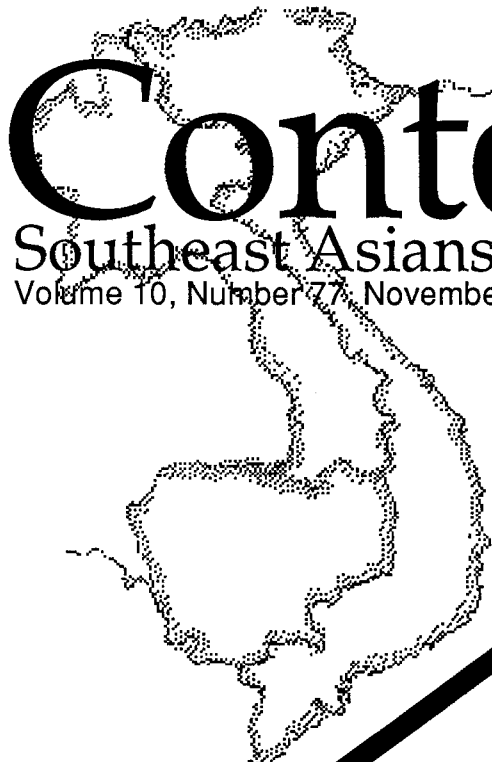




Context:

Southeast Asians in California

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(formerly "Refugee Update")

Folsom Cordova Unified School District
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Judy Lewis, Editor

From *Mirror of Language*
by Kenji Hakuta (1986)

Learning a second language

What's it like for children?

Do second-language learners resemble first-language learners? Do second-language learners of different languages go through the same process? Three generalizations can be made:

- *the order of appearance of morphemes (small units of meaning) in second-language learners does not come anywhere near resembling the order found in first-language acquisition.* This may be due to the maturity of the second-language learner's thinking; for example, in first-language acquisition, past tense develops late because it requires a developed concept of time.
- *the order of acquiring morphemes tends to be remarkably similar across different language backgrounds.* The order closely resembles the frequency of these morphemes in adult conversation (Larsen-Freeman, 1976).
- *the differences in the order of acquisition is explainable by transfer from the native language.* Spanish and Korean children differed on only one morpheme—articles—which Spanish has but Korean does not (Fathman, 1975; also, Zehler, 1982).
- *second-language learners use more "prefabricated language" than first-language learners, probably because of*

greater memory span and knowledge of the functional uses of language.

These are whole expressions which prove useful in interactions with friends, like "My turn", "Don't do that", "Do like this", "I know how to do it", "I'm the leader", etc. As many as half of the first utterances in a second language (among child learners, at least) may be of this type. This type of language, because it is embedded in social interaction and causes observable reactions in others, is highly memorable. Such prefabricated language plays an important role in maintaining the motivation the learner, and also produces immediate feedback about the correctness of the utterance.

Our language does not expect us to build everything starting with lumber, nails, and blueprint, but provides us with an incredibly large number of prefabs, which have the magical property of persisting even when we knock some of them apart and put them together in unpredictable ways. (Bolinger, 1976)

...and for adults?

Is adult second-language acquisition the same as for a child? If there are differ-

(next page)

ences, what are they?

- overall, the process appears to be the same for both adults and children, but there are differences in the extent to which each learns the new language. [However, studies have addressed only the product of acquisition, not the process itself.]
- all age groups show an annual increase in their language use until about the 5th year, but the older groups reached the plateau sooner than the young groups (Bachi, 1956).
- the younger groups were more native-like in both pronunciation and sentence comprehension.
- second-language learners who begin in childhood (before puberty) are more successful in both accent and grammar.
- adult second language acquisition is systematic (Corder 1971; Nemser 1971; Selinker 1972); more proficiency predicts better performance in all aspects of grammar.

How children and adults differ

Differences between child and adult learners, other than age and length of exposure to the second language appear to be individual variations, primarily intelligence and language aptitude, personality, attitudes, and sociolinguistic situations. A study by Patkowski (1980) found that the best adult learners are no different than child learners.

Intelligence and language aptitude

When dealing with language acquisition, *intelligence* is commonly referred to as *language aptitude*. Such aptitude includes abilities to code the sounds of a language, to recognize grammatical structures, and rote memory. Certainly, modern IQ tests rest on memory and analysis, and Oller and Perkins suggest that both language aptitude and intelligence are seated in the same cognitive base. However, another study by Klein and Dittmar (1979) showed that the amount of education a person had in the native country was a rough indicator of language aptitude, showing that school-based skills are ones that tests test best. Thus, years of prior education and/or language aptitude have a strong effect on second-language acquisition. [Recent studies with refugee

groups confirm a relationship between prior education and speed of English language acquisition (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1982-84; Green and Reder, 1986.). However, minority Laotian groups, who had little formal schooling are often described as having oral skills in at least two languages, showing that some kind of language aptitude is unrelated to schooling.]

Personality

One study by Guiora, Brannon and Dull (1972) found that learners of Thai had better pronunciation after having drunk moderate amounts of alcohol. Any adult second language learner knows personally of the great inhibitions that limit the willingness to "look foolish". A study in Canada found looked at personality variables and found that "field dependence-independence" (an ability to pick figures out of a field of shapes) and "tolerance for ambiguity" were correlated with success at second language acquisition. On the other hand, "extroversion" (being outgoing) showed less association with success (Naiman, Frohlich and Stern, 1975). Krashen (1981) suggests that individuals vary in the degree to which they monitor their utterances. Hakuta says that if a person possesses personality variables which lead to poor language acquisition, whatever they are, there is little that one can do to change the situation.

Attitudes

Learners who are positive towards speakers of the language to be learned are more successful at learning that language. Gardner and Lambert (1980) found that the attitudes that the *family* held towards the new group were critical. However, most studies are seen as having little validity, due to the difficulty of defining *attitude* and linking it in a direct relationship to acquisition.

Sociolinguistic situations

This variable refers to the nature of the target group, and where the learner is seen to fit within it. This variable is intriguing and overlaps (or may take the place of) most of the previous factors, but sociolinguistics is fairly new, and there has not been much research into the factors

which influence second language acquisition. A study of Spanish and Italian workers in Germany found that the best predictor of German proficiency was the amount of leisure time contact with Germans (Klein and Dittmar, 1979). A study of Puerto Ricans (Cancino and Hakuta, 1981) found that the best predictor of English (other than length of time in the U.S., prior schooling, and Spanish aptitude) was the amount of English spoken in the workplace. Keep in mind, however, that these two studies may not be widely applicable as they both involve people who have a generally positive attitude towards the target group—if not, they would not have been interacting either at work or at play.

Thus,

Second language acquisition takes place in both formal and informal settings. Personality and attitudes are related to second language acquisition in both formal and informal situations, but aptitude is related only to formal settings, like school.

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Amazon-ing!

Along a river which drains into the Amazon River, on the border of Brazil and Colombia, is an area in which there are at least 25 different languages spoken, an area about the size of New England. Anthropologist Sorenson (1967) spent several summers in the region and found that bilingualism was a required aspect of life.

People are identified by the language that their fathers speak, which determines their tribe. However, the social rules require that a person marry someone from a different tribe, that is, someone who speaks a different language. To marry someone who speaks your own language is seen as incest. Thus, a young man learns the language of his prospective wife's tribe. After marriage, she moves in with his tribe, and learns his language. Young children begin by learning the mother's language, and then as they grow up, they learn their father's language, the one which identifies them. One of the tribal languages serves as a lingua franca for trade and commerce, and by adolescence, most children know this third language as well. Because there are women from many different tribes in any one village, most children are exposed to several different languages in their daily interactions, and may learn some of these. During a lifetime, the people acquire other languages, and spend their adult years perfecting the languages they know.

Surprisingly, no one language has superiority over any other. The choice of language depends on the particular people one is grouped with at the moment, and languages shift easily. Each individual initially speaks his own father-language during such a conversation in order to assert his tribal affiliation and identification, but after a while, the junior persons change, without comment, to the language of the tribe where the conversation is taking place, to Tukano (the lingua franca), or to another language, whatever one is most convenient for the others. (Sorenson, 1967, p. 678). Apparently, the use of several languages in one society does not necessarily lead to deep social divisions.

Vietnam: Hard Road to Peace

National Geographic 176(5), November 1989

- *Hanoi—The Capital Today* (Peter White, David Harvey)
- *Hue—My City, Myself* (Tran Van Dinh, David Harvey)
- *Saigon—14 Years After* (Peter White, David Harvey)

Cultural Literacy

A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy
E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. \$14.95.

2,000 of the 5,000 terms included in the original cultural literacy book and dictionary, written for children.

Also—two “shoestring calendars” for next year, one based on the “adult” cultural literacy dictionary, and the other based on the children’s dictionary.

[Editor’s note: What is needed now is a workbook series or a sequential kit (like the old SRA reading labs) with reading levels beginning at 1.0, to make the cultural literacy dictionary a centerpiece of ESL programs. Actually, any children from “verbally deficient” homes would benefit from a systematic exposure to the items upon which so many references in everyday life are based. Teaching of these largely Eurocentric items will help ensure equal access to all.]

Scrooge Scrooge is the stingy old man in CHARLES DICKENS’S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* whose life is changed when he meets a series of ghosts on Christmas Eve. ©

Grinch The Grinch is a nasty creature in the children’s story *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS*, by the American author Dr. Seuss. The Grinch is so mean that he does not want anyone else to enjoy Christmas, so he spends Christmas Eve stealing everyone’s presents, decorations and holiday food. But on Christmas morning he hears everyone singing and celebrating in spite of their losses. He realizes that the spirit of Christmas is something that cannot be stolen, and he becomes a happier and wiser creature. ©

“God bless us, every one!” “God bless us, every one!” is a line from CHARLES DICKENS’S book *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*. The words are spoken at Christmas dinner by a young crippled boy, Tiny Tim. ©

Samsara

29 minute video produced and directed by Ellen Bruno, a film that “offers a gentle, nonpolemic but powerful account of the Cambodian past and present.” [Refugee Reports, Oct. 20, 1989]

“How often in the market do we brush up against those who tortured us?” says one woman in the film. “Who among us has bloody hands, slipped quietly into life beside us? We are all in search of someone, the child lost, the husband lost.”

For information on this video, contact Ms. Bruno at 171 Old La Honda Road, Woodside CA 94062, (415) 851-2398.

Bilingualism and Learning Disabilities: Policy and Practice for Teachers and Administrators

Ann C. Willig & Hinda F. Greenberg, editors. Educators’ Publishing Service, Inc., 75 Moulton St., Cambridge, MA 02238-9101. 800-225-5750. \$20.00, includes postage.

BRIDGES: Promising Programs for the Education of Immigrant Children, 1989.

Laurie Olsen, Project Director.

Bridges is the latest report from California Tomorrow’s Immigrant Students and the Schools Project. Designed to facilitate the exchange of information about creative developments in education for immigrant children, *Bridges* describes over 70 innovative programs throughout California, lists funding resources, and provides a bibliography of cross-cultural resource materials. Rather than prescribing solutions, *Bridges* presents a picture of what can be done to adapt teaching, classrooms and schools to California’s diverse population. \$15.95.

To order, or to become a member of California Tomorrow, contact:
California Tomorrow, Immigrant Students Project, Fort Mason Center, Bldg B, San Francisco, CA 94123. (415) 441-7631.

am Magazine

California magazine published in English and four Southeast Asian languages (Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, and Vietnamese). Subscription for one year is \$18 per language. 149 N. Fulton, Fresno, CA 93701.



Sacramento City College
 Freeport & 12th Ave.
 8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
 \$35.00
 \$25.00 parents/students
 (non-employees)

Make check or purchase order payable to **Refugee Educators' Network**, 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. For information: (916) 635-6815. Deadline: February 24, 1990. The costs are kept to a bare minimum to encourage wide participation, and proceeds buy materials for the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center.

VN silk painting demo	"We are Hmong"- <i>Hmong Std Assn</i>	ESL in the real world- <i>Harold Murai</i>	SEAsian gangs <i>Jeffrey Munks</i>	Teaching pronunciation- <i>Lilly Cheng</i>	In Khmer:	Video previews, displays, vendors, etc.
Khmer classical dance- <i>Chan Moly Sam & Sam Ang Sam</i>	"We are Vietnamese"- <i>VN Std Assn</i>	Accessible lessons-language arts K-6 <i>Eleanor Thonis</i>	Hmong & early marriage <i>Lue Vang</i>	SEAsian youth studies compared- <i>Chuong Chung</i>	Translated: SEAsian gangs <i>Jeffrey Munks</i>	Video previews, displays, vendors, etc.
Lunch & Khmer dance performance						
Hmong story cloths	"We are Khmer"- <i>Cambodian Std Assn</i>	Accessible lessons-soc. studies, gr 7-12 <i>Huynh Dinh Te</i>	Amerasians <i>Van LE, Kim Lan Nguyen, Chuong Chung, Jenny Dang</i>	<i>World of Difference</i>	In Hmong: Understanding peer pressure- <i>Lue Vang</i>	Video previews, displays, vendors, etc.
Mien paintings- <i>Jonathan Saeteung, apprentice painter</i>	Who are the Khmu?	Parent education for literacy- <i>Grace Holt</i>		Teaching pronunciation- <i>Lilly Cheng</i>		Video previews, displays, vendors, etc.

Jeffrey Munks,
CALL (Communication and Language Line, 177
Webster St. Suite A-3767,
Monterey, CA 93940. (408) 646-0979

Teachers, Counselors, Principals: Can You Identify Vietnamese Gang Members in Your School?

Sacramento, San Jose, Westminster, Oakland and San Francisco acknowledge a growing gang problem among Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese youth. While such students are the minority of the newcomer population, in the vicinity of 1%, schools are the one public institution through which these youth have at one time passed. School personnel can play an important role in providing alternate roads to the future for the youngest students—by ensuring that they learn to read English, by providing them with effective role models who expect them to perform, by guiding them towards vocational goals, and by providing a social environment in which newcomers are not subject to racial harassment. School adults can also learn to recognize students who are experimenting with the criminal life-style. To do this, it is necessary to find out what the police have learned.

Jeffrey Munks, of Monterey's Communication and Language Line, Inc., will present at the upcoming Southeast Asia Education Faire (March 3, at Sacramento City College). He recently talked to educational leaders in Sacramento about "Non-traditional Crime in America". What follows are excerpts from his paper, concentrating on the two kinds of criminal activity likely to be encountered by school personnel.

Adult-directed juvenile criminal activity

A 15-year old Vietnamese boy in the San Jose area was convinced to become an informer, and told the police he was a member of the Hoang Doi Gang ("hungry tiger" gang). An older man recruits high schoolers with incentives like money, meals, a fast life. The gang might operate like this: on an evening, three or four kids in the gang would be directed by the leader to go steal car stereos. They were taught what to do and how to avoid being caught.

First they would steal an auto in San Jose, then drive to San Francisco, where they would break into 25 to 75 cars (mostly Toyotas) and steal the factory stereos. They then would dump the stolen car, and steal another to get back to San Jose. After the stereos were delivered to the leader, the second car would be dumped on the streets. After accumulating one to two hundred stereos, they would load them into a van owned by the leader, and then deliver them to a Vietnamese used car dealer who specialized in selling rental cars like Hertz and Avis. The cars would have their odometers rolled back, and a new stereo installed, and then sold for much more than they were worth.

"Hasty Gang" Activity

The youth involved in this kind of activity are often on their own, either "un-accompanied minors" or teenagers who have been kicked out of their father's house as a punishment of last resort. The Hasty Gang provides a feeling of belonging for these kids living on the street. This is an example: a 16-year old Vietnamese boy has been kicked out of his family home in Stockton, CA, because of trouble between him and his father (disobedience, lack of respect, and a couple brushes with the law). The boy steals a car and drives to San Jose where he stops at the Wooden Cue, a local hangout for Vietnamese boys on the street. Another boy he has never met walks over and starts a conversation. The initiating boy asks if the Stockton boy wants to "party" the following night. As he is out of money and lonely, he says "yes". The next night, he and five other boys conduct an armed robbery at a residential house. After the job is done, the six boys split the take and then go different ways. One flies out of San Jose, another steals a car and drives to another town. They end up in Boston, Houston, Seattle, Long Beach, or New Orleans, where they live off the take for two or three weeks. When the money runs out, they go to another hangout and wait for another "party".

What the field officers have learned

"Age" is not a cultural construct with the same significance as in American society; here, laws and entry into various programs have age limits and minimums. Many refugees were given a birthdate arbitrarily during refugee processing, or

chose a birthdate for one reason or another.

Boys who are out on a crime do not carry identification or proof of age. Often the officer is confused by the sounds of the names, and can be fooled; therefore, police now hold the youth until the I-94, resident alien card, or driver's license is located. If he is carrying an ID, it may be in his sock. The boys will try to pass themselves as juveniles, and may pretend that someone with the same last name is a relative who can vouch for him. Once officers become aware of the few family names, and learns to recognize the ethnicity of names, he is less likely to be fooled.

The big gangs are not likely to be a local problem. Instead, it is a group of two, three, or four youth in a Mustang, Toyota, Camaro, or Firebird, wearing modern or even extreme "punk" style dress and hair. There are often weapons in such a car. If the boys carry no ID, then chances are that there are weapons in the car. A search will not turn up the weapons, unless unusual hiding places—like under the rear seat, under the spare tire, inside the trunk lining, or in the headliner—are searched.

Often the boys in the group decide ahead of time who will "take the fall" if they are caught. It is usually the youngest one or the one with the cleanest record. The Vietnamese criminal often uses the language barrier to his advantage, therefore, a pocket recorder is essential. Left running, the tape can record their comments to each other, and can be translated later.

The weapons of choice are guns, and they often have several of the most intimidating quality.

If an officer finds two or three stolen stereos or other property, it is likely that it is just the tip of a volume operation. Police are told to go to the various residences and search for other stolen property, written records, and other kinds of evidence. What cannot be confiscated are be photographed.

The target of armed robbery is often people in the ethnic community, who, being unused to federally insured banks, convert money into gold jewelry, or keep money at home. The job is planned, and confederates are solicited at the local hangout. The boys go to the residence, perhaps in several cars. The first man goes into the back yard with a weapon. Then the others, three to ten, enter the residence like storm troopers, all armed. They round up the occupants and force them to lay down in one room. The victims' hands and mouths are taped or tied. If the victims don't come up with valuables, they may be beaten or shot. After the job, the boys all leave in predetermined escape

routes. Their goal is to go in different directions, to places far away from the scene of the crime.

Police have to consider the backyard lookout and look for a number of cars parked near the residence. When searching for the criminals, the police should head for the freeways out of town and the airports.

The victims may actually recognize the criminals, but will not identify them. They fear retaliation against themselves or other family members for cooperating with the police in identifying the criminals.

Many criminals have altered auto ignition keys in their possession. Toyota keys are a favorite, because of their shape. Both sides are filed in a sawtooth pattern, ending in a sharp point. This filed off key can open many kinds of Toyotas and Nissans, and should be considered a burglary tool. The key may be on the key ring, or hidden in the sock. Many times, the criminal youth have two bent pieces of metal. The metal may be from a windshield wiper, and has been altered with a file to make a lock pick that works to open and start many kinds of Toyotas and Nissans. These, too, are burglary tools.

ID, money, drugs, and weapons may be hidden in the sock, shoe, boot, or taped to the thigh or calf.

Handcuffs represent great shame for the misdemeanor offenders. In Vietnam, handcuffs were not used for minor offenses; for major offenses, the culprit either came along, or was shot. A Vietnamese youth may react in unexpected and extreme ways when presented with handcuffs.

The criminal youth often do not live at home. They use motel rooms or the home of an elderly relative.

An effective strategy has been for local law enforcement to fax photos of suspects to other cities with Vietnamese populations, even as far away as Toronto or Seattle. Because the officers and data processors are often unfamiliar with the names and confused over the structure of the names, (first, last, etc.), a database search may miss an important connection.

What, then, should school personnel watch out for?

- Vietnamese teen-agers who have been kicked out of their homes, or who live with other teen-agers.
- possession of any filed-off Toyota keys or flat pieces of metal.

(continued on back page)

- youth who are failing in school and often truant.
- youth who "drop in" and "drop out" of school.
- youth who have been subjected to harrassment, especially of a racial type, and who have little recourse through the legitimate problem-solving processes at school (retaliation attacks may follow the "hasty gang" pattern).

School personnel can adopt some of the officers' techniques, including the use of Polaroid photos of youth on campus without permission, and tape recorders left running as one youth talks to another in Vietnamese. Sometimes, in fact, translations of such conversations reveal mistakes in identity or other misunderstandings.

Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students



\$5.50, plus California tax and \$1.50 shipping/handling. Make check or P.O. payable to Folsom Cordova USD/SEACRC. Mail to SEACRC, 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. Phone (916) 635-6815 for information.

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