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ERROR ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF VERBS IN ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS
WRITTEN BY STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF EDUCATION, PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

SOM MONY



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DEDICATION

This project paper is dedicated to

My parents Nou Som and Kao Sun

and

my wife and three sisters

Makara, Sovannara, Sotheary and Sarain





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank the many people who had generously given advice and assistance to me while I was working on this project paper.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Education Malaysia, and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, for the provision of scholarship and courses, without which this study would never have been accomplished.

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I wish to also thank the thirty students who were selected as samples for this study. Their written compositions were vitally important, and without them this study would not exist.

My heart-felt thanks must be forwarded to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the National Institute of Education in Cambodia, for granting me a long leave from my current job to continue my studies at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Malaysia.

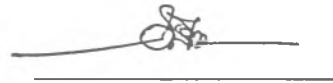
Finally, I would like to thank all members of my family, especially my wife, Mrs. Makara Bou for her support, understanding, patience and love.





DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.



Date: May05, 2005

SOM MONY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyse the recurrent errors in verbs made in sixty English compositions written by thirty students at the National Institute of Education, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The students were given a test with two sections to write. They were required to write two compositions by choosing one question from section one and choosing one question out of four questions provided in section two of the test. This study is designed to fulfill a four-fold function: 1) to find out and classify the common errors in the use of verbs in student writing; 2) to indicate frequency of certain types of errors; 3) to explain the sources of these errors; and 4) to suggest remedies with a view to correcting the errors. In the study, the errors in verbs were categorized into four major error types: **Verb Tenses**, **Verb Forms**, **Subject-Verb Agreement**, and **Modals**. The researcher found that most of the errors made were in **Verb Tenses**, followed by errors in **Verb Forms**, then errors in **Subject-Verb Agreement** and errors in **Modals** respectively. The errors were explained in terms of 1) overgeneralization; 2) ignorance of rule restrictions; 3) incomplete application of the rules; and 4) false concepts hypothesized. Based on the findings, a three-tier programme was recommended. The programme offered three separate stages of remedial work (the remedial, the reinforced, and the enrichment stages) and teachers should adopt the most appropriate one and implement it according to the students' needs. It is clear that from this study the researcher found that the errors in the use of **Verb Tenses** required more attention than other error types because this type of errors was the most frequent errors the samples made in their writing. Moreover, the findings would provide information that could be used to construct teaching materials pertinent to the needs and improvement of teaching and learning of English in Cambodia.





ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesilapan penggunaan kata kerja yang wujud dalam 60 buah karangan Bahasa Inggeris yang telah ditulis oleh 30 orang pelajar di Institut Pendidikan Nasional, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Pelajar tersebut telah diberi ujian merangkumi dua bahagian. Pelajar perlu menulis dua karangan dengan memilih satu soalan daripada Bahagian Satu dan satu soalan dari Bahagian Dua. Kajian telah direka untuk memenuhi 4 fungsi: 1) mencari dan mengklasifikasikan kesilapan dalam kata kerja yang sering dilakukan oleh pelajar dalam penulisan mereka; 2) untuk menentukan frekuensi kesilapan yang wujud; 3) menerangkan punca kesilapan; dan 4) mencadangkan langkah-langkah mengatasinya agar pembetulan dapat dilakukan. Dalam kajian ini, kesilapan dalam kata kerja dikategorikan kepada empat jenis: **Verb Tenses**, **Verb Forms**, **Subject-Verb Agreement**, dan **Modals**. Pengkaji mendapati bahawa kebanyakan kesilapan dilakukan dalam **Verb Tenses**, diikuti oleh **Verb Forms** dan **Subject-Verb Agreement** serta **Modals**. Kesilapan tersebut diterangkan dalam bentuk 1) generalisasi; 2) tidak mengambil kira peraturan tatabahasa yang sedia ada; 3) mengaplikasi peraturan yang tidak lengkap; dan 4) konsep yang salah dihipotesiskan. Berdasarkan data-data kajian, program tiga-tahap telah dicadangkan. Program tersebut mengandungi tiga peringkat aktiviti pemulihan yang berasingan. (Pemulihan, Pengukuhan, dan Pengayaan) dan guru perlu memilih peringkat yang tepat dan mengimplimentasikannya mengikut keperluan pelajar. Daripada kajian ini jelas bahawa kesilapan dalam menggunakan **Verb Tenses** memerlukan perhatian yang lebih berbanding dengan kesilapan-kesilapan yang lain kerana ia merupakan kesilapan utama pelajar dalam penulisan mereka. Selain itu, kajian ini juga memberikan maklumat yang kemungkinan besar boleh digunakan untuk menghasilkan alat bantu mengajar yang sesuai dengan keperluan pelajar serta memperbaiki mutu pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di Cambodia.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English began to be taught as a subject in Cambodian schools only from 1989.

Between 1975 and 1989 it had been forbidden to teach or to learn English. Prior to

1975 the principle foreign language taught in schools had been French. From 1989

therefore Cambodia had to recommence the teaching of English as a foreign language

from a very low resource base: no curriculum, no textbooks, few teachers of English.

At the National Institute of Education, English is taught as a compulsory subject. However, Cambodian language is the medium of instruction for every subject offered.

It has been noticed that the students at the institute commit a lot of errors in their writing and these errors need to be investigated to identify the various causes and sources of errors and the techniques of correcting errors.





1.2 General Background

1.2.1 Geography

Cambodia is a country situated in Southeast Asia, shares borders to the North with Thailand and Laos, to the East with Vietnam and with the Gulf of Thailand to the South. Cambodia has 440 kilometers of coastal border facing the Gulf of Thailand. With a total area of 181,035 square kilometers, the country is about one-third the size of Thailand or 293 times bigger than Singapore (MoEYS, 1999). The central region is the developed area. It consists of a low plateau and is dominated by the Mekong River and the Tonlesab Lake.

1.2.2 Climate

Cambodia is a dry and humid tropical country. It is situated very close to the equator; high temperatures and high humidity prevail generally. Daily temperatures can reach 40°C in April, the hottest month, and are around 30°C during January, the coolest month. Daily minimum temperatures are usually no more than 10°C below the maximums, but it has been known to drop as low as 14°C at night in late December or early January. There are only two seasons, the rainy season starts from June to November and the dry season starts from December to May.

1.2.3 Government and Administration

The Kingdom of Cambodia comprises of 20 provinces and four municipalities. The four municipalities are Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, and Pailin. The capital city of Phnom Penh consists of seven precincts and populated by nearly one million people (MoEYS, 1999).





The constituent Assembly was re-established following the UN-sponsored general elections held in 1993. This elected Constitutional Assembly later became the National Assembly. The constitutional Assembly develops new laws for the country with the King as Head of State. The King reigns but does not rule and is a symbol of the unity and eternity of the nation. There are three branches: executive, legislative and judicial.

1.2.4 Population and Economy

According to the national census of March 1998, Cambodia has a total population of 11.4 million of which 51.78% are women. The majority of the population lives in rural areas and on agricultural production. More than 80% of the population lives on and derive their incomes from farming.

Only 15.7% of the total population resides in urban areas or towns. The country has an estimated annual population growth rate of 2.4%. At this rate, the population is likely to double within less than 30 years.

It is estimated that the GDP is arises between 7% and 7.5% per annum. The GDP per capita is US \$286 per annum (MoEYS, 1999).

1.3 History of Education and Development of Foreign Languages in Cambodia

The education system in Cambodia suffered tremendously during 1970 to 1979. After mass killing and taking refuge of the teachers and educated persons resulted from Khmer Rouge (1975-1979), Cambodia has faced completely disastrous situation.

Unlike education in some of the countries in the region, which has somehow enjoyed its steady development, Cambodian education has for the most part





experienced hardship and stagnation due to the unfortunate social and political upheavals that wrecked the country over the past several decades (RGC, 1997).

Cambodia has undergone a troubled history since the demise of the Khmer Empire. It is, therefore, technically and historically difficult to conjure up and provoke an impression of formal education from the period of Angkor to French colonization. During the period of the French protectorate from 1864 to 1953, a French-based educational system was in practice in tandem with the traditional system (Cambodian Business & Investment Handbook, 1996).

Before the French arrived in Indochina, education in Cambodia was traditionally handled by community-based pagoda schools where the Buddhist monks were the initial teachers. Most of the students were young boys, (as girls were rarely admitted) and education was limited to practical learning with religious and cultural instruction (Cambodian Business & Investment Handbook, 1996; Le Masson &



Fergusson, 1997).

1.3.1 The French Protectorate Period

In 1864, French gunboats intimidated King Norodom (reigned 1860-1904) into signing a treaty of protectorate (Ray,N., 2003).

Early French efforts in regard to education in Cambodia reflected the nonchalance of initial attempts at administering the protectorate. In 1867, after only four years of protectorate, King Norodom, under French patronage, established the secular school in Cambodia, for children of the royal family. A second school was established by Ferreyrolles, a French military officer, in Phnom Penh in 1873.

The French education system had not touched the lives of the peasantry. Cambodia's peasants continued to be educated at the Wat (pagoda). To overcome



obstacles, it was decided to use the temple schools, but to reform them. The reason for reform, it was stated, was that the temple schools, without curriculum, timetable, inspectors, or examinations, were inadequate and in a state of degeneration.

The French administration had confined to an essentially primary curriculum. The French had not established secondary schools for the population generally. Only one school existed prior to independence. Ayres (1997) closely documents the critics of the French colonial administration as lacking the intention of educational development for the peasants. Students were required to travel either to Saigon, Hanoi or Paris to pursue further studies.

Cambodia achieved independence in 1953, with much credit, lauded on King Sihanouk. During the next 17 years, education, especially higher education in Cambodia developed tremendously as the result of self-realization of the importance of education with the frequent encouragement from King Sihanouk. Teacher training colleges were established in several provincial towns and the number of secondary schools national-wide increased.

However, as stated by Chandler (1996), "The Vietnamese War destabilized the Cambodian economy and drove Sihanouk from office". After the King was overthrown in the US-supported coup d'état led by General Lon Nol in March 1970.

From the French Protectorate up to 1970, the foreign language in Cambodia was French.

After the coup d'état, Cambodia was plunged into a period of devastating war. During the early 1970s all state affairs were interrupted by the war in Vietnam. Cambodia was divided into different factions making Vietnamese troop and supply movement feasible and active, on the one hand, Lon Nol government troop battled the communist resistance groups with the Khmer Rouge was included, the country



suffered heavily with tremendous educational, human and capital losses. In addition to that, as the USA continuously lost control of the Vietnam War and while the communist Khmer Rouge became militarily more powerful within the country, the socioeconomic gains during the past two decades under King Sihanouk's leadership were soon irrevocable.

With the war in Vietnam approaching its end by the early 1972, civil war and aerial bombardment throughout Cambodia caused serious destruction to all facets of Khmer life and tremendously enfeebled the system of education. Obviously, most of the school buildings were seriously damaged by American bombs and artillery shells. The Cambodian economy was in danger and as a result, education was badly underfunded. From 1970 to 1975, French and English were foreign languages in Cambodia.

1.3.2 The Khmer Rouge Period (1975-1979)



On April 17, 1975, the Lon Nol regime was toppled by the communist Khmer Rouge (Chandler, 1996; Le Masson & Fergusson, 1997). The period from 1975 to 1979 under the Khmer Rouge, though relatively short, was the massive tragedy of Cambodian educational sector.

After 1975 events, Cambodia and its innocent people who had just suffered the destructive war had continued to face with the genocidal catastrophe orchestrated by Pol Pot Democratic Kampuchea. This razed to the ground both the infrastructure and superstructure of Cambodian society by having committed countless crimes against humanity and the nation. It is estimated that more than two million innocent Cambodians, most of them were intellectuals died from starvation, execution, maltreatment and disease. It should be clearly noted that education in general was the





prior target of the Khmer Rouge destructive revolution. As supported by Le Masson and Fergusson (1997),

"The primary targets of the Khmer Rouge vengeance were Cambodia's intellectuals (i.e. anyone who spoke a foreign language, or anyone with an education or Western training), the bourgeois classes ..., and the so-called people of April 17th Students and teachers suffered particularly badly during this time"(p.109)

To accomplish its first goal in completely abolishing Cambodia's education, the Khmer Rouge started destroying educational facilities and killing students, teachers and other scholars soon after their victory. For instance, one of the high schools in Phnom Penh named Toul Sleng High School was used as a prison, widely known as Toul Sleng Torture Centre, in which most of the Cambodian victims, especially intellectuals were imprisoned, brutally tortured, and finally killed. During this period, the education system was completely destroyed. Le Masson and Fergusson (1997) put it that,

"Troops ransacked the Royal Palace, the government ministries, and commercial offices, indiscriminately flinging documents and papers into the streets. Opposite the palace they burned down an entire bookstore. Tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of books were thrown into Mekong River or burned on the riverbanks. At the Soviet hospital (so named because it was built with Russian aid), soldiers gathered up all the books and magazines, including the





medical library, and carted them to a nearby shed. Setting the shed afire with gasoline, they ignited a conflagration that for a while endangered the hospital itself. Untold numbers of books were burned at a city dump some five kilometers from the hospital, and the libraries of Phnom Penh University and Buddhist University went up in flames."
(p. 110-111)

1.3.3 The People's Republic of Kampuchea

In 1979, the National Liberation Front deposed the genocidal regime and the People's Republic of Kampuchea was founded, allowing this completely devastated country the opportunity to rebuild its own educational system. Some leftover primary schools were then reopened for children. Due to the lack of schools and classrooms, houses, cottages, stables, garages, and so forth were used as classrooms. Children were taught under the shade of the trees. However, the lack of qualified teachers and an absence of national-wide curriculum were some of the countless problems confronting Cambodia's education in that period, making its quality greatly suffered.

From 1979 to 1986, the Vietnamese and Russian languages were introduced at secondary level. English and French were completely banned.

However, from 1987 to 1989, minor progress was made in education, and the situation generally was more improved. The provincial teacher training colleges assumed responsibility for training all primary and pre-school teachers; there were six regional teacher training centres which charged with training teachers all subjects for lower secondary schools. Phnom Penh University was the only institution responsible for training all upper secondary school teachers throughout the country. English language teaching and training was not still taking place in a formal way.





1.3.4 The Royal Government of Cambodia

In early 1990s, the United Nations sought a resolution to Cambodia's long-standing political conflict. Both infrastructure and trained human resources had been destroyed during two decades of civil war.

The Royal Government was formed in 1993. For the time being, after years of reconstruction, the education system has been rebuilt from pre-school to post-secondary levels. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has been playing important roles as the main human resources development agency of the country to restore and secure the supply function of human resources.

The policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia is that French and English are the foreign languages which are taught in schools. Although the government officially put equal status on French and English, English tends to be the first language of choice.



1.3.5 The Development of English in Cambodia

The national language of Cambodia is Khmer, but this language is not spoken outside of Cambodia except in certain regions of the countries immediately adjacent to Cambodia. In order to communicate with its immediate neighbours, as well as countries in the region and worldwide, Cambodia therefore needs an international language. With the establishment of the French protectorate from 1864 to 1953, this language was French, but following its independence from France in 1953 Cambodia began to replace French with Khmer as its official language for administration purposes. The political situation from 1970 prevented this process from being satisfactorily implemented, and the Royal Government of Cambodia has commenced to re-establish Khmer as its language of administration. Khmer language is also the





language of instruction in the secondary and tertiary education. Cambodia had to recommence the teaching of English in 1989 from a very low resource base (Chamnan, 1996). Dawson (2001) notes that;

"1989-1990, a decision was made by the government to change foreign language instruction from Russian and Vietnamese to English and French - but there were no teachers." (p. 2)

1.3.6 Provision of English in Secondary Schools

From 1990-1993, there were political transitions. However, the education system made good progress. In particular, teacher training courses, for all subjects other than English and French, were still well-managed in all the regional teacher training centres. English language classes were provided in some High Schools, but the country had only a few qualified English teachers supported by the necessary teaching and learning materials to prescribe English in the curriculum. Between English and French, English is becoming the more popular choice among school-going Cambodians. A framework for an English curriculum for secondary schools was developed in 1991 by the Ministry of Education with help from outside the country and a textbook was also prepared and piloted, scheduled for use in secondary schools by 1994 (Chamnan and Cornish 1997: 38). However, the majority of students gain much of their knowledge of English in private English classes (Darany, 1996).

Despite the great interest in learning the language, English proficiency among school leavers leaves much to be desired. Primary school leavers have very little or have no knowledge of English since English has not been introduced into the primary curriculum.





As far as teacher teaching methodology is concerned, the traditional grammar-translation method reportedly prevailed, which involved memorization-production and the learning of English structure (Suon, 1990).

However, a learner centred approach to teaching English was introduced in 1995, with the assistance of various foreign governments and NGO donors (Sophal et al., 1999). Pre-school, primary and secondary teacher training courses have been held through in-service, pre-service and short incremental programs.

1.3.7 Provision of English in Higher Education

Cambodia still lacks of qualified lecturers in higher education. As for the university instructors, they are trained at best with a master's degree and more typically with a bachelor's degree from the very institution at which they teach. This means that instructors have minimal competency in their profession. Partly this is a result of postcolonial existence, although most Cambodia watchers, political historians such as Kiernan and Boua (1982), as well as Chandler (1996), refer to the Pol Pot regime as the main reasons for the backwardness of education in Cambodia. Geoff Coyne (1997) emphasizes the transition stages which contextualize the situation:

"Cambodia is really undergoing a rapid transition from three former and very different regimes: the Khmer-French regime (pre-1975), the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979), and the Socialist regime (1979-1990). Of these, the Pol Pot regime has left a legacy of death of intellectuals and destruction of educational materials that the government is working to overcome. A major problem of this legacy is the re-creation of a body of teachers, adequate in numbers and qualifications to tackle the





problem of imparting quality education at university level, in needed disciplines and to the numbers of students required for nation re-building." (p. 27-28)

Throughout the country, there is only one particular four-year formal program, English Language Teacher Training, based at the university of Phnom Penh, aims to provide teachers for high schools and tertiary levels. This program has been conducted since 1988 to provide graduate teacher of English. The first graduates appeared in June 1993.

However, as in so many developing countries which can not offer attractive salaries in the public sector to those with marketable qualifications, only about one-quarter of the graduates go teach in government schools (Darany, 1996).



1.4 Statement of the Problem

English is taught as a foreign language in Cambodian schools. This means that students lack exposure towards the language. Even though students are exposed to the language in schools, the exposure does not make them proficient in the language. In schools, students are exposed to the language only during the English language sessions and it is very limited.

Teacher's qualifications and teaching may contribute to the deterioration of performance among students, especially in writing.

AIDAB (1992: 6) states that,

"There are several factors which adversely affect English language development in Cambodian schools. The first, and arguably the most





important, is the lack of adequate qualified teachers. Methodology is often outdated and reliant upon pre-1975 training which does not encourage communicative competence. Even when teachers have been able to participate in retraining, large classes, often 60 or 65 students, make new methodologies and communicative activities difficult to present and organize. There are few textbooks available, and students often can not afford to purchase the recommended basis text. Teaching materials are beyond the financial reach of most teachers, and most classrooms have no charts, maps or teaching aids. The conditions faced by teachers themselves are poor: salaries are low, workplace conditions are of low standard, and many teachers are forced to make up other employment to supplement their income."



One very significant factor which affects writing in the foreign language classrooms is that the amount of language which the learners will have at their disposal for their writing will be very limited - so limited that it might seem to make it impossible to introduce any meaningful form of writing practice. At some time, the learners, being more mature than they were when they learned to write in their mother tongue, are conscious of limitations which the foreign language imposes on the expression of their ideas (Byrne, 1991).

Writing is an important, but difficult to acquire, communication skill which is essential in today's information society. The level of difficulty is significantly higher when a foreign language is involved. Differences in language structures, manners of expressing thoughts, writing styles, and other culturally varying factors greatly affect the writings of foreign (second) language learners (Benson & Heidish, 1995).





As far as the students at the National Institute of Education are concerned, they always commit a lot of errors in their writing. This study is carried out to find out the common errors in the use of verbs in student writing and to suggest remedies with the view to correcting the errors.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is conducted to find out the answers to the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the errors made by students at the National Institute of Education in their written work?
2. What is the frequency of occurrence for each type of errors made by the students?
3. What are the causes of errors made by the students in their written work?



1.6 Need for the study

Error Analysis (thereafter EA) is a basic step in providing the grounds for an assessment of learner's competence to use the language and of his knowledge of that language. EA is vital to the language teacher who needs to know in advance as far as possible the type and importance of the errors a particular group of students would be likely to make, the various causes of the errors and the techniques of correcting these errors.

The lack of acquaintance with error analysis is often the cause of language teacher and his/her students wasting a considerable amount of time before the teacher finally discovers what type of errors his/her students make; what priorities to adopt in their correction; and what corrective techniques are the most effective and most appropriate. A lack of acquaintance with error analysis will sometimes cause teacher





to become concerned with insignificant errors to the exclusion of others that are more important.

This study is carried out to make the researcher and the teachers at the National Institute of Education aware of the types of errors made by the students and to seek the ways to help students overcome their writing difficulties.

1.7 Purpose of the study

Success in teaching any subject is determined by the performance and accomplishment of the learners. If the learners fail to achieve the simplest objectives in the learning subject so that his/her work results in a mass of glaring errors, instruction in the subject has been a grievous waste of effort. Teachers of English are aware of this and labour hard to eliminate the errors only to find similar errors repeated again and again by students in their written exercises or compositions. Such a situation will continue to prevail unless a study is made to find the root causes of the problem and unless remedial materials are developed to prevent their occurrence.

This study is designed to fulfill a four-fold function:

1. to find out and classify the common errors in the use of verbs in student writing;
2. to indicate frequency of certain types of errors;
3. to explain the sources of these errors;
4. to suggest remedies with a view to correcting the errors.

1.8 Significance of the Study

It is obvious that the students' opportunities to use English in both productive and receptive areas of the language are very limited. Insufficient exposure to the target





language partly gives rise to committing errors, especially in writing. Students' errors tell teacher how competent the students are. Once teachers identify these errors, they would know what to do with their teaching methods and selections of their teaching materials to help their students and to plan programs for future groups.

Corder (1967), by paying attention to the learner's errors, feels we will come to understand better his/her needs and stop assuming we know what he/she should learn and when he/she should learn it. He claims that errors can be significant in three ways: (1) they tell the teacher how far the learner has come and what he/she still must learn; (2) they give the researcher evidence of how language is learned (i.e., strategies and procedures used); (3) they are a device the learner uses to test out his hypotheses concerning the language he/she learning.

The researcher hopes that the findings of this study would help the researcher as well as teachers at the National Institute of Education to be aware of the errors in verbs and the sources and causes of errors. The findings would also help to indicate learning items which will require special attention and extra practice. Moreover, the findings would suggest modifications in teaching techniques and help teachers to plan necessary remedial lessons to overcome the errors.

1.9 Definition of Terms

In order to understand this study, some terms and phrases are defined as followed:

Error:

The term is used to refer to the use of a linguistic item in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning. In learning English as a foreign or second language classrooms, if a student can not self-





correct a mistake in his or her own English, but the teacher thinks that the class is familiar with the correct form, we shall call that sort of mistake an error (Edge, 1994).

First language:

First language is a person's mother tongue or the language acquired first. In multilingual communities, however, where a child may gradually shift from the main use of one language to the main use of another (e.g. because of the influence of a school language), first language may refer to the language the child feels most comfortable using. Often this term is used synonymously with native language. First language is also known as L1 (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Foreign language:

A language which is not the native language of large number of people in a particular country or region, is not used as a medium of instruction in schools, and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government, media, etc. Foreign languages are typically taught as school subjects for the purpose of communicating with foreigners or for reading printed materials in the language.

Interference:

In foreign or second language learning, the term interference, also known as negative transfer, is referred to the use of native language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language.



***Interlanguage:***

Interlanguage is the language produced by second or foreign language learners. Brown (1994) defines interlanguage as the separateness of a second language learner's system, a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target languages.

Interlanguage error:

This term refers to an error which results from language transfer which is used by the learner's native language.

Intralingual error:

The term refers to an error which results from faulty or partial learning of the target language, rather than from language transfer.

***Modal error:***

A *modal error* is an error that involves the wrong choice of a modal, the wrong form of any part of a modal verb phrase, or the wrong time reference of a modal verb phrase.

Mother tongue:

Mother tongue, in general, is a first language which is acquired at home.



***Second language:***

Second language, in a broad sense, any language learned after one has learnt one's native language. However, when contrast with foreign language, the term refers more narrowly to a language that plays a major role in a particular country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use it. For example, the learning of English by immigrants in the US or the learning of Catalan by speakers of Spanish in Catalonia (an autonomous region of Spain) are cases of second (not foreign) language learning, because those languages are necessary for the survival in those societies. English is also a second language for many people in some countries like Nigeria, India, Singapore and the Philippines, because English fulfills many important functions in those countries (including the business of education and government). (Some people in those countries, however, may acquire English as a first language, if it is the main language used at home (Richards and Schmidt, 2002)

***Subject-verb agreement error:***

A subject-verb agreement error is one in which a verb does not show agreement in number (singular or plural) with its subject.

Target language:

Target language is the language which a person is learning in contrast to a first language or mother tongue.



***Verb-form error:***

A *verb-form error* is an error in the formation of the main verb or any part of a verb phrase.

Verb-tense error:

A *verb-tense error* is one of two types below:

1. incorrect choice of a verb tense within a sentence
2. inappropriate shifting of verb tenses within a paragraph or group of paragraphs

1.10 Limitations of the Study

There are many types of errors made by students in their written work. This study mainly focuses on analyzing errors on verbs that students commonly make in their writing. The errors are categorized into verb tenses, verb forms, subject-verb agreement, and modals. However, the findings would give some insights into the main recurrent errors made the students at the National Institute of Education. Furthermore, the study is limited to the written work of only 30 randomly selected students. Therefore this sample would not represent the entire students in Cambodia. Apart from these, the researcher lacks information of the students' background such as academic and social status, due to the time constraints.

