



Context:

Southeast Asians in California

Volume 11, Number 90, April-May 1991

Folsom Cordova Unified School District
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 Judy Lewis, Editor

When text is a test

What follows is one paragraph from an old sixth grade history text. All of the Dolch words (the 220 most common English words, comprising 50-75% of text) have been left in place, but the other words have been replaced with "xxxx". This is how text appears to a very limited reader of English.

By the xxxx of the xxxx xxxx, xxxx in the long, xxxx xxxx of xxxx had xxxx to the xxxx of xxxx. When a xxxx xxxx, the xxxx of that xxxx xxxx into two xxxx, the xxxx and the xxxx. The xxxx went to xxxx and the xxxx had to xxxx on xxxx. It was the xxxx of the xxxx to xxxx the xxxx and look after it xxxx it xxxx xxxx to xxxx. If the xxxx was not xxxx for, it xxxx xxxx and could xxxx the xxxx.

Apparently, something has to be "looked after".

a-1
 after-1
 and-4
 by-1
 could-1
 for-1
 had-2
 if-1
 in-1
 into-1
 it-4
 long-1
 look-1
 not-1
 of-5
 on-1
 the-14
 to-5
 two-1
 was-2
 went-1
 when-1

Dolch words & frequency of occurrence—51 of the total 89 words in the paragraph. There are only 22 different words.

ancestors
 cared
 Chou
 died
 disturb
 duty
 dynasty
 earth
 faded
 family
 feed
 heaven
 history
 hun
 led
 line
 living
 nothing
 parts
 person
 po
 pride
 remained
 restless
 slowly
 soul
 split
 stay
 time
 unbroken
 until
 worship

Non-Dolch words—38 of the 89. Some of these are the "key words".

Text presents the single greatest obstacle to school success for language minority students. Which words are the important ones? How can a student keep up with classmates when each paragraph requires extraordinary effort to decipher? There are various kinds of basic word lists—words that occur most frequently in speech, reading, or writing. If basic words are quickly recognized, the other words emerge as the ones that carry the main ideas of the passage.

Dolch words are the basic words learned in kindergarten, first and second grades. Learning Publications (PO Box 1326, Holmes Beach, FL 33509) publishes the Dolch lists in more than 25 languages, a starting point for non-English-speaking students literate in their own languages. However, the Dolch words alone don't provide many clues to understanding, as the paragraph on page 1 shows. Of the Dolch words in that passage—

- only three words convey a reasonably strong visual image: *long*, *look*, and *two*. However, *look* is deceptive; it is part of a two-word verb *look after*..

look after it (take care of it)

look after it (look after it goes by)

- *It* is used four times: 3 times it has the same antecedent, and one time it is part of the general "it was..."

- *To* is sometimes a preposition, sometimes part of an infinitive, and sometimes part of an idiom:

led *to* the worship

went *to* heaven

had *to* stay

to feed

faded *to* nothing

Here is the complete paragraph (key words are bold-face):

By the time of the Chou dynasty, pride in the long, unbroken line of history had led to the **worship of ancestors**. When a **person died**, the soul of that person **split** into two parts, the *hun* and the *po*. The *hun* went to **heaven** and the *po* had to stay on **earth**. It was the **duty** of the **family** to feed the *po* and **look after** it until it slowly faded to nothing. If the *po* was not **cared for**, it remained restless and could **disturb** the living.

(The Human Adventure, Addison-Wesley, p. 97)

The non-Dolch words are stronger in terms of concept and visual image. Looking over the list of non-Dolch words on page 1, the key ideas begin to emerge—

Someone *worships* ancestors.

Someone has a *long* history.

People *die*.

People have *souls*.

The *soul* *splits* into two *parts*.

The two *parts* are called *hun* and *po*.

One part *stays* on *earth*.

One part goes to *heaven*.

The *family* must *care* for the *soul*.

A *restless* *soul* *disturbs* the *family*.

The text presents other challenges. Familiarity with the notion of *heaven* and *earth* is assumed. The reader has to figure out that *look after* and *care for* are synonymous. The reader must be able to negotiate the time nuances and conditions of verbs:

had led to (had+ led = info about time)

had to stay (had to = must)

could disturb

Of five sentences, three begin with dependent clauses, and one requires belief in the validity and relevance of *if-then* arguments.

By the time of the Chou dynasty,

When a person died,

If the *po* was not cared for,

Finally, the reader is faced with an adjective that appears to be a verb but is used as a noun—

could disturb the *living*.

Many teachers have students complete a study guide. The advantage for limited-English readers is that the questions help define the important concepts and simplify the text. What can be done with a limited-English reader who is in a mainstream class with no help? If the student is literate in his or her own language, I would take a highlighter and mark the key words in the paragraph, and alter the assignment to include defining the key words in the primary language.

A student with no prior literacy could not rely on a dictionary to help make the connection to established concepts. The only solutions for such students is to have a bilingual aide, parent, or peer explain the main ideas of the paragraph, or to explain the key words in simple English.

Dolch Words

Adjectives

a
all
an
any
best
better
big
black
blue
both
brown
clean
cold
eight
every
first
five
four
full
funny
good
green
hot
kind
light
little
long
many
much
new
one
only
pretty
red
right
round
seven
six
small
some
ten
that
the
these
this
those
three
too

Adverbs

two
warm
white
yellow
again
always
away
before
down
far
fast
here
just
never
now
once
out
soon
then
there
today
together
very
well

Prepositions

about
after
around
at
by
for
from
in
into
of
off
on
over
to
under
up
upon
with

Pronouns

he
her
him
his
I
it
its
me
my
myself
our
she
their
them
they
us
we
you
your

Verbs

am
are
ask
ate
be
been
bring
buy
call
came
can
carry
come
could
cut
did
do
does
done
don't
draw
drink
eat
fall
find
fly
found

gave
get
give
go
goes
going
got
grow
had
has
have
help
hold
hurt
is
jump
keep
know
laugh
let
like
live
look
made
make
may
must
open
own
pick
play
please
pull
put
ran
read
ride
run
said
saw
see
shall
show
sing
sit
sleep
start
stop
take

tell
thank
think
try
use
walk
want
was
wash
went
were
will
wish
work
would
write

Conjunctions

and
as
because
but
or
so

Question words

how
what
when
where
which
who
why

Misc

no
not
if
yes

95 Most Common Nouns

airplane
apple
baby
back
ball
barn
basket
bear
bed
bell
bird
birthday
boat
book
box
boy
bread
bus
cake
cap
car
cat
chair
chicken
children
coat
corn
cow
dog
doll
door
dress
duck
ear
eggs
elephant
eye
face
farm
father
feet
fire
fish
flower
garden
girl
grass
hair
hand
hat
head
hen
hill
horse
house
kitten
leg
letter
man
men
milk
money
monkey
mother
nest
nose
paper
party
picture
pig
pony
puppy
rabbit
rain
ring
road
school
sheep
shoe
show
squirrel
stick
store
street
sun
table
tail
toys
train
tree
wagon
watch
water
window
wood

1st 100 *The High-Utility 500 (Rebecca Sitton)—the most frequent words in students' writing*

the	of	and	a	to	in	is	you	that	it
he	for	was	on	are	as	with	his	they	at
be	this	from	I	have	or	by	one	had	not
but	what	all	were	when	we	there	can	an	your
which	their	said	if	do	will	each	about	how	up
out	them	then	she	many	some	so	these	would	other
into	has	more	her	two	like	him	see	time	could
no	make	than	first	been	its	who	now	people	my
made	over	did	down	only	way	find	use	may	water
long	little	very	after	words	called	just	where	most	know

2nd 100

get	through	back	much	go	good	new	write	our	me
man	too	any	day	same	right	look	think	also	around
another	came	come	work	three	must	because	does	part	even
place	well	such	here	take	why	help	put	different	away
again	off	went	old	number	great	tell	men	say	small
every	found	still	between	name	should	home	big	give	air
line	set	own	under	read	last	never	us	left	end
along	while	might	next	sound	below	saw	something	thought	both
few	those	always	show	large	often	together	asked	house	don't
world	going	want	school	important	until	form	food	keep	children

3rd 100

feet	land	side	without	boy	once	animals	life	enough	took
four	head	above	kind	began	almost	live	page	got	earth
need	far	hand	high	year	mother	light	country	father	let
night	picture	being	study	second	soon	story	since	white	ever
paper	hard	near	sentence	better	best	across	during	today	however
sure	knew	it's	try	told	young	sun	thing	whole	hear
example	heard	several	change	answer	room	sea	against	top	turned
learn	point	city	play	toward	five	himself	usually	money	seen
didn't	car	morning	I'm	body	upon	family	later	turn	move
face	door	cut	done	group	true	half	red	fish	plants

4th 100

living	black	eat	short	United States	run	book	gave	order	open
ground	cold	really	table	remember	tree	course	front	American	space
inside	ago	sad	early	I'll	learned	brought	close	nothing	though
idea	before	lived	became	add	become	grow	draw	yet	less
wind	behind	cannot	letter	among	able	dog	shown	mean	English
rest	perhaps	certain	six	feel	fire	ready	green	yes	built
special	ran	full	town	complete	oh	person	hot	anything	hold
state	list	stood	hundred	ten	fast	felt	kept	notice	can't
strong	voice	probably	area	horse	matter	stand	box	start	that's
class	piece	surface	river	common	stop	am	talk	whether	fine

5th 100

round	dark	past	ball	girl	road	blue	instead	either	held
already	warm	gone	finally	summer	understand	moon	animal	mind	outside
power	problem	longer	winter	deep	heavy	carefully	follow	beautiful	everyone
leave	everything	game	system	bring	watch	shall	dry	within	floor
ice	ship	themselves	begin	fact	third	quite	carry	distance	although
sat	possible	heart	real	simple	snow	rain	suddenly	leaves	easy
lay	size	wild	weather	miss	pattern	sky	walked	main	someone
center	field	stay	itself	boat	question	wide	least	tiny	hour
happened	foot	care	low	else	gold	build	glass	rock	tall
alone	bottom	walk	check	fall	poor	map	friend	language	job

Here's the paragraph again....this time the words that are not on the "High Utility 500" are replaced with "xxxx"....

By the time of the xxxx xxxx, xxxx in the long, xxxx line of xxxx had xxxx to the xxxx of xxxx. When a person xxxx, the xxxx of that person xxxx into two parts, the xxxx and the xxxx . The xxxx went to xxxx and the xxxx had to stay on earth. It was the xxxx of the family to feed the xxxx and look after it until it slowly xxxx to nothing. If the xxxx was not cared for, it xxxx xxxx and could xxxx the xxxx.

Now, we can tell that the family is involved, along with something that has two parts, something that stays on earth and has to be cared for. To a Chinese, these might be enough clues to tell that the passage is about ancestor worship.

Key words:
 worship
 ancestors
 soul
 split
 hun
 po
 heaven
 duty
 restless
 disturb

Words from the "High Utility 500" are boldface

Samples of text

First Grade

Long ago, there was an emperor. He was a happy man because of his nightingale.

This nightingale was a little, gray bird. She did not look beautiful, but she sang beautiful songs.

Everyone would come to hear the songs. They would listen all day because the songs were happy songs.

Birds Fly, Bears Don't, p. 131

Fourth Grade

Bats are different from birds. Bats have fur on their bodies instead of feathers. Their wings and tails are made of leathery skin stretched across thin bones.

Bats do not lay eggs, as birds do. Bat babies are born alive, the same way kittens are. Mother bats nurse their young with their own milk. That is why bats—like mice, cats, cows, and people—are called mammals. Of all the mammals, bats are the only ones that can truly fly.

Ten Times Round, p. 128

Literature Selection—*Tuck Everlasting*

Fifth Grade

Winnie was standing with her cheek pressed into Tuck's chest, her arms flung tight around him. She trembled, and kept her eyes squeezed shut. She could feel Tuck's breath come and go in little gasps. It was very quiet.

The Treegap constable knelt over the sprawled body of the man in the yellow suit, and then he said, "He ain't dead. Leastways, not yet."

Biology text

College

Whereas the survival of a complicated animal depends on a functional nervous system, a simple animal like a sponge can get along with no specialized nerve cells at all. Each sponge cell communicates only with its immediate neighbors. Lacking overall neural integration, however, a sponge is little more than a reproducing, filter-feeding vase.

The Nature of Life, p. 599

Sacramento Bee

They are the true time travelers. "We came from a very primitive existence with no electricity, no telephones, no running water," said Brandon Deng of Sacramento, a Mien refugee who changed his name from Seng Chan Saeturn when he became a citizen in 1988. "Then, when we landed in this country, I looked around and thought, 'Whoa. Where have I been?'"

Jeannie Wong, *Sacramento Bee*, 5/26/91, A18

TIME Magazine

Seng, a driver for the TIME correspondents who covered the Cambodian war, soon grasped the dimension of the crisis. The day before the final assault on the capital, with rockets landing less than a block from his apartment, Seng and his stroke-crippled wife asked a relative to take their two boys and two girls to a nearby hospital, thinking they might be safer there. The boys, Neang, 14, and Aun, 6, returned home later that afternoon as the rocket attacks subsided. But the two frightened daughters, Seng Ly, 9, and Theary, 12, stayed put. When their father went to pick them up two days later, they were gone, swept up in the first stage of the forced evacuation.

TIME, April 30, 1990, p. 29

Mandated Notifications

Legal Talk

Absences for Justifiable Personal Reasons, as determined by board policy, shall be excused. Such reasons include, but are not limited to, an appearance in court, observances of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion, attendance at religious retreats, or at employment conferences, when a parent or guardian has requested this absence, in writing, to the school principal and it is approved (California Education Code §48205).

So—what about those two-word verbs? Why aren't they on the word lists if they are so common? Shouldn't students learn them as units, rather than as separate words? The ESL Miscellany (*Pro Lingua Associates, 1981*) lists both separable and non-separable two-word verbs.

Separable

—other words can come between the two parts—
for example: *called the game off*.

blow out (extinguish)
bring up (raise)
call off (cancel)
call up (telephone)
do over (redo)
fill out (complete)
find out (discover)
give back (return)
give up (abandon)
hand in (submit)
hang up (disconnect)
keep up (maintain)
leave out (omit)
let down (lower)
look over (review)
look up (research, find)
make out (distinguish)
make up (invent; reconcile)
pass out (distribute; faint)
pick out (choose)
put away (file, shelve)
put off (postpone)
put on (don)
put out (extinguish, anger)
take back (return)
take off (remove)
take up (initiate discussion)
talk over (discuss)
throw away (discard)
try on (test the fit)
try out (test)
turn down (reject; lower the volume)
turn in (submit)
turn off (stop power)
turn on (start power)
use up (deplete)

Non-Separable

call on (ask for an answer; visit)
come back (return)
come over (pay a casual visit)
come to (regain consciousness)
get along with (be friendly)
get by (succeed with little effort)
get over (recover)
get through (finish)
go away (leave)
go over (review)
get up (arise)
keep on (continue)
look for (search)
look into (investigate)
look like (resemble)
look out (beware)
look up to (respect)
pass out (faint, distribute)
put up with (tolerate)
run into (meet accidentally)
run across (meet accidentally)
run out of (exhaust a supply)
run over (hit by a car)
show up (appear)
take after (resemble)
take off (leave)
talk back to (answer rudely)
wait on (serve)

In the case of two-word verbs, the more unique synonym may be easier for the second-language student to differentiate and understand. Got it?

What about those other verbs that are not what they seem?

had to, need to, have to, got to (must, should)
supposed to (should)
going to (will)
be able to, know how to, used to be able to (could)
may be, might have, could have (may)
don't mind (will)
would like to (could, would)

Most Common Newspaper Words

against	most
almost	Mr.
also	Mrs.
American	Ms.
another	night
asked	nothing
back	number
being	other
between	part
called	people
course	plate
day	public
didn't	same
during	school
each	set
end	since
enough	should
even	something
eyes	state
fact	states
few	still
general	such
government	system
great	than
hand	though
head	thought
high	through
himself	time
home	told
house	took
however	united
knew	until
last	used
later	war
left	water
less	way
life	while
man	without
men	world
might	year
more	

New Voices

Newsletter from the National Center for Immigrant Students, National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS).

Single copies are FREE from NCAS, 100 Boylston St, Ste 737, Boston MA 02116.

CHIME

National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS), 100 Boylston St, Ste 737, Boston MA 02116, (617) 357-8507.

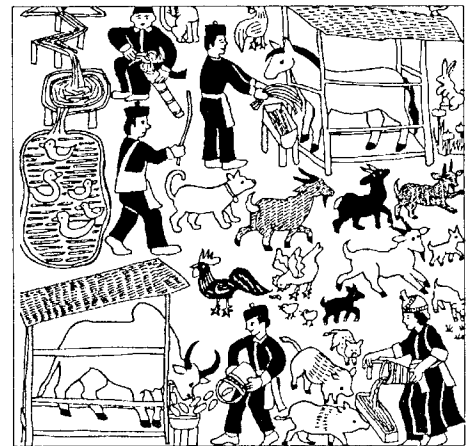
Clearinghouse for Immigrant Education provides access to literature, research, teaching materials, and human resources to promote effective education for immigrant students.

Hmong Textile Designs

Anthony Chan, Stemmer House Publ, 1990

Black-and-white pen drawings of the pieces of *paj ntaub* in one woman's collection, that of Norma Livo.

\$5.95, Stemmer House Publishers, Inc., 2627 Caves Road, Owings Mills MD 21117.



Voice of America

Listeners in Africa and Europe can tune in to programs that are in "special English"—designed for those whose English is a second language. If VOA modifies English to increase understanding, why not educators?! We need the script for one program, to see what they do—fewer idioms, fewer two-word verbs, fewer dependent clauses, shorter sentence length, repetition of key words?

1800 hours (universal time)—news followed by features in "special English"
broadcast to Europe on 6040, 9760, 11760, 15205 kHz
broadcast to Africa on 15410, 15580, 17785, 17800 kHz (often heard elsewhere)

These are memories of war

by KC Kuoy Chhan, Southeast Asian Student Newsletter,

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These are the hands that worked the ground
These are the hands which tried to find the unfound
These eyes are ones to have flooded rivers of tears
These eyes are ones blinded by those bloody years
These feet are ones to have walked the fields
These fields where my brother was brutally killed
These were the hands which painfully waved good-byes
These were the feet which walked those many miles
These were the eyes which cried our loved ones away
That was the time we knew we could not stay
These are hearts left wounded in memories
These are the hearts left scattered in many pieces
The blood which I despised
was the blood when my father died
Bombs and missiles sparked the countryside
I heard those cries echoed through the endless nights
In silence, I closed my eyes and burned deep inside
These are memories, memories of the past
These memories are going to last.

ESL video inservice

program titles:

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Amerasian program

The Amerasian Homecoming Act, originally set for 1988-90 for 20,000-30,000 Amerasians and their accompanying relatives, is still going. Some 39,500 have entered the US so far, and FY 1991 is projected to be the largest year yet.

Amerasians are resettled in "cluster sites", located away from already impacted areas, in which there are jobs and affordable housing.

Departures from Vietnam

FY 88	3,737
FY 89	13,505
FY 90	18,062
FY 91 (5 mo.)	5,920

Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service with InterAction put out an info sheet (March-April 1991 was No. 27). Contact Marta Brenden, Editor, AMERASIAN UPDATE, 122 C Street NW, Ste 300, Washington DC 20001, (202) 783-7509.

Happenings

Foreigners will be able to buy and trade property in Vietnam, beginning July 1, 1991 (ICDigest 4/12/91)

Cambodians may now send money to relatives in Cambodia via US and Cambodian bank agreements. The new OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control) regulation amendments allow \$300 to any one household per quarter, or a one-time amount of \$750 for emigration.

Recent arrests of American citizens in Vietnam (former Vietnamese citizens) has led to the *Indochina Digest* (5/17/91) re-issuing this statement:

...travel to Vietnam should be undertaken only with extreme caution. The State Dept travel advisory issued on May 30, 1990, remains in effect. In part, it says:

The United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Vietnam. No third country represents the interests of the United States in Vietnam. ... US citizens who travel to Vietnam ...should be aware that they may be placed under surveillance by Vietnamese security agencies who may be suspicious of their activities simply because they are Americans ...Engaging in activities deemed suspicious by Vietnamese security authorities could lead to the arrest and detention of both the American traveler and his/her Vietnamese contacts, relatives, or friends. There is no assurance that the Vietnamese authorities would either inform or allow US representatives access to American citizens under detention.

Dr. Bui Duy Tam, a San Francisco doctor, was arrested in March, and has been detained for allegedly receiving documents from writer Duong Thu Hoang. The documents were said to be critical of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

September 12-13 conference on Vietnam-US relations (economic/government) will be held in New York—*Vietnam: The Tiger Awakens*. Contact IC Project for more info. (202) 483-9314.

Laos will have a Suzuki motorcycle plant by May, and will assemble about 1,500 bikes per month. This is a joint Thai-Japanese venture in Laos. (ICDigest 4/26/91)

Thailand and Cambodia have cross-border trade, for the first time in 16 years. The trading posts will open June 15 at Poipet and Klong Luk. (ICDigest 4/26/91)

The US has sent its first official government aid to Vietnam since the end of the war. The \$1 million in humanitarian aid has gone to the US Agency for International Development, to deal with the problems of prosthetics for amputees. (ICDigest 4/26/91)

3,000 business representatives from 1,414 companies visited Ho Chi Minh City last year, looking for opportunities. Japan sent the most (712), followed by Singapore (102), South Korea, France, Britain, Hong Kong, Holland, and Australia. (ICDigest 5/3/91)

\$20 million in US humanitarian aid to the non-Khmer Rouge resistance groups of Cambodia has been suspended, pending the outcome of a review requested by Congress to see if the aid was in violation of US law prohibiting assistance to any faction cooperating with the Khmer Rouge. \$25 million has been requested for the next fiscal year. Meanwhile, China has stepped in with interim assistance. (ICDigest 5/3/91)

Research Center

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the US Dept of Education has funded a new National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, to be operated by UC Santa Cruz. For info, contact Eugene Garcia or Barry McLaughlin at (408) 459-3501.

Summer Institute

SWRL and CABA present a summer institute for educators new to bilingual education, July 10-12, 1991. Fee is \$190; housing at the UCSanta Barbara campus is \$50 per night. The Institute will be held at the Francisco Torres Conference Center at the UCSB. Contact CABA Summer Institute, 320 West G Street, Ste 209, 2nd floor, Ontario CA 91762, (714) 984-6201.



Summer hours

The Southeast Asia Community Resource Center will be open MORNINGS during the summer. Nguyet Tham will be available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (call then for billing and ordering information), and Lue Vang will be available Tuesday and Thursday mornings (call on those days for SEACRC information).

SEAFaire '92....

The 8th annual (gasp!) Southeast Asia Education Faire will be Saturday, March 7, 1992....most likely at the same location.

800 people seems to be too many for any facility to handle well, particularly in the rain, but we hate to turn anyone away. For so many to come out on a Saturday is high praise—thank you *each!*

Call for video, slides

Proceeds of the last faire plus proceeds from the SEACRC have been put towards the purchase of video editing equipment. We'd be interested in hearing from anyone who has taken video or slides over the years since SEA refugees began arriving in 1975. For example a college student we heard about took 15 rolls of slides at the Weimar processing center near Sacramento in 1975. We'd like to make visuals like these available to the community.

SEACRC Hilltribe Video Project

Lue Vang is setting up an informal pilot project designed to use video technology to bring information about the Hmong, Mien, Lahu, and Khmu villagers in northern Thailand to the community and to educators in Sacramento. The SEACRC is providing a 8 mm videocam, batteries and video cassettes to a Hmong student group at the University of Chiang Mai, who will oversee the village filming on topics suggested by us. For example, we want to see how newborns are handled in the various cultures—the team will go out to Hmong, Mien, Lahu, and Khmu villages do some filming and questioning, and send us the tape. Other topics will include funerals, hilltribe college students, family histories (China to Laos to Thailand, for example), daughters-in-law, textile arts, silverwork, etc.

Interested in a 45-hour Hmong I class?

Hais lus Hmoob?

Call Lue Vang to sign up—(916) 635-6815. If there are 7 interested persons, we can organize a class for late summer (August). Credit through CSU Continuing Education (4.5 CEUs), or a letter of satisfactory completion of 45 hours of language instruction, can be used to satisfy half the language requirement for the Language Development Specialist certificate. The cost per person depends on the number of students. Last class cost students \$70 each (\$1.55 per student per hour). There's a Hmong II class, also 45 hours, but we need to know if anyone is interested in taking it.

South east Asia

Community
Resource
Center

2460 Cordova Lane,
Rancho Cordova Ca 95670,
916 635-6815

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