



# Context:

Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California's classrooms

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## So you have a non-English speaking student in your class— **15 Easy & Effective Efforts**

**Context** is published eight times during the academic year as a way to provide staff with information and ideas concerning their newcomer students and parents. While the focus is on Southeast Asians, most articles and resources apply to other newcomer groups as well. This newsletter is developed with Economic Impact Aid funds, and district staff with English learners receive an automatic subscription. Other district staff may request a subscription, at no cost. Outside subscribers pay \$10.00 per year to cover mailing and handling costs.

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### Refugee Educators Network

This group of educators meets at the above address 5 times per year to share information and plan an annual conference, the Southeast Asian Education Faire—9:00-11:30, 3rd Thursdays.

Join us!

September 16, 1993  
November 18, 1993  
January 20, 1994  
February 17, 1994  
May 19, 1994

**1 Smile.** For most of us, 75% of a message is non-verbal; for a non-English speaker, it's likely to be 95% or more. Newcomers have an uncanny ability to understand what's in your heart. Even though it's frustrating not to be able to communicate, don't let the newcomer sense your feelings, or let other students in the class see your exasperation. Ask another student to be a "buddy," to demonstrate what needs to be done. Kids don't seem to be daunted by the lack of a common verbal language.

**2 Guess** a lot. When a limited-English speaker tries to communicate with you, use all your intuitive skills to understand what he means to say. Remember how well we attribute meaning to the babbling of babies; it's not so much different with older learners of English. Expect misunderstanding, and keep on trying.

**3 Find out** if the student knows how to **read the home language.** If so, you can expect the student to use that language to learn new words, especially in grades 3 to 12. Fortunately, kindergarten is a natural English-as-a-Second-Language environ-

ment; the most difficult and slowest progress will be seen in 2nd and 3rd grades, where teachers assume minimal ability to write letters and associate symbols, sounds, and meanings, but students often have not received beginning literacy skills in their home language. Students without prior schooling have to learn to read a language they do not speak, so it takes much longer and requires different strategies.

**4 Begin** with the Dolch List—the 200 **most frequently encountered English words.** •Assign a student to help the newcomer learn to read (pronounce) and write 3 to 10 words a day. Have the non-English speaker write the meaning of the word in her home language (ask a bilingual aide, an older more fluent student, or send the list home for the parents to translate). Use standard rote memory strategies (copying, flash cards), realizing that for some children it is simply memorizing a collection of line strokes. •Have the "buddy team" make flash cards, with the English on one side, and the home language on the reverse. •Have them make picture flash cards for the concepts that can be represented visually. •Get a

These ideas are *coping strategies* for teachers faced with newcomer students in mainstream classes. While routine and rote, these activities provide a place to begin ... do-able tasks that create enough pattern to allow the brain to derive generalizations about the new language in relation to the old. Most work best with students who can already read and write another language.

If a teacher is lucky enough to have a class full of newcomers, different kinds of activities come to mind—for example, Jan McGorry takes her high school ESL class through *Moby Dick* ... providing the extra instruction and experience to understand the vocabulary, concepts, and themes. Linda Dickenson and her 5th and 6th grade newcomers (of 6 languages) dive right into *Cinderella* and other core stories. The regular materials are made understandable by teaching them differently.



copy of *1,000's of Pictures*, a collection of stick figure drawings of common nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, and so on. Soon everyone will be involved in representing ideas in simple pictures.

**5** Jump into **easy-to-read books** (limited vocabulary) or student-made books, as soon as 20 or 30 words are learned. Have a student record the book on tape (or on the Macintosh computer). Let the newcomer listen and follow the words many times. Have him read the book aloud, and record the readings often. If the student can write his own language, have him write translations on each page.

**6** Use **newspapers (or magazines) and highlighters**. Have the student highlight the 10 or 20 or 30 words she has learned so far (visual recognition of words). Once she has learned the 200 most frequent words, continue until the most frequent 500 words are recognized quickly. At this point, 50-75% of any text is recognizable.

**7** **Copy the chapter summary** on the copy machine. Ask an aide, older student, or parent to translate and explain the summary to the student. Do this for science, social studies, and literature. Take a high-lighter and mark the key words; these are the new words for the week. The student's assignment is to learn to pronounce, write, and understand the meanings of these key words. For example, in 6th grade, a student

who can read his home language is expected to write the key words, translate them, and write a sentence in English and the home language. Or, when appropriate, illustrate the word.

**7** Buy up old **comic books**. Let the non-English speaker look at the comic books when the rest of the class is doing something beyond her language ability. (Stephen Krashen recommends *Archie*.)

**8** Get a supply of **books on tape**. Make sure they are unabridged—that the student can follow the words as he listens to the tape. Have them listen to favorite stories over and over, until the text is practically memorized. If you have a high-tech classroom, use *Discus* books on CD. The student can click on various parts of the pictures and hear the vocabulary item, can listen to the text slow or fast, or can hear the word broken into syllables.

**9** Use the **Mona Lisa method**. (Artists often learned technical skills by copying the old masters.) When the class is reading and answering questions on a study guide, have the student copy a few key paragraphs of text. Expect perfect spelling, punctuation, capitalization, spacing, format, and so on. This is not simple task for students who have learned to read and write non-Roman alphabets. As the student's skill develops, photocopy the text to be copied, with every 7th or 9th word blanked out. Presto! a cloze activity. Have students trans-

### Ten most useful words:

a and be for have in  
of that the to

### Fifty most frequent in reading:

the	he	at	we	there
and	you	on	ask	this
a	for	have	all	as
to	had	but	one	out
of	is	me	from	said
I	with	my	are	would
in	her	not	were	what
was	she	be	or	their
that	his	him	when	no
it	as	they	up	if

**100 words account for 60% of all the words in reading & writing.**

Thanks to Mary Buehler, of Sacramento Literacy, who reprinted material from California Literacy's *Literacy Lights* (July, 1993) in her newsletter.

late the paragraphs into the home language, or take them home to be translated.

**10** Make **outlines or maps** of the chapter. Any kind of summarizing strategy will help limited-English speaker, and will teach valuable coping strategies. In addition, selecting key words that “telegraph” the main ideas cuts down on the volume of text a student has to negotiate.

**11** Don’t expect less, but do **change assignments**. Remember that in American schools the curriculum spirals. A 5th grader who gets only a few key words and concepts from American history will encounter it again in 8th and 11th grades, and if college-bound, again in college. The same applies to almost every subject area.

**12** For students literate in alphabetic systems, use **sound charts** to quickly teach a new code. Arrange all the initial consonants, blends, and digraphs along the left side of the chart. In the first column, blend each sound with one of the 14 vowel sounds. (“ba, ka, da, fa, ...” and so on.) As boring as this sounds, it is a method used in many other countries, and may be familiar to the student. In addition, it presents the complexities of English sounds in a patterned, predictable way, allowing the student’s brain to form generalizations about decoding English, and to decipher the similarities and differences between

the sounds of the home language and English.

**13** Buy a **current map** the world, and hang it up in the room. A paper map at a stationery store or college bookstore is \$3 to \$6, and is worth the investment, given the annual changes in the names and boundaries of countries in today’s world. Activities will spring from the map—“Where did you live?” “How did you travel here?”

(Avoid using flags as way to welcome new students, especially if they have come to the United States from communist countries or dictatorships.) But do take the time to **learn the students’ names**; soon you will be able to associate countries, languages, and names. (This helps locate the right interpreter, and establishes a quicker bond of trust with the parents.)

**14** Have a bilingual aide or older student translate and explain **background knowledge**. Hirsch’s Core Knowledge series (*What your 1st grader needs to know*, etc.) is a good resource.

**15** Get a **bilingual dictionary and picture dictionaries**. The *New Oxford Picture Dictionary* presents 2,000 items in context, with English and home language identifying labels. Buy up old copies of the *Dr. Seuss’ Cat in the Hat* dictionary at garage sales and flea markets. Facts on File, Oxford-Duden, and Visual Dictionary are all useful.



Sounds Ch

	a	e
<b>b</b>	ba	be
<b>d</b>	da	de
<b>f</b>	fa	fe
<b>g</b>	ga	ge
<b>h</b>	ha	he
<b>j</b>	ja	je
<b>k</b>	ka	ke
<b>l</b>	la	le
<b>m</b>	ma	me
<b>n</b>	na	ne
<b>p</b>	pa	pe
<b>qu</b>	qua	que
<b>r</b>	ra	re
<b>s</b>	sa	se
<b>t</b>	ta	te
<b>v</b>	va	ve
<b>w</b>	wa	we
<b>y</b>	ya	ye
<b>z</b>	za	ze
<b>ch</b>	cha	che
<b>sh</b>	sha	she
<b>th</b>	tha	the
<b>wh</b>	wha	who

# Characteristics

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
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## Isolation.

- No personal experience with “different others.”

Cognition develops in stages. Morality develops in stages. Language emerges in stages. Culture (the unwritten rules that drive “normal” behavior within groups) is acquired like language, and most likely tolerance of other cultures also develops in stages. There’s no reason to think that tolerance for “different others” is an all-or-nothing process; we need to look for stages of development.

Complex systems of generalizations (rules) are formulated by the brain through repeated experience. Languages are acquired informally, but they are also taught formally in school; cultures are not. Just as reading and writing fluency is increased with the new-old formalized-informal methodology called the “whole language” approach, cultural fluency and tolerance can be increased by arranging experiences and interpreting the meaning of those experiences. As with language and other generalization-based systems, meaning begins with contrast.

## Contact & destroy.

- Culturally different are killed (Indians, for example; many other examples in the world).
- Culturally different are isolated (segregation).
- Culturally different are avoided (self-segregation).
- Cultural majority demands change.
- Helpfulness takes the form of paternalism.
- Solution to conflict: control or destroy.

## Contact & ignore.

- “Different others” assimilate to cultural norms of group with power and/or in numerical majority.
- Cultural majority encourages conformity.
- Cultural minorities cast off traditions, literacy, accent, beliefs, customs.
- Americanization. “Melting pot.”
- Monocultural policy: “People are all alike.”
- Solution to conflict: non-engagement; avoidance.

# Continuum

# Strategies

## EXPOSE children to differences

- Arrange groups so that students of different backgrounds work together.
- Bring different people together in non-threatening activities.
- Show movies, videos, read books about people who are different.
- Play music from different languages and cultures, quietly in the background.
- Make different languages part of the auditory and visual environment.

## ALLOW differences

- Develop empathy in children.
- Involve children in activities that require categorization and re-categorization.
- Involve children in simulation stereotyping activities like “brown eyes, blue eyes”.
- Create “zero tolerance” for name-calling or taunting based on cultural, racial, or personal differences.
- Read / watch / listen to personal stories of the affects and effects of intolerance.

## CELEBRATE differences

- Play “hot seat,” make “me” books, and involve groups of children from different backgrounds in personal awareness activities. Watch for and encourage culturally significant responses.
- Consciously develop non-judgemental environment for acceptance of diversity.
- Be aware of stages of cognitive development; adjust activities to levels of abstract thought.
- Get involved in festivals, food fests, music, dance, art...

## STAGE 4

### Contact & curiosity

- Experience with “different others” creates new neural connections, breaks down rigid generalizations (stereotypes).
- People are open to new information about others.
- Comparison. Trial adoption of characteristics of “different others.” Rejection of own group’s less-desirable characteristics.
- Heightened awareness of own group’s “unwritten rules.”
- Tendency to ask others about reasons for different behaviors; listen to and think about answers.

## STAGE 5

### Co-existence.

- Relativity. Realization that others’ actions make sense from their point of view.
- Realization that all groups have unwritten rules that drive behavior, but that the rules themselves differ.
- Cultural majority advises when asked (unasked for advice is really criticism).
- Tolerance of differences.
- Multicultural policy: “People are all different.”
- Solution to conflict: compromise, parallel rather than joint activities.

## STAGE 6

### Respect.

- Appreciation of differences.
- Incorporation of others’ characteristics into personal repertoire (adopt some of “their” unwritten rules as your own).
- People exchange information about themselves.
- Cultural minority trusts that the cultural majority will not reject them because of their cultural backgrounds.
- Diversity = synergy.

## of Tolerance

*Where are you—as a teacher—on this continuum? Where are your students? How can you move from where you—and they—are towards “respect”?*

### EXPLORE differences

- Compare lifeways in different cultures. (Use a target culture that is very different.) Consider categories of human behavior: relationships; work; education; recreation; food; protection from danger. Make charts.
- Use proverbs to explore different ways of expressing similar concepts/values.
- Identify unwritten rules of “American” culture.
- Get involved as a “cultural interpreter” to newcomers to America.

### TOLERATE differences

- Learn about stereotyping and prejudice.
- Identify personal stereotypes and prejudices. Seek out personal contact with members of identified groups.
- Learn and practice ways to resolve conflicts—“win-win.”
- Identify personal beliefs about others; seek out factual information; explain from “other” point of view.
- Learn to use points of inter-cultural conflict to identify unwritten rules.

### RESPECT differences

- (This is the goal.)
- It means not trying to change someone else into you.
  - It is the cognitive product of social interaction with the “culturally different.”



## Signs of the times in Vientiane, Laos

By Rosalie Giacchino-Baker, Ph.D.  
California State University, San Bernardino

Although twenty-five years have passed since we first visited Vientiane, the capital of Laos, the town has remained remarkably unchanged. It took only an hour to fly from Bangkok to Vientiane, but we stepped off the plane into a time warp. In contrast to Bangkok's modern Don Muang Airport, the small, two-story, turquoise terminal of Vientiane's Wattay Airport stands alone in the middle of rice fields and jungle. A July wall of wet heat hits us as my husband, daughter, and I walked down the steps from the plane, hoping that someone would be there to help us with

carrying little more than a teakettle and a plastic bag—would think of our necessities for one year away from home.

We were met by new Lao and American friends who brought a van big enough to transport our belongings. The twenty-minute ride to our host's home produced a kaleidoscope of images. Dusty, open-front shops sold everything from hardware to noodles. Women, dressed in calf-length *sins* (sarongs) and Western-style blouses, swept wooden walkways. Children carrying babies on their hips stopped at roadside stands to buy boiled corn-on-the-cob. Motorcycles outnumbered cars even after a traffic light signaled our entry into the city.

Freshly painted government buildings wore identification in Lao and French. Occasional English signs gave hints of political winds of change. The large grey presidential mansion with its crisp white trim stood in sharp contrast to other buildings whose peeling and crumbling exteriors recalled colonial connections. Occasional embassy crests verified that this was really a national capital that welcomes emissaries from around the world. Gated compounds hinted at foreign or local wealth in a socialist country. Magnificent trees and bright hibiscus masked the stark reality of tin-roofed houses that lined most of the route to the house in the city we will call home for the next year.

Nearly a month has passed since that first car ride. We are still living



*A traditional Lao meal.*

Drawing by Halinka Luangpraseut.

six suitcases and two footlockers of books and questionable necessities for our year-long stay. I couldn't help wondering what refugees think and feel when they return to Laos for a visit after years of physical ordeals and cultural conflicts. I also wondered what a refugee—

in temporary housing, a two-bedroom house on the banks of the Mekong River which serves as the boundary between Laos and Thailand. Our view of Thailand, however, is blocked by a small island connected to Vientiane by a long wooden footbridge.

From our porch we watch the happenings on and under this bridge, a window into the daily life of the area. Women in cone-shaped woven hats push wooden carts of green vegetables and corn grown on the island. Young families ride by huddled on a single motorbike. Most people use bicycles, maneuvering for a limited amount of space on the narrow rickety walkway. Buddhist monks of all ages in bright orange or faded saffron robes occasionally walk out to the island to bless crops or dwellings. Beneath the bridge water buffalo graze and wallow in the river that is crisscrossed by bamboo fish traps set by people living in nearby houses. Early mornings bring men and women who drag fish nets through the shallows and empty their catch of small fish, eels, and freshwater crabs into plastic buckets.

Monsoon rains and flood waters in China determine the depth of the river. After several torrential downpours we saw a sleepy waterway swell overnight into a fast-moving current—thrilling swimming hole to dozens of squealing boys who dared one another to jump off the bridge. Cornfields in the riverbed had been harvested in anticipation of the flooding, and signs their existence was quickly erased by the flood waters. Infrequent rains have since caused the river level to re-

cede dramatically, and water buffalo have again replaced the swimmers as occupants of the river.

Things move slowly in Vientiane, the tempo of life tied to the seasons. Most people go home during the lunch hour, which is really two hours. Shops and businesses that do remain open are tended by people who look as though they'd rather be resting. Children, on their three-month recess from school, nap on floor mats and hammocks. The rains bring some relief from the heat, but small roads turn into puddles of red mud. Some worry that the tranquil tempo of life will be lost when the bridge connecting Thailand and Laos is completed in early 1994. Others look forward to easier communication and commerce that the two-lane span between Vientiane and Nongkhai, Thailand, will bring.

Signs of impending change are everywhere as Laotians try to create a new and more prosperous national image. Twenty-five years ago, Vientiane was a small cosmopolitan center where goods were available cheaper and more plentifully than in provincial Thai towns. Today, Laotians routinely cross to Thailand by boat to get better bargains. Laotians seem to think that things in their country are worth less than similar items from Thailand. Thai fruit is more expensive because everyone says it is bigger and sweeter. Thai and American currencies are accepted (and often preferred) throughout the country. Most processed foods and manufactured goods carry Thai labels. Thai programs are the only ones broadcast on TV, so Laotians in Vientiane



are learning Thai to follow the plot in the soap operas. Ironically, Bangkok Thais who come to Laos experience a sense of nostalgia for less congested, less polluted, less complicated times.

Because of war and political changes, Vientiane looks and works much as it did 25 years ago, while Thailand, with 55 million people, has become one of the young economic tigers. Some wonder if Thailand's influence will overwhelm its northern neighbor. The number of foreigners is slowly but steadily growing in this country of only four million people. The question remains whether Laos will be

able to choose and control its road to modernization.

For the moment, then, Vientiane remains much as it was when Lao-tian refugees fled during and after the war years. Most refugees from Laos—the Hmong, the Lu-Mien, the Lahu, and the Kammu—had probably never seen the capital before they fled their country. They called the hills and mountains their home ... but that is another story.



## Proverbs from other cultures

Can you think of an American proverb that expresses the same idea?

### Chinese

I was angered, for I had no shoes.  
Then I met a man who had no feet.  
Do not remove a fly from a friend's forehead with a hatchet.

### Russian

After the head is off, one does not cry over the hair.  
With seven nurses, the child loses its eye.  
Happiness is not a horse, you cannot harness it.

### Spanish

Beads about the neck, and the devil in the heart.  
Between brothers, two witnesses and a notary.  
The best mirror is an old friend.  
If the sky falls, hold up your hands.

### Amerindian

When you are in the water, swim.  
Don't judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins.  
Do not blame God for having created the tiger, but thank him for not having given it wings.

### Arabic

Think of the going out before you enter.  
A thousand curses never tore a shirt.

### Italian

Teeth placed before the tongue give good advice.

Who offends writes on sand; who is offended, on marble.  
Trouble rides a fast horse.  
Who sows thorns should not go barefoot.

### Greek

Act quickly, think slowly.  
Hunger is the teacher of many.  
With a relation eat and drink; but conduct no business with him.  
Wood that grows warped can never be straightened.

### Turkish

Two watermelons cannot be held under one arm.  
Smoke does not make a pot boil.  
Measure a thousand times and cut once.

### Japanese

Ten men, ten minds.  
A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle.  
If I peddle salt, it rains; if I peddle flour, the wind blows.

### Portuguese

Better a red face than a black heart.  
Never cut what can be untied.

### Irish

A new broom sweeps clean, but the old brush knows all the corners.

## Upcoming events

### Sharing for Success

4th annual refugee information exchange conference.

**October 20-22, 1993**

Hyatt Regency Alicante  
100 Plaza Alicante  
Anaheim, CA 92803  
\$80 by October 1  
Contact Thuan Nguyen,  
916-323-5846.

### Building Professional Competence in a Multicultural Society

National Multicultural Institute

**January 20-23, 1994**

Washington DC (Training Trainers)

**May 19-22, 1994**

Washington DC (9th annual conference)  
Contact NMCI, 202-483-0700.

### Annual Southeast Asian Conference: Equal Opportunities for Newcomer Students

SWRL (Southwest Regional Laboratory)

**October 21-22, 1993**

Sheraton Anaheim Hotel  
1015 W. Ball Road  
Anaheim, CA  
\$45 by October 8  
Contact Phylliss Coston, SWRL, 4665 Lampson Ave., Los Alamitos, CA 90720.  
310-598-7661.

### Folsom Cordova Language Development Specialist Training

Kathleen Kenfield

**December — February**

February, 1994 LDS Exam  
Limited spaces for participants from other districts, \$250. Call 916-635-6815 for application.



10th annual

## Southeast Asia Education Faire

March 19, 1994

Sacramento City College

8:00-4:00

\$40.00

Deadline: March 11.

Southeast Asians and other recent newcomers (Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, etc.)

### Make payable to Folsom Cordova USD/SEACRC—

- #9308 *Selected Resources: People from Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam.* Lewis, ed. \$5.00. No carton discount.
- #9207 *Minority Cultures of Laos: Kammu, Lua', Lahu, Hmong, and Mien.* Lewis; Kam Raw, Vang, Elliott, Matisoff, Yang, Crystal, Saepharn. 1992. 402 pages. \$15.00 (carton discount \$12.00, 16 per carton)
- #S8801 *Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students* Bliatout, Downing, Lewis, Yang, 1988. \$4.50 (carton discount for lots of 58: \$3.50)
- #S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffman, Lewis, 1988. \$5.50 (carton discount for lots of 40: \$4.50)
- #S8903 *Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students* Luangpraseut, Lewis 1989. \$5.50 (carton discount for lots of 42: \$4.50)
- #S8904 *Introduction to the Indochinese and their Cultures* ~~Chhim, Luangpraseut, Te, 1989. \$9.00.~~ Will be reprinted early next year.
- #S8805 *English-Hmong Bilingual Dictionary of School Terminology* *Cov Lus Mis Kuj Txhais ua Lus Hmoob* Huynh D Te, translated by Lue Vang, 1988. \$2.00 (no carton price)
- #S9006 *Vietnamese Language Materials Sourcebook* Huynh Dinh Te, 1990 \$2.00 (no carton discount)

Add California tax if applicable. For orders under \$30.00 add \$2.00 per copy shipping and handling. For orders over \$30.00, add 10% shipping/handling. If you wish UPS for quantity orders, please request it.

- #S9999 *CONTEXT: Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California*, annual subscription. \$10.00.

### Make payable to Refugee Educators' Network—

- #R001 Lao Alphabet Pstr \$3.50
- #R002 Lao Primer \$4.00
- #R003 Lao 1st Gr. Reader \$5.00
- #R004 Lao 2nd Gr. Reader \$5.50
- #R005 Lao 3rd Gr. Reader \$6.50
- #R006 Hmong Primer \$4.00
- #R007 Hmong dict'n'ry \$30.00
- #R008 1992 Faire poster \$5.00

Includes tax; \$1.00 per item shipping/handling up to \$30.00. Over \$30.00, 10% s/h.

### Make payable to Lue Vang,

PO Box 423, Rancho Cordova CA  
95741-0423.

### *Grandmother's Path, Grandfather's Way*

(Vang & Lewis, rev. printing 1990)

\$14.95, plus \$2.00 shipping/handling,  
applicable CA tax.

Context:  
c/o Folsom Cordova USD  
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Folsom CA 95630

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