

The Relationship between Private Tutoring and English Achievement: A Case of Four Cambodian High Schools

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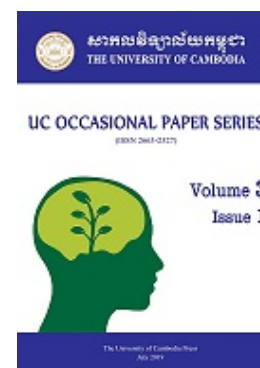
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Abstract

Private tutoring is globally known as a shadow education, and it is proved to have positive impact on academic achievement of students at all levels. Contextually, private tutoring is also popular among learners in Cambodia not only for national exam-required grades, but also for non-required ones. However, very few scholars in Cambodia has interested in its effects. Thus, this small-scale study aimed at exploring the determinants influencing English achievement and differences between learners who take private tutoring with their teacher and who with others. The data for the linear regression model were obtained from cluster-randomly-selected 669 high school learners in four town-

center-located schools. The result of this model shows that learners taking private class with others outperform their counterparts who are with their own teacher. Additionally, learners with clear plan for further education seem to perform better, and learners who have good role model (father's occupation, and a member who generates family income via using English) is advanced their friends in English achievement. However, the absenteeism of the learners shows no effect to their academic achievement in this study.

Key words: language teaching, learning outcomes, learning performance, extra classes, shadow education



I. Introduction

English like other languages except Vietnamese and Russian was banned for about 20 years in Cambodia after Pol Pot regime was defeated in January 7th 1979, before it was constitutionally allowed to be a compulsory subject in lower and upper secondary school in 1990 (Neau, 2003). Also, foreign language – English or French – in the primary school was, according to the official announcement, N^o. 25 MoEYS.s.n.n., dated on April 9th, 2014, introduced in 2014 from fourth to sixth grade; however, “... For the first stage (2005-2009), the MoEYS will encourage schools to offer foreign languages using non-MoEYS resources...” based on Policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009 (p.10) dated on December 2004. English overtook French and other languages quickly after then due to two pronounced political factors suggested by Clayton (2007) – the mission of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) from 1992-1993 for first national election, and Cambodia became one of the members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999.

Since after, English teaching was recognized as one of the most challenges by Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) due to the insufficient number of qualified teachers, facilities and resources (Pou, 1996). A series of in-service training were launched to improve the quality of English teaching via training on teaching methodology

under different aids projects. However, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) or teacher-centered method was known as the privilege method in Cambodian context (Suon, 1990, Neau, 2003). While the attention on language teaching approaches and teachers’ capacity development has been cared, the poor quality of student learning nation-wide is reported (Ford, 2003; Ford, 2006; Chet 2006, Chet, 2009), and the matter to learning remains unanswered.

Within Cambodian context, due to the less number of English learning hours¹ in state schools, learners prefer to take English private tutoring. This is referred to a private lesson for which every learner is required to pay; it is not conducted within the school schedule. Learners have their own choice to study with whom or with any private school they prefer. Currently, there are so many private schools are operating language classes mainly during the time that learners are free from their daily school schedule. Learners commit to learn English as it is viewed as a passport for better result in university, and for a scholarship abroad, and their perception might be private tutoring can lead them to a better grade in the examination, for the score of language test is a surplus² for Cambodian high school national exam. English and French were

¹ Two hours for primary school from 1st to 6th grade, and 6 hours for lower secondary, and upper secondary schools (based on 2016’s curriculum framework of general education and technical education).

² If students earn more than the minimum score of 25 out of 50, the remained score above the minimum will be added to the total scores of the subjects that are counted to be divided for passing average (based on the exam guideline, N^o.34 moeys.s.n.n, dated on December 3rd, 2018).

included in the national exam of Cambodia in 2006 according to an official information (MoEYS, 2005).

Recently, the private tutoring, including one-to-one and a small group tutoring (Medway, 1995; Mischo & Haag, 2002), is known as the world fact (Lee et al. 2009; Bray, 2009), and as shadow education in this field of study (Aslam & Atherton, 2012; Bray, 1999; Lee et al. 2009) because the contents at private school are alight with that of in public school. However, it seems to be different in language private school in Cambodia except if the learners take the private lesson with their classroom teacher. Generally, private tutoring is viewed as one of the factors positively contributes to the learners' academic achievement (Baily, 2012; Unal et al, 2010). Berberoglu & Tansel (2014); Lee (2013) found that private tutoring has significant effects on academic achievement in both language and mathematics in Turkish and Korea respectively; however, there is no effect at all with Italian learners in language subject (Meroni & Abbiati, 2012).

Contextually, none of study has paid its attention to the private tutoring in Cambodia so far, thus this study intended to examine the relationship between the private tutoring and learners' English learning achievement in Cambodian high schools. To realize this objective, this survey aimed at answering to the following questions:

(1) What are the differences between the learners who have private tutoring with their own classroom teachers and who with others?

(2) What other determinants impact the learner's English academic achievement in Cambodian context?

II. Research Methods

Research Samples

This study attempted to focus on only 11th graders of the one-selected upper secondary schools located in the town center of four different provinces – like Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Svay Rieng, and Kampot. Simple random sampling was first done to pick up the target provinces across Cambodia for this study while Phnom Penh the capital city was purposively withdrawn before the process, as the learners in the capital may have huge different characteristics comparing to the rests. Meanwhile, cluster-random sampling was employed to select classes in each school, and then all learners in selected class were invited to be the respondents of this survey. However, the learners, who were not taking private tutoring, were filtered and asked to return the questionnaire. In total, there were 669 participants (Female: 368 account for 55%). It should be noted that only 11th graders were taken for this study (a) 10th graders seem to be quite new for the concerned upper secondary schools' English syllabus because some of them may have less experience in their school, or they may have just transferred from other schools, and (b) 12th graders were purposively taken out in order to avoid any disturbance in their daily schedule for national exam preparation during the data collection process.

Research Tools

One set of questionnaire was designed to collect the information on demography, absenteeism, motivation, further education choice, private tutoring-related, and parent-related factors from the concerned learners in each target school. One standard test was designed based on the contents taught in 11th grade during the first semester. Before the designing of the test, the information related to the contents that have been taught in each target school was collected, so the test contents would not be bias from one target school to another. This achievement test was divided into three main parts – vocabulary (40%), grammar (40%), and reading (20%). The weight of each item was divided based on the frequent focus (*GTM was reported to be popular in their class*) during their English lesson reported by the English teachers of the concerned schools. Writing and listening skills were excluded owing to the fact that teachers of the target schools proclaimed that they have very less focused on writing skills, while almost all informed that their learners have not experience in listening since there is no any listening materials available at their school. To ensure the reliability and validity of the tools, piloting stage was conducted in one upper secondary school in Takeo province. Some concerned parts of the tool were corrected, and instruction was simplified by providing an example accordingly. Meanwhile, the test takers were fairly treated although they were in different classes, and in different provinces.

Data Collection Methods

All members of the team met and discussed on the procedure and the protocol of data collection to ensure a uniform condition during the fieldwork. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study before they were given a copy of questionnaire. Then participants were asked to complete the questionnaire individually in each class with the support from one member of the research team in case of needed. After the questionnaires were collected, a fifteen-monute break was given to participants before they were invited to sit for a forty-minute test.

II. Data Analysis

Linear regression was employed for the data analysis in this study. Before the data were put into the model, the data correlation was checked to avoid the redundancy of the effect in the model. As can be seen in *Table 1*, to better fit in the model, only ‘Father’s occupation’ was added into the model owing to the collinearity between mother-related variable.

Table.1. Correlation

		F's <u>occu</u>	M's <u>occu</u>	F's <u>edu</u>	M's <u>edu</u>
Father's <u>occu</u>	Pearson Correlation	1	.41**	.51**	.36**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	666	666	664	666

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

What's more, reliability of the standard test was checked. The *Table 2* clearly explains that the test significantly represents the better reliability ($\alpha = .843$) in predicting the academic achievement of the learners in this study.

Table.2. Test reliability

	N	Min.	Max	M	SD	Alp.
Case Valid(<u>listwise</u>)	669	00	10	17.02	8.24	.843

There were ten independent variables were put into the model (*Table 4*) while standardized score of the researcher-made test was used as dependent variable. Participants were asked to rate their own absenteeism, and their teacher's absenteeism by choosing one among the three choices – frequently absence, sometime absence, and hardly ever absence. Similarly, three scales were also used to rate their decision for 'Further education' variable – quit soon, finish 12th grade,

and pursue university level. For motivation variables, there were three statements for internal motivation, while 4 statements for external one with four scales. Before inputting them into the model, each motivation was classified into two categories (Low motivation =0, and High motivation=1) by combining *totally disagree* with *disagree*, and *total agree* with *agree*. For 'father's occupation' variable, respondents were asked to select one among the three options Government-related job, private-related (organizations, company..), and Others. However, binary choice was used for them to rate if any of their family member, generating the income via using English, whom they think they would like to follow in their future (*304 learners answered YES, while 363 reported NO, and 2 were missing data*).

III. Research Results and Discussion

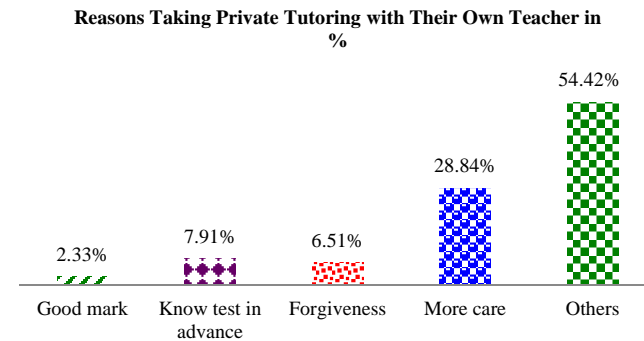
As can see in the *Table 3* below, there are 454 learners (67.9%) among the total participants reported they do not take private tutoring with their teacher of English who are teaching them at school, while 215 (32.1%) learners reported they do.

Table.3. Participants taking private tutoring

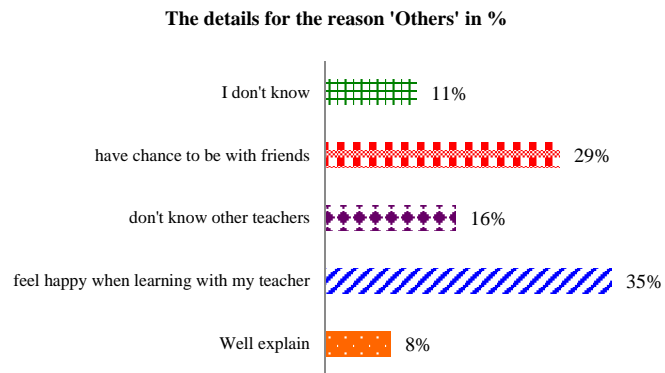
		F.	%
Valid	With another teacher	454	67.9
	With their teacher	215	32.1
	Total	669	100

Among learners taking private tutoring lessons with their teachers, *Figure 1* illustrates that few admitted to expect ‘better grade’, while not many of them expect for ‘forgiveness’ from their teachers (*in case they misbehave, or are absence during any class without being authorized*), and ‘being informed about the exercises’ that might be appeared during the exam in advance. Meanwhile, about 29% of respondents wish to get ‘more care’ from their teachers like more explanation, being nice to them, etc., whereas more than half (54.42%) have other reasons for their choice of taking private tutoring with their teachers. The details as can be seen in *Figure 2*.

Figure 1: Reasons of taking private tutoring with their teacher of English who teaching them at school



35 percent of respondents among 54.42% declared that they decided to take this type of private tutoring since they feel so happy when learning with their teachers, following by 29% who seem to care much about having fun time with friends rather than about pursuing more knowledge of English language, while only 8% selected their choice due to the fact that they like the ways their teacher explains. However, not many of them (16% and 11%) choose this type of private tutoring with no concret idea except they do not know any teacher (16%), nor do they have idea on the reason they choose to do so (11%).

Figure.2. The details of the 'Others' in figure 1

The result of this study is aligned with the previous studies (Baily, 2012; Berberoglu & Tansel, 2014; Lee, 2013; Unal et al, 2010) that ascertained that private tutoring has significantly impact on academic achievement in language. Attractively, this study proves that students who take private tutoring with their English teacher who is teaching them at school, regardless of any reason of their decision, seems to have lower result in the achievement test comparing to their counterparts who are taking English private tutoring with another teacher, or with another private school. The result, also, statistically alerts that they not only lower perform than their peers, but their result may be even worse if they keep in practicing this choice.

As clearly explained in *Figure 2*, sixty four percent of the learners, who are taking English private tutoring with their own teachers, seems to do it for pleasure rather than for building up their English knowledge.

Additionally, learners who have set a goal to pursue higher education seem to outperform their peers who do not wish to do so. Contextually, almost all learners seem to be aware that to succeed at university, good knowledge in English is required, for documents, and reading materials are in English. What's more, a language for the medium instruction is, due to the limitation of the terminology, English in many universities although the Khmer (Cambodian's native language) is stated as a language for a medium instruction for all levels of education by the state (Clayton, 2006). It can be a contextual common reason that to use any searching engines for their assignments and/or for self-study, English is also required, owing to the fact that there is a huge constraint for Cambodian learners to find what they academically need in Khmer on reliable websites. For the time being, the encouragement of the MoEYS's policy in terms of additionally add up the remained scores after minus the minimum scores required of English subject during the 12th grade national exam might be one of the pushing factor for the learners whose educational goal is to pass high school exam (with better grade), and to further their education.

Table 4: Results

	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)		3.053	.002
Private tutoring with teacher	.113	3.015	.003**
Gender disparity	-.061	-1.625	.105
Student's absenteeism	.047	1.245	.214
Further education	.118	3.091	.002**
Internal motivation	.067	1.766	.078
External motivation	.014	.360	.719
Father's occupation	.181	4.444	.000***
Role model for income via English using	.124	3.272	.001**
Parent's English education	.052	1.260	.208
Teacher's absenteeism	-.033	-.894	.372

$R^2 = .125$; Sig. $\leq .05$

Significantly, Father's occupation and having a role model who uses English to generate family income are statistically pronounced in this study. More than thinking of the success in further education, those learners may think of following in their father's and their relative's footsteps for future career or income earning. Currently, almost all job vacancies require applicants whose English proficiency is good enough,

and some positions in government jobs demand their interested candidates to have better English level too.

On the contrary, this study shows no remarkable difference between female and male learners in English academic achievement. Although the result of this model is not statistically significant, it illuminates that the male learners tend to perform lower than their female counterpart. Interestingly, students' absenteeism shows no effect on English academic achievement if they keep on taking private tutoring with either their teachers or with others. This can explain that students learn more at private tutoring than they do in state-running school. Similarly, teacher absenteeism is also found no significant related to the learners' result whereas it points a negative trend on learning achievement if teachers keep missing their class more and more.

IV. Conclusion

The private tutoring have positively influence on English academic achievement regardless the gender, and absenteeism. What's more, no matter what type of motivation they have or how strong their motivation is, it has no effect on their English learning, but their English achievement is better if they have ambition to pass 12th grade national exam, and/or to continue their education at university. Having a parent whose job is with government and/or private-running sectors like an organization, or a company positively affects the learner's English academic achievement. Also, the learners whose family member can

generate the daily income by using English seem to outperform their peers. The last two significant factors are clearly suggesting that having a role model in either professional occupation or generating family income positively contributes to English achievement of the learners. Although it is not statistically significant, the absenteeism of the teachers of English is still a pronounced determinant impact on the academic achievement of their learners due to the negative trend of the statistical analysis.

V. Request

Although this study contains some limitations in generalizing its findings due to the unavailability of factors including in its model like number of hours spent on English private tutoring, support from parents both financially and psychologically, and more data related to teachers and school, some useful implications can be drawn to exercise for the better outcomes in English education in its context. First, Provincial Office of Education (PoE) under the supervision of MoEYS had better strengthen each school to orient students about the surplus of English score in the 12th grade national exam. What's more, the ignite talk about life at university or in job/business should be launched at school by inviting guest speakers who are the former students of the concerned school, so they can help to open the mind of current upper secondary school learners to see how important English is for their future education and life.

Again, PoE with the support from MoEYS should collaboratively work with private schools to strengthen their teaching methodology which can prepare their learners for university level, and for their future job rather than offer only the content knowledge. What PoE and MoEYS should take into account is how individual-running-private tutoring class can be controlled especially the quality and effectiveness (for example, via issuing a private-tutoring license to only teachers who are officially recognized by the school and community).

There should also be any action taken to maintain the number of instructional time of English subject at school level.

To set light on the betterment of English academic achievement via generalization of this study in the private tutoring, the future study should include some missing points suggested above, and school-based result should be used in the model in order to compare the significant factors, with that of findings in researcher-made test's result.

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