This school provides qualified staff and human resources for the ethnic minority areas in the province. A boarding high school plays an important role in the economic development of the country and in strengthening social security and defense in the ethnic minority areas in the province.

School facilities

The school campus has an area of 24,935 m² with protective fences surrounding construction. It has been granted a certificate of land use rights.

The solidly built complex includes: 10 classrooms in a two-storey building; 06 functional rooms in a two-storey building including 03 labs (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), 01 room for informatics, 01 room for audio-visual, and 01 room for music – painting ; a three-storey building for dormitory with 40 rooms; a cafeteria; a multifunctional gym; and a playground or yard.

In addition to the works mentioned above, there are other buildings which temporarily function as a meeting room, staff room, library, health clinic, and public services.

Candidates for boarding high school in Soc Trang

Candidates for this boarding high school are ethnic minority children, mainly Khmer aged from 16 to 18 residing in areas with socio-economic difficulties in the province. The boarding

high school is allowed to recruit no more than 5 % of Kinh students who are not residing in areas with socio-economic difficulties in general admission criteria for entry to this boarding high school in a year. There are now about 200 new Khmer students recruited annually.

Teachers

In this boarding high school, there are 35 teachers who are trained at different . Apart from teaching, all teachers in this boarding high school are required to 1) understand and teach ethnic minority policies of the government in Vietnam to Khmer students; 2) understand Khmer traditions, customs, and psychological features of Khmer students; 3) apply forms of teaching and evaluate Khmer students appropriately; 4) facilitate Khmer students in their self-study time after school classes; 5) participate in training courses on professional knowledge and methodology; 6) care for Khmer students; and 7) inherit given policies specified by the government of Vietnam.

Some married teachers who do not have conditions to buy houses can live in the school dorm but this number is limited. The majority of teachers live in their own houses.

The principal in this boarding high school encourages teachers to study some Khmer to help explain the lessons in case students do not understand the Vietnamese explanation.

However, this appears to be a problem due to the teachers' ability in Khmer. It is striking for me to learn that there is a gap between what the teacher participants say and what they do in reality.

In the interviews, they said that they sometimes explained some of the complicated points of English lessons in Khmer to Khmer students. Nevertheless, my conversations with some of Khmer students after classes and my field-notes show that they have never done this.

National high school examination regulations

According to the national high school examination regulation in 2015-2016, to consider recognizing high school graduation, students must take four subjects. The three compulsory subjects are Math, Literature, and Foreign Language, and an elective.

Candidates who may not be learning a foreign language at school or studying it in school where there are not enough conditions to study a foreign language, which is certified by the Director of the Department of Education and Training, are allowed to choose an alternative subject for foreign language among the four subjects in the high school graduation examination.

Nominations to universities/colleges

According to Decree 134/2006/NĐ-CP dated in 2006 by the government of Vietnam, Vietnamese citizens are ethnic minorities whose minority groups have no or very few staff reaching university or college level compared to that groups' population within the provinces, cities directly under central government are eligible for this nomination. The number of nominees varies annually in planning for university/college admissions of the State and the competent authorities assigned by each profession and training level.

School enrollment

Since its establishment in 1993, the number of Khmer students and graduation rates in this boarding high school increase annually. The boarding high school has difficulties collecting a number of graduate students since the admission letters from universities/colleges are directly sent to Khmer students who do not report their university/college admissions to the boarding high school. Therefore, the data below is not likely fully complete.

Provincial boarding high school in Soc Trang				
School Year	Completion	Graduation rates	Number of students going to universities or colleges	% Students going to universities/colleges
1993-1994	50	44.64	0	0.00
1994-1995	105	43.75	1	0.95
1995-1996	126	51.43	15	11.90
1996-1997	132	51.56	21	15.91
1997-1998	139	57.20	34	24.46
1998-1999	152	54.68	45	29.61
1999-2000	172	65.40	46	26.74
2000-2001	192	68.57	49	25.52
2001-2002	199	67.69	48	24.12
2002-2003	205	71.93	50	24.39
2003-2004	211	71.28	43	20.38
2004-2005	234	75.73	53	22.65
2005-2006	245	77.78	56	22.86
2006-2007	272	82.93	31	11.40
2007-2008	259	74.21	53	20.46
2008-2009	350	84.13	34	9.71
2009-2010	375	88.24	174	46.40
2010-2011	402	83.40	57	14.18
2011-2012	470	95.14	138	29.36
2012-2013	557	100.00	87	15.62
2013-2014	560	100.00	93	16.61
2014-2015	552	100.00	102	18.48

Appendix I

Timelines of the Study

<i>Week</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
1		Collect parent, student and teacher signatures and consent forms and show visibility to students and staff					
		First classroom observation in grade 10 class	Focus group interview for Khmer students of grade 10	First classroom observation in grade 11 class	Focus group interview for Khmer students of grade 11	First classroom observation in grade 12 class	
2		Write summary field-notes of observation, send to Supervisor for discussion. This may result in probing for more information during interviews.	Write field-notes Transcribe interview, translate and send to Supervisor for skype conversation.	- Write summary field-notes of observation, send to Supervisor for discussion. This may result in probing for more information during interviews. - Send transcription to grade 10 students for	Write field-notes Transcribe interview, translate and send to Supervisor for skype conversation.	- Write summary field-notes of observation, send to Supervisor for discussion. This may result in probing for more information during interviews. - Send transcription to grade 11 students for member	Re-read all transcripts – begin data analysis and interpretation to improve observations and focus group interviews

				member check.		check.	
		Focus group interview for Khmer students of grade 12	Focus group interview for teachers of English	Second classroom observation - in grade 10 class	Second classroom observation - in grade 11 class	Second classroom observation - in grade 12 class	
3		Write field- notes Transcribe interview, translate and send to Supervisor for skype conversation.	- Write field- notes Transcribe interview, translate and send to Supervisor for skype conversation. - Send transcription to grade 12 students for member check.	- Write summary field-notes of observation. - Send transcription to teachers for member check.	Write summary field-notes of observation	Write summary field-notes of observation	
		- Collect	- Collect	Send	- Collect		

		transcription (Member check) for Khmer students of grade 10 - Conduct second Focus group interview with grade 10 students	transcription (Member check) for teachers - Conduct second Focus group interview with teachers	transcription to teachers for member check.	transcription (Member check) for Khmer students of grade 11 - Conduct second Focus group interview with students of grade 11		
4		Write field-notes Read and re-read the member checks to prepare for the interview	Write field-notes Transcribe interview	Write field-notes Read and re-read the member checks to prepare for the interview	Write field-notes Transcribe interview	Write field-notes Read and re-read the member checks to prepare for the interview	
5		- Collect transcription (Member check) for Khmer students of grade 12 - Conduct second Focus	Third classroom observation - in grade 10 class - Collect second transcription (Member	Third classroom observation - in grade 11 class - Collect second transcription (Member	Third classroom observation - in grade 12 class - Collect second transcription (Member	Reserve this day for classroom observation in case students' schedule change	

		group interview with students of grade 12	check) for Khmer students of grade 10	check) for Khmer students of grade 11	check) for teachers		
		Write field-notes Transcribe interview	- Write summary field-notes of observation - Send transcription to grade 12 students for member check.	Write summary field-notes of observation	Write summary field-notes of observation	Write summary field-notes of observation	
6		Reserved week	- Reserved week - Collect transcription from grade 12 students as member check.	Reserved week	Reserved week	Reserved week	

Summary of timelines for this study

Appendix J

INFORMATION LETTERS and CONSENT FORMS

Study Title: Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam

Research Investigator:

NAME: **Tai Vo**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: tvo@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-3674

Supervisor

Professor Supervisor: **Olenka Bilash**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-5101

Date: _____

Dear Teacher,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project entitled, **Sociocultural and**

Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam.

The purpose of my research is to better understand the learning of English by Khmer students. I will do so by interviewing teachers and students and identifying the variety of factors that they talk about, and by observing a few classes. The outcomes of this study will (a) help me and EFL

teachers in Soc Trang province identify what motivates Khmer students in learning English, (b) assist Soc Trang's EFL teachers in better understanding Khmer students' learning needs and desires, (c) help inform other minority language policy cases in Vietnam and the rest of the world, and (d) help people understand more about learning a third foreign language when language learners have weak first language or second language or poor literacy in both languages.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you are under no obligation to agree to participate. Your participation in the study is twofold:

1. You are asked to participate in **two focus group interviews** of approximately one and a half hours duration each. They will be conducted over a one month research period (once in the first week and once in the third week). During the interview you will be asked to exchange stories and thoughts related to your experience in teaching English to Khmer students as well as your perceptions of the reasons for their successes and failures in learning English. The interviews will be audio-recorded for future reference and the tapes will be summarized. The summary of each conversation will be provided to you for your approval and reflection a few days after each interview. You may change, add or delete anything you wish. No one will hear the tape except me. You are asked not to share things other people share in the focus group.
2. You are also asked to give me permission **to observe your class**, take notes about my observations and take some photos to help me remember the visit. The purpose of the classroom observation is to note the nature of the interaction between teacher and students. It is in no way an assessment and I will not discuss anything that I see with the

school principal or any official. No identifiable people will appear in the photos and no one but myself will see them. They will not appear in any of my research publications. Further, I will avoid taking notes or photos of any of the students who choose not to participate.

Results of this study will be used to write Tai Vo's dissertation. Research reports might include direct quotes made by you but your name will not be used. Other identifying information will also be omitted whenever the results are made public.

Your confidentiality will be assured throughout the study and your anonymity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in the dissertation. No one else except the interviewer and his supervisor will have access to the interview tapes and all use of data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards. Once data has been digitalized (within one month of collection) all identification will be removed.

The data in this study will be securely stored for a minimum of five years and will then be destroyed.

You will be able to opt out of the study at any point up until one month after the data has been collected, simply by informing me that you do not wish to participate. In the event you withdraw your participation all data that has been collected from you will be removed from the data set.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned, and the other copy should be kept for your records.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of my research, please feel free to contact my supervisor:

Dr. Olenka Bilash 780-492-510, olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Tai Vo

Phone: 780-492-3674

CONSENT FORM (Teacher)

Please sign the form below to indicate your willingness to take part in the study described above.

I, _____, have read the accompanying information letter and give my informed consent to participate in the research study, **Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam**, conducted by Tai Vo.

In agreeing to take part in this study, I understand that:

- I am under no obligation to participate.
- Even after giving my consent to take part, I may discontinue my participation without penalty at any time. I may withdraw information that was already collected by contacting Tai Vo within one month of the collection of that data. Any information or data that directly link to me as an individual will be excluded from the study.
- Information that I provide will be treated as confidential. Direct quotes from me may be used in research reports (i.e., dissertation, presentation and publications), but my name and other identifying information will be changed or omitted.
- I agree to let you observe my class and take notes. I understand that the notes are not for any assessment purposes.
- I agree to let Tai Vo take some photos of my classroom with unidentifiable people for the purpose of acting as a memory tool for him.
- I will not share anything I heard during focus group discussions with anyone.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

INFORMATION LETTER and ASSENT FORM

Study Title: Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam

Research Investigator:

NAME: **Tai Vo**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: tvo@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-3674

Supervisor

Professor Supervisor: **Olenka Bilash**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-5101

Date: _____

Dear Students,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta in Canada. I am conducting research about Khmer students learning English and would like to invite you to take part in my research project. I will interview teachers and students and write about what they say helps or hinders Khmer students from learning English. The results of the study will (a) help me and EFL teachers in Soc Trang province identify what motivates you in learning English, (b) assist Soc Trang's EFL teachers in better understanding your learning needs

and desires, (c) help inform other minority language policy cases in Vietnam and the rest of the world, and (d) help people understand more about learning a third language.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you are under no obligation to agree to participate.

You are asked to participate in **two focus group interviews** of approximately one and a half hours duration each. They will be conducted about two weeks apart. During the interview you will be asked to exchange stories and thoughts related to your experience in learning English – what helps and what hinders your learning. I will record the interview, listen to it and write a summary. Then I will share the summary with you. You may change, add or delete anything you wish. No one will hear the tape except me. You are asked not to share things other people share in the focus group.

You are also asked to give me permission **to observe your class**, take notes about my observations and take some photos to help me remember the visit. The purpose of the classroom observation is to observe how teachers and students interact. It is in no way an assessment and I will not discuss anything that I see with the school principal or any official. No identifiable people will appear in the photos and no one but myself will see them. They will not appear in any of my research publications.

Results of this study will be used to write my dissertation. Research reports might include direct quotes made by you but your name will not be used. No one will know your name or where you study. Instead I will use a pseudonym.

The data in this study will be securely stored for a minimum of five years and will then be destroyed.

You will be able to opt out of the study at any point up until one month after the data has been collected, simply by informing me that you do not wish to participate. If you withdraw your participation all of your comments will be erased and not included in the analysis.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned, and the other copy should be kept for your records.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of my research, please feel free to contact my supervisor:

Dr. Olenka Bilash 780-492-510, olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Tai Vo

Phone: 780-492-3674

ASSENT FORM (Students)

Please sign the form below to indicate your willingness to take part in the study described above.

I, _____, have read the accompanying information letter and give my informed consent to participate in the research study, **Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam**, conducted by Tai Vo.

Please choose to sign ONE part only

1. In agreeing to take part in this study, I understand that:

- I do not have to participate if I do not want.
- I can stop participation at any time. There is no penalty. Everything I have said will be erased and not used.
- Everything I say is private and confidential. You may quote my words but never state my name or the name of my school.
- I agree to let you observe my class and take notes.
- I agree to let Tai Vo take some photos of my classroom to help him remember it. I will not be seen in the photos.
- I will not share anything I heard during focus group discussions with anyone.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

2. I do not wish to participate in the research but agree to be present during classroom observation with the understanding that no data will be collected from me.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

3. I do not wish to participate in the research and do not give permission to be observed

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam

Research Investigator:

NAME: **Tai Vo**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: tvo@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-3674

Supervisor

Professor Supervisor: **Olenka Bilash**

341 Education South

University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2R3

EMAIL: olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

PHONE NUMBER: 780-492-5101

Date: _____

Dear Parents,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta in Canada. I am conducting research about Khmer students learning English and would like to invite your child to take part in my research project. I will interview teachers and students and write about what they say helps or hinders Khmer students from learning English. The results of the study will (a) help me and EFL teachers in Soc Trang province identify what motivates your child in learning English, (b) assist Soc Trang's EFL teachers in better understanding your

child's learning needs and desires, (c) help inform other minority language policy cases in Vietnam and the rest of the world, and (d) help people understand more about learning a third foreign language when language learners have weak first language or second language or poor literacy in both languages.

Your child's participation in this study is purely voluntary. S/he is under no obligation to agree to participate. Your child's participation in the study is twofold:

1. Your child is asked to participate in **two focus group interviews** of approximately one and a half hours duration each. They will be conducted about two weeks apart. During the interview s/he will be asked to exchange stories and thoughts related to his/her experience in learning English – what helps and what hinders his/her learning. I will record the interview, listen to it and write a summary. Then I will share the summary with your child. Your child may change, add or delete anything s/he wishes. No one will hear the tape except me. Your child is asked not to share things other people share in the focus group.
2. Your child is also asked to give me permission **to observe his/her class**, take notes about my observations and take some photos to help me remember the visit. The purpose of the classroom observation is to note the nature of the interaction between teacher and students. It is in no way an assessment and I will not discuss anything that I see with the school principal or any official. No identifiable people will appear in the photos and no one but myself will see them. They will not appear in any of my research publications.

Results of this study will be used to write Tai Vo's dissertation. Research reports might include direct quotes made by your child but his/her name will not be used. Other identifying information will also be omitted whenever the results are made public.

Your child's confidentiality will be assured throughout the study and your anonymity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in the dissertation. No one else except the interviewer and his supervisor will have access to the interview tapes and all use of data will be handled in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards. Once data has been digitalized (within one month of collection) all identification will be removed.

The data in this study will be securely stored for a minimum of five years and will then be destroyed.

Your child will be able to opt out of the study at any point up until one month after the data has been collected, simply by informing me that s/he does not wish to participate. If s/he withdraws all data that has been collected from him/her will be removed from the data set.

Two copies of this form will be provided. One copy should be signed and returned, and the other copy should be kept for your records.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of my research, please feel free to contact my supervisor:

Dr. Olenka Bilash 780-492-510, olenka.bilash@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Tai Vo

Phone: 780-492-3674

CONSENT FORM (Parents of students under 18 years)

Please sign the form below to indicate your child's willingness to take part in the study described above.

I, _____, have read the accompanying information letter and give my informed consent to let my child participate in the research study, **Sociocultural and Ecological Factors Influencing the Acquisition of English of Khmer Students in Vietnam**, conducted by Tai Vo.

Please choose to sign ONE part only

1. In agreeing to take part in this study, I understand that:

- My child does not have to participate if you or s/he does not want.
- My child can stop participation at any time. There is no penalty. Everything s/he has said will be erased and not used.
- Everything my child says is private and confidential. You may quote my child's words but never state his/her name or anything about him/her.
- I agree to let you observe my child's class and take notes.
- I agree to let Tai Vo take some photos of my child's classroom to help him remember it. My child will not be seen in the photos.
- My child will not share anything s/he heard during focus group discussions with anyone.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

2. I do not wish for my child to participate in the research but agree that s/he be present during classroom observation with the understanding that no data will be collected from him or her.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

3. I do not wish for my child to participate in the research and do not give permission to be observed

(print name)

(signature)

(date)