



Promoting Education, emPowering Youth

English Project in the Junior High School Final Report

The period of 2010 - 2014

Produced by Mr. Chim Seng, Project Manager

I. PEPY Background

PEPY's founders arrived in Cambodia with enthusiasm but also naiveté regarding conditions on the ground and sustainable development. They aimed to teach about the environment when they themselves admittedly knew little about Cambodia. Through some initial misguided attempts at investing time and money, the founders learned that investing time in people, not merely giving things away, is what encourages people to take action to improve their own communities. New schools do not educate children, quality teachers do. Objects do not change lives, people knowing how to use them or make them do. PEPY (which once stood for "Protect the Earth, Protect Yourself"), was originally named for a belief rooted in the environmental lessons of that first trip to Cambodia. PEPY's programs have expanded beyond environmental education with a focus now on youth leadership, and broader improvements in the education offered in government schools.

In 2011, we re-evaluated both the PEPY acronym and PEPY's mission and vision, in order to make sure that these components accurately reflected the work that we did in Chanleas Dai. In light of our transition over the years from promoting environmental lessons and construction of schools, to our current focus on youth empowerment and education programs, PEPY now stands for **Promoting Education emPowering Youth.**

II. Problem Statement

Kralanh is a district located on the west of Siem Reap Province. Kralanh has ten communes in total. Chanleas Dai is about seven kilometers from the central district and is one of the communes. This commune is located in a rural area where there is an extremely high student dropout rate. There was a lack of appreciation there for the value of education and health. In 2006, PEPY established an English project in Hun

Sen Chanleas Dai Primary School. This project involved teaching students in grades 4 to 6 English during their free time after government classes. Students and parents were pleased with the opportunity, and other schools in the Chanleas Dai cluster also requested us to provide English classes to students in their schools. Due to limited resources we could not provide such classes. The students from Chanleas Dai Primary school were confident in speaking English while students from other schools were not. This situation created problems for the teachers who taught in the junior high school, as students had such varying levels of English. To overcome these challenges, PEPY decided to move the English project to the junior high school and also revise the English project in the primary school, to travelling teacher support where we worked with six schools in the Chanleas Dai commune.

2.1- Objectives

The objectives of the English project were to:

- ❖ Facilitate the students to gain information from around the world through the English class.
- ❖ Improve the standard of English for students which in turn will assist them in getting better careers in the future

III. Project implementation Approach

PEPY is an organization which focuses on the needs of the community. Therefore, PEPY encouraged the members of the community to be involved in all the stages of new project development. PEPY eventually agreed to establish the English project in the junior high school. In order to run this project we, as an organization, implemented the method and procedures as follows:

- Based on the needs of the community, we presented the ideas to the district officer of Education Youth and Sport (DoEYS). Receiving their comments and feedback was very important because they are the key people in the education sector.
- Once the request or proposal was approved by the DoEYS, it was brought back to the principal and teachers of the school as we worked closely with them and they assisted us in arranging schedules and student timetables.
- A teaching curriculum was developed and finalized before classes started. Unfortunately a student survey/assessment was not done to assess the students' levels of English. We would recommend doing this so that the curriculum matches the levels of the students.

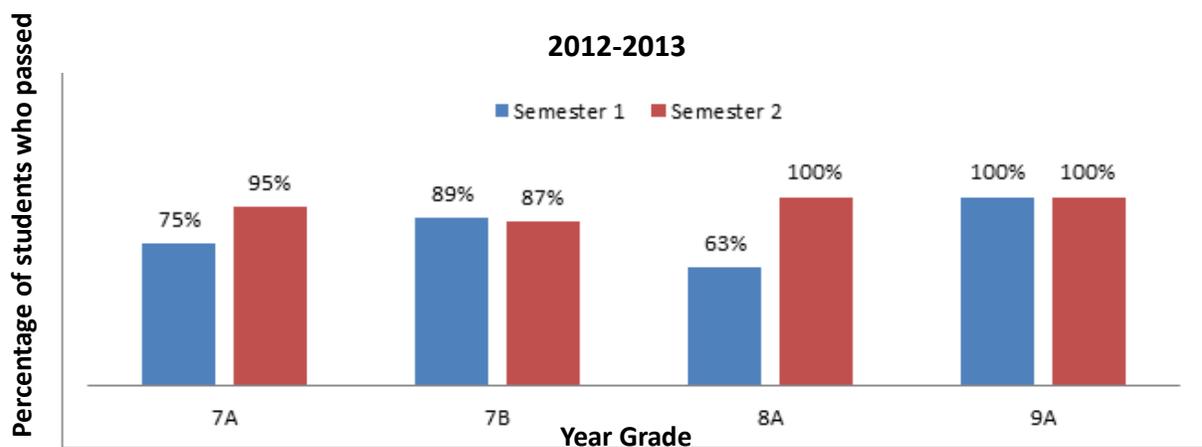
- The academic year starts in September. This is when we announced project information to all students in the junior high school. The information that the students received on that day were 1) why do we need to study English? 2) Where do they study? How many hours do they study per week? 3) What do they need to do if they want to study? When will the class start and what regulations would govern it etc. It was not compulsory for any students; they can choose to study with us or not.
- Students are graded after all applications are submitted.
- One of the requirements that students have to complete is to bring their parents or guardian to a parent's meeting at the junior high school where we work. The main purposes of this meeting was to: 1) inform the parents/guardians that their children have registered in our project 2) get more collaboration from them on supporting and monitoring their children's learning and 3) let them see the benefits of the class, and what their children would learn from it. The students that did not bring their parents were not allowed to attend the class until their parents attended. It was not effective because some of their parents were too busy so the decision was made to allow them to bring their parents later.
- The first day of the class was about the class culture. Students work together to create their class rules and all the students signed the agreed rules.
- Students are taught by using student centered approaches and an interactive learning environment where students can share their ideas, do activities together, draw pictures and ask their friends questions.
- English teachers or the project manager regularly requested meetings with the government teachers and principal in order to receive feedback from them.
- In order to support students' learning and to monitor their progress, we provide homework. Testing was done monthly by semester and continuously.
- When students are absent from the class more than four times, we would organize a home visit to meet their parents and get more information about the reasons for their child's absence.

IV. Outputs

a. Number of students

In the five years of running the PEPY project, 989 students enrolled and attended from the Chanleas Dai commune. The number of students registered in our program dropped down every year due to the decrease in grade 6 graduation rate. However, every year we found that all students who continued to study in the junior high school also registered in our English project.

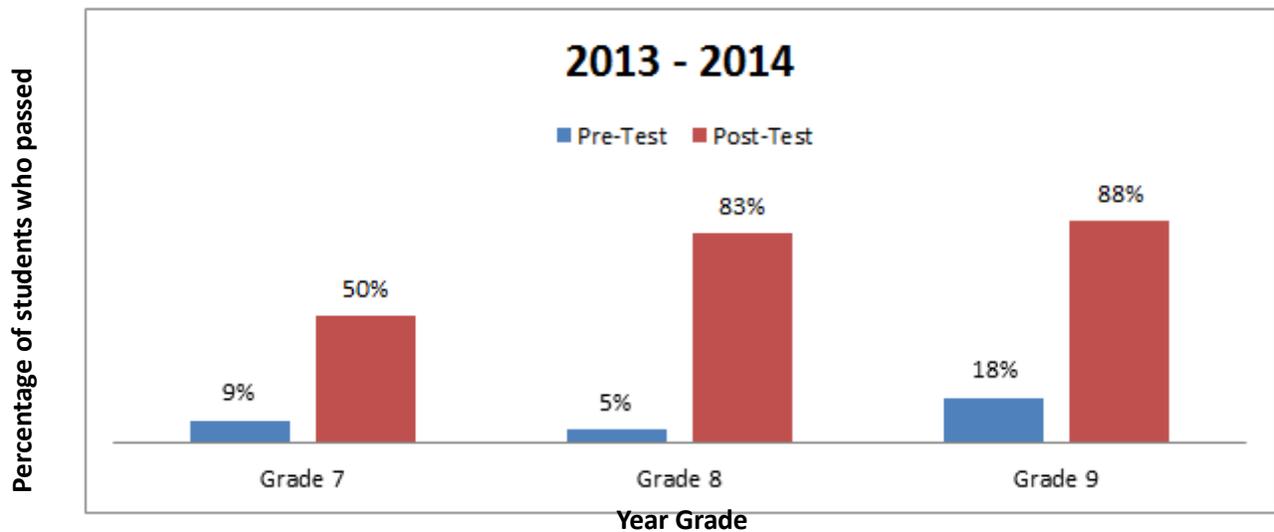
b. Exam results



In the academic year 2012 – 2013, we started to focus on monitoring and evaluation to see how much progress the students were making. We conducted the semester test with all the students. The result in the graph above illustrates that most of the students passed the test. However, if we look into more detail we can see that all grade 9 students passed the test while the results were not as good in other grades. We also found that grade 7B students performed worse in semester 2 than semester 1. Many students were absent frequently from class after Khmer New year.

In the second semester, we found that the percentage of students who passed the test increased in grade 7A by 20% and grade 8 increased by 37%. In contrast grade 9 students remained static (100%) while grade 7B decreased by 2%.

Pre- and post-Test



We did not do a pre and post test before, so we could not see what the student's progress was after attending our class. The PEPY team realized it was important so it was decided to do a pre and posttest assessment with the students. There was a cost involved for the organization but it was a valuable tool in understanding the effectiveness of the work with the students.

As the graph above shows most of the students didn't pass the pre-test. However, if we examine the posttest, we find that students improved. Grade 8 students showed the highest improvement.

c. **Class Lessons**

We first started with the 'Let'sGo book 4' to teach grade 7 students. We then decided to change to 'New American Headway' beginner for two years and for the last two years we used our own book called 'English for Cambodian students'. This book was developed by using a Cambodian context and linking it to the international context. It also supported the government English text book as well. We used 'New Headway' beginner textbook with grade 8 students. We used that textbook as a guide and we supplemented it with more lessons from a Khmer context.

For grade 9 students, we use 'Elementary textbook' and added in more lessons about Cambodian culture. All grade 7 students received 14 lessons, a) introduction to the class, b) my country and language, c) my friends, d) let's clean the classroom, e) school subjects, f) in the schoolyard, g) listening to teachers, h) I am sorry, i) listening to adults, j) things in my room, k) people in my school, l) when is your birthday?, m) Sopeak's room, and n) help me find school supplies.

Grade 8 students received 20 lessons a) what is your name?, b) what's this in English, c) every day English, d) countries, e) where are you from? f) Address and phone number, g) what is your job? h) family, i) sports, food and drink, j) time, k) room and furniture, l) preposition in reading and writing, m) the family and possessive adjectives, n) in the restaurant, want and would, o) requests and offers, p) color and present continuous. In addition they received lessons on Khmer New Year, Pchom Ben day, and the water festival. Grade 9 students received twelve lessons, a) hello everyone, b) meeting people, c) the word of the week, d) take it easy, e) where do you live?, f) can you speak English?, g) then and now, h) how long ago?, i) food you like, j) bigger and better, k) looking good, l) life and adventure, m) how clever, and n) what have you done this year?

Grade 7 students, were able to count up to 100, write the alphabet properly, know the sound of each letter, know some blending sounds, and write about themselves. Students learned enough English language to introduce themselves or describe someone in their family to other people.

Grade 8 students, knew how to use basic grammar in sentences such as a) present simple, b) present continuous, past simple and also future simple as well. They knew how to write letters to their friends and also how to describe their villages to other people. Grade 9 students understood many grammar rules and how to structure and write a correct paragraph. They learned a lot about Khmer ceremonies such as Khmer New Year, Pchom Ben day, Water festival, and the history of famous people around the world.



d. Meeting with parents

PEPY organized student parent meetings at the beginning of the year, usually in mid-October. In the last four years, almost all the parents attended the meeting. In the final year we encouraged the school leadership to organize the parent meeting and only five parents came. Due to a flood occurring at the time the school leadership kept delaying the meeting until the people in the community were busy with their harvest. At the time it appeared that the school leadership was not motivated to make sure the meeting took place.

e. Home visit

In the last two years, there was a high student absence and dropout rate from school and our team conducted more home visits than we had previously done. More than fifty families were met each year in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. This compared with previous years when we usually had only seven – ten families per

year. Some parents who we met reported that their child wanted to stop because the child didn't understand the lessons in the government class while some parents said that they had no choice because their families are in poverty.

V. Challenges

During our implementation phase we found challenges both internally and externally

Internal factors:

- There was a high turnover (move to a new position in the same organization) of English teachers and they did not keep good student records so it was difficult to monitor student's progress and general statistics
- We found it very difficult to develop curriculum and find suitable textbooks that supported the government textbook because we had to think about the grammar, vocabulary, and the context of students in each level.

External factors:

- It was challenging to organize a meeting with necessary individuals in the Junior High School.
- Chanleas Dai is one of the communes that has a high migration rate each year. Some students had to drop out of school because they were convinced or forced to help parents earn more income for the family. Some students decided to quit on their own because they wanted to earn money to buy their own materials like mobile phones, new motorbikes, clothes and they also wanted to have their own money to spend during Khmer New Year or Pchom Ben festival.
- When the attendance of government teachers is poor this in turn has an adverse impact on the attendance of students.
- Other NGOs took some of the -students away from their classes for 4-5 days for several times a year. Therefore, they could not attend lessons on those days.
- Some students lived far away from the school and when the teachers failed to show up, it demotivated them to go to school.

VI. Outcomes

According to the results of the internal evaluation conducted in June 2014 by Mr. Rith Sarakk, Senior Program Manager the following conclusions were drawn:

- Students are confident in sharing their personal information or other stories about their village to other people through the English language.
- Students understood better about Cambodian special ceremonies such as 1) Khmer New Year, 2) Pchom Ben Day, 3) Water festival. The students are also able to share information on these events in English.
- In addition to English, students improved their confidence in talking to people not known to them and also doing a presentation in front of their classmates.
- Students can now work faster and are friendlier to their classmates.

VII. Impact

- Some students, who live in Run, Tramkong and Somrong village, taught English to their relatives and friends in their own community. They ran lessons in a house, using a white board they bought and students paid for the whiteboard marker pens. This was done independently and the students used their own initiative to carry out these lessons



- Students who have been through the PEPY English program displayed good confidence in speaking, writing, and reading which improved their study in Kralanh High school.
- Students in the Chanleas Dai, Run, Chhok rath, and Tramkong communities, decided to pay for their own additional English classes at the private center in Kralanh district because they found that English was really important to them and it also supported them with their learning in the government class.

VIII. Recommendation and Lessons we learned

- It would have been beneficial if we had developed our own textbook before the class started. The textbook as well should support and adapt Cambodian culture, context and also aid the government English curriculum. Moreover, it would have been good to link Cambodian culture to an international context, because students would have a broader conceptual understanding.
- It is always important to support people who really need our help. From our work so far, in the junior high school we have found that some government teachers

seemed to not have much dedication towards their work. They did not seem keen to avail of our support even if their students wanted us. If teachers and the senior management showed that they needed us, they would work hard with us to find the ways to work together to help the students.

- We should have a clear monitoring system and plan, especially a data tracking record, recorded properly and consistently. The new manager should be trained in how to use the system otherwise we would lose all important statistics that we had in the past once we changed manager.
- Students are grouped together by grade and at the moment there are too many students with differing levels of ability who study together. It would be better to work with the government teachers to arrange different schedules for different levels of students, this way they may be more successful learners working in grouping that goes at more appropriate pace.
- Success in English primarily depends upon the government class. PEPY should consider working more closely with the government teachers and finding out what their needs are and supporting them in the right way. Offering the supplementary classes to students is not enough but providing more support to government teachers is more powerful because these individuals already have good skills but they do not have enough motivation.
- An English assessment or English level survey should be carried out prior to the lessons beginning. This should ask the students what sessions they want to study and give an indication as to what level the students are at prior to creating a curriculum.