

SEASSI Khmer Language Learning Guidelines (Draft)

Speaking Proficiency Guidelines

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NOVICE

The Novice level is characterized by the ability to communicate minimally with learned material. The learner is able to respond to and initiate a range of typical and usually quite formulaic everyday social interactions. Much of the spoken material in the learner's command consists of discrete memorized phrases and structures. The learner functions best when s/he is the initiator of the interaction and/or remains in primary control of the direction and complexity level of the conversation. The Novice learner can be best understood by educated native speakers of Khmer with a good deal of experience not only with language learning themselves but also significant exposure to non-native speakers of Khmer. Uneducated native speakers, especially speakers of highly marked dialects, often have significant problems both parsing the Novice learner's grammatical constructions and understanding the learner's attempts to correctly produce Khmer phonetics.

Novice-Level Errors

First, note that here we're discussing learners who are native speakers of American English and have had no or very little exposure to Khmer language and culture. A few students relevant to this discussion are Khmer Americans with extremely low or no practical Khmer communication skills, either aural or oral. Even more infrequently, we see

Beginning SEASSI learners who are not native speakers of English but come from a European or even Latin American country, or from countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. However, since the vast majority of our learners at this level are American English native speakers, we will focus our error analysis on that group.

In general, the phonetic command of Khmer by the Novice learner is marked by several serious deficiencies. This is especially true of vowels, and in particular diphthongs. Learners at this level often produce vowels which are in effect American English sounds and fall quite a bit short of the intended Khmer vowel value, especially when the learners still have problems distinguishing the sounds themselves in listening (which is quite common at this level). We can perhaps generalize by saying that most of the central position Khmer vowels are missing from American English, so it is understandable that learners have particular trouble with these sounds. Nevertheless, below we will consider several problem vowels separately, including non-central vowels which prove difficult for learners.

Some characteristic problem vowels include វ័ន្ទ /ʔoʔ/, វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔuʔ/, វូវ័ន្ទ /ʔou/ and វិវូវ័ន្ទ /ʔuu/ (learners who speak a romance language well have less problems producing these sounds than monolingual English-speaking Americans). វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔəʔ/, វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔɨʔ/ and វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔɨʔ/ are also difficult for students. Differentiating វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔaə/ and វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔəə/ is almost always a serious stumbling block for the Novice learner. Furthermore, in students often confuse the vowels វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔəə/ and វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔɨʔ/. It is also quite common for Novice learners to have difficulty distinguishing between first series វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔae/ and វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔay/ in their speech. The same distinction problem exists for first series វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔao/ vs. វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔaw/, and with the production of second series វិវ័ន្ទ /ʔɨw/ in general.

Another general vowel pronunciation problem is producing vowels of correct length, a very important and distinctive factor in Khmer vowel sounds. Novice learners tend to produce long vowels in Khmer which are not quite long enough, and short vowels which are not quite short enough. This is due to the fact that there are no vowel length contrasts in English. Some examples of short vs. long vowels in Khmer follow: វង្សា /ŋa/ as in ចាក់ /caʔ/ “to inject” vs. វាង្សា /ŋaa/ as in ចាក /caaʔ/ “to depart”; វិញ្ញូ /ŋu/ as in ទុក /tuk/ “to keep” vs. វិញ្ញូ /ŋuu/ as in ទូក /tuuk/ ‘boat’; វិញ្ញូ /ŋə/ as in បិទ /bət/ ‘to close’ vs. វិញ្ញូ /ŋəə/ as in បិទ /bəət/ ‘to inhale’; វិញ្ញូ /ŋi/ as in រលឹក /rɔlik/ vs. វិញ្ញូ /iɨ/ as in លឺ /liɨ/ ‘to hear’; /ŋə/ as in ទប់ /tʊə/ ‘to be stopped up’ vs. /ŋuə/ as in ទួល /tuə/ ‘raised mound of earth’.

Novice learners of Khmer also tend to have problems producing initial consonants where clear distinctions are required between aspirated and unaspirated, e.g. ក /k/ vs. ខ /kh/ and ជ /c/ vs. ឈ /cH/, etc. Learners also have trouble distinguishing between unvoiced unaspirated and nonvoiced aspirated sounds such as ត /t/ vs. ច /tʰ/ and between the voiced/unvoiced labial consonants such as ប /b/ and ផ /p/. The source of this error is that English voiceless stops have an aspirated and unaspirated allophone, so that aspiration in English has no function (is not distinctive), at least not in initial position.

Finally, learners at this level often fail to correctly produce word-final aspiration and glottal stops, and final ច /c/ is often mistakenly rendered as ត /t/, whereas final ញ /ŋ/ is rendered as ន /n/. To generalize, we can say that the palatal codas which are typically Mon Khmer are often rendered by Novice learners as dentals. In general, final consonants, which are always unreleased in Khmer, are often pronounced by Novice

learners as released consonants, as final stops are pronounced in English.

Novice-Low

Oral production consists of isolated words and perhaps a few high-frequency phrases.

Essentially no functional communicative ability.

- ◆ Speaker may know a few high-frequency expressions such as: ជំហាបស្ត្រីវ /cumriəp suə/ 'formal respectful greeting', វង្សគុណា /ʔaa kun/ 'thank you', មិនអីទេ /mɨn ʔəy tee/ 'never mind', 'it's fine', 'you're welcome' ល្អ /lʔaa/ 'good', តិច ៗ /təc təc/ 'a little' (informal colloquial form).
- ◆ May be able to name a few typical food items or everyday objects (say, less than 20% of the items in each list in document **S.S.1**).

Learners sometimes enter a language program at this level of proficiency due to exposure with Khmer friends or boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse, or experience in the country. Assuming, however, that learners begin a language program as "true beginners," it is expected that they will attain this level of speaking proficiency by mid-way through Week One of SEASSI or roughly the end of Week Three of a semester language program (approximately 12 instructional hours).

Novice-Mid

Oral production continues to consist of isolated words and learned phrases within very predictable areas of need, although quantity is increased. Vocabulary is sufficient only for handling simple, elementary needs and expressing basic courtesies. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and show frequent long pauses and

repetition of interlocutor’s words. Speakers may have some difficulty producing even the simplest utterances. Some Novice–Mid speakers will be understood only with great difficulty. The Novice–Mid speaker, especially in an intensive program such as SEASSI, may know a surprising number of isolated words and phrases which can often be quite rapidly acquired in the first few weeks of the program thanks to diligent study and practice. Or, such vocabulary may have been acquired through previous study of or experience with Khmer culture. However, knowledge of these items does not increase functional ability in the language. This is due largely to the vast grammatical differences between English and Khmer and the considerable negative influence of English grammar on the Novice learner’s attempts to produce grammatically correct utterances in Khmer.

- ◆ Number of vocabulary words and semantic domains increase, although practical conversation is still extremely limited.
- ◆ Functions limited to some courtesy formulas (ទៅណា /tɨw naa/ ‘where are you going?’ ឈ្មោះអ្វី /cʰmuəh ʔəy/ ‘what is your name?’ សុខសប្បាយទេ) /sok səpbaay tee/ ‘how are you?’, listing, enumerating, mostly memorized phrases and sentences (ចូលចិត្តណាស់ /coul cət nah/ ‘like very much’ ក្តៅណាស់ /kdaw nah/ ‘very hot’ ពិបាក /piʔbaak/ ‘difficult’ ខ្ញុំអត់យល់ /kɲom ʔat yǔəl/) ‘I don’t understand’

Content consists of **common lexical items: a fairly high number of kinship terms, object names (especially classroom objects), places (especially buildings and establishments relative to the university environment, rooms of a house), food items, some colors, animals** (list S.1.1)

- ◆ Mostly memorized material of three or four words dominates: ដើរលេង /daə leɛŋ/ ‘to walk about for fun or pleasure, with no particular reason or destination’ មិនអីទេ /mɨn əy tee/ ‘it’s nothing,’ ‘no problem,’ ‘you’re welcome’

- ◆ Use of memorized polite particles may appear at this level: បាទទេ /baat tee/
 ច្រើនទេ /caa tee/ ‘hyper-polite/respectful terms for agreement/affirmative response’

May repeat the question of the interlocutor when asked a question

Pronunciation continues to be strongly negatively influenced by native language: very few learners at Novice–Mid level have overcome the specific phonetic problems noted earlier in these guidelines

Learners have an awareness of constructions using the completion particle បាន /baan/ but rarely independently apply it correctly. This goes as well for the correct use of two-part verb forms used to indicate relative states of completion: ស្តាប់បាន /sdap baan/ ‘to understand’ មើលឃើញ /mɔəl kʰəj/ ‘to see’ រៀនចេះ /riən ceʰ/ ‘to learn’; learners generally understand these forms when they hear them but rarely produce them themselves, since this type of verb construction is not common in English.

At this level of proficiency, learners have acquired a **basic vocabulary of particles and structures for discussing time in Khmer (list S.1.2)**, but often err in their time-related constructions on the side of too much complexity...this is seen largely as an influence of English and its tendency to be more specific than Khmer in the reporting of time and tense. Thus, learners tend to overuse particles such as បាន

/baan/ (in its use as past-tense marker, preceding verbs) and នឹង /nɨŋ/ (in its use as future-tense marker preceding verbs). Native speakers tend to intuitively omit these particles in colloquial speech unless absolutely necessary for clarification.

- ◆ At this level, learners rarely correctly apply the verbs ទៅ /tɨw/ and មក /mɔk/ in their role as indicators of action/motion away from/toward the speaker, respectively

It is expected that most learners will attain Novice–Mid proficiency in Khmer by the fourth or fifth week of SEASSI study, or by the end of the first semester of a full year program

(approximately 80 instructional hours). A growing number of Heritage learners are beginning Intermediate class study at SEASSI at Novice–Mid proficiency (as of 2008), but if incoming learners are assessed at the lower margins of this level it must be considered whether or not they would be better served in the Beginning class.

Novice–High

Able to satisfy partially the requirement of basic communication exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances but occasionally expands these through simple recombinations of the elements of those utterances. Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material. Shows signs of spontaneity although this falls short of real autonomy of expression. Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones, though many learners at this level are beginning to make forays into this area of proficiency. Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and the most common kinship terms. Pronunciation will most likely still be strongly influenced by first language. Errors (both phonetic and grammatical) are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice–High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.

Utterances remain choppy while at the same time tending towards too much complexity/specificity due to influence from English grammar

Learners at this level rarely independently construct well–formed Khmer topic comment sentences (as either statements or questions)

◆ Vocabulary has begun to become somewhat specialized/sophisticated relative to the speakers’ field of work/study

Learners possess a basic vocabulary and command of structures relative to weekly topics focused on in the classroom: (list S.1.3) introductions/pleasantries; items and

activities in the classroom; family and making reference to various life-states and rites of passage; food (eating and cooking); basic directions and location in space; work (including important related verbs) in a general sense; states of health and illness; very limited concepts relating to Khmer Buddhism, including rote memorization of one Buddhist chant; the physical environment and the weather; basic living tasks such as renting a hotel room; describing the purchase, selection and wearing of clothing.

Can understand many simple questions related to the above topics, but often has great difficulty creating an answer, especially if the larger context of the question is not crystal clear, if extralinguistic cues are not present, or if the learner is in doubt about what types or ranges of response are expected of her/him. Answer often takes a translated English form. For instance, repetition of verb used in the question (for either positive or negative responses), which is typical of correct Khmer grammar, is seldom used by learners at this level without prompting

Shows awareness but limited control of classifier system and the most common classifiers (ក្បាល /kbaal/ 'classifier for books' ចាន /caan/ 'classifier for plates or dishes of food' and possibly others used in discussing common objects such as books, which are found in the classroom, or food-related objects); only classifier somewhat consistently used is នាក់ /neəʔ/ 'status-neutral classifier for humans'

- ◆ May use inappropriate pronouns (inconsistent with age difference/status level) and status-related verbs
- ◆ Partial control of adjectival words; typical errors include using verb "to be" with adjectives (*ដ្បាញ /ciə lʔaa/ 'good' *ដ្បាធំ /ciə tʰom/ 'large or big')

Can express likes and dislikes but not very effectively or with much nuance

Most learners have at this level a fairly solid command of basic particles and constructions used to indicate simple causality, as well as particles and constructions

used to expand and elaborate on statements (or to ask for elaboration from others):

ពីព្រោះ /pii prueh/ 'because' ហេតុអ្វី /haet ʔəy/ 'why?' ដូច្នោះ /doucneh/ 'so,'
'therefore'

◆ Can answer "A or B" type questions; can usually correctly ask and answer comparison and superlative questions which make comparisons and make reference to superlative states X និង Y , ណាធំជាង /x niŋ y, naa tʰom ciəŋ/; 'which of these two things is larger?' ឡាននេះលឿនជាងគេ /laan niʰ liəŋ ciəŋ kee/ 'this car is fastest of all'

◆ Learner begins to correctly use verbs used to show habitual action/states ដែល /dael/ 'to have ever' មិនដែល /min dael/ 'to have never' ធ្លាប់ /tʰloap/ 'to be accustomed to, used to' ចេះតែ /ceʰ tae/ 'habitually'

Learner begins to correctly use a limited number of adverbial phrases constructed with the particle តែ /tae/ : ត្រូវតែ /trəw tae/ 'must' but probably not គ្រាន់តែ /kroan tae/ 'only; solely; just' or លើកលែងតែ /ləək ləeŋ tae/ 'except'

Learners at this level are beginning to gain control of some of the **auxilliary uses of the verb អោយ** /ʔəoy/ (as opposed to simply thinking of it as a direct translation of the English verb "to give"): អោយទៅ /ʔəoy tɨw/ 'to order to go; to have go' អោយធ្វើ /ʔəoy twəə/ 'to order to do; to have do' ធ្វើការអោយ /twəə kaa ʔəoy/ 'to work for'

Can often get into but not out of situations.

It is expected that most learners will reach Novice–High proficiency level in Khmer by the end of week eight of SEASSI or by the end of two semesters of a full–year Khmer course (approximately 160 instructional hours). Approximately 10–20% of Beginning class SEASSI Khmer learners reach Novice–High level by week 6 of SEASSI (120 instructional hours). Probably about 60% of Heritage learners at SEASSI enter Intermediate class at Novice High

Proficiency.

INTERMEDIATE

The Intermediate level is characterized by the speaker's ability to

- 1) create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode; 2) initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks; and 3) ask and answer questions.

Intermediate-level Errors

Phonetically, learners at this level still often make many of the vowel distinction mistakes noted under the description of "Novice-level errors." However, by this level improvement is shown in a number of areas. Also, it is important at this point to distinguish between Heritage learners (children of Khmer immigrants to the US with significant experience with the language in a home/family setting prior to undertaking formal study of the language) as opposed to non-native speakers of Khmer. To attain Intermediate-Low speaking proficiency, non-native speakers had to have completed the equivalent of 120–200 hours in a Beginning level Khmer instructional program. For Heritage learners, however, it is possible to begin formal study at this level solely based on home/family exposure to the language. It is also common for Heritage speakers to enter the Khmer language program at, say, Novice-mid, Novice-high or Intermediate-Low speaking proficiency and within 20–40 hours of instruction shoot up to Intermediate-Mid level or higher. This is believed to be due to a solid foundation in Khmer grammar and phonology internalized by the Heritage learner in childhood, even if this proficiency is not readily observable at the time of intake assessment into the program.

In general, Intermediate Level learners continue to struggle with correct and consistent pronunciation of vowels such as វិទ្យា /ʔaə/ វិទ្យា /ʔiə/ វិទ្យា /ʔay/ and វិទ្យា /ʔaw/, though definite improvement can be seen in making distinctions between pairs which are problematic at the Novice level, such as វិទ្យា /ʔay/ versus វិទ្យា /ʔae/, វិទ្យា /ʔae/ versus វិទ្យា /ʔay/, and វិទ្យា /ʔaə/ versus វិទ្យា /ʔaw/. Most of these distinctions tend to be much less of a problem for Heritage speakers than for non-native speakers. Heritage and non-native speakers at this level do tend to both continue to have problems correctly producing final aspiration in words, as well as glottal stops and in general correctly producing unreleased final stops. This is seen in both types of learners as an influence from English phonetics, especially as regards unreleased final stop production. Both types of learners also continue to have a problem producing a true final ច /c/ or ញ /ɲ/ stop, though there is marked improvement in this area compared to Novice level. Heritage learners have a particular difficulty distinguishing between final aspiration vs. a final glottal stop in words. This difficulty present in speech and hearing becomes acutely evident in the “invented spellings” of Heritage learners as their literacy education in Khmer progresses.

Yet another area in which many Heritage learner errors are seen is in the reduction of syllables in various Khmer dialects in particular and in colloquial speech in general. A specific dialectal form of Khmer and/or colloquial speech is for many Heritage learners the only form of Khmer that they know. This causes difficulties in both hearing and producing correct forms, especially as regards the reduction of syllables. For instance, Heritage learners sometimes know the words វិទ្យា /ʔaŋkuy/ 'to sit' មួយរយ /muəy rəy/ 'one hundred' ផ្ទះ /pteəʰ/ 'house' and សរសេរ /sasei/ 'to write' only as the reduced forms កុយ /kuy/, មួយ /məhəy/, ទះ /tɛəʰ/ and ស្រុក /

təsei/ , respectively. Similarly, in another example, Heritage learners may hear (and produce) the words /pruə^h/ 'because' and /piiruə^h/ 'beautiful or pleasing sound or music' as the same word.

Intermediate level learners in general show much more consistent control over the production of aspirated vs. unaspirated initial consonants, as well as the distinction between ត /t/ and ច្រ /t^h/ , ត /t/ and ដ /d/, and ប /b/ vs. ប្រ /p/. However, Heritage learners are seen as having an edge on non-native speakers in the control of the above sounds.

In the area of grammar, English grammar tends to show a significant negative influence on attempts at Khmer grammatical constructions by both Heritage and non-native learners. Some typical grammatical errors at this level include incorrect placement of ជួយ /cuəy/ as an auxiliary verb (using the verb consistent in the way "help" would be used in English, which differs from correct Khmer usage), incorrect verb choice when Khmer uses several verbs to cover a semantic domain covered by only one verb in English (confusing the verbs ចេះ /ce^h/ 'to know how to do something' ដឹង /dɔŋ/ 'to know a fact' and ស្គាល់ /skoəl/) 'to be acquainted with'; incorrect use of ទោយ /ʔəoy/ as auxiliary verb (*យើងចង់គាត់ទោយមក /yəŋ caŋ koət ʔəoy mɔk/ vs. យើងចង់ទោយគាត់មក) /yəŋ caŋ ʔəoy koət mɔk/ 'we want her/him/them to come'; incorrect choice of the infixed or root form of verbs with similar but different semantic domains (*ស្លាប់គាត់ /slap koət/ vs. សម្លាប់គាត់ /samlap koət/ 'kill him/her/them'; *ចាយពេល /caay peel/ vs. ចំណាយពេល /camnaay peel/ 'to spend time').

INTERMEDIATE-LOW

Able to handle successfully a limited number of interactive, task-orientated and social situations. Can ask and answer questions, initiate and respond to simple statements and maintain face-to-face conversation, although in a highly restricted manner and with much linguistic inaccuracy. Within these limitations, can perform such tasks as introducing self, ordering a meal, asking directions, and making purchases. Vocabulary is adequate to express only the most elementary needs. Misunderstandings frequently arise, but with repetition, the Intermediate-Low speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

- ◆ Conversation becomes interactive, participatory
- ◆ Can sustain conversation on familiar topics with sentence level discourse

Can express likes and dislikes in relation to themselves, though with limited control over nuanced verbs for expressing emotion (confusion of use of ចូលចិត្ត /coul cət/ 'to like' vs. ស្រឡាញ់ /sralaŋ/ 'to love'; lack of more sophisticated emotional vocabulary, like ខកចិត្ត /kʰaak cət/ 'to be disappointed' តូចចិត្ត /touc cət/ 'to feel slighted' អស់ចិត្ត /ʔaʰ cət/ 'to resign oneself; to give up trying')

Can discuss familiar topics: family, living space, personal items

Emerging use of classifier system but not always with appropriate choices: e.g. incorrectly using នាក់ /neʔ/ 'neutral classifier for humans' for វង្ស /ʔaŋ/ 'respectful, high-status classifier for monks, gods, royalty and Buddha images'

Some control of common classifiers, but not applied consistently or without prompting (Heritage speakers tend to have less of a problem with this): កន្លែង /kanlaeŋ/ 'classifier for places' ក្បាល /kbaal/ 'classifier for books, heads of cattle or other animals' ច្បាប់ /cbap/ 'classifier for volumes (of books), issues (of magazines,

newspapers) កញ្ចប់ /kaŋcap/ 'classifier for packages'

◆ Fairly consistent use of the aspect marker ហើយ /haəy/ 'post-verb, past tense/ completion aspect marker'

Uses S-V-O sentence order

◆ Uses yes-no questions but may give the inappropriate answer (ត្រូវ /trəw/ 'correct' rather than the repeated verb), consistently recognizes both មិន /រត់ /m+n/ / /ət/ 'verb negation particles' and ទី /rɨi/ 'question-final tag meaning "or not" ' as tags

Uses appropriate noun-adjective order: ផ្ទះស្អាត /p^hteə^h sʔaat/ 'clean house'

Can successfully get into and out of a simple role play/survival situation: buying a train ticket, etc.

◆ Incorrect use of the verb "to be" (ជា /ciə/) with adjectives still occurs, including among Heritage learners

It is expected that some 20% of SEASSI (non-native speaker) Khmer students will reach Intermediate-Low proficiency by Week Eight of Beginning Level study (160 hours of instruction), or in a semester-based program, the completion of two full semesters of study. All other learners should attain Intermediate-Low proficiency by the end of Week Two of Intermediate level study at SEASSI (40 instructional hours or 200 total instructional hours counted from the start of Beginning level study). This would correspond to roughly half a semester of third semester Intermediate instruction in a semester-based non-intensive program. Heritage learners who begin Intermediate level instruction at the Novice-Mid or Novice-High speaking proficiency level may reach Intermediate-Mid as soon as the end of Week One of SEASSI (20 instructional hours).

Intermediate–Mid

Able to handle a variety of uncomplicated, basic communicative tasks and social situations. Can talk simply about self and family members. Can ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs; e.g., personal history and leisure time activities. This includes very basic discussion of fairly sophisticated topics such as the education, the **basic tenets of**

Buddhism and events in the life of the Buddha; important events and concepts in Khmer history,(2.1) retellings of Khmer folk tales studied in class (រឿងអានុជ្ជវរ

/rɿəŋ ʔaa leiw/ 'The Tale(s) of Aa Lew', រឿងធនញ្ជ័យ /rɿəŋ tʰɔŋkɔŋcəy/ 'The Tale of Victorious Chey' រឿងដំរីនិងស្រមោច /rɿəŋ damrəy niŋ sramaoc/ 'Tale of the Elephant and the Ant' រឿងអាខ្នាក់អាខ្និន /rɿəŋ ʔaa kwaʔ ʔaa kwən/ 'Tale of the Blind Boy and the Crippled Boy').

Utterance length increases slightly, but speech may continue to be characterized by frequent long pauses, since the smooth incorporation of even basic conversational strategies is often hindered as the speaker struggles to create appropriate language forms. Although misunderstandings still arise, the Intermediate–Mid speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic native-speaking interlocutors.

Can initiate within the context of the conversation

Can ask for clarification, e.g., to see if the speaker is answering the right question

◆ Still has difficulty with the wide range of pronouns/kinship terms (Heritage learners less so)

Can manage conversation about everyday social life and academic topics studied thus far, but cannot deal with complex social situations or highly abstract conversations on those academic topics

- ◆ Can elaborate and modify conversation with strings of sentences. Can do this best with topics such as shopping, food, everyday concerns, other self-centered topics, and to a lesser degree with academic topics covered thus far in class (education, basic history and Khmer cultural practices, folk tales, religion and the life of the Buddha)

Language is concrete and anecdotal

- ◆ Syntactically appropriate responses to verb + ទេ /tee/ 'yes-no question tag' and មែនទេ /mɛɛn tee/ 'question tag meaning "isn't that so"; "right?"'

- ◆ increasingly sophisticated control of ជា /ciə/ 'verb identifying permanent or essential states of being' and ប្រាន /baan/ 'particle having to do with completion'

- ◆ Uses simple modals such as ដែល /dael/ 'to have ever' ត្រូវតែ /trəw tae/ 'must' អាច /ʔaac/ 'can, is able to' សំរាប់ /səmrap/ 'for; in order to' គួរ (តែ) /kuə tae/ 'should' fairly consistently

Correct classifier placement but still lacks control of full range of classifiers

- ◆ Uses limiters but mistakes are still common and frequent in their application/choice:

ទៀត /tiət/ 'more' ដទៃ /datəy/ 'other; different' ជាមួយគ្នា /ciə muəy kniə/ 'together [with]' ដូចគ្នា /douc kniə/ 'to be the same [as]' ដែរ /dae/ 'also' ទើបនឹង /təəp nɨŋ/ 'to have just' (these are all less of a problem for Heritage learners)

- ◆ Begins to use serial verbs more consistently: ទៅទៅ /ʔaoy tɨw/ 'to order to go; to have go' ទៅទៅមក /ʔaoy mɔək/ 'to order to come; to have come'

- ◆ In general, begins to use the multi-use auxiliary verb ទៅទៅ /ʔaoy/ much more consistently, but still with relatively frequent errors

- ◆ Begins to recognize and use pronoun/subject deletion (Example: ទៅស្អែក /tɨw sʔaek/ instead of ខ្ញុំទៅស្អែក /knom tɨw sʔaek/ 'I'll go/I'm going tomorrow')

Can get into and out of a situation/role play without complication: renting a hotel room; **discussing various elements and practices in Khmer culture/beliefs (list S.2.2).**

It is expected that most learners will attain Intermediate–Mid level speaking proficiency by the end of Week Three (60 Intermediate instructional hours or a total of 220 instructional hours counted from the beginning of Beginning level study) of SEASSI, or approximately Week 11 of a third semester non–intensive Khmer course.

Intermediate–High

Able to successfully handle the most uncomplicated communicative and social situations.

Can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The Intermediate–High speaker can generally be understood even by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, but repetition may still be required.

- ◆ Emerging control of time period markers: ព្រឹក /prɨk/ 'morning' រសៀល /rɔsiəl/ 'early afternoon' ល្ងាច /lɨjɔc/ 'early evening' យប់ /yup/ 'night'

Begins to self–correct

Begins to explain and offer opinion

Able to answer questions with more information than necessary. Volunteers information

Can narrate a sequence of events with increased sophistication and nuance, but control of two part descriptive Khmer adjectives (ស្អាតប្រាស /sʔaat baat/ 'clean, neat, attractive' លឿនលឿន /cɨən liən/ 'advanced, developed' ច្បាស់លាស់ /cba^h loə^h/ 'clear' ជាក់ស្តែង /ceəʔ sdaen/ 'clear, certain' ស្រួលបួល /sruəl buəl/ 'comfortable,

pleasant’ is still quite limited, and may be practically non-existent in some learners, particularly non-native speakers.

Repeats same information with different variations, but does not give detailed “paragraph” links, especially involving the use of the particle ក៏ /ka/ ‘particle which precedes verb phrases and indicates a semantic relationship between the phrase following it and an earlier occurring verb phrase’. In general, a good control and awareness of situations in which to use this particle can not really be expected below the Advanced speaking level. Its absence contributes to the general unsophisticated nature of oral “story telling” at this proficiency level.

◆ Use of more complicated time expressions: ឆ្នាំទៅ /cnam tiw/ ‘last year’ បន្តិចទៀត /bantəc tiət/ ‘soon; in a little while’; possibly មួយភ្លែត /muəy plæt/ ‘in just a second/moment’ but not វិនាទីមួយ /ʔamban mi+j/ ‘just a moment ago; just now’. (however, non-level-typical particles like this may be under the command of heritage speakers whom otherwise seem to fit in this level)

Can ask for clarification and reassurance

Begins to speak in “paragraphs”

◆ Emerging serial verbs; correct distinction of ចង់ + verb /caŋ/ ‘to want to [verb]’ vs. ចង់បាន + noun /caŋ baan/ ‘to want to acquire [noun]’

◆ Emerging ability to circumlocute to compensate for vocabulary deficiencies, e.g., របស់ប្រើសំរាប់លេងភ្លេង /rɔbɑ^h braə səmrap leŋ pleŋ/ ‘thing that one uses to make music’ for ឧបករណ៍ដង្ហែង /ʔopbaʔkaa dantrəy/ ‘musical instrument’

Begins to distinguish between formal speech; i.e. vocabulary choice and grammatical constructions used for communicating information in stylized and formal settings, especially the communicating of information to mass audiences such as in news reporting and advertising. At this level, very little if any improvisation is possible in such

contexts, but learners familiarize themselves with this **specialized vocabulary and stylized grammatical constructions (list S.2.3) via the memorization of phrases learned from studying news stories and print, television and radio advertising in Khmer**, and then performing those phrases in various classroom projects. Another source of this **formal vocabulary, much of it poetic and Pali-Sanskrit in origin (list S.2.4)**, is the study of popular song lyrics in Week Five of Intermediate level Khmer study at SEASSI.

Non-native speaking learners who begin Intermediate level Khmer study at SEASSI at the Novice-High or Intermediate-Low speaking level should attain Intermediate-High proficiency by the end of either Week Four or Week Five of SEASSI (60–80 instructional hours at the Intermediate level, 220–240 total instructional hours counting from the start of Beginning level study). Non-native speaking learners in a non-intensive semester-based program should attain this level by the end of the third semester of study or the first few weeks of the fourth semester. Heritage learners who begin Intermediate study at a Novice-High or Intermediate-Low proficiency can be expected to reach Intermediate-High speaking proficiency by the end of the third or fourth week of study. Prediction of attainment of a specific level of speaking proficiency for Heritage speakers becomes particularly difficult from this level upwards, due to the vast variation in individual experience with the language, level of internalization of grammar prior to beginning formal study, and focus and commitment to the language learning program. That is, some Heritage learners adopt an attitude at the Intermediate-Mid level that their command of Khmer is "sufficient" and resist the work necessary for steady improvement upwards.

ADVANCED

The Advanced level is characterized by the speaker's ability to 1) converse in clearly participatory fashion; 2) initiate, sustain, and bring to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or an unforeseen turn of events; 3) satisfy the requirements of school and work situations; and 4) narrate and describe with paragraph-length connected discourse. Phonetic errors are still evident at this level, more so for non-native learners than for Heritage learners. In general errors are of the same types discussed in the Novice and Intermediate sections of this document, but due to wide individual variation it's difficult to predict which errors are more common, if any.

One well-known problem with learners at this level is fossilized errors (of the types described earlier) which may, at this point, be with the learner for the rest of their life. Generally, however, due to increasingly solid command of grammar and sheer fluency of speech, learners at and beyond Advanced-level proficiency tend to be able to make themselves understood to most native speakers in spite of their phonetic errors.

Advanced –Low

Able to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine school and work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining, and apologizing. Can narrate and describe with details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings can often be smoothed over by communicative strategies, such as pause fillers, stalling devices, and different rates of speech. Circumlocution which arises from

vocabulary or syntactic limitations very often is quite successful, though some groping for words may still be evident. The Advanced–Low level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors.

◆ Paragraph length discourse and complexity increase significantly; uses time markers appropriately and consistently: ឥឡូវនេះ /ɛləw ni^h/ 'right now' សព្វថ្ងៃនេះ /sap tɲay ni^h/ 'these days' កាលមុន /kaal mun/ 'before' ដួនកាល /cuən kaal/ 'once in a while' ក្រោយមក /kraoy mɔək/ 'afterwards' រហូតដល់ /rɔhout dal/ 'continuing until' តាមធម្មតា /taam t^hɔmmədaa/ 'usually; regularly' ; uses other connectives: ភាគច្រើន /p^hiəʔ craən/ 'the majority; for the most part' ទោះបីជា /tuə^h bəy ciə/ 'although; even though' លើកលែងតែ /ləək lɛɛŋ tae/ 'except' បានន័យថា /baan nəy t^haa/ 'means that'

Can describe in detail using increasingly nuanced and sophisticated adjectives, but use of two-part descriptive adjectives is still inconsistent, particularly among non-native speakers

It is expected that most non-native speaking Intermediate level class learners at SEASSI will attain Advanced–Low speaking proficiency by the end of Week Eight of SEASSI (160 instructional hours or 320 total instructional hours counting from the start of Beginning level study). It is expected that learners in a non-intensive, semester-based program will attain Advanced–Low proficiency by the end of the fourth semester of Khmer study. Heritage learners, on the other hand, can often attain Advanced–Low speaking proficiency by the end of Week Six of SEASSI (120–140 hours of Intermediate level instruction) if they began the program with at least Intermediate–Low proficiency.

Advanced–Mid

Can compare and contrast with increasing sophistication

Fairly consistent use of register changes: **proper reference to monks, superiors, etc.** (list

S.3.1)

- ◆ Fairly consistent use of causative ធ្វើអោយ /twəə ʔaoy/ 'to cause to, to be the cause of [verb phrase]'
- ◆ Consistent control of indefinites: អ្នកណា /neəʔ naa/ 'who; whomever' (មួយណា /muəy naa/ 'which' អ្វី /ʔəwəy/ 'what'
- ◆ Fairly consistent use of បានទេ? /baan tee/ 'is [that] possible?' 'can [you] do that?' in appropriate tag questions
- ◆ Fairly consistent control of particles used to connect sentences in sequence: e.g., A រួច B, /A ruəc B/ 'A occurred, then afterwards B occurred'
- ◆ Consistent control of relative clauses; uses ដែល /dael/ 'which, who' with few if any errors
- ◆ Control of modals: មុខជា /muk ciə/ 'will probably' ដើម្បី /daəmbəy/ 'for the purpose of' vs. សំរាប់ /səmrap/ 'for, in order to' (Heritage students will generally show more facility with this distinction than non-natives)
- ◆ Use of យ៉ាង /yaan/ បែប /baep/ and របៀប /rɔbiəp/ all meaning 'type, way, kind' with verbs and with នេះ /ni^h/ 'this' and នោះ /nu^h/ 'that'
- ◆ Use of negatives with serial verbs: ធ្វើមិនរួច /twəə mɨn ruəc/ 'cannot do; impossible to do' លូកមិនដល់ /luuk mɨn dal/ 'cannot reach' និយាយមិនចេញ /niyəy mɨn ceŋ/ 'can't find the words for'
- ◆ Use of transitive markers: រឺក៏ /ri^h ka/ 'or...' 'possibly then, on the other hand...' គិតថា /kit t^haa/ 'to think that' ស្មានតែ /smaan tae/ 'to suppose or imagine that'

Can get into, through, and out of a situation with a significant complication

- ◆ Appropriate use of មិនបាន /mɨn baan/ + verb 'did not; cannot'

Can discuss in a very basic fashion concepts related to Khmer poetry and literature, including **identifying and making reference to the salient features of traditional literary genres (list S.3.2)**

Can discuss haltingly and with some prompting Khmer history and politics, **using increasingly sophisticated "educated vocabulary" (list S.3.3)**

Can discuss topics such as history, politics, music and film with educated Khmer native speakers and present, however haltingly, opinions on these topics

Can present from memory (using a fair number of memorized phrases) one's main academic or work interests in Khmer; describe one's intended research in Cambodia; etc.

At this level it is increasingly difficult to predict, given individual variations in learner background and experience (e.g time spent in Cambodia between Intermediate and Advanced level formal study), proficiency levels that learners will "typically" reach after a given number of instructional hours. So keep in mind that the total number of hours given here become less and less easily predictable as definable standards.

That said, it can be reasonably assumed that the majority of non-native speaking learners who begin Advanced SEASSI study at Advanced-Low proficiency level will achieve Advanced-Mid proficiency by the completion of Week Four of Advanced level study, which is 80 instructional hours at the Advanced level or 400 cumulative instructional hours from the start of Beginning level study. This would be equivalent to the completion of five semesters of non-intensive study in a semester-based university program. A very rare few non-native speaking learners may reach Advanced-Mid level by the end of Intermediate study or by the completion of the first two weeks of Advanced

study (320–360 instructional hours), but this is extremely rare indeed and almost unheard of. For Heritage learners, however, it is not uncommon for learners to move from Intermediate–Low or Mid proficiency at the beginning of Intermediate level study to Advanced–Mid proficiency by the end of Week Eight of Intermediate SEASSI study (160 Intermediate instructional hours). The above progression describes roughly 40% of all SEASSI Intermediate class Heritage learners.

Advanced–High

Able to satisfy a broad variety of everyday, school and work situations, Can discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. The Advanced–High speaker often shows a well–developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms with confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing and circumlocution. Differentiated vocabulary and intonation are effectively used to communicate the fine shades of meaning. The Advanced–High speaker often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech but under the demands of Superior–level, complex tasks, language may break down or prove inadequate.

- ◆ Partial control of baseline requirements for Superior level
- ◆ Common elaborate structures begin to appear in narration: គ្រប់បែបគ្រប់យ៉ាង / krup baep yaan/ 'every way / type possible' ; 'in every respect' យកចិត្តទុកដាក់ / yock cət tuk da?/ 'to pay attention [to] ; to concentrate [on] ; to focus [on] ; យ៉ាងហោច / yaan haoc/ 'at the least' ; ចាស់ទុំ / ca^h tum/ 'older people worthy of respect' ; ស្រួលមិនស្រួល / sruəl mɪn sruəl/ 'in any case' ; 'whatever the case may be'
- ◆ Emerging control of polite vs. common terms; use of អញ្ជើញ វោរុច្ចាប / 'polite

particle which precedes verbs preceding verbs to show respect/status differences

Structural accuracy compensates for pronunciation errors, many pronunciation errors will still be present, some fossilized and quite difficult to permanently correct at this point, especially in non-native speakers

◆ Begins to use high level discourse markers and clause relators: យូរៗ ម្តងៗ /yuu yuu mdaŋ/ 'once in a while'; ... ក៏ដោយ ... ក៏ដោយ /kadaoy ... kadaoy/ 'framing structure used to list and group verbs or nouns deemed semantically related by the speaker' ; ពេលណា ពេលម្តងៗ /peel naa ... peel niŋ/ 'whenever X occurs, at that time Y will also occur or be the case'; ទាំង ទាំង /təəŋ təəŋ / 'everything including item A, and also item B as well'; verb1 + បណ្តើរៗ verb2+បណ្តើរៗ /verb1 bandaə verb2 bandaə/ 'to do verb1 at the same time one is doing verb2' ; លុះ /lu^h/ 'and then; after that, X will occur or be the case' ; មុននឹង /mun niŋ/ 'before X comes/came to pass' ; verb phrase1 + ទើប /təəp/ + verb phrase2 'when and only when verb phrase 1 occurs, then and only then can verb phrase 2 occur' ; ក្រៅពី /kraw pii/ 'outside of; irrespective of' ; ដោយសារ /daoy saa/ 'by means of' ; ទោះបី /ʔaoy tae/ 'provided that' ; ប្រសិនបើ /baan ciə/ 'is the reason that'

◆ Emergent control of a wider range of stock idiomatic time-related phrases such as យូរណាស់មកហើយ /yuu na^h mɔɔk haəy/ 'a long time [ago]; កាលនៅពីតូច /kaal niw pii touc/ 'when [I] was young'

Command of discourse strategies and vocabulary (especially educated and poetic vocabulary) described for Advanced-Mid at an even deeper, more sophisticated level, with **evidence of a much larger vocabulary of this type (list S.3.4)**

It is expected that perhaps 50–60% of non-native speaking learners who enter Advanced

level study at SEASSI with an Advanced–Low speaking proficiency will potentially attain Advanced–High speaking proficiency by the completion of Eight Weeks of study. This is equivalent to six semesters of non–intensive university study of Khmer, or roughly 480 instructional hours (counting from Beginning–level study). It should be noted again that such predictions at this point are highly speculative and unreliable, and that in the present SEASSI Khmer Coordinator's experience teaching at 10 SEASSIs from 1990–2008, he has seen only one non–native speaking student reach Advanced–High speaking proficiency (after the completion of Eight Weeks of Advanced level SEASSI study).

Heritage learners, depending on their individual background, could easily reach Advanced–High speaking proficiency by Week Four of SEASSI Advanced class, assuming they entered the program with Intermediate–High or Advanced–Low proficiency. It should also be mentioned that currently SEASSI is not equipped to sufficiently handle or challenge learners who come to the program with a speaking proficiency of Advanced–High or above (assuming a comparable proficiency in literacy, which will almost certainly be present in non–native speakers and Heritage speakers alike at this speaking level), and that such learners would be better served by study in the ASK (Advanced Study or Khmer) program in Cambodia, or by individual university–level or independent study in Cambodia.

SUPERIOR

The Superior level is characterized by the speaker's ability to 1) participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics: 2) support opinions and hypothesize using native–like discourse strategies.

Superior –Low

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Usually the Superior–Low level speaker is only partially familiar with regional or dialectical variants. The Superior–Low level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. Discourse strategies show an emergent ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). However, fluid use of these features still lags behind recognition/awareness of them and their absence or periodic misuse clearly distinguishes the Superior–Low speaker from most native speakers.

In the case of Heritage learners, this same distinction separates them from Khmers who grew up and were schooled in Cambodia. Sporadic errors still occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing; some patterns of error may be evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication in most circumstances.

Elaborates and supports one’s ideas and opinions

Able to comment and criticize in an appropriate manner

Able to modify one’s speech to the audience

◆ Emergent use of the hortatory/“conversation participation assurance” particle *ណា⁺* / *na/* , though may not have complete control over its several morphological variants conditioned by final consonant, emotional state, etc.

◆ Emergent use of high level colloquial discourse markers: ទេដឹង? /tee dən/ 'particle expressing doubt or an unsure opinion; "who knows?" ' មែនឬ? /mɛn ʔəŋcəŋ/ 'isn't that right?'; 'whaddya think, am I right or what?' ណាបងណា! /na ban na/ 'whaddya say"? huh? huh?' ម្ល៉ោះហើយ /mla^h haəy/ 'so; therefore' ឆ្លើយឆ្លង /ʔəŋcəŋ ʔaɛŋ/ 'exactly!' 'precisely!' 'just like this' 'just like that'

Fairly solid control of ហ្នឹង /nəŋ/ to indicate "here" or "this"

◆ Consistent and clear use of the restrictor ថា /t^haa/ in combinations with other discourse particles to create complex reporting of thoughts and states: (ចាំមិនបានថា ធ្លាប់ទៅរម្ងាប់ក៏រត់ /cam mɪn baan t^haa tloəp tɨw rɨt muəy ka ʔat) 'I can't remember whether [I've] ever gone or not'

◆ Solid and consistent control of polite (or formal) vs. common, colloquial terms: ពិសា /piʔsaa/ 'to eat; respectful/high status second or third person verb'; បរិភោគ /barip^hook/ 'extremely formal verb meaning to eat'; មាត់ប្រសាសន៍ /miən prasa^h/ 'high status verb meaning to speak'; សំរាត់ /səmraan/ 'high status/respectful second or third person verb meaning to sleep'; ស្វាមី /swaaməy/ 'husband (respectful/formal)'; ភរិយា /p^həʔrəyɨə/ 'wife (respectful/formal)'; កុមារ /koʔmaa/ 'child (formal/literary/royal)'

◆ Fairly consistent use of colloquial supplication markers such as តស៊ូ(ទៅ) /t^h tɨw/ 'let's go' 'let's get outta here' and ផង /p^haaŋ/ 'request-softening supplication marker'

◆ Emergent controlled use of commonly reduced morphological forms such as ម- /mə/ for មួយ /muəy/ 'one'; ប៉ុន /pon/ / ប៉ុណ្ណោះ /ponna/ for ប៉ុន្តែ /pontae/ 'but; however'

◆ Emergent use of playful/joking language, including stock phrases such as ចេះតែ ថា /ce^h tae t^haa/ 'aw, you're just saying that'; និយាយតែរត់មាត់ /niyəy tae rüət

moət/ `running one's mouth off; talking just to hear the sound of one's own voice'

Superior -High

Emergent ability to tailor language to different audiences (both in formal and familiar situations, speaking to educated and uneducated listeners) and emergent ability to discuss in depth highly abstract topics. The Superior-High level speaker shows an emergent familiarity with two or three regional or dialectal variants, including the ability to identify salient dialectal features and to mimic them. The Superior-High level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and is beginning to show a quite finely-tuned awareness of discourse strategies. Discourse strategies show an solid and sophisticated ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). Sporadic errors still occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterned errors are evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication.

The baseline features cited for the Superior-Low level all apply to Superior-High level, with the added qualification that most of the features identified as "emergent" for Superior-Low can now be considered "fairly consistent"

◆ Use of the hortatory/"conversation participation assurance" particle ណា៎ /na/ shows near-perfect control over its several morphological variants conditioned by final consonant, emotional state, etc. (/ʔəna/, etc.)

Emergent to consistent use of a wider range of high level colloquial discourse markers than those assumed for Superior-Low level: ប៉ុណ្ណឹងឯង /ponnəŋ ʔaɛŋ/ 'exactly to that extent' តែប៉ុណ្ណោះ /tae ponndʰ/ 'only to that extent' តើងតែ /səŋ tae/ 'almost' តើម /səm/ 'then' ត្រឹមតែ /riəp tae/ 'just about to' ហ្មៀបតឹង /hiəp nɪŋ/ 'just

about to ម៉ាន់តៃ /miən tae/ 'there's no other option/choice but to' កុំអោយតៃ /kom ʔaoy tae/ 'provided that not' ក្រែងលោ /kraeŋ loo/ 'to be afraid / worried / suspicious that' ប៉ុនណាណី /ponnaa nəy/ 'to an expansive/excessive state,' 'as much as you could imagine'

◆ Emergent use of colloquial expressive/emotional markers, including those typical of modern Phnom Penh dialect and popular media speech: អត់ទាស់(ហ្មង) /ʔa^h toə^h maŋ/ 'doesn't that take the cake'; 'now I've seen everything'; ពុទ្ធា /putthoo/ 'oh, my god!'; ទេតៃ /tee taə/ 'only to that extent' 'surprisingly' 'only' ; verb1 + តៃ /kee/ + verb2 + ងង /ʔaəŋ/ 'structure acknowledging the situating of one's actions in a larger social context, often with negative connotations or reference to "loss of face"'

Emergent use of constructions and particles used to indicate conditional situations, contrary-to-fact states and contrary-to-expectation evaluations of situations: < កុំតៃ /kom tae/ + restrictive or constrained situation + កុំអី /kom ʔəy/ + unrestricted situation > 'if it wasn't for the fact that [restrictive or constrained situation] were the case, then [unrestricted situation]; could freely occur : ងង /p^haŋ/ (as contrary-to-assumption indicator) ; ហ្មង /maəŋ/ 'indicator of "solely" or "only, to that extent"; often expresses surprise on the part of the speaker that another person would assume an opposing view' verb + បន្តោយ /bəndaoy/ = 'directly' ; 'right away''

Displays emergent use of a range of items indicative of near-native fluency which are not necessarily a part of baseline Superior-Level requirements; this include but are not limited to:

Specialized vocabulary vs. general term for same concept

Humor, including wordplay and "Spoonerisms"

Use of a range of well-known Khmer proverbs, inserted appropriately in everyday

speech (list S.4.1)

Decorated and elaborate speech

- ◆ Speechifying