

Context:

Newcomers in California's classrooms
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Completing the circle: A woman's journey home

By Lorie Hammond and Cheng Fow Saetern

My name is Cheng Fow Saetern. I was born in the country of Laos in 1969. I grew up in Thailand, where we fled during the war. My mother is Mien and my father is Chinese... Together my mom and dad had six daughters... We lived in a small village far from town. No cars could drive to this village... Our family had rice fields, corn fields, vegetable fields, orange orchards, and some animals. We didn't have to buy any food because we had free land to grow our crops in. We worked on the farm together every day.

In 1984, I met my husband, San Chow Saechao, and we got married when I was seventeen. I had to be a good wife and daughter-

in-law. I could not go back and live in my mother's house anymore. In 1988, we moved to Changcom Refugee Camp, and we didn't have enough money for food. We had only one chicken leg and one pound of vegetables to eat with our rice every week. My mother came to the camp to visit me. The gate was between her and me, and that was the last time I saw her.

In 1990, our name came up and we moved to the United States. I didn't speak, write, or read English. I didn't know anything. I went to the supermarket and I saw the different fruits and vegetables. They were not the same as the ones in my country. I didn't like to eat. I thought I had to start my life over again and it was very difficult for me. My mother and sisters live in a different country from me. I feel very sad sometimes, but there is no one I can talk to. It is very difficult for mothers and children to live apart.



Cheng, her mother, and her sisters, with Lorie and Alex Hammond, all in traditional Mien costume.

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Cheng and her mother.

From Cheng's life story, 2002

In May, 2001, Cheng, her husband San, and Lorie Hammond and her daughter, Alexandra, went to Thailand on a journey that would reunite Cheng with her family for the first time in eleven years. Lorie and Alex went along to chronicle the journey in words and photos. The group flew to Bangkok and from there to Nan, a market town in northeast Thailand where Cheng's mother and sisters go to shop or sell their wares.

The flight from Bangkok took us through the rice valleys of Central Thailand and into the mountains, green with bamboo forests that look just like the movies we had seen of Vietnam. Clusters of houses line small brown rivers, evidence of recent rains. Terraced fields circle the less steep slopes of the mountains, creating a beautiful crazy quilt. Fluffy white clouds create patterns of shadow on the land.

I was struck by the layers of time and culture that we traversed. For Cheng and her family, the transitions from ancient to modern life come in leaps that compress the progress that most people have experienced over several hundred years. Refugees are not exposed to the typewriter before the

computer, the railroad before the airplane. As Cheng retraced her journey home, Alex and I accompanied her in the other direction, through layers of culture with which we were increasingly unfamiliar. First was the third world capital of Bangkok, which has much in common with the capitals we have seen in other developing countries: Mexico, Guatemala, China. Such places are marked by vastly different technologies and lifestyles all active at the same time: rickshaws competing on crowded roads with semis, people emerging with bicycles and hand brooms to greet and clean the jumbo jets, skyscrapers built with bamboo scaffolds and workers carrying buckets of cement. And upon these technologies is layered the cultural contrasts: cool, dark temples with Buddhist monks in meditation, while outside the discos blast out western music filtered through Thai words.

But where we were going was not the third world, but the fourth. For Cheng, it was a coming home. For me and Alex, it was a transformative step into another world. Lawrence Chua, a Thai writer who lives in New York City, comments about his own homecoming: "Part of the journey forward is also a journey into the past, exiling oneself from nostalgia and the comfort of returning to the present untouched... a relationship that is founded in the black truths of the soil itself."



Two women embroidering

(p. 14-15, *Collapsing New Buildings*)

After two days of travel, we landed in Nan. Eleven of Cheng's relatives were there to greet us, which made fifteen of us, plus luggage, who must fit into one Nissan pick-up truck. This vehicle, that should be used to advertise Nissan, was owned by Cheng's brother in law, Lai, and was the only vehicle in two villages. People paid Lai to transport them or their crops to the market town and other destinations. Up to twenty people could fit, and when the rains turned the dirt roads to a clay soup, Lai applied chains, as in snow, and wove his way, fishtailing, up the mountain. Any concerns about seat belts or baby car seats must be left behind, although Alex and I soon decided that Lai was a kind of "superman" who could get us through anything.

For the next four weeks, we stayed two or three days in each of Cheng's mother's and five sisters' houses. All were in the mountains, within about an hour and a half journey (actually only 20-30 miles) from Nan. The reception that Cheng received can only be compared to a person returning from Mars. Special ceremonies were held in all locations, and villagers as well as relatives filled each house, staying until 2:00 AM questioning Cheng. Cheng herself began a charade, almost certainly to equalize her power with awe-struck relatives, who wanted to hear every detail of her exotic life in California. The charade consisted of pretending that she did not know how to do things, like move pots on the fire, and needed to be retaught how to live her former life. Usually the person who volunteered to "teach" her was a child less than ten, who could do the task with ease.

Yet at the emotional level, Cheng shared that she felt whole again. She described herself and her five sisters as like the sections of an orange, that fit together exactly with each other, and with no one else. When we left for the United States, Cheng said: "My heart felt like it was broken since the sight of them standing there waving so far from me. All of them are their family, but I'm the only one who will get in the airplane. We have the same parents, but why are our lives so different?" Her sister taped and sent a song-poem that ar-

rived two weeks later. Its theme was that when she saw the plane fly into the air, it was like a silver bird. But it was not like the birds in her village, whose habits she knows. She cannot imagine the place where the silver bird will go. Its life is a mystery to her, and yet it is her sister's life.

Like so many refugees, Cheng will always be caught between worlds. She has created a happy family in the United States, with San and their own four children and San's extended family. One way she creates continuity in her own life is to teach her children the lessons of her own family. She tells her four children: "Remember that no one else can love you like your brothers and sister. One piece of wood can break easily, but four pieces of wood are difficult to break."

One of the most striking things for all of us about the trip to Thailand was the realization that life is changing rapidly not only for Cheng and other refugees in the United States, but also for villagers like Cheng's family. Cheng and her sisters did not go to school, and knew no written language. Skills were learned through modeling, at home and on the farm, and heritage was learned through oral stories. Yet the children of Cheng and her sisters go to school, both in the United States and Thailand, in a culture and language other than their own. Mien and other hill tribe children attend Thai schools, where they are required to wear specific uniforms and haircuts rather than their traditional dress, are taught in the Thai language, and receive Buddhist and nationalist teachings, rather than the ways of tradi-



Child carrying baby brother wearing traditional Mien hat.



Modernization: a three-year-old with a transistor radio.

tional animist, tribal, non-nationalistic peoples. If children do well, they have the opportunity to go to middle and high school in the city, away from their villages. Many such schools are Christian, supported by well-meaning international groups, that immerse children in the western tradition of their benefactors.

Many questions are raised by these situations. Among other things, our experience reinforced the importance of recording and maintaining Mien cultural practices in schools in the United States, because these practices are less likely to be supported by Thai schools, bent on modernization, than by U. S. schools, which have at least some tradition of multicultural education. The trip reinforced our commitment to FIELD, a school-community garden project described below, in which parents from Mien and other backgrounds can share their “funds of knowledge” through reproducing traditional agriculture at school sites, as part of a science and literacy curriculum.

Another set of questions are raised for me as an educator. It is one thing to create multicultural experiences in classrooms, and quite another to thrust oneself—either abroad or within U. S. immigrant communities—onto another person's turf. To do so is trans-

formative. The idea that cultures have different kinds of knowledge, which can seem abstract in a classroom context, is very real when one is walking through a highland jungle, guided by a nine year old child who knows that your real worry is not the cobra in the bushes, but the apparently harmless caterpillar on your shoulder. It was a profound experience, as a person fascinated with the evolution of horticulture from gathering, to watch Cheng's sister and brother-in-law “find” a lunch of exotic fruits, wild mushrooms and ginger, and rattan shoots in the jungle, cook it on a fire, and serve it on banana leaf plates with chopsticks carved on the spot from young bamboo. As professional educators committed to the maintenance of culture and language, it is invaluable to have cross-cultural experiences that reinforce in profound ways the value of preserving the many traditional cultures in danger of extinction. It is also important to realize that what we are really preserving is parts of ourselves and of human experience, which lie undeveloped in the modern world, and are also in danger of extinction. As my daughter Alex, who studies in New York City, said about the Mien village: “Here one is accepted for being, not made into a commodity based on how one looks, or how smart one is. I have never before been with such human beings.”

What is Project FIELD?

FIELD (Food Independence through Economic Literacy Development) is a combination family literacy/garden project in which immigrant and refugee families are enabled to grow food for home use on school grounds in exchange for teaching their traditional stories and agricultural practices to the children in the school. The idea behind FIELD is that immigrant populations have enormous “funds of knowledge,” learned in their homeland, which are discredited and forgotten in their new life. Our premise is that their children and all children can benefit from learning the practices, stories, and skills which immigrant families bring to our communities. A school-community garden provides an intercultural space in which teachers and immigrant parents can interact and, together, teach the children they share.

FIELD is funded by a USDA food security grant, as a partnership between the Mercy Foundation, Washington Unified School District, and CSU Sacramento, Department of Teacher Education. It currently supports two school-community gardens in West Sacramento, California, at Westfield and Evergreen Schools. The Evergreen school garden is coordinated by Cheng Fow Saetern, and has a Mien field house and a demonstration field of Thai rice. For more information about FIELD, contact Lorie Hammond at lhammond@csus.edu, or 530-753-5690.



Cheng's sister Sew threshing rice.

Teaching in the Twentyfirst Century: Facing The Challenge

Angus Dunstan, English Department, California State University, Sacramento

In the current politically charged literacy climate, the task we ask our public school teachers to perform is especially difficult, particularly when they are working in schools with a history of low performance and low expectations. For all kinds of reasons, I know I could not do what they do, what many of you reading this do every day. So I decided to embark on this project of interviewing public school teachers who are surviving and prospering in spite of all the difficulties and challenges they face, in order to understand better what they do and how they do it. I began with Jim, the subject of this report, because he had been a student in one of my college English classes four years earlier, and because my wife had worked with him in an after-school Hmong literacy project. I knew that he had already established a reputation as a terrific teacher in a very demanding school, and I wanted to know how he had made it work for him.

Talking to Jim was both depressing and inspiring. The depressing part is all too familiar—poor physical working conditions, desperately under-prepared students, bureaucratic obstacles, and simple overwork. Strangely enough, however, I found the inspiring part was also quite familiar. From my conversations with good teachers over the years I've come to expect, but still marvel at, a combination of remarkable optimism, faith in students' potential, wide-ranging intelligence and good humor, and a willingness to do what needs to be done.

Jim double majored in English and Anthropology, and has often found that his studies in Anthropology have been more useful to him in his present position than his English! Teaching in an ethnically diverse inner-city high school, he finds that his anthropological background informs his ideas, attitudes and responses to his students, who are 90% Asian-American, African-American, and Hispanic. To give a simple example, he tells of hearing complaints about the alleged disrespect

shown by students "who won't look at you when you're disciplining them." Understanding something of the ethnic background of the students, Jim realized that by NOT making eye contact when they were being told off they were actually showing respect for the teacher.

Like quite a few teachers I've talked to over the years, Jim has some reservations about his teacher training. He recalls hours spent studying health and nutrition, mandatory courses in computers and cultural awareness (skills he already had but was not allowed to test out of), and courses in literacy and applied linguistics that duplicated those he'd already taken as part of his English degree. But he remembers only an hour and a half devoted to classroom management and discipline, skills sorely needed in Jim's school and in many others. Jim is adamant that these skills needed far more emphasis in his teacher training program. He is convinced that failure to manage the classroom effectively, to set up a system in which students and teacher understand the limits of acceptable behavior, is a major contributing factor to the high drop-out rate for newly credentialed teachers.

One new teacher who started at the same time as Jim lasted only one day. At the end of that first day, when Jim asked him how it was going, he could tell the other guy was in trouble. "Hang in there," Jim told him. "It'll get easier." The next day the troubled novice showed up and started his first class. But mid-way through that first period he called the Assistant Principal on the classroom phone and asked if he could just cover him for a couple of minutes while he went to his car to get a briefcase that he had left in the trunk. He never returned. Never called in. Was never heard from again. This was a teacher ill-prepared for the classroom, not equipped with the classroom management techniques necessary to engage students and keep them on task.

Fortunately, Jim came into teaching after years as an insurance agent and as manager of a chain of small stores, so he knew about time management, about discipline and teamwork and labor relations. "I came in here with a kind of business mentality. It was never hard for me to establish rules and procedures in the classroom," he says, "but that kind of thing was never really taught in my credential program." In a school

with many referrals because of student misconduct per day, Jim is proud of the fact that in three years he has yet to refer a single student.

Given his varied background, I wondered why he'd decided to teach English at all. "Four English teachers in a row changed my life," he said. Starting with Mrs. Phelps in ninth grade, he'd had wonderful English teachers each year in high school. He'd always been a reader, but Mrs. Phelps showed him how much he still had to learn about writing, and he just knew from that point on that he wanted to teach English one day. He did not pursue a teaching career right away and admits that he "succumbed to the lure of easy money" for a while. Moreover, he acknowledges that the lure is still there. Of the twenty-two students in the last class of his credential program, he knows only four who are still teaching today, three years later. Most that he knows about left for better paying jobs; in a couple of cases these were jobs with companies who even paid off their new employees' student loans! He finds the burden of paying off his own student loans particularly onerous, which leads him to teach summer school and keeps him looking for ways to augment his salary. "Can there be any other profession," Jim asks, "that puts you through so many hoops to get qualified, and then pays you so poorly?"

Jim could hardly have picked a more challenging school in which to begin his career; many of the incoming freshmen last year were substantially below grade level. As part of his teaching load, Jim teaches three periods of a writing class that is required of every freshman who tests below a certain level. But because it is not technically Freshman English, it doesn't warrant the 20-1 ratio other 9th grade English classes enjoy, so he has 105 students in these three classes. The average grade in his three classes a couple of years ago, a good year, "a great freshman class," was C. Last year it was F. No matter how many times other teachers tell him that was a particularly difficult year, one of the most challenging freshman classes they've seen in a long time, Jim still worries about it.

At the end of each grading period last year, he held a big class meeting, beginning with, "What can we do, guys, to make this work?"

They brainstormed ideas: more group work, more drama, more read-alouds. He read *Harry Potter* to them and they enjoyed it. "Believe me, you can do quite a lot with *Harry Potter*," Jim laughs. He's tried everything: no one just sits at a desk for the whole period, he doesn't talk for more than five minutes at a time, he takes them outside, he shows more videos, he uses more kinesthetic approaches. But nothing seems to work. Without putting the students down, and without a trace of bitterness, Jim explains, "That year, the majority of them just didn't seem to care. They didn't see that the class had any relevance to them whatsoever."

So what keeps him going? Though there are challenges to be sure, including cynics and people who have been doing what they do for too long in conditions that would try the best of us, things are looking up. He takes his inspiration from those teachers who have taught for many years but have not lost their passion and their enthusiasm, and who still believe that students are capable of learning. He is energized by other new teachers who bring a sense of excitement and determination to the task of school improvement. He is enthusiastic about proposals for school reform that will help make students feel more connected to the whole educational enterprise. He has been one of his school's representatives on the district E21 (Education for the 21st Century) reform effort that has received a lot of good press locally, and that has put in place plans to create small learning communities at all the district high schools. "I hope the cynics are wrong," he says, "but if they're right, and this latest effort fails, I'll sign on for the next thing that comes along. If I ever get to the point where I feel it's hopeless, and that there's no way to reach these students, that's when I'll know it will be time to look for a new career. I just can't imagine doing this job without constantly looking for ways to improve it so we have a stronger, more positive impact on the lives of our students."

During his credential program, Jim did some long-term substitute teaching in his neighborhood school in an affluent, mostly white suburb of Sacramento. Nothing could be more dramatically different from the school he now teaches in, but he says he'd rather be where he is.

There, parents were very involved and frequently present at the school site, classmates competed against one another for grades, and college was the presumed destination for almost all students. Here, for the most part, parents are not often seen—some were even jailed last year because of their children's truancy—most students are not highly motivated, and even those who *are* doing well are new to the college preparation game.

As a successful and energetic new teacher he has quickly become involved in many aspects of school life and is already no stranger to controversy. During one of the community meetings that were part of the E21 project, Jim expressed the opinion that one of the major problems at the school was the elimination of most, if not all, of the trade classes—not to mention what's happened to the art and music programs. "The idea that all kids should be going off to college has become the prevailing theme on many campuses," he said, "and so the trade classes have disappeared, replaced by academic 'core' subjects." There is a sense that anything less than college is a sign of failure. So the large number of students who have no interest in college immediately feel that there is nothing in school that relates to them. Jim's ideas did not meet with much approval from those who interpreted what he was saying as implying that some students *could* not succeed. In fact, Jim is motivated entirely by a desire to see those students succeed, but not necessarily all in the same way.

Something practical has to be made available for these students, Jim reasons, so they feel a connection between school and the outside world. He believes that high schools need to embrace trade skills as a valid goal to pursue, adding that math and English, for example, could be taught as part of a trade school curriculum. "We must empower students to make their own choices and to feel a sense of pride in their choices whether they choose UC or the Toyota shop across town. When it comes to quality of life, I went to a four-year school and have a job I love. My best friend went to a six-month trade school and has a job he loves as a contractor. Which person is better off?"

When I asked him what was the worst thing about his job, he answered, as always, very

quickly. But it wasn't just one thing. In no particular order of importance, he listed them: the public perception that no matter how hard you try, students' "failure" is always your fault; cynics who have seen "reforms" come and go already and are convinced that no new initiative will last longer than a few years so why bother anyway; the fact that as hard as he works he cannot rely on his salary alone to raise his family and pay off his student loans; the feeling that one is not treated or regarded as a professional. On the subject of professionalism he makes the telling observation that he was treated with much more respect years ago when he was selling insurance than he is now.

The best thing? Though last year's freshman class was frustrating, the previous year's group was wonderful, he says, and because he's a glass-half-full kind of guy, he hopes next year will be good also. "We've hired a lot of new young enthusiastic teachers this last couple of years and I really hope most of them will stick around." He also notes that for every seasoned faculty member who has burned out, there are others who still burn with the passion they brought with them the first day on the job. "Their knowledge and expertise is invaluable to the current reform effort," he noted.

In my work as a former co-Director of The South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) at Santa Barbara, and in my association with members of CATE (California Association of Teachers of English) and especially the CATE board, I've met a great many veteran teachers who have faced the challenges Jim faces and who have persevered in spite of the difficulties and because of the various rewards they have discovered in their work with public school students. I hope that Jim, a teacher who really likes and respects his students, and who has great rapport with them, will find the strength and resources to stay in the classroom, where he now feels so optimistic about the future.

Southeast Asian High School Student Tutors



“Reach for the Stars and You Might Grab Mars.” That was the slogan accompanying a Mars candy bar that was wrapped in a homemade poster and put into each teacher’s and tutor’s box at Susan B. Anthony’s summer school. A different poster and candy appears in each box each week of the program. Summer school Principal Laura Sheffield and Office Manager Elsa Delgado are so pleased with their program that their enthusiasm bubbles over and spreads to everyone involved. They believe that incentives like the candy and encouraging messages keep up the excellent morale that contributes so significantly to their very successful summer school program.

Susan B. Anthony’s summer program includes 8 Southeast Asian high school students who are assigned to classrooms to work in small groups or on an individual basis with the elementary students. A visitor to the school sees the high school tutors out on the playground supervising games, in the office making photocopies, and in the classrooms working with the young students. The tutors are engaged in their work, and are always busy and enthusiastic. They exude the self-confidence that comes from a supportive atmo-



sphere and from a sense of doing an important job well.

The elementary students are very pleased to have these high school students there, and look at them as role models. The teachers are pleased to have assistance in classrooms of 25 students. The teachers also appreciate the tutors’ Hmong, Mien and Lao language abilities that allow them to explain difficult concepts to the students and communicate with their parents.

The Central Valley Foundation has sponsored stipends for 42 Southeast Asian high school students this summer to work in programs at Elkhorn Elementary in Washington Unified School District, and at Susan B. Anthony, Pacific Elementary, and the Hmong Extended Day Program in Sacramento City Unified. Lee Yang, Pacific Elementary summer school principal, reports that he is “so proud of the tutors at Pacific because they are doing such a good job.” The 4 high school students often work long past their paid hours to make the program run more smoothly by preparing materials for the next day.

At each school, the tutors are learning from their role models, the teachers and principals, and the elementary students are receiving much more individual attention than they would without the high school students. At Elkhorn Elementary, the students come from a wide variety of home language environments, so the 12 Southeast Asian tutors are learning about many different cultures. At the Hmong Extended Day Program, everyone is Hmong: principals, staff, teachers, student teachers, volunteers, 18 tutors and over 600 elementary students from all over the Sacramento City Unified School District. One summer afternoon found Dr. Lue Vang, specialist from the SCUSD Multilingual Education Department, conducting a stimulating workshop for fifty Hmong parents. Each week a Hmong speaker, such as Dr. Ka Va from CSU Sacramento, makes a presentation to all the students, again reinforcing their connection with their community and inspiring them to set their goals high, or as the Susan B. Anthony slogan says to “Reach for the Stars.”



Photos from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees website: www.unhcr.ch.

We are Family: Refugees Now and Then

Save **March 22, 2003** for the 15th Refugee Educators' Faire, to be held at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento.

About 500 attended last year's 32 workshops and presentations. Local districts supported the effort by sending lots of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, students, and student teachers—for example: Sacramento City Unified sent 84; Washington Unified 67; Folsom Cordova Unified 60; Elk Grove Unified 47; International Studies Program at Sacramento 25; Del Paso Heights Elementary 22; Thermalito Elementary 17; CSUS 15; Grant Joint Union High 9; Enterprise Unified 7; Stockton Unified 7; North Sacramento 6; Merced Unified 5, San Juan Unified 5; and Lincoln Unified 3.

A new slate of presentations and workshops focusing on the many aspects of families as they were and how they have changed since moving the United States is under development by conference organizer Carol Dunstan. Topic areas will include conditions (then and now) in refugee- and immigrant-sending countries, changes in social structure and roles, language, snapshots, educational issues and resources, and state standards. Attendees will learn about the peoples and languages of Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union, Cuba and Central America, Africa, Arabic-speaking countries, and the Indian subcontinent.

Once again, the conference will be organized to document the requirements of the state's "buy-back" staff development program.

The March 2002 conference provided about \$5,000 towards continuing operation of the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center for 2002-03, a project of the Refugee Educators' Network, Inc.

For program information contact Carol Dunstan at cduns@cwnet.com.

For ticket information, contact Nguyet Tham at ntham@fcusd.k12.ca.us.

A registration flyer will be included with *Context* in October 2003, and will be posted at www.seacrc.org in October.

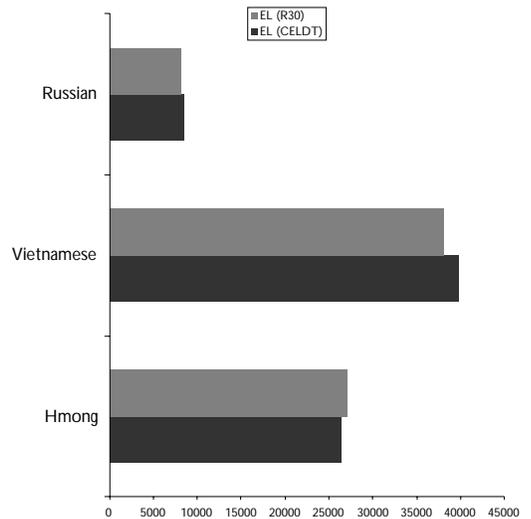
Hmong, Vietnamese, and Russian English Learners in California: What did the California ELD Test reveal?

California now annually tests every English learner with the same standardized test of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. McGraw-Hill administered the first round of testing between July and October of 2001, after a very short implementation timeline. CELDT (California English Language Development Test) results are posted on the Department of Education's website, and users are able to examine results by language and other subgroups. On these two pages, the data for three language groups—Hmong, Vietnamese, and Russian—are presented in chart form, along with interpretative comments.

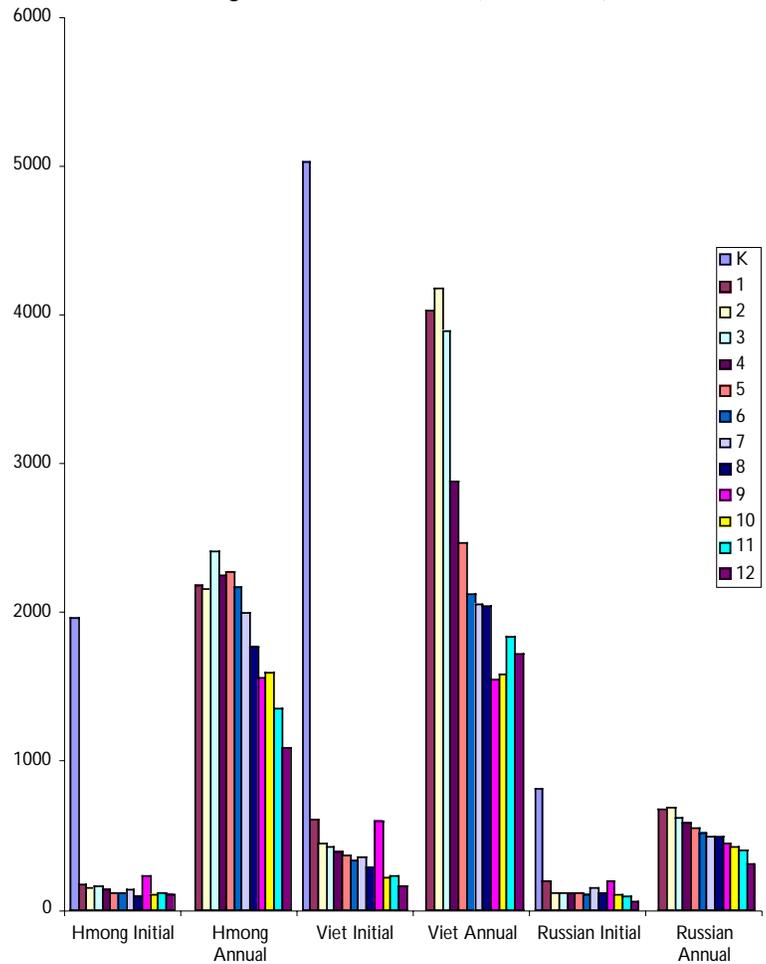
The CELDT was administered in different ways by different districts, within parameters set by test administration instructions, and McGraw-Hill scored more than a million test booklets by February 2002. Test results are reported for those students who are newly enrolled in a district ("initial identification") and for those who were previously identified as English learners in a district ("annual assessment"). Results are reported by grade level. Key questions and comments follow.

Were all English learners tested? The chart at the top of the page compares the number of English learners tested with the CELDT to the number of English learners reported a few months earlier on the R30 Annual Language Census (March 2001). There were 4% more Vietnamese and Russian English learners tested with the CELDT, and 2% fewer Hmong. This may support the belief that Hmong are moving from California, or it may mean that not all

CELDT: Hmong, Vietnamese, Russian English learners, March 2001 vs July-October, 2001

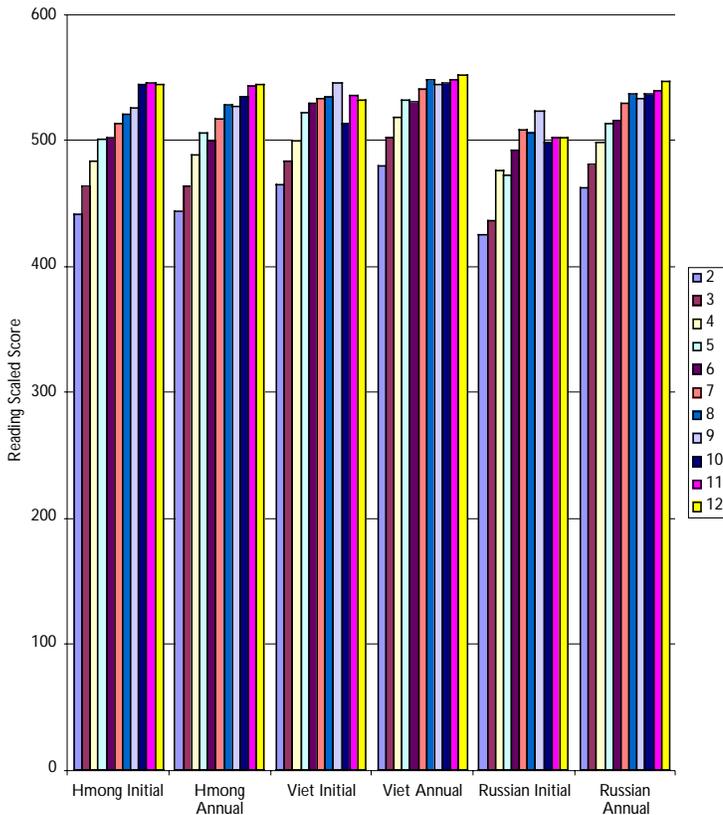


CELDT: Number of Hmong, Vietnamese, and Russian English learners tested (7/01-10/01)



Analysis and article by Judy Lewis, editor, from data available at the Department of Education website: www.cde.ca.gov/statetests/celdt/celdt.html

CELDT: How does reading change from kindergarten through grade 12?



Hmong EL students were tested. It is also possible that language identification for kindergarteners was not accurate.

What is the difference in the number of new kindergarteners between language groups? The chart on the bottom of the facing page shows that there is an unusually large number of Vietnamese kindergarteners, when compared to Hmong and Russian. This finding is difficult to explain, unless language identification was in error. The spike at grade nine probably represents students in high school districts (initial identification applies to students new to the district).

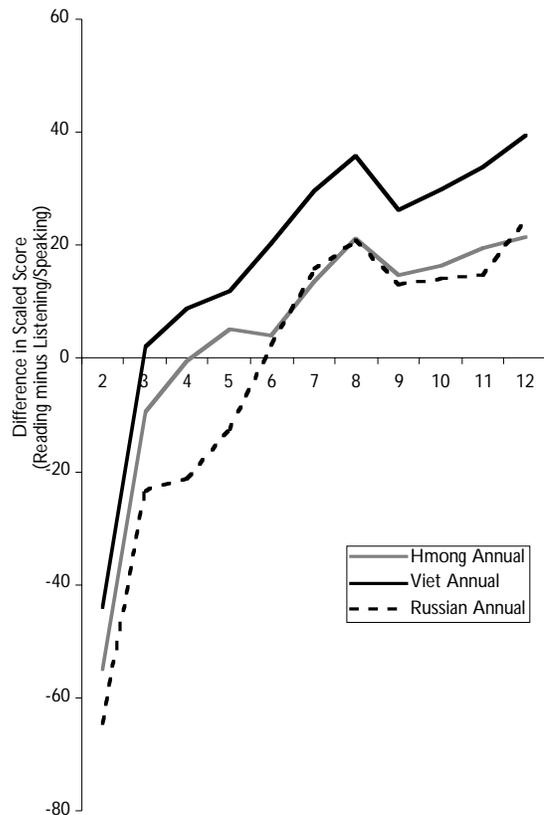
Are there language group differences in reading proficiency? The chart at the top of this page shows reading scores for the three languages, for both initial identification and annual assessment. One conclusion could be that because Russians have arrived more recently than Hmong or Vietnamese, a larger proportion of the “initial” group actually represents new arrivals to the country, where for the other languages, these students are moving from one district to another. Proficiency in reading appears to continue to increase throughout the school years, and the greatest growth is between grades 2 and 5. There’s an unusual drop in the reading of Vietnamese (initial)

in grade 10, and an unusual spike for Russian (initial) in grade 4.

Is there a difference between listening/speaking and reading proficiency? Is there difference between language groups? Children from non-literate communities are believed to have better oral proficiency than reading proficiency throughout school. The chart at the bottom of the page shows that when comparing Vietnamese and Hmong (who arrived in the U.S. at roughly the same time), this appears to be true. Reading appears to be stronger than oral skills by a greater degree for Vietnamese, a group with a longer history of literacy. The shift between stronger oral and stronger reading skills occurs about a year later for Hmong (grade 4) than for Vietnamese (grade 3).

The degree of difference between oral and reading proficiency for Russians is similar to that of the Hmong, but the shift occurs later, at about grade 6. The fact that the Russian refugees began their arrival in the US about 15 years later than the Southeast Asians and that the community has strong literacy skills needs to be considered when comparing Russian to Hmong and Vietnamese groups.

How does oral fluency compare to reading by grade?
CELDT Annual Assessment scaled scores by grade, all Hmong, Vietnamese, and Russian English Learners in California (Tested July to October 2001)





Title III Information

Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act is the section of the new reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which provides federal funds for programs and services to limited English proficient (LEP) and immigrant students. For additional details on Title III, visit the California Department of Education website and click on more details for either the LEP Student Program or the Immigrant Education Program.

www.cde.ca.gov/el/title3

Staff Development Opportunity

TW Branun & Associates provides inservice opportunities regarding programs and services to English learners.

www.twblearn.com

Immigrant Studies and Information

The Center for Immigrant Studies (CIS) sponsors and catalogues research regarding immigrant populations in the United States. The Migration Information Source is a clearinghouse of information on immigrants.

www.cis.org and www.migrationinformation.org

Refugee Information Exchange Conference

The California Department of Social Services is sponsoring the 13th Annual Refugee Information Exchange Conference to be held at the San Diego Marriott Hotel during the period of September 4-6, 2002. The theme of the conference is "America: Our New Home." Registration information is available at Conference Services (www.rce.csus.edu).

www.dss.cahwnet.gov/refugeeprogram/

Center of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents

California State University at San Marcos operates a center for Spanish language

books for school students in pre-school through high school. The Center provides catalogues of materials as well as teacher training opportunities.

www.csusm.edu/csb/

NABE NEWS

Membership in the National Association for Bilingual Education includes a subscription to **NABE NEWS**, a magazine about bilingual education that contains synopses of many research articles as well as instructional resources for teachers.

www.nabe.org

Hmong Cultural Center

Located in St. Paul, MN, the Hmong Cultural Center's Resource Centre provides information about Hmong-related books, PhD dissertations, articles and Hmong language literature. Listed below are categories for lists of resources.

- Hmong History and Early Studies of the Hmong
- The Hmong in Southeast Asia
- The Hmong in China
- The Hmong and the War in Laos
- Hmong Clans and Kinship
- The Hmong Language
- Hmong Religion, Religious Beliefs, and Christianity
- Hmong Music, Hmong Courtship, and Marriage Practices
- Hmong Traditional Healing and Medicine
- Hmong Diet and Food Practices
- Hmong Textiles, Storycloths, and Clothing
- Hmong Folktales and Folklore
- The Hmong New Year
- Hmong Birth Customs and Parenting Practices

- Hmong Views of Death and Funeral Practices
- Hmong Refugee Resettlement and Residential Settlement Patterns
- Hmong Cultural Values, Customs, and Acculturation in the West
- Hmong Men and Women and Gender Roles
- Health and Medical Issues Affecting the Hmong
- Mental Health Issues and the Hmong
- Children's Storybooks and Lesson Plans for Teachers
- Hmong Oral Histories
- Adaptation of Older Hmong Adults
- Adaptation of Hmong Youth and Generational Issues
- Hmong Educational Adaptation
- Politics and the Hmong in Southeast Asia and the U.S.
- Race Relations and the Hmong
- Socioeconomic Incorporation of the Hmong
- Works by Hmong-Origin Authors

www.hmongcenter.org/hmonsubbib.html

UC Berkeley SEA dissertations

Listed below are some of the dissertations in UC Berkeley's Southeast Asia collection concerning Hmong, Mien, Khmer, and Vietnamese.

- Brandefels, Emily Jill. *Iu Mien practices surrounding the events of pregnancy and childbirth: East and West*. (M.S. 1990 Dept: Health and Medical Sciences).
- Dang, Trina. *Delinquent behavior in young Vietnamese-American males*. (Senior Honors Thesis 1991, Dept: Anthropology).
- Gold, Steven James. *Refugee communities: Soviet Jews and Vietnamese in the San Francisco Bay Area*. (Ph.D. 1985 Dept: Sociology).
- Greene, Karen Lisa. *Narratives of love and courtship: Khmer refugee women and the*

negotiation of identity. (M.A. 1991 Dept: Folklore).

- Hsia, Sarah Hoying. *Iu Mien Southeast Asian refugees: choosing health practice options from the east and west*. (M.S. 1985 Dept: Health and Medical Sciences).
- Kelsey, Mary Elizabeth. *Negotiating poverty: welfare regimes and economic mobility*. (Ph.D. 1994 Dept: Sociology).
- Marx, Rani. *Oakland's Iu Mien: a study of three Indochinese refugee households*. (Senior Honors Thesis 1980).
- Montez de Oca, Jeffrey. *At the portal of tomorrow: Hmong students in higher education*. (Senior Honors Thesis 1995).
- Nguyen, Bang Hai. *Evaluation of anti-tobacco intervention among Vietnamese Americans*. (Ph.D. 1998 Dept: Public Health).
- Nyman, Nina Wachs. *Cross cultural perspective on child development: a study of the imaginative play of Cambodian and Black preschoolers*. (Ph.D. 1986 Dept: Social Welfare).
- Park, Edward Jang-Woo. *Asian Americans in Silicon Valley: race and ethnicity in the postindustrial economy*. (Ph.D. 1993 Dept: Ethnic Studies).
- Ponce, Lisa Ann McPherson. *A Cambodian child with developmental disabilities and the western health and welfare system*. (M.S. 1986 Dept: Health and Medical Sciences).
- To, Dien Thi. *Cultural perceptions of Vietnamese immigrants in three models of service delivery*. (Ph.D. 1993 Dept: Education)

Virginia Shih, www.lib.berkeley.edu/SSEAL/SoutheastAsia/Dissertations/dissub.html





Access and Engagement

Program Design and Instructional Approaches for Immigrant Students in Secondary Schools.

Aida Walqui (2000, Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems), \$20.95.

Many immigrant students in secondary school have problems succeeding because of the structures of the schools themselves. This book profiles six students to help illuminate the needs of immigrant students. It details the structural obstacles that inhibit students' success, and it describes ten priorities for designing effective teaching and learning contexts for immigrant students. The author describes four promising programs in detail and makes recommendations in the areas of future program development and research.

www.cal.org/store

Music of the Hmong People of Laos

Boua Xoua Mua (CD, Arhoolie Records, 1995)

Recording of traditional Hmong musical traditions. Listen to sound clips at www.amazon.com. Titles include (in Green Mong):

- Qeej Kawm Ntawv
- Lug Txaj Sib Dleev
- Lug Txaj Ua Nyaab
- Tsaaj Ntsaws
- Tsaaj Nplaim
- Tshuab Nplooj
- Ncaas
- Zaaj Tshoob—Ceeb Toom Nam Txiv
- Zaaj Tshoob—Qeb Tsoog Tuam Ntsaa
- Qeej Nqug Rooj
- Qeej Taag Mo
- Tsaaj Ntsaws—Tsi Teb Tsaws Chaw

Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin

Jo Ann Kolytk, Nancy Foner (Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

This book first traces the stages of the Hmong refugee experience and then looks at

how Hmong families are adjusting and adapting to their new lives in America. The reader gains an appreciation for how the Hmong see their own adaptational process and how they represent and define their Hmongness in America. Part of the *New Immigrants Series*.

Promised Land

The Socioeconomic Reality of the Hmong People in Urban America (1976-2000).

Fungchatau T. Lo (Wyndham Hall, 2001)

Includes the history of the Hmong that led to their seeking refuge in America. This study is an example of the American immigration experience despite the fact that the Hmong had so many obstacles to overcome.

Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics

Louisa Schein (Duke University Press, 2000)

Ethnography of a the Miao (Hmong) in China, a group long consigned to the remote highlands. In a work that combines methods from both anthropology and cultural studies, Schein examines the ways Miao ethnicity is constructed and reworked by the state, by non-state elites, and by the Miao themselves.

Dress, Gender and Cultural Change: Asian-American and African- American Rites of Passage

Annette Lynch (Berg Publishing Ltd, 1999)

Where the Torches Are Burning

Pos Moua (Swan Scythe, 2002)

A first collection of poems and prose by a Hmong poet living in California's Central Valley.

The Hmong of China: Context, Agency, and the Imaginary

Nicholas Tapp (Brill Academic Publishers, 2001)

Land of Smiles

T.C. Huo (Plume Press, 2000)

A comic novel describing the Southeast Asian experience in America. Set in the 1970s, in the era of the Vietnam War and its volatile aftermath, this is the story of a young Laotian man's journey from a refugee camp in Thailand to a housing project in Oakland, California.

Mother's Beloved: Stories from Laos

Bounyavong Outhine, Bounheng Inversin (Hong Kong University, 1999).

14 short stories by the late Outhine Bounyavong, noted Lao author, is the first book of contemporary Lao short stories available in English. These deceptively simple stories tell of ordinary Lao people, their customs, traditions, and values, and show the impact of political, economic, and social changes since independence. Bilingual English and Lao.

Transnational Aspects of Iu-Mien Refugee Identity

Jeffery L. MacDonald (Garland Publishing, 1997)

Study of how the Iu-Mien have constructed a global ethnic identity in less than 20 years. Utilizing ethnographic data on the Iu-Mien, this study examines how the Mien refugee responses to Christian conversion, literacy development, and cultural exchange with their ancestral groups in China have resulted in an identity as "Mien" rather than "American Mien."

Upcoming publications...

- *Ten Mice for Tet* by Pegi Deitz Shea, Cynthia Weill (September 2003)
- *Why Vietnamese Immigrants Came to America* by Lewis K. Parker (August 2003)
- *Vietnam War (America at War)* by Maurice Isserman (April 2003)
- *Grass Roof, Tin Roof* by Dao Strom (January 2003)

- *Pushed to Shore: A Short Novel* by Kate Gadow (January 2003)
- *Skyriders Low and Slow: Combat Rescues in Laos and Vietnam* by George J. Marrett (December 2002)
- *A Bitter Peace: Washington, Hanoi, and the Making of the Paris Agreement* by Pierre Asselin (Library Binding)
- *The Fall of Saigon: The End of the Vietnam War (Point of Impact)* by Michael V. Uschan (Paperback - November 2002).

CalStore

The Center for Applied Linguistics now has its publications available at an online store (www.cal.org/store).

Heritage Languages in America

The second national conference will be held October 18-20, 2002 at the Sheraton Premiere Hotel, Tyson's Corner, Virginia. This year's conference will bring together heritage language community and school leaders, representatives from preschool through 12th grade schools, colleges and universities, international researchers, and federal and state policymakers to plan and lead new initiatives in heritage language development in the United States. Online registration and conference information is available at www.cal.org/heritage/conferences/2002/reg.html.

National Conference for Educators of Newcomer Students

This first annual conference is scheduled for September 26-27, 2002, at the Radisson Barceló Hotel, Washington DC. For information, contact Charles Martorana at newcomers@cal.org, (202) 362-0700.

The Center for Applied Linguistics offers a searchable database of secondary newcomer programs (revised 2000) at www.cal.org/newcomerdb.



Publication information:

Editor: **Judy Lewis**, State & Federal Programs, Folsom Cordova Unified School District, 10850 Gadsten Way, Rancho Cordova CA 95670, Phone (916) 635-6815, Fax (916) 635-0174

jlewis@seacrc.org

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2001-02 Supporters:

- Dept of Education, Emergency Immigrant Education Program
- Elk Grove USD
- Folsom Cordova USD
- North Sacramento ESD
- Del Paso ESD
- Washington USD
- Coachella Valley SD
- Pasadena USD
- Natomas USD



10850 Gadsten Way
Rancho Cordova CA 95670
916 635 6815
916 635 0174 fax
jlewis@seacrc.org
<http://www.seacrc.org>

Refugee Educators' Network. This group of educators meets at the above address five times per year to share information and oversee the operation of the nonprofit corporation. Meetings are 9:00-11:30, on the 4th Thursdays of the month.

September 19, 2002

November 21, 2002

January 16, 2003

March 20, 2003

May 15, 2003

Faire! March 22, 2003

Context:

Refugee Educators' Network, Inc.
Transitional English Programs Office
10850 Gadsten Way
Rancho Cordova CA 95670

- Hmong Literacy Development Materials, 1999* (call or email for price list).
- #9616 *Tawm Lostsuas Mus (Out of Laos: A Story of War and Exodus, Told in Photographs)*. Roger Warner. English/Hmong. \$18.56 per copy, \$89.10 per 6-pack, \$445.48 per carton of 40.
- #9613 *Introduction to Vietnamese Culture* (Te, 1996. \$5.00. Carton price \$4.00).
- #9512 *Handbook for Teaching Armenian Speaking Students*, Avakian, Ghazarian, 1995, 90 pages. \$7.00. No carton discount.
- #9410 *Amerasians from Vietnam: A California Study*, Chung & Le, 1994. \$7.00. No carton discount. OUT OF PRINT. Available online.
- #9409 *Proceedings on the Conference on Champa*, 1994. \$7.00. Available online.
- #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) Available online.
- #S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffman, Lewis, 1988. \$5.50 (carton discount for lots of 40: \$4.50). Available online.
- #S8903 *Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students* Luangpraseut, Lewis 1989. \$5.50. Available online.
- #S8904 *Introduction to the Indochinese and their Cultures* Chhim, Luangpraseut, Te, 1989, 1994. \$9.00. Carton discount: \$7.00.
- #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)
- Make checks and purchase orders payable to Refugee Educators' Network, Inc. Add California tax from your city, if applicable. For orders under \$30.00 add \$2.00 per copy shipping and handling. For orders over \$30.00, add 15% shipping/handling. Unsold copies are not returnable.*
- #S9999 **CONTEXT: Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California, annual subscription. \$17.00 (5 issues, October to September).** Available online.

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