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# Introduction

## *What is a Heritage Learner?*

The term “Heritage Learner” as used in this textbook refers to the children of Khmer immigrants (usually refugees) who have grown up mostly in the West, and understand to some degree and speak (at least a little) Khmer. Heritage learners’ command of spoken Khmer is usually limited to vocabulary and grammatical structures appropriate for a home or family situation, or for talking with friends. This spoken Khmer tends to be very informal and highly colloquial, and possibly strongly influenced by a specific regional dialect of Khmer (as opposed to standard Khmer, which conforms closely to the writing system). Most Heritage Learners cannot read or write Khmer (that’s why you’re here—to learn!), and cannot discuss sophisticated, educated topics like religion, social issues, politics, or history in Khmer. For that, you use English.

Why is this previous knowledge of spoken Khmer that you bring to the classroom important? For several reasons. First of all, you were exposed to the sound system of Khmer—which is very different from the sound system of English—at an early age. If you can still understand it fairly well, this gives you a huge advantage over your non-native speaking fellow students at learning to a) distinguish all the sounds of Khmer from each other correctly and b) produce them yourselves. Khmer has over 30 vowel sounds (counting diphthongs), as opposed to 18 vowels in American English. Khmer also has 18 consonant sounds. There are 21 consonant sounds in English, but several of the Khmer sounds don’t exist in English. Learning to even be able to *hear* these is a huge task for non-native learners of Khmer, a task which is never completely over (or at least takes years to be successfully accomplished). You may not hear all the distinctions between Khmer sounds perfectly now, and you may produce several of them incorrectly. However, you have a head start on the learning process if you can hear even half

of them. Second of all, if you grew up hearing and speaking Khmer you have at least a basic internal understanding of how to arrange words into phrases and sentences in Khmer in order to make meaning, according to the grammatical “rules” of Khmer. You may not be able to (and in fact you most likely can’t) explain these rules. That is, you know when a thought or concept has been phrased correctly in Khmer, but you can’t tell someone why it’s correct. You just “feel” it, and it hurts your ears if it’s done incorrectly. If you can do this, it means you have internalized the rules of Khmer grammar. Your intuitive knowledge of Khmer grammar is probably far from perfect, since your strongest spoken (and written) language is no doubt English, and the rules of English grammar have probably interfered with your sense of Khmer grammar. But again, you have a big head start in this regard over non-native speakers.

Finally, if you grew up in a Khmer home you probably have a basic familiarity with traditional Khmer culture. It may not be your favorite culture to operate in. It no doubt conflicts from time to time (maybe all the time!) with your more “Western” ideas and view of the world. You have these views because you’re also an American and grew up and were educated here. But you’re used to hearing your parents and aunts and uncles and grandparents tell stories, express their world-view and tell you what they think is important in life (over and over again, right?). You’re also used to interacting socially with (having to pay respect to, etc.) older Khmers. This gives you a huge “leg up” on the process of learning to function properly within that culture. This is a momentous task for non-native speakers, who have to learn all this stuff from scratch as an adult.

All of the above not only gives you an advantage at becoming a more sophisticated speaker of Khmer. These factors also combine to drastically reduce the time it will take you to get up to speed in *reading* Khmer. And we’ll take advantage of this fact in the classroom at SEASSI, and throughout this textbook.

Now let’s get down to the specific things you’re going to need to learn in your study of Khmer. They may include some things you didn’t think of yourself, but

## Tips for Non-native Speakers: *Your Own Advantages in*

### *Learning Khmer*



*From time to time you'll see a sidebar/box with the icon in the left in it. This is how we'll bring special hints and information relevant to non-native speakers of Khmer. This may be called a "Heritage Language Textbook," but rest assured, it's your book too.*

We've been talking about all the advantages that native speakers of Khmer—Heritage learners—have over you in learning to speak, hear, read and write Khmer in a sophisticated manner. But you have a few advantages of your own. First of all, just as speaking/understanding Khmer from an early age can be an advantage for Heritage learners, so can it be a disadvantage. Since this is a university-level course, we'll be dealing with Khmer systematically, in a highly organized fashion, stating rules, formulae, defining structures, etc. This can be very hard to do if you come to the language from the "inside". You don't, so you will have an easier time approaching Khmer analytically. This can be particularly useful in your study of Khmer grammar.

Likewise, previous experience with Khmer culture is a double-edged sword for Heritage learners. Often, the world view of Khmer culture for them means their parents' "old fashioned" way of thinking, unrealistic expectations made of them by their families, etc. You carry no such emotional baggage when it comes to learning to act within the contours of Khmer culture.

Finally, there's motivation. You've chosen to study a difficult language like Khmer for very carefully thought out reasons. You've made the decision to work very hard at learning it, resigning yourself to hours and hours of often tedious study. Sometimes Heritage learners come to the study of Khmer at a university level thinking it will be easy, and similar to "community literacy classes" they may have attended at the temple as kids. It's not, and realizing the amount of work they have to put in to a course like this can be a shock to them.

The fact that both you and the Heritage learners have different advantages (and disadvantages) that you bring to learning the language can be turned into a positive thing for both of you. You can help each other, each using your unique strengths and to help the other overcome your respective weaknesses; here's how:

1. Often, your Heritage classmates can be a good “sounding board” for you when you’re trying to master a certain grammatical structure. They won’t necessarily be able to tell you *why* you’re saying something either right or wrong, but they can often tell you that you’re either wrong or right, or point you in the right direction.
2. In this text, and in class at SEASSI, we’ll often give you “rules” to apply to a certain grammatical structure, or rules of thumb for choosing a certain vocabulary item over another. As noted above, you’re more suited to this analytical approach to Khmer than Heritage learners, so perhaps you can help them see “the big picture” more clearly.
3. You’re more likely to see the long-term benefits of adapting to a certain traditional way of behaving or speaking Khmer than your Heritage classmates, for whom Khmer culture can be very emotionally “loaded”. As an outsider, you bring an appreciation to various aspects of Khmer culture that they take for granted. Your encouragement can mean a lot to them.
4. You can also take advantage of a skill that most of your Heritage classmates will excel at: speaking informally and colloquially. They need to work mostly on their formal speech; you need lots and lots of practice with your colloquial speech. Go out of your way—go so far as to make a pact at the beginning of the summer—to speak *only* Khmer with your Heritage classmates, in and out of class. And encourage them to correct you when you say something that’s awkward, too formal for the situation, etc.

that’s why you have experienced instructors. We know exactly what skills and knowledge you need in order to become a sophisticated speaker and reader of Khmer, prepared to function within the limits (and possibilities) of contemporary Cambodian society.

### ***Educated Vocabulary***

From time to time in this textbook, and on the Multimedia CD-ROM, we’ll make reference to “educated vocabulary” that you need to learn. By *learn*, this means you need to incorporate these words smoothly into your speech, and also be able to understand these words in context when you hear them spoken. Finally, you’ll need to learn how to spell them (many have irregular spellings; silent letters, etc.) and of course be able to read them. At times this may seem like a pain, and cer-

tainly, memorizing vocabulary is never fun. But do discipline yourself to spend this “not fun” time preparing for class. Our activities in class are designed to get you to practice using this vocabulary in real-life situations. But you can’t access the new words in a realistic situation until you’ve planted the words in your memory in the first place. This memorization is probably the least exciting part of your study of Khmer, but it’s absolutely necessary.

### ***Behaving ‘Appropriately’ According to Khmer Culture***

Yes, I know this is a “hot potato” for Heritage learners. But if you’re going to conduct research or get work done in Cambodia, you have no choice. You need to be able to speak respectfully and appropriately in formal Khmer, especially to those older than you. You need to use proper body language around older people. Finally, you’ll need to accommodate various aspects of Khmer worldview (these include attitudes toward women, the handicapped, and racism) that you can’t change (at least not overnight). You have to learn to overlook certain aspects of Khmer behavior and speech that you may find, as an American, quite distasteful. We’re not trying to make you into a Cambodian (as opposed to a Khmer American), or convert you into thinking like your parents and grandparents about everything. But to interact with those of their generation, and with all members of modern Cambodian society, you’re going to have to learn to accept some ways of doing things and thinking on the part of others that you will surely find objectionable. After the task of memorizing vocabulary, this is probably the second hardest thing you’ll have to do in your study of Khmer.

By the way, let’s get one important rule for the classroom at SEASSI (and for all your interactions with any teachers of Khmer) out of the way now. You must *never* address your Khmer teachers by their first name alone. Use the terms which we’ll teach you on the first day of class at SEASSI (and on the Track 3 of your Audio CD, Disk # 1, listed on page 17 of this textbook), and those terms alone. You can combine the title of “teacher” with the teacher’s name, but never use the name alone. You may not be able to completely understand the importance of ac-

cording your teachers this type of respect when you're speaking Khmer with them right now, but trust me, it's extremely important if *you* want to be respected as someone who can truly function in the Khmer language and in Khmer society. Also, your teacher now remains your teacher for life; you should never stop using a title when addressing them, even years into the future.

### ***Learning to Read and Write in Khmer***

Ah, last but not least! And you may have thought this is the *only* thing you would learn in Khmer class! First, let's get some things out of the way about literacy. Literacy is extremely highly valued in Khmer culture, even though a relatively high percentage of Khmer society is still functionally illiterate (35% or more). Throughout most of Khmer history, only a small elite had access to learning to read and write. The written word is believed to have *power* by most Khmers, maybe a little too much power. But that's the way it is, and people's respect for you goes up quite a bit when they see you've learned to read Khmer, especially if you did so "later" in life and not in elementary school. So take learning to read and write in Khmer seriously, it can open lots of doors for you.

Literacy is a double-edged sword itself. Humans have only been reading and writing for some 5,000 years, out of a total of 150,000 to 200,000 years of human existence on the earth. That's not very long. Certainly, writing has advantages, but it has its disadvantages as well. One disadvantage is that literacy has caused us to get "lazy" in terms of what we memorize. Of course, we're "stuck" with literacy now and need it to function in our modern world, and most of us have come to love it and couldn't imagine doing without it (can you imagine living with no electricity?). But the point is, there's nothing particularly "natural" about reading and writing. There's also nothing that says that a spoken language—which does seem to be a very natural aspect of human existence—has to be tied to a given writing system. In theory, any spoken language could be written in any writing system if the writing system had the proper elements with which to express the

sounds and concepts of the language.

Khmer writing is based on a South Indian script derived from Northern Indian *Devanagari*, but Khmer could just as well have ended up written in Chinese characters (like Vietnamese, a spoken language related to Khmer—and not to Chinese—used to be). Or Khmer could be written in a Roman alphabet, such as Javanese (which used to be written in a Devanagari-derived script) is.

So while Khmer writing may be written in an Indic alphabet derived from *Devanagari*, the script originally used to write Sanskrit, Khmer does not “come from Sanskrit”. Khmer is part of the Mon–Khmer family, a very old language family—probably the oldest—spoken in Mainland Southeast Asia. The Mon–Khmer family includes languages scattered geographically from southern China through Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma, down into Malaysia and across to India. It’s an “accident of history” that the spoken language Khmer came to be written in the alphabet that it’s written in. This is true of all written languages. But again, we’re “stuck with it” (written Khmer, that is).

So in this textbook, and in class at SEASSI, we will *only* use Khmer script for writing Khmer words. We will never (or only extremely rarely) use any sort of phonetic transcription to represent the sounds of Khmer. I strongly encourage you to do the same in your private studies: learn to associate the letters of Khmer with the sounds of Khmer. Don’t invent your own transcription system using the Roman alphabet. In most cases, if you do so you’ll only encourage yourself in wrong pronunciations that may exist in your speech.

Another important thing about reading is that it’s first and foremost a decoding of *ideas* from text, and not primarily a means of expressing a sound-to-symbol correspondence (though of course it is that too). You can learn to read a language without speaking a word of it, and many people do. So when you’re learning to

read Khmer, learn to resist the urge to read out loud right away. Reading out loud can be useful, but it's not the *most* important thing about reading. What's paramount is that you derive meaning from the text.

You can also apply to Khmer a lot of the "tricks" you already use (though you may not realize it) when you read English. These include trying to guess the meaning of an unknown word when you encounter one. You do this by thinking about whether the word is similar in structure to another word that you do know, and by considering its context (the meanings of the words preceding and following it). You can also predict the meaning of an unknown word based on the "direction" (meaning-wise) that the text is going, and by considering what *kind* of text it is ( a personal letter? A newspaper article?). And you do these things *before* you go for the dictionary, or before you ask someone the word's meaning.

Another trick you no doubt use if you're a halfway decent reader of English is to approach text at the *word* and *phrase* level, and not letter by letter. Think about it: when you read English, you don't sound out every word, out loud or in your head. Far from it! You have a very large "sight vocabulary" of words that you already know. When you see a word that you already know, you immediately think about its meaning and move on to the next word. More often, you recognize words in *groups* (phrases), absorb the meaning of the phrase and go on to the next phrase. So will it be with Khmer. But first you have to build up a good store of common words in your memory, which we call "sight words". We'll be spending time on this task throughout this textbook. The more words you know, the faster and more efficiently you'll read.

## The Structure of This Textbook

This text (and the Intermediate and Advanced Khmer courses at SEASSI) is organized by content or topic. Part of becoming a sophisticated speaker and reader of Khmer means being to talk, understand others talking, read and write about a vari-

ety of important subjects: history, religion, education, society and its problems, etc. So we've devoted each chapter to a different topic. In learning about that topic, you'll learn important "educated vocabulary" associated with it. You'll learn how to describe the topic in terms of traditional Khmer thought, and how to express your own, probably "non-traditional" opinions about the topic. We won't teach you any one topic in-depth. Rather, we'll give you the tools to discuss and learn about that topic in greater depth yourself, in interactions with educated speakers of Khmer, and by reading Khmer texts. These "texts," by the way, can include movies and music as well as written works.

Each chapter (with some variations) contains the following sections:

1. An introduction to the topic in English.
2. An Audio CD track or two of basic important "educated vocabulary" dealing with that topic, with a corresponding list in the textbook. Take these lists seriously! It's important for you to add these words to your vocabulary. At SEASSI, you'll be quizzed on them twice a week, in writing and orally.
3. Reference to Multimedia Lessons on your Course CD-ROMs. Sometimes the textbook will contain a transcript of the video in the Multimedia Lesson; sometimes the transcript (and exercises) will be found on the CD-ROM.
4. Simple articles in Khmer related to the topic.
5. More complex articles in Khmer related to the topic. These are intended for Advanced level learners, who have already gone beyond the basics of the Khmer alphabet and have built up a large sight word vocabulary.

Two other types of sections which appear less often (not in all chapters) are:

1. Suggestions for practice and self-study (outside the classroom).
2. Excerpts from scholarly articles on the topic in English, key words in which have been replaced by Khmer terms. You're on your own for discovering the

meaning of these terms, using your dictionary, asking in class, asking your fellow students, or coming to office hours to ask your instructors. The hope is that you'll be motivated to understand the entire excerpt, which will cause you to "work" for the meaning of the unknown Khmer words.

Scattered throughout many chapters, you'll also find the following sidebar:

**Tips for Non-native Learners.** These are comments specifically directed at non-native learners of Khmer, and usually relate some aspect of the topic of the chapter to informal, colloquial spoken Khmer.

Note that throughout the first three chapters of the textbook, the "Introduction to Khmer Literacy" begun in the first chapter will be continued.

## How to Use This Textbook (What to Study)

First of all, you have a standing assignment if you're a SEASSI student: read the introduction to each chapter (the part in English) *before* coming to class on the Monday of the week that chapter will be covered. In addition, listen to (and memorize as indicated) the "educated vocabulary" words for that chapter., and read all of the "scholarly article excerpts" for the chapter. **You should spend at least 2 hours reading the introduction and scholarly article excerpts for each chapter.** Beyond this, you'll be told in Culture Hour on the Friday preceding each week what else in the coming chapter you should read by Monday. This will often include one or more of the Khmer articles in the chapter, and one or more of the Multimedia Lessons. If everyone has done the necessary preparation *before* coming to class, the hands-on activities we do in class will make sense and be useful to everyone. If you don't even know your basic vocabulary yet for a given chapter, however, you'll hold everyone else back and make the activities much more tedious—and less fun! Besides, as mentioned above, at SEASSI you'll be given

regular (and often unannounced) dictation quizzes on the educated vocabulary items for that week.

### ***How to Memorize Vocabulary***

As I said earlier, this is not fun, but it's a necessary part of studying any language. How to best do this depends largely on *you* and what works for you individually. Many students like to use flash cards. You can write the Khmer term on one side, and the English on another. Or, you can write up to four Khmer terms on one side of the card, one in each corner. Then, write the English glosses on the corresponding corners of the opposite side of the card. Switch off using one side or the other to prompt you for the word on the opposite side.

For some, myself included, flash cards don't do it. I used to write words with definitions on pieces of 8.5 by 11 paper and keep them in my back pockets. When I was waiting for a bus, or just out walking, I would pull out a sheet of paper and try to "cram in" a few more words. I'd put the list away after a while and try to "test myself" further into the walk, and then pull the paper out again to see how I had done. Also, don't neglect practicing using the vocabulary words in context. That is, "use them in a sentence". Don't rule out working with flashcards together with a friend. That can often make the task much more closer to "enjoyable". At SEASSI, where we cover a chapter per week, **you should spend *at least 6 hours per week outside of class working on nothing but memorizing vocabulary.***

Assume whenever you're given vocabulary in a "box" in this text and on your Audio CD, that you're expected to memorize it. Vocabulary items with no icons are to be incorporated into your speech, and need to be recognized when you're reading. When you see a "book" icon next to a word, it means you only need to be able to read it. When you see a "pencil" icon, you need to be able to correctly spell the word (as well as speak it and be able to read it). Look at pages 13 and 14 to see what these icons look like.

### ***How to Use the Multimedia Lessons***

All Multimedia Lessons contain a video. Most lessons give you explicit instructions on how many times to watch the video, what to listen for, etc. You should always listen to a given video no less than 4 times, usually more. Don't try to do everything associated with a given lesson in one sitting either. You'll drive yourself nuts. If you find yourself "glazing over," take a break, and come back to it later. And each time you listen to or watch the video, try to approach it a little differently. Consult the vocabulary list sometimes, read the transcript sometimes. At other times, just listen "cold" without trying to read along. Sometimes, you should listen only for specific vocabulary. At other times, focus on the interaction between the conversants on the video. **You should spend at least two hours total working on *each* Multimedia Lesson**, with the exception of Lessons Seven and Twelve.

### ***Reading the Khmer Texts***

How you study a given Khmer text in this textbook depends on your current literacy skill level. However, you can get *something* out of *every* text no matter what level you are. Therefore, you should always try whichever of the following methods is appropriate for you on *every* text in a given chapter:

1. If you're just starting out and still in the process of learning the vowels and consonants, scan through the article several times. Each time, look for every occurrence of a consonant or vowel that you're in the process of learning. Do just one vowel or consonant at a time.
2. As you're learning your sight word sets for each week, scan through articles looking for occurrences of each sight word. Note that this might take a little longer than the above task; depending on the word you're looking for. You may not find a given sight word at all in a given text, depending on the subject matter of the text.
3. If you're starting to move beyond just the alphabet and sight word basics, try reading the article (however, if you're an "accelerated" or beginning literacy

student, only try this with the easier Khmer articles in each chapter, not the ones marked “Advanced”). By “read” I mean read for *meaning*. Try to get all the way through the article the first time, skipping over material you can’t understand. Now go back and read the article a second time, this time pausing to consider each trouble spot. Try to guess the meanings of unknown words based on known words in the vicinity, your knowledge of the subject matter of the article, etc. Read the article a third time, this time writing down on a separate piece of paper the words you don’t know. When you’re done, go and look them up in the dictionary, or in the vocabulary list for the article. Now read the article a fourth time, consulting the definitions you found as needed. Before you go and take that well-deserved break, read the article a fifth and final time, to apply all your new-found knowledge. Only consult the list of definitions when absolutely necessary. Resist the urge to consult the vocabulary list for an article until you’ve read through the article three times, in accordance with the above steps.

4. Finally, if you’re an Advanced student or “upper level literacy student” in SE-ASSI parlance, you can apply method #3 above to the “Advanced” texts in any chapter as well.

Note that all of the above steps are intended to be done *silently*. That is, don’t try to read aloud right way. Focus on uncovering the meaning of the text first. Only read the article aloud as a separate activity after you apply the methods outlined above. For this, you might want to get together with a fellow student. **You’re expected at SEASSI to spend at least 8 hours per week *reading* the Khmer articles in your textbook.**

If you’ve been counting, we’re up to around 20 hours per week of study time spent outside of class (give or take 2 hours, since some weeks you have only one Multimedia Lesson; other weeks you have as many as three). Is that enough? Nowhere near it, if you really want to get the full benefit out of an intensive lan-

guage program. In fact, we recommend that Beginning level students spend a total of 2 hours outside of class for *each* hour spent in the classroom. That's 40 hours per week for Beginners, who spend a full 20 hours (not counting breaks) in class per week. You spend 14 hours per week in class. But wait, let's not forget about your independent study project, which accounts for 30% of your grade. **You should plan on spending at least 6 hours a week working on your independent study project alone.** That brings us up to 26 hours, and we want to get your total up to 40 hours study per week, just like the Beginners. So what are you going to do with the remaining 14 hours?

Homework. Some of it will be in the form of readings handed out separately from what's in the textbook. Some is in the supplementary online materials (most of which involve working with video, similar to what you do with your Multimedia Lessons on your Course CD-ROMs). You'll access these lessons via the world wide web using a password. Some homework will be in the form of group projects you'll need to work on outside of class. Of course, toward the end of the summer at SEASSI when you're doing the bulk of the work on your independent study project, you'll be given a lighter homework load so you can devote more time to your project.

## Understanding the Icons in this Textbook

The following icons (there are more on the next page) are used frequently throughout this textbook:



**Audio Track:** This icon indicates that the text nearby can be heard spoken on the Audio CDs accompanying this textbook



**Multimedia Lesson:** This icon indicates that there is a Multimedia Lesson which relates to the topic being covered, on your Course CD-ROMs



**Written Vocabulary:** This icon indicates that you need to know how to spell the word in question, in addition to using it in your speech and being able to read it



**Tips for Non-native Speakers** This icon indicates explanatory material (or in some cases vocabulary with audio) of specific interest to students who are not native speakers

## Understanding the SEASSI Khmer Modular System

Instruction in Khmer at the Intermediate and Advanced levels at SEASSI is modular. This means that individual language skills are separated and treated during different class periods. A brief overview of this system is given below:

### Accelerated Literacy Module

This module is offered **10 hours per week**. We focus on the basics of the Khmer alphabet, including diacritics, and we learn sight words. Beginning at the end of Week Two, simple authentic texts are read for meaning. Free writing is emphasized.

### Upper Literacy Module

This module is offered **10 hours per week**. The focus is on moderately easy to complex authentic Khmer texts. We read these texts for meaning and link them to practice in formal spoken Khmer and vocabulary building. Both free writing and formal composition are emphasized.

### Grammar Module

This module is offered **2 hours per week**. It is mandatory for all Intermediate and Advanced level students. Topics covered include Khmer sentence structure, morphology (word formation), understanding Sanskrit and Pali loan words in Khmer, and the structure of formal spoken Khmer.

### **Speaking Module**

This module is offered **4 hours per week**. At least 2 hours of this module are mandatory for all non-native speaking students. The focus is on informal, colloquial spoken Khmer and vocabulary building, with an emphasis on everyday social interaction, self-expression and storytelling.

### **Culture Module**

This module meets **2 hours per week**. It is mandatory for all SEASSI Khmer students, Beginning through Advanced. Here we'll make you familiar with Khmer culture, both "high" and popular. Students learn dances, songs, how to make (and eat) food, and watch movies.

Heritage students take a minimum of **8 hours** per week of literacy modules, chosen from Accelerated and Upper modules. A combination of the two is possible and is necessary for some students early in the summer. If a Heritage student does not need to take Speaking Module, s/he takes **10 hours** of literacy modules per week. Placement is determined on the first day of class.

Non-native speaking students take a minimum of **6 hours** per week of literacy modules, and a minimum of **2 hours** per week of Speaking module. Students may take as many as **4 hours** of Speaking module. If a student doesn't need all 4 hours of Speaking module, s/he takes 8 hours of literacy modules.

All students spend a total of **14 hours** per week in class; no more, no less. Each student prepares her or his individualized schedule on the first day of class in a meeting with the Coordinator. No changes may be made to that schedule without consultation with the Coordinator.

Enrollment as an "Intermediate" or "Advanced" student is determined during the

first week of class. Advanced students receive different homework assignments and quizzes than Intermediate students and are graded according to a stricter standard. Advanced students are also required to memorize more (and different) “educated vocabulary” words, and read the “Advanced” articles at the end of each chapter, which Intermediate students do not. All students, however, attend class together. In weeks Five to Eight, advanced students read a series of Khmer short stories and novel excerpts, in place of the Intermediate students’ study of the novel *Sophat*.

Every student designs, researches and carries out a significant independent study project. The first two weeks are for initial planning and design of the project; the third week is for research and more detailed planning. Weeks 4–7 are for carrying out the research project. In the final week of SEASSI, each student must make a 15–20 minute oral presentation *entirely in Khmer* to the rest of the class, based on their project. They must also turn in a written portion of the project. A short (3–4 sentence) description of the project is due by the end of Week 2 of SEASSI. A 1–2 page formal proposal, including a timeline for completion of various stages of the project, is due at the beginning for Week 4. Each student is assigned a faculty advisor for his or her project at that point, and must meet with that advisor regularly throughout the course. Students are graded for adhering to their timeline/ proposal as well as for the quality of their final product.

More detailed information on the Khmer course at SEASSI will be given in handouts at the beginning of each summer.