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Is there a "cognitive gap" between people with different literacy experiences?

Literacy and Cognition

US immigration laws after the mid-1920's required that a person knocking on the golden door be able to read and write. This requirement still holds—in principle—but osmosis through the semi-permeable national borders and the granting of asylum to political refugees who hail from remote mountain villages has brought to US classrooms a mix of students never before seen. Teachers face a living laboratory for observing the relationship between of schooling, literacy, and cognition.

Some refugee groups—most of the Hmong, Mien, Khmu, Lahu, and T'in, and some of the Khmer, Lao, and Chinese from North Vietnam— would never have qualified to enter the US through regular immigration channels because they had never attended school. What has emerged after ten years of classroom work with the children of these groups is that oral English skills can be excellent while reading skills lag far behind. Language acquisition theory explains that these children have not had sufficient input in the form of reading, a proposition that applies to native English speaking children who lag in their acquisition of reading and writing skills as well. Bilingual education theory explains the lag in terms of "subtractive bilingualism"—children who have limited proficiency in the skills of two languages.

While teachers wrestle with the problems of producing capable English-literate individuals, there is another problem— that of the generation and cultural gap—*gulf* — between immigrant parents and their acculturated children. What the cross-cultural studies of cognition suggest is that this gap is complicated by different ways of thinking, different forms of cognition. The children's experiences in school, along with literacy skills, and socializing with others unlike themselves produce different ways of perceiving, classifying, describing, remembering, manipulating words as real things, and drawing conclusions. Parents and children perceive, categorize, compare, and reason differently. Yet each side assumes that the other processes information and forms conclusions in the same way.

Cross-cultural studies of cognition & literacy

Reseach from anthropology and cross-cultural psychology suggests that there are differences in cogntion between culturally different people, but these differences fade with new exposure and changed experiences. Most of the research comes from work with the tribal Vai, Wolof, and Kpelle people of Africa and rural villagers in Russia. Most of the research has focused on perception, classification, memory, and logic, and suggests that the critical experiences include Western-style education, urban experience (mingling with people outside one's immediate group), and literacy. What emerges is that *American schools teach specific ways to use words as tools* for ordering what is seen, organizing things to remember, describing unseen things, and progressing from hypothetical propositions to conclusions, which are believed as absolutely as real experience.

Western society has not always been associated with literacy. Widespread literacy first occurred during Plato's time in ancient Greece, and produced an alternative to the oral transmission of knowledge and culture prevalent until that time. Havelock analyzed epic poems and scholarly dialogues of Plato's time, and found that there were differences between oral and written texts. The styles, syntax, and lexicons were different, with the epic poems featuring memory-enhancing devices such as rhythm, narration, emotional imagery, and repetition. The dialogues, on the other hand, featured abstract concepts and an orderly sequence of premises leading to a logical conclusion. Goody and Watt looked at the coincident emergence of alphabetic literacy, history and logic, and argued that alphabetic literacy produced the other two disciplines. They noted that literacy makes language permanent, which enables discourse over time, and the building of one idea upon another. Aristotle's development of the syllogism and logical inference would have been impossible without the opportunity to examine written records and compare statements. Written language promoted abstract concepts and new ways of categorizing knowledge.

General assumptions

Several reserchers are important in the study of cognition in different cultures. The Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, linked cognition and sociocultural experience. His basic premise was that the mind is changed through interaction with the environment. The universal processes of abstraction, generalization, and inference vary with the nature of a particular language and the conditions prevailing in any individual society. Oral language, a universal symbol system, is crucial to the development of higher cognitive processes in children. Other symbol systems, like writing, are not universal, and this leads to culture-specific differences in the organization of the higher cognitive processes.

Greenfield, a psychologist from Harvard, looked for cultural influences on concept formation among Wolof children in West Africa. She matched children for age and urban exposure, and found differences between the performances of schooled and unschooled children. She proposed that schooling provides children with the capacity for talking about things that are not immediately present, and for understanding oral or written passages that lack context clues (nothing to see, hear, touch). Canadian psychologist Olson looked at the development of logical thought among children. He found that preschool children lacked the ability to separate language from the interpersonal relations in which it is embedded. Older children and adults can deduce logical consequences by manipulating the words themselves; "John hit Mary" can be verbally manipulated into "Mary was hit by John". The logical reasoning that underlies this kind of verbal manipulation

develops along with literacy and/or school. Jerome Bruner has also researched the effects of culture on thought. He proposed that cultural inventions such as written language make cognitive processes develop at earlier ages, and expand the upper limits of thinking processes. Thus, Bruner, Olson, and Greenfield see cultural inventions such as writing as instrumental to cognitive development; literacy is an "force that brings into existence entirely new mental structures or processes".

Learning to read in American schools

Reading is often looked upon as a mysterious process that takes years to master and requires the artistry of highly skilled teachers. Approaches to reading have fluctuated over time, from sight reading to phonics to Distar to the whole language approach. What does current research say about English-speakers learning to read English? The Commission on Reading published a summary of the research and recommendations for educators in 1985. The findings included:

- •Good readers recognize words automatically and without conscious effort.
- •Explicit instruction in phonics is helpful, when it is presented early, and kept simple. The important skills are recognizing the sounds of letters in isolation, the blending of sounds together—particularly the initial consonants and medial vowels, and the retrieval of words with similar patterns—reading by analogy.
- •Beginning readers should be presented with interesting material from the earliest stages.
- •Generalized reading skills (underlying cognitive skills) begin with experiences in which there is "scaffolding". Someone actively limits the complexity of the reading, points out important key parts, repeats key words, and creates predictability.
- •Reading improves with more reading. There should be both oral and silent reading. Reading and writing are related in the same way as listening and speaking; to write better, one needs to read more.
- •Reading is constructive. Readers use reasoning and background knowledge to pull meaning from the text.
- •Reading instruction should explicitly teach the reasoning sequences used to arrive at conclusions.

Thus, *learning to read in American schools assumes prior cognitive skills* such as the ability to discriminate shapes and pictures on a page, some ability to classify shapes and phenomena, the ability to predict, and experience in relating abstract graphic symbols to real life experiences. *Reading then develops other cognitive skills*; whether or not these cognitive skills would develop on their own is the essential question.

Perception

Literate individuals look at pictures and recognize what the images represent. This does not happen naturally. Non-literate traditional Kpelle villagers in Liberia were shown photographs of familiar utensils and tools, but could not recognize them. Cole and Scribner (1974) point out that it took centuries for Western society to work out the conventions of three-dimensional representation in two-dimensions. Recognizing drawn or painted figures, which are more abstract than photographs, takes even more prior experience. (This is evident in American workbooks, in which cartoon-like pictures are shown to children. It takes considerable practice to learn the association for each drawing, essentially an icon.) Likewise, conventions that show distance in drawings (perspective, relative sizes and positions of objects, placement of objects on the page) are learned. Research, largely by

Deregowski with the Zambia people, suggests that *it takes explicit teaching, rather than general exposure, for people to learn the conventions of pictorial representation.*

Classification

Classification, according to Rosch and Lloyd (1978), is a skill that allows people to grasp maximum information from the world with minimum effort. When I see a moving object on the road, it takes very few clues to identify it as some sort of vehicle; I don't have to study all its features to recognize what it is.

The perceived world is categorized according to common attributes (color, form, size, pattern), motor movements, functions, and resemblance to averaged shapes. Jerome Bruner's studies with children document a shift in choice of categorizing principles with age. For example, young children sort on the basis of visual features such as color, size, pattern, and so on. Older children utilize some sort of linguistic concept that names a class to which the various objects belong. For example, a six year old child will report on a sorting activity that "some are red, some are blue", but an eight year old will say that "they are all tools" or "you can eat with them" or "they all move". Bruner suggests that developing linguistic skills enable an older child to screen out the vivid perceptual details and concentrate on common features. *By being able to code the items verbally, it is possible to compare objects searching for commonalities.* Studies with children from Alaska, Mexico and Senegal show that children in different cultures do not make the shift to linguistic sorting in the same way as American children in Boston. Bruner suggests that *formal schooling accelerates cognitive growth through repeated practice with decontextualized situations* that are a common component of school activities. These experiences *train the children to use verbal "code and compare" strategies to novel situations requiring categorization*.

Luria used categorization activities to compare literate and non-literate adults in rural areas of Russia. The literate adults had only one to three years of school. The groups were matched for urban experience and exposure to outsiders (whether they were in collectives or not). The most rural non-literate adults categorized objects (for example: hammer, saw, log, hatchet) on the basis of "going together" in a real life situation. The objects were grouped into some sort of ideational cluster regardless of common attributes ("I use a saw and a hatchet to chop up a log" or "I use a hatchet to make a handle for the hammer from the wood"). *Even though they can be trained to recognize that they are all tools, that fact has little relevance or importance.* The rural adults used these techniques 80% of the time, and employed semantic categorization only 4% of the time; on the other hand, the literate adults with minimal schooling used categorization 100% of the time, without prompting.

Scribner found similar results with bush villagers among the Kpelle. Fully 70% of the adult bush villagers (who had no urban experience, no school experience, and no literacy) *grouped objects, but could give no reasons for their choices.* They responded by saying, "I like them this way" or "my sense told me to do it this way." High school students from the same population could give category labels to their groups: "these are clothes" or "you can hunt with these." Individuals who worked for cash (and had some exposure to outsiders), but no school or literacy, fell between the two extremes. They tended to link the items together through their various uses: "the net is for fishing, the okra and peanut are cooked in the pot". These responses were similar to those of Luria's rural Russians.

Bruner, Olver, and Greenfield suggest that *school experience trains children to analyze objects into component parts*, and assignment of objects to groups requires this sort of analysis into parts. On the other hand, unschooled individuals respond to the global attributes of objects such as color.

Sharp and Cole tried reclassification tasks with Mayan youngsters of various ages, six to 20 years of age. Reclassification entails sorting a set of objects a second time, according to a different attribute (color, shape, number). As expected the children tended to sort by color at the youngest ages, then by shape as they grew older. However, years of education influenced the results more than age alone. On the reclassification task, only the youngest children and the teenagers with less than two years of school were unsuccessful. Scribner and Cole suggest that *school experience teaches cognitive flexibility: there is more than one way to classify a group of objects;* there is no one correct way.

Sharp (1971) taught Kpelle children to classify objects according to a certain criterion. He measured the number of trials it took to learn how to do the problem. He found that color was learned in fewer trials than number, and form was the most difficult of the three. He also found that older children learned more quickly than younger, and schooled children learned more rapidly than unschooled children. However, in further tests, he found that the difference between younger and older children lay in the fact that younger children applied a prior learned solution to a new problem (rote learning), whereas the older children learned by selecting a relevant attribute (conceptual learning). *American school children tended to abandon rote learning for even simple problems,* but the unschooled African children maintained rote learning even when the problem became too difficult.

Criticism of these studies focuses on the fact that villagers have litte experience with things like triangles, squares, red things, blue things, etc. Price-Williams (1972) looked at how children performed when they were faced with relevant and irrelevant objects. With Nigerian children, the age-related difference in the capacity to reclassify was apparent when geometric shapes were used, but there was no difference in performance when they sorted familiar animals and familiar plants that differed in terms of size, edibility, etc.

The common point to all these studies is that educational experience affects the ability to use language as a cognitive tool in solving problems. It also increases cognitive flexibility, in that there is no one way to classify things, and teaches analytical methods by mentally taking apart objects into component parts.

Memory

Many researchers point out the superlative memory skills of rural uneducated nonliterate people. It may be that the kinds of things memorized are surprising to researchers, because they don't expect nonliterate individuals to remember long oral histories or herbal remedies or family trees. The relevance of the concepts to be memorized is important. Deregowski (1970) found that tribesmen from Zambia did not remember time-related concepts as well as high school students from the same population. The villagers did not own time-pieces, but the schools ran according to time schedules. Therefore the *relevance of the items to be memorized is important to memorization.*

Non-literate societies stress practices that increase the likelihood that information will be transmitted from one generation to another. Mnemonic devices similar to those described by Havelock in the ancient epic poems are used to remember long tracts of tribal and family history. The Hmong oral texts are patterns with predictable poetic structure that contains semantic pairs, rhymes, distinctive rhythm, and repetition. The predictability of the sung patterns

reduces the ambiguity, and the number of repetitions of elements within the structure helps both the remembering and the understanding of oral texts. In this way, a young girl can hear a courtship chant, and can reproduce it largely intact; her creativity is shown in the ways she varies and recombines elements of the chant.

In general, studies have shown that *schooled children and adults employ different strategies for memorizing*. Most regroup objects into categories, then remember the objects one category at a time. The unschooled villagers tended to use memorizing techniques, but did not spontaneously reorganize the objects. Rather, they named the items, and rehearsed the names, and sometimes paired the objects with demonstrations of their functions. When the objects were presented in the form of a narrative story, the memory of the unschooled villagers did not differ from that of school children. "In the course of normal events, things are remembered because their natural contexts are organized in ways that matter to the individual and make sense in terms of the social experiences." Grammatically unconnected material was not well remembered by the unschooled adults, and they did not impose a structure on the objects unless they were taught to do so. *Success in school requires that children learn to memorize large amounts of unrelated material, much of it irrelevant and unfamiliar. Teachers often teach memorization techniques directly during school activities.*

Taking advantage of the narrative style of oral texts, using familiar structure, rhythm, rhyme, and a logical progression of events may help children from non-literate families memorize material in school. In addition, teachers can help children by explicitly teaching methods of regrouping grammatically unconnected items for recall.

Reasoning

Reasoning implies processing and reorganizing information to arrive at a conclusion, as opposed to remembering a conclusion from a prior experience. Much of the cross-cultural research on problem-solving involves Piaget's classic conservation experiments and the solving of verbal syllogisms. Greenfield's work with the Wolof children showed results similar to those obtained in the perception tasks. Schooled and city children show development of the conservation concept similar to American school children (they reason that the amount of liquid remains the same despite the container shape). However, *rural unschooled children develop the concepts at a more advanced age, if at all, and rely more on perception rather than reasoning.* Greenfield suggests that *school teaches children to expect explanations to be based on physical criteria,* whereas unschooled children are more likely to give *social* explanations such as "you changed the amount of liquid".

In inferential tasks that require physical manipulation, unschooled Kpelle children and adults performed at the level of American kindergartners, with schooled individuals performing a little better. However, when revising the experiment so the equipment was not intimidating, the performance of all the groups rose considerably, so that researchers concluded that unschooled rural people do solve simple inference problems in basically the same way as urban Westerners. *The difference in performance hinged on beginning the task: those without school, city or Western contact did not seem to know where to begin*, even though they knew the individual steps.

When faced with verbal problems like "what do a dog and a chicken have in common", Luria's rural unschooled Russian villagers enumerated *differences*. Even when prompted, *they could not find commonalities.*

Verbal inferences have been used with African tribal groups as well as with the rural Russians. Luria found that the Russian villagers who had no school and no experience with outsiders *refused to*

accept the premises of the problem. For example, they were asked: "Cotton grows where it is hot and humid. In Village A it is hot and humid. Does cotton grow there?" They responded: "How should I know; I've never been to that village." *People with even minimal schooling accepted the propositions and followed them to their logical conclusions.* When the Kpelle were presented with inference tasks that were embedded in a story, their percentage of wrong answers was the same as American high school students; however, the Kpelle groups (young and old unschooled adults and schooled young adults) all had at least one-fifth of their answers marked as irrelevant. *Rather than choose the best of two unacceptable answers, the Kpelle chose a completely different response that was, to them, more socially acceptable.*

Slobin, in talking about the development of cognitive processes, suggests that *school experience teaches children that direct experience is not necessary to solve problems or acquire knowledge. Problems can be manipulated verbally. An individual can act on possible information as well as actual information, and possibilities can be eliminated logically.*

Learning styles

The social world of non-literate village people integrates many aspects into ongoing activity—religious beliefs, economic activities, teaching and learning. Learning is largely by observation and trial-and-error. In traditional societies, adults seldom verbalize a practice or a concept; rather, they demonstrate what is to be done. In addition, children in traditional societies are seldom heard to ask "why" questions. Fortes suggests this is because so much *learning is done in real-life situations, in which the context makes meaning clear.*

Studies designed to test whether villagers are superior at learning by observation, and whether or not they experience difficulty when the teacher and learner are not involved in a common ongoing activity, revealed that *styles of communication varied.* The unschooled individuals left out important parts of descriptions, as though it was not necessary to fully describe an object for another person to identify it. Their *descriptions were based on an assumption that the listeners knew what they meant without precise verbalization.* Like young children, who describe objects in personal terms, not easily understandable to others ("pick the one that looks like my mother's hat"), the Kpelle seemed unable to "take the listener's point of view".

Often the communication styles that differ from English use few words to carry a lot of meaning—rather like teenagers' inside jokes. English tends to be very explicit; the legal contract is an extreme example of the way in which English reduces the chance for misinterpretation—it takes no outside "context" to figure out the meaning. On the other hand, Asian languages tend to be "high context" in that it takes an insider to understand what is being communicated. Thus, the forms of language used in students' homes may not conform to the patterns common in US schools.

Conclusion

Western schooling is related to better performance on tasks such as sorting, logic explanations, explanation of language, communicating instructions to games, and answering hypothetical questions. These are all skills that require "talking about" something, often topics that have no personal relevance to the speaker.

School did not influence performance in classification activities; it was experience with people unlike themselves that accounted for the differences.

Schooling improved performance on some other tasks, but was less important than other variables that co-varied with school (literacy, exposure to outsiders): story recall and memory for objects, abstraction, and logic problems. In the case of

memory, it was age that was the determinant.

Literacy skills that were learned outside of school also was associated with differences in performance. Knowledge of the Vai syllabary improved performance in auditory integration, using symbols to represent language, and using language to talk about language.

Non-literates were least able to perform tasks related to encoding language with symbols.

School provides students with the capacity to handle verbal explanations. Teacher-student talk often involve talking about the mental operations required to carry out some activity. This coincides with Slobin's proposition that school teaches children to understand context-free language and to learn from talk alone.

Implications

The Hmong, until fairly recently have lived in rural villages, without access to schools, much as the Vai, the Kpelle, and the rural Russian villagers lived. Some have have been exposed to Westerners and have moved into social contact with unrelated Hmong and other ethnic groups. Therefore, we could expect that the elder Hmong, unschooled and non-literate, would have different responses to certain tasks. These would be ones 1) requiring perception of two-dimensional representations of real objects; 2) classifying phenomena by linguistic categories; 3) reclassifying objects by a different attribute; 4) remembering grammatically unrelated and unfamiliar objects. They would typically remember best when information is presented in a familiar narrative structure, especially when supplemented by mnemonic devices; they would learn best through observation. They would respond to reasoning problems from an experiential and egocentric point of view, refusing to accept the propositions of an argument and giving socially acceptable responses. In describing events or objects, they would be likely to omit relevant details, to be less than explicit. They would be unlikely to analyze phenomena into component parts, but would respond to global characteristics, particularly perceptual cues. They would be unable to verbalize why they have grouped things as they have, or to explain "why" they've chosen as they have. In explaining events, they would be more likely to use social or even magic explanations rather than assuming a logical world of physical criteria. Their lack of literacy would have an impact on tasks requiring encoding; teaching them phonics would require attention to experiences that would train them to represent language with abstract symbols. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that their cognitive processes are inherently different; with experience and direct teaching, their performance on various cognitive tasks would equal that of newcomers from Western, urban, literate societies.

Their grandchildren, after living in urban settings, and after only a year or two in American schools, should perform differently on a variety of tasks. They should be able to recognize two-dimensional representations better, except for the iconic illustrations encountered for the first time. They should be able to categorize phenomena by semantic category rather than by perceptual attribute, and should show more flexibility in resorting phenomena into new categories. They should be better at verbalizing why they group things as they do. In terms of developmental cognitive tasks, they will be more likely to expect physical reasons and non-personal "laws" to explain happenings in the world,

rather than using magic or social explanations. The schooled children will be more likely to accept the hypothetical nature of logic tasks, and will be able to follow the sequence of syllogisms and other types of inference. Above all, their children will be able to handle verbal explanations of abstract concepts better than their parents.

The generation of the grandfather's son would fall between the two extremes in their performance on cognitive tasks. However, because of the erratic nature of their prior experiences, teachers cannot assume anything. These are currently the parents of the children in school.

Even though the children's experiences in American communities and in formal school makes their responses to tasks different from their parents, they are still the "bridge" between two worlds. Teachers cannot expect them to have the same home experiences as native-English speaking children of literate parents. For example, as a teacher, I would want to provide plenty of practice in using symbols to represent sounds and words, and I would want to make sure that the symbols on the page are perceived as I expect. If necessary, I would explicitly teach the conventions used to indicate relative size, position, and distance in drawings, and would make sure the objects represented on the page have already been seen in three dimensions. I would want to provide plenty of practice with categorization activities, explicitly teaching how any set of objects can be sorted according to different criteria. I would want to verbalize mental operations as much as possible, and to encourage Western-like descriptions. At the same time, I would want to teach by doing so the students can learn by observation, rather than presenting complex verbal explanations of how to accomplish something.

I would want to be aware that logical explanations may not fit with the kind of logic used in the home, and that people do not automatically accept hypothetical propositions as relevant. It is this difference in processing hypothetical information to arrive at conclusions that may the basis of the cognitive gap between immigrant parents from traditional villages and their Western-educated children.

This may also help explain the gulf in understanding that results when a doctor explains a congential heart defect and expects parents to agree to open-heart surgery. The doctor assumes the parents to follow his logic, but the parents refuse to participate in the "sylllogism game". From this difference in cognitive style developes a power struggle over who controls the welfare of a child.

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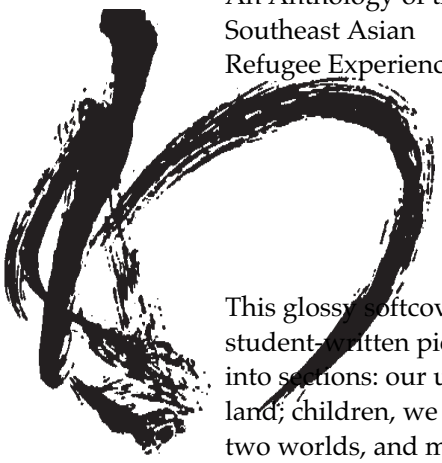
Is it true that a lot of Indochinese have January 1st as their birthday?

We've read that this is true, but in practice we have seen very fewJanuary 1st's. In the current database (not all the records have birthdates listed), there were only 3 January 1st's—one is Vietnamese, one is Korean, and one is Ukrainian. Evidently this idea began with the Chinese cultural ways. If I ask, "How old is he?", the answer might be one to two years older than the "actual" age. For example, a baby is born in September, 1980, has his first birthday in December (12 months since conception); when the lunar new year occurs February 1981, he is "two years old". Actually, to the Chinese way of reckoning, he's *been on the earth* during two lunar calendars. However, if I ask, "When was he born?", I receive a birth date in return. From that, I can calculate the age in Western terms.

This does not always hold true. For villagers, there was no real reason or way to record births. If the villagers did not write, then there was no family record kept of dates. Plus, the calendars used in Hmong, Khmu, and other villages were quite different from the linear, 24-hour based calendar of the west, and different from the lunar calendar of the Chinese. A person might have been born during the corn harvest right after the French left. For people from rural areas, a birthdate was invented at the time of refugee processing. Tthe 1st and 15th of various months are popular birthdates.

In addition, there were sometimes very pragmatic reasons to provide different birthdates to officials, even if the year and month of birth were remembered.

In any case, the question, "How old are you?" *does* point out a cultural difference. Not every society uses birthdates as personal identifiers in the way the American society does. I can't really going through life not knowing how old I am—it's an identification, as well as a way to gauge how I'm doing in the business of life. I've heard Hmong refer to age like this: "She's old enough to have grandchildren." "He's old enough to crawl and sit up." Age is defined by behavior. Obviously developmental timetables as Americans apply them (as a measuring stick for intelligence, for example) do not translate—the milestone *is* the age.



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PASSAGES:

An Anthology of the Southeast Asian Refugee Experience

This glossy softcover book is a variety of student-written pieces loosely organized into sections: our unforgettable motherland; children, we must leave!; living in two worlds, and moving on. Kou Yang, social service worker and city college instructor in Fresno wrote an introductory piece on Indochina. Student authors (CSUFresno ESL students) are: Chivong Siong, Xua Yang, Tong Yang, Lang Fang, May Tong Lee, Sopheak Real, Kolhida Kunusa, Tri Quang Le, My-Lien Dinh, Long Phi Nguyen, Bich-Ha Hoang, Phu Gip, Jennifer Quach, Thiphavanh Rajphangthong, Inthakesone Nhouyvanisvong, Sompong Ratsakhy, John Saechao, Mai Xee Her, Houa Yang, Ma Tai, Xang Hang, Meng Sue Vang, Yer Chang, Lona Tiv, Linath Lim, Quyen Tuong Nguyen, Bao-tran Truong, Lou Saephan, Chai Fang, Vang Pao Yang, Seng Moua, Syripanomkone Nhouyvanisvong, Kua Vang, Mee Her, Fue Ricky Vang, Maly Xiong, Joice Bliatout, Schwa X. Yang, Cheng Lee, Avonne Vah, Techsin Theam Ty. The stories, poems, and essays are complimented with beautiful black-and-white photos by Akemi Miyama. The only startling incongruity is that facing photos are not always of the same ethnicity as the writing. While this is a minor point, and may even lead to interesting student discussions about the similarieties and differences between the various groups who have come from Southeast Asia, it could also confuse Americans who generally don't have a very clear idea of the differences—an example is the photo of Hmong womenon page 40 facing a Vietnamese written essay, "Point of No Return" by Long Phi Nguyen.

While the pieces have been edited for standard English, the students' ideas, descriptions, and observations still come through, for example:

"Going to school to learn English was not the only difficulty I had. Shopping in a store created another problem for me because I did not know how to ask for help or how to to look for the items I needed to buy. One day I went to a supermarket near my home to buy some food for my family. When I arrived, the store was full of everything, but I needed to buy only some pork. I walked to the back of the store, and there was a large, long refrigerator. I looked in the refrigerator and saw lots of meat. I did not know what kinds of meats they were because I could not read their labels. I could not tell for sure by looking at the packages. At that time, I did not know what to do. I just kept looking at the meat until a man in the store came to me. He was a tall, white man with a card hanging on his chest. He probably was one of the workers in the store. He stood in front of me and said some words in English, but I did not understand what he was saying. He was probably asking me what I wanted or something. I wanted to tell him that I came to buy some pork, but I did not know how to say that in English, so I just kept quiet, and he left. After a few minutes, I decided to go home because I could not find what I wanted. I was very upset when I arrived home."

—Vang Pao Yang, p. 160-161.

Understanding Vietnam's Historical Perspectives

January 3-17, 1991
Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Open to college/university educators. Information: CIEE, Professional Programs, 205 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10017. 212 661-1414 X 1201.

Lecture/Performance

From Vietnam: A Lyric Celebration of Women

Hoang Oanh
Dr. Phong Nguyen
Tuyen Tonnu

Wednesday,
November 7 1990
at 7:30 p.m.

Trustees' Auditorium
Asian Art Museum
Golden Gate Park

Free

This concert will feature an evening of traditional music and folk songs from Vietnam. Hoang Oanh is a well-known singer now living in southern California who is known for her singing of popular as well as traditional songs. Dr. Phong Nguyen and Tuyen Tonnu will accomany Hoang Oanh on the *dan tranh* (17-stringed zither), *dan nguyet* (2-stringed long-neck lute), and *dan bau* (monochord).

Lecture/Performance

Music of Vietnam

Dr. Phong Nguyen

Wednesday,
November 7 1990
at 10:15 a.m.

Trustees' Auditorium
Asian Art Museum
Golden Gate Park

Free

Dr. Phong Nguyen, born in a village Mekong delta of Vietnam, is one of the leading Vietnamese musicians. The holder of a Ph.D. from the Sorbonne University in Paris, he is an ethnomusicologist, a performer, and a teacher. His lecture/performance will be an overview of musical forms of Vietnam including folk music, music for diversion, and music language. Dr. Nguyen will also discuss the relationship between Vietnamese music and language. Dr. Nguyen has performed extensively Japan, Europe, and the United States, and currently teachers at Kent State University in Ohio.

Annual Southeast Asia Conference

Traders, Travelers and Tourists in Southeast Asia

February 16 and 17, 1991
Lipman Room, Barrows Hall
University of California, Berkeley

Exploration of the region, colonial era trading patterns, tourist impact on the area. One page abstracts on the above topics should be submitted before November 15, 1990 to:

Dr. Eric Crystal
Center for Southeast Asia Studies
Building T-9, Room 116
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

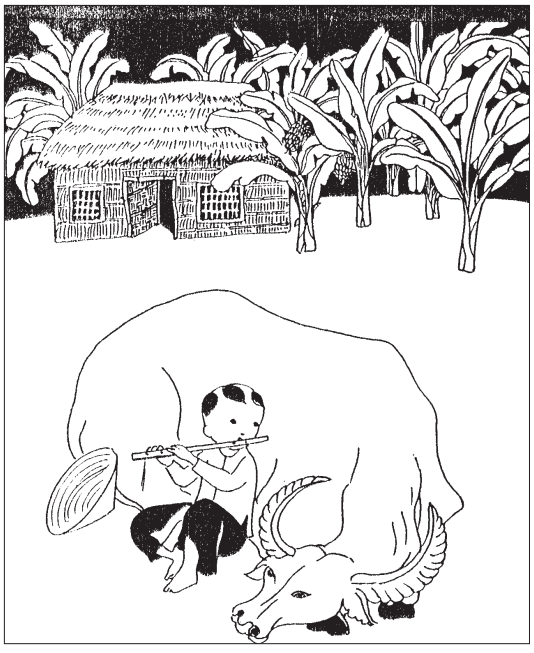
CAFABE

Asian-Pacific Currents: Educational Challenges of the 1990's

November 16-17, 1990

Airport Hilton, Oakland, California

Information: Sau-Lim Tsang, ARC Associates, 310 Eighth Street Suite 220, Oakland CA 94607
(415) 834-9455



For information about the Vietnamese performances, call:
415-668-6404

American Culture

Althen, Gary. *American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States.* Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1988..

Bellah, R., and others. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.* Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1985.

Brislin, R. *Cross-cultual Encounters: Face-to-Face Interaction.* New York: Pergamon Press, 1981.

Condon, J. and F. Yousef. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication.* Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1975.

Fussell, Paul. *Class*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.

Lewis, T. and R. Jungman, editors. *On Being Foreign.* Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1986.

Levine, D. R. and M. Adelman. *Beyond Language: Intercultural Communication for English as a Second Language.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982.

Liu Zongren. *Two Years in the Melting Pot.* San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals.

Morris, Desmond, and others. *Gestures.* New York: Stein and Day, 1980.

Smith, E. and L. F. Luce, editors. *Toward Internationalism*, 2nd ed. Scranton, PA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986.

Steward, E. and M. Bennet. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,* 2nd edition. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1988.

Zanger, V. *Face-to-Face: The Cross-Cultural Workbook.* Scranton, PA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1985.

Address for Intercultural Press: PO Box 768, Yarmouth, ME, 04096.

Major American themes—

Individualism.
Privacy; wide personal space.
Equality.
Informality.
Progress, change.
Optimism.
Time is a resource.
Time organizes.
Achievement:
"Whacha *doin'*?"
"Howerya *doin*?"
"What d'ya *do*?"
Directness.
Assertiveness.
Action preferable to inaction.
Man can change nature: appearance, imperfections.

One teachers's course

Teaching the Vietnam War through Literature

W.D. Ehrhart,
University of Massachusetts, Boston
(from *Joiner Center Newsletter,* July 1990)

America's Longest War (George Herring)—provides basic historical context for later readings.

The Quiet American (Graham Greene)—an early warning (1952) to America's growing participation in Indochina.

No Passenger on the River (Tran van Dinh)—a novel from the Vietnamese point of view set in 1963 Saigon, leading up to the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem.

Close Quarters (Larry Heinemann)—set in 1967-68, the "Vietnam experience" of the American soldier.

Saigon, Illinois (Paul Hoover)—voice of those who chose not to go.

Passing Time (W.D. Ehrhart)—the teacher's own book about the years immediately after the return from Vietnam, 1969-74.

In Country (Bobbie Ann Mason)—the effects of Vietnam on women.

Poetry by Jan Barry, John Balaban, Horace Coleman, Bryan Alec Floyd, Yusef Komunyakaa, Basil T. Paquet, Burce Weigl.

Weapon (Robert Mason)—set in Nicaragua, 1988—pulls the Vietnam experience into the present tense.

1st Language Acquisition: Exposure + Interaction = Cognition

EXPOSURE

The human brain sorts through verbal input and formulates the rules of language, then tries out language, observes results and revises output. This capacity is referred to as the "language acquisition device". Key stages in first language acquisition are:

Hearing natural flow of language

Discriminating between sounds

Mimicking intonation

Watching gestures for clues

Following commands

Using one word plus gesture

Using single words

Using two words (one word is the "pivot" which goes with a variety of words).

Using more than two words

Expanding length by replacing words in familiar patterns.

INTERACTION

Some theorize that language acquisition results because words produce results in others. In first language acquisition, someone actively changes the language world—called "scaffolding".

Child's action—expression, gesture, sounds—causes the "other person" to do something in response.

The "other" interprets the child's meaning.

The "other" believes that the child is trying to communicate something.

The "other" controls the language input:

reduces the ambiguity,
repeats,
expands,
simplifies the syntax
and vocabulary,
uses the important
words over and over.

COGNITION

Thinking developes in stages—described by Piaget, Bruner, and others. Education theory and teacher behavior is based on current theories of cognitive development.

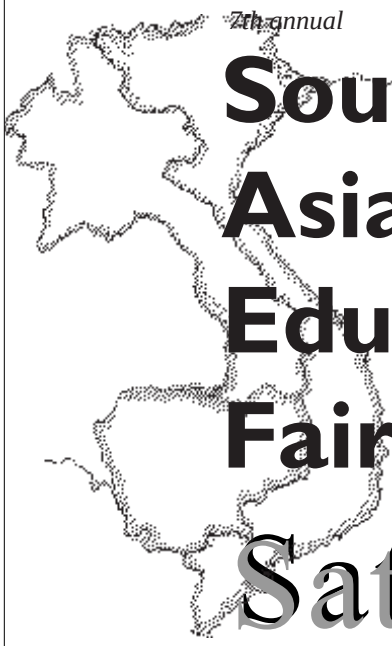
Second language learners have developed cognitive skills in the mother tongue, so the course of language acquisiton is altered, but the basic factors in first language acquisition are still important to second language acquistion.

TWO WORD SENTENCES

Early sentences serve eight functions, and this is similar across different languages and cultures.

One reason young children acquire second languages quickly is that "others" accept these kinds of responses—older children and adults feel silly talking "like a baby". However, accepting these kinds of utterances promotes *interaction*, a key element of acquisition.

LOCATE, NAME	there book, see doggie, that car
DEMAND, DESIRE	more milk, want cookie
NEGATE	no wet, allgone milk, no sleep
DESCRIBE	doggie go, mail come, hit ball, cookie fall
POSSESSION	my shoe, mama dress
MODIFY, QUALIFY	pretty dress, big car
QUESTION	where ball?



7th annual

Southeast Asia Education Faire

Saturday, March 2, 1991

- More than 25 sessions
- Vietnamese lunch from Andy Nguyen's
- Displays and sales
- Hefty packet of info—with latest publication.
- Designed for educators, paraprofessionals, parents (native language sessions), and interested others.
- Proceeds support the Southeast Asia Comunity Resource Center.

New:
Workshop on other newcomer groups—like the Ukrainians and Armenians from the Soviet Union.

General admission: $35.00

Special rate for parents and college students (limited number of tickets at this price): $25.00.

Deadline: February 16

Order early so we can mail your tickets to you.

Contact: **Refugee Educators' Network**,
2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova CA 95670.
Phone 916 635-6815 for information.

Context:
Southeast Asians in California

c/o Folsom Cordova USD
Transitional English Programs Office
2460 Cordova Lane,
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670