



Context:

Southeast Asians & other newcomers in California's classrooms
October 1994, Volume 15, No. 115

Cov lus nug hauv yeej Thojnam Phanat Nikhom, Thaihteb

Questions asked at Phanat Nikhom Refugee Processing Center, Thailand, July 1994

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

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

Join us!

September 22, 1994
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While in Thailand finishing up his doctoral fieldwork, Lue Vang was asked to speak to a group of Hmong refugees—the last group from Ban Vinai Refugee Camp—processing through Phanat Nikhom Reprocessing Center. While the answers he gave might be interesting, the questions themselves allow us “a window to the mind,” insight into the hopes and fears that accompany the final phase of this historic resettlement program.

Yog Hmoob ua Miskas tag lawm lwm hnub le uas 20-30 xyoo tom ntej puas muaj Hmoob nyob teb chaws Miskas thiab Hmoob lub neej yuav muab xaus li cas?

•If Hmong become American citizen, in 20 or 30 years how will Hmong life end up?

Yog vim li cas poj-niam ua hauj-lwm tsaus ntuj?

•Why do Hmong wives work at night?

Xws li cov tsis muaj txiv es mus txog teb-chaws Miskas puas nyuaj?

•Those of us who have no husband,

when we arrive in America is it difficult?

Nej cov tub txawg tub ntse nyob America teb puas pab nrhiav hauj-lwm pub rau peb hauv Hmoob ua kom nrog luag muaj noj muaj haus thiab?

•Those educated Hmong in America, can they help find jobs for us to work so we are like the other people?

Hnov hais tias peb cov Hmoob nyob rau tebchaws US, leejtwg kawm ntawv tau heev, luag cov neeg pheej muab tua los sis muab lom no puas muaj?

•Heard that those educated Hmong in the US, those who have a lot of education, usually are poisoned and die. Is that true? (This may be a reference to “sleep and die” or the “sudden unexplained nocturnal death” syndrome.)

Peb cov menyuam mus kawm ntawv luag muab tshuaj xyaws dej rau haus ces nws thiaj khiav mus ua neeg phem lawm no puas muaj tseeb?

•Our children go to school, the others use medicine mixed with water to drink, and the children run away and become bad. Is that real?



Yog peb tau mus txog tim ub, tau nrog cov daj kawm ntauw no, luag puas thiab luag puas nyam?

•If we get to the US and study with the yellow-haired people, do they reject us or like us?

Cov menyuam Hmoob uas mus yug teb-chaws Miskas es laww loj laww puas txawj hais lus Hmoob thiab laww puas hais tias laww yog Hmoob?

•Hmong children born in the US, when they grow up, do they know that they are Hmong and do they speak Hmong?

Ua cas ho muaj cov Hmoob uas laww ho txiav havi mus ua havi Miskas lawm thiab?

•Why do Hmong become American citizens?

Fhov txim ntau ntau tij-laug xaw nug meentsis teeb-meem. Hais txog tsev nyob, nyob rau teb-chaws USA luag txoj-cai, ib lub tsev no luag tso cai rau ib yim neeg twg nyob tsawg hli?

•Excuse me elder brother, would like to ask you about a little problem. Speaking about housing in America, their rules and regulations, how many months can a family live in a house?

Cov hmoob-nyoog 20 xyoo rov saum lawm, xeem tau, ua yuav kawm qib twg ua ntej?

•Those who are 20 years old when they pass the school entrance test, what grade will they start in?

Peb cov tuaj tom qab luag puas yuav yug peb lawm, tas li peb hnov mas luag hais tias luag yuav tsis yug lawm, no puas muaj thiab los tsis muaj?

•Those of us who come later, as we

heard, that they do not have funding to support us any more. Is that a fact or not?

Hnov hais tias tuaj mus Miskas, yuav tau ua tsoq no puas muaj, yog muaj ho hais rau peb paub thiab no?

•Heard that come to America, will be a soldier in war. Tell us if this is true or untrue.

Keo cai dab-qhuas Miskas coj li cas? Keo cai lij-choj coj li cas? Lub neej thaim kawg uas nyob Miskas tsis muaj neeg thoj-nam nyob Thaibteb lawm yuav zoo li cas?

•What are American beliefs (religion, tradition)? What is the country's law? Hmong life in America when there is no Hmong refugee in Thailand, what will it be like?

Peb cov C.87 yog cov kawg rau lub yeej no lawm, peb mus lig rau peb thiab los tsis lig?

•We are C-87 group (the last refugee group in the processing center). If we go to America, is it too late for us or not?

Peb yog cov miam, peb thiab nyob txog tau no, ua kawg los yog xaus rau lub yeej no. Yog peb mus Miskas ne peb puas yuav nrhiav tau noj thiab los tsis tau?

•We are uneducated, therefore we have stayed until now in these camps. If we go to America can we find a job or not?

Peb lub neej nyob Miskas tom ntej no yuav zoo li cas?

•Our Hmong life in America, what will it be like in the future?

Xaw paub hais tias teb-chaws Miskas

*nyob sab ntuj twg, los nyob rau hnub
tuaj lossis nyob rau sab hnub poob?*

Thov koj tus ua tij qhia rau peb paub.

•Would like to know American country is at what part of the world, the east or the west? Please tell us so we will know.

*Ua li ne peb tsis mus Miskas no puas
zoo rau peb los tsis zoo, thov qhia rau
peb paub thiab?*

•Suppose we don't go to America, is it good for us or not? Please tell us so we will know.

*Cov quas puj vim le caag cov txiv neej
moog nrug quas puj pw es nwg yuav
kom yug them nyaj, yug maam tau
nrug nwg pw nua puas muaj hab los
tsis muaj nua os?*

•Those women that a man goes to sleep with, he has to pay before he can sleep with her (even his wife). Is that a fact?

*Kuv xaav noog txug has tas yog yug
moog lig-lig es luas puas yuav yug
lawm, xaav thov noog qhov nuav?*

•I want to ask when we go late, do they still support us? I really want to know.

Muaj miv nyuas coob puas zoo thiab?

•Have many children, is it good?

*Zoo siab ntau uas kuv tau ntsib koj.
Kuv thov koj pab qhia txog ntawm kev
mus America uas ntawm kuv, vim yog
kuv ib leeg xwb, kuv tsis paub hais tias
yog thaum txog tim America yuav ua li
cas, li cas rau kuv. Kuv yuav mus nyob
li cas rau li cas? Thiab thov koj tus ua
tij los yog ua niam ua txiv pab qhia pub
rau kuv yog thaum kuv mus txog tid
kuv yuav ua hauj-lwm rau li cas thiab
kuv xav kom koj qhia meej rau kuv*

*thiab? Vam thiab cia siab tias koj yuav
pab thiab.*

•Happy to meet you. I ask you about going to America because I am alone. I don't know when I get there, what will I do? How will I live? Would you please explain to me what kind of job I will do in America. Hope you will help me (to understand).

*Vim li cas tus poj-niam khiav mus
yuav tus tod lawm cia yus
nyob xwb, yog li cas tiag?*

•Why does the wife run away to marry someone else and leave you alone? Why, really?

*Kuv xaa paub tas ua caag peb cov
Hmoob moog nrug luas ua laib?*

•I want to know why Hmong join gangs.

*Ua caag Lavthabnpaas Meskas twb has
tas tsis muaj nyaj lug yug peb cov
Hmoob lawm nua es puas muaj tag?
Kuv xaav paub.*

•Why does the US government say that they don't have money to support the Hmong? Is that true? I want to know.

*Kuv xaav paub zoo le peb cov nyam
qhuav moog nuav luas yuav yug pig
tsawv hli?*

•I want to understand: those of us just now go to the US, how many months will they provide assistance?

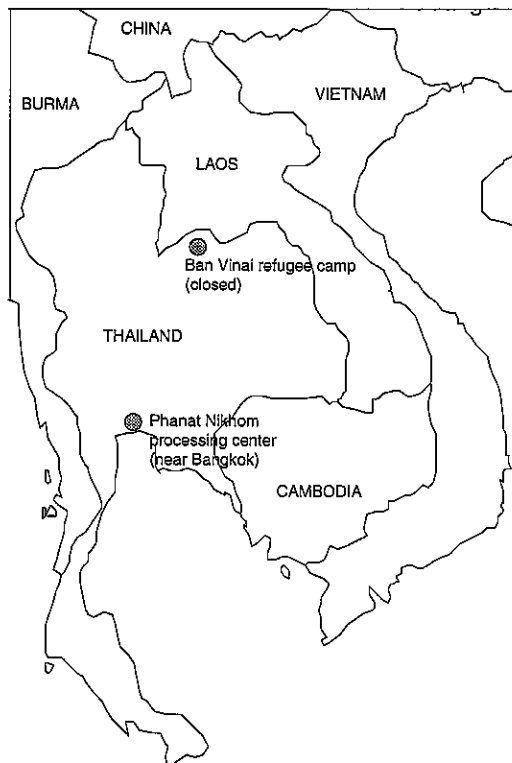
*Yog vim li cas peb cov Hmoob mus
nyob rau Meskas pheet pawv tsev (chaw
nyob) heev?*

•Why do those Hmong in America change house so often?

Kuv xav paub hais tias yog ua li cas

The English translation retains as much of the original structure as possible. Notice the style of politeness, the open-ended nature of the questions, and the way in which topics begin a thought (for example: "have many children, is it good?")

Some of the questions are asked by White Hmong, some by Green Hmong. There's a difference in the way words are written (for example: WH-'thiab', GH-'hab'; WH-'xav', GH-'xaav').



Hmoob cov tsheb uas Hmoob tsav pheej raug neeg muaj tsoo, xav paub heev thiaj nug koj?

•I want to know why Hmong cars have been hit more than other people's cars. I really want to know, so I ask you.

Excuse me I would like you to tell about American culture and about American society; would you kindly illustrate for us? (Written in English.)

Raws li hnov mas tias cov hnoob-nyoog uas 20-21 xyoos tsis tau kawm ntawv mus qib siab, yog thiaj xav paub ua puas muaj tiag?

•According to what we hear, those aged 20-21 years old did not have a chance to go to school (higher education). Is that true or not?

Nyob Meskas yog kawm lus Meskas kom tiao no yuav ntev npaum li cas thiab puas tau haujlwm uas raws li siab xav?

•In America if you want to study English to the finish, it will take how long, and can we get a job that "follows the heart's wish"?

Nyob Meskas muaj cai lij-choj rau poj niam txiv neej. Poj niam muaj cai foob tau txiv neej yam tsis muaj kev txhaum dabtsi li no puas muaj tseeb?

•In America there are laws about wives and husbands so that the wife can sue the husband without reason, is that true?

Yog hais tias cov tub ntshais hluas uas hnoobnyoog muaj 17-18 xyoo no lawm es yuav mus rau Meskas no ua li yuav tau kawm ntawv li cas thiab vim li cas lawv ho muab txiav nyiaj?

•If those boys and girls aged 17-18 years arrive in America can they go to

school? Why do they cut off their assistance?

Yog vim li cas tus pojniam ho khiav mus yuav tus tod lawm cia yus nyob xwb es txawm yus hais npaum li cas los nws yeej tsis yuav, yog vim li cas qhov no?

•Why do wives run away to marry someone else, leave you alone, even though you try to reconcile but she can't. Why does this happen?

Hais txog cov tub kawm ntawv uas txawj ntse nyob rau txawv tebchaws mas tau muaj tus puav tau raug luag muab khoom lwm yam koj los rau rau hauv nws lub cev kom nws muaj mob es kom nws raug puas tus neeg ntawv no es puas muaj?

•The educated Hmong who live in a different country, then there are some who had something put inside their body that will cause sickness so eventually he will become disabled, is that true?

Vim li cas cov neeg tuag nyob rau sab tid Meskas ho yog cov neeg txawjntse xwb?

•Why is it that those people who die in America are the educated ones?

Peb lub neej Hmoob nyob rau txawv tebchaws ne txog thaum kawg yuav zoo li cas?

•Hmong life in a different country what will the outcome be?

Yog le caag Meskas ho tsis pub peb paam cov laug kws taag sim neeg lawm le kws nyob rua peb tebchaws es muab koj moog paam rua ib lub tsev xwb?

•Why does America not let us to do our funerals at home and they have to put the body in a place where there are all kinds of people?

Zoo le kuv nuav es muab nam txiv tso

tseg taag rua teb chaws nua es kuv moog txug tim Meskas puas yuav zoo hab los tsis zoo?

•Suppose like me, I leave my parents in this country and go to America. Is it good or not?

Hnov hais tias yim tibneeg twg coob txog li ntawm 10 leej lawm nrhiav tseem nyob nyuaj heev no puas muaj thiab?

•Heard that a family with ten members or more have a difficult time finding a house to live. Is that true?

Vim yog yuav rov los rov tsis tau, yuav ua txoj twg los ua tsis tau; tuaj mus Meskas los xam tsis pom lub neej yuav xaus qhootwg, thiab lig lawm luag yuav tsis yug nyiaj. Koj yog tus mus nyob ntev ntev lawm, koj pab qhia ib txoj kev seb peb yuav ua li cas tau?

•I can't go back, but I can not choose to go forward. Going to America I don't see much for life anywhere, and it's too late, they won't provide much assistance. You are the one who lived long in America, tell us what we should do that will be good for us.

Hais txog peb cov mus tom qab no tus nom tswv Meskas tsis yug lawm ais peb yuav ua li cas nrhiav tau noj, qhov tseem ceeb yog tsis paub ntawv?

•Talk about those of us who go to America late. There will not be much assistance. What jobs will we find? The truth is that we are illiterate.

Hais txog kev nyob hauv Phanat Nikhom no lawv yuav yuam sawv daws kom kuaj plawv xwb; qhov no yog li cas tiag?

•Talk about life in Phanat Nikhom, they ask us to check our heart (blood pressure cuff). Why is this?

Hais txog kev nyob Meskas mas muaj tub

sab heev mas yog tub sab tuaj ua phem rau yus ais yog yus tua no yus haj tseem txhaum thiab no yog Meskas tso ua los yog li cas tiag?

•Talk about life in America, there are many thieves who come to take our things, and we kill the thief but we are still at fault. Do Americans let them steal this way?

Peb hnov tias peb cov Hmoob nyob tim teb chaws Meskas cov poj niam muaj txiv nyob teb chaws nplog mus yuav txiv mas Vaj Pov sau \$1,000 dauslas no puas muaj?

•We hear that Hmong wife in America whose husband is in Laos and the wife marries someone in America, does Vang Pao collect \$1,000 penalty from the new husband?

Cov poj niam muaj txiv deev hluas nraug mas tsis pub tus txiv hais, yog hais tseem muab mus kaw thiab no puas muaj?

•The wives who have affairs with another man, the husband can't say anything, if he says something, he goes to jail. Is that true?

Cas tub ntshais sib yuav mas sau \$6,000 dauslas no puas muaj? Peb cov Hmoob ua laib no puas muaj? Cov Hmoob mob ej heev no puas muaj? Muaj cov poj niam mus raws dev ua no puas muaj? Meskas tuaj yuav luag tej poj niam mus ib ntus xa rov qab tuaj, yog yus tsis yuav tseem muab yus kaw kom yus yug nws thiab no puas muaj?

•Do the parents of the daughter who marries collect \$6,000, is that true? Are Hmong really joining gangs? Lots of Hmong have "a" (AIDS), is it true? Americans come to take our wives for a while and then send them back, and if the husband does not take her back, then they will still take us to jail, is it true?

Questions as windows to the mind:

•What are the major concerns of these Hmong (mostly men) refugees?

•How do their concerns make sense, in terms of what they know about the world?

•How do the Hmong—for whom group cohesiveness is important—reinforce norm-like behavior?

(Not many Hmong in Laos or Thailand have gone to college. Being highly educated is a desirable goal, but at the same time, education makes one different from the norm. What happens to those who are too different?)

•What kinds of conflict does this produce for American-reared Hmong?

(They are taught in a thousand ways—explicitly and implicitly—to pursue their dreams and fulfill their individual potentials.)

•How will beliefs about becoming highly educated change?

•How will beliefs about appropriate behavior for women change?

•Why are there so many questions about government assistance?

(Keep in mind their recent history: subsistence farmers; traders of livestock, salt, or opium for iron, cloth, thread, radios, tin roofs, motorcycles, or silver; soldiers in exchange for cash; refugees supported by international organizations.)

How might Americans misinterpret this concern with survival?

•How do these questions reveal what people have heard about America?

•Why did some Hmong stay in the camps for nearly 20 years, rather than emigrate to America?

•What conflicts can you predict once these Hmong arrive in America? How can educators help resolve conflicts?

Empowering Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Learning Problems.

(ERIC Digest #E500). ED333622.ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Va. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. EDO-EC-91-5 1991

A positive attitude and a positive self-concept are necessary ingredients for achieving maximum learning potential. A program that accepts and respects the language and culture of its students empowers them to feel confident enough to risk getting involved in the learning process, which includes making mistakes. This digest describes ways in which professionals who work with culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities can create such an educational climate.

Incorporate minority students' language and culture into the school program

The extent to which their language and culture are incorporated into the school program is significantly related to students' academic success (Campos & Keatinge, 1988; Cummins, 1984, 1989; Willig, 1985). In programs in which minority students' first-language skills are strongly reinforced, the students tend to be more successful. Students' English skills do not suffer as a result of less English instruction because there is considerable transfer of cognitive and academic skills across languages. Thus, students who have learned to read in Spanish in a bilingual program do not have to learn to read all over again when instruction begins in English (Ada, 1988). Educa-

tors who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to students' repertoires are likely to empower them more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture in the process of fostering their assimilation into the dominant culture. The following is a list of ways schools can create a climate that is welcoming to minority families and, at the same time, promotes children's pride in their linguistic talents (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988, p. 14):

- Reflect the various cultural groups in the school district by providing signs in the main office and elsewhere that welcome people in the different languages of the community.
- Encourage students to use their first language around the school.
- Provide opportunities for students from the same ethnic group to communicate with one another in their first language where possible (e.g., in cooperative learning groups on at least some occasions).
- Recruit people who can tutor students in their first language. Provide books written in the various languages in classrooms and the school library.
- Incorporate greetings and information in the various languages in newsletters and other official school communications.
- Provide bilingual and/or multilingual signs.
- Display pictures and objects of the various cultures represented at the school.
- Create units of work that incorporate other languages in addition to the school language.
- Encourage students to write contributions in their first language for school newspapers and magazines.
- Provide opportunities for students to study their first language in elective subjects and/or in extracurricular clubs.
- Encourage parents to help in the classroom, library, playground, and in clubs.
- Invite students to use their first language during assemblies, prizegivings, and other official functions.
- Invite people from minority groups to act as resource people and to speak to students in both formal and informal settings.

Encourage minority community participation as an integral component of children's education

When educators involve parents from minority groups as partners in their children's education, the parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to their children and has positive academic consequences. Most parents of children from minority groups have high academic aspirations for their children and want to be involved in promoting their academic progress (Wong Fillmore, 1983).

However, they often do not know how to help their children academically, and they are excluded from participation by the school. Dramatic changes in children's school progress can be realized when educators take the initiative to change this exclu-

sonary pattern to one of collaboration. A collaborative orientation may require a willingness on the part of the teacher to work closely with teachers or aides proficient in the mother tongue in order to communicate effectively and in a non-condescending way with parents from minority groups (Ada, 1988).

Allow students to become active generators of their own knowledge

There are two major orientations in pedagogy: the transmission model and the interactive/experiential model. These differ in the extent to which the teacher retains exclusive control over classroom interaction as opposed to sharing some of this control with students. The basic premise of the transmission model is that the teacher's task is to impart knowledge or skills to students who do not yet have these skills. This implies that the teacher initiates and controls the interaction, constantly orienting it toward the achievement of instructional objectives.

A central tenet of the interactive/experiential model is that talking and writing are means to learning (Bullock Report, 1975, p. 50). Its major characteristics, as compared to a transmission model, are as follows:

- Genuine dialogue between student and teacher in both oral and written modalities.
- Guidance and facilitation rather than control of student learning by the teacher.
- Encouragement of student-student talk in a collaborative learning context.
- Encouragement of meaningful language use by students rather than correctness of surface forms.
- Conscious integration of language use and development with all curricular content rather than teaching language and other content as isolated subjects.
- A focus on developing higher level cognitive skills rather than factual recall.
- Task presentation that generates intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.
- Student involvement in curriculum planning, teaching students to understand learning styles.

In short, pedagogical approaches that empower students encourage them to assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and collaborate actively with each other in achieving these goals. The instruction is automatically culture-fair in that all students are actively involved in expressing, sharing, and amplifying their experiences within the classroom. Recent research on effective teaching strategies for bilingual students with disabilities supports the adoption of interactive/experiential models of pedagogy (Swedo, 1987; Willig, Swedo, & Ortiz, 1987).

Use an advocacy orientation in the assessment process

Recent studies suggest that despite the appearance of change brought about by legislation such as Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, psychologists continue to test children until they find the disability that could be invoked to explain the student's apparent academic difficulties (Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1986). What is required to reverse the so-called le-

gitimizing function of assessment can be termed an advocacy orientation. To challenge the labeling of students from minority groups as disabled, assessment must focus on (a) the extent to which children's language and culture are incorporated into the school program, (b) the extent to which educators collaborate with parents in a shared enterprise, and (c) the extent to which children are encouraged to use both their first and second languages actively in the classroom to amplify their experiences in interaction with other children and adults. It is essential that assessment go beyond psychoeducational considerations and take into account the child's entire learning environment.

The major goal of the intervention model discussed here is to prevent academic casualties among students from minority groups. The principles of empowerment pedagogy are equally applicable to all programs for students from minority groups, regardless of whether they are designated bilingual education, bilingual special education, or some other form of program. In fact, students from minority groups who are experiencing learning difficulties and have been referred for special education have a particular need for empowerment pedagogy and can benefit considerably from such approaches (Swedo, 1987).

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Prepared by Jim Cummins

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Recalling Magic of their Old Names

Andrew Lam

CUC, Hoang, Mai-Xuan, Thanh, Hong-Van, Dung, Thanh-Thach, Phat.

What are these? Names. Vietnamese names. What in our language suggest shades of clouds and cool of jades are, under the harsh American tongue, twisted into a cough, a grunt, a funny word, a diphthong.

In Louis Carroll's "Through The Looking Glass," Alice says, upon entering a strange wood: "I wonder what'll become of MY name when I go in? I shouldn't like to lose it at all . . . because they would have to give me another, and it would almost certainly be an ugly one." Unfortunately, our own Vietnamese names are turned ugly in this new American forest decorated with neon lights, computers, microwaves and a million other fantastical knick knacks.

When we arrive, we find our own names often mispronounced, misspelled, and misunderstood, the magic snatched out of them like a candle flame in the storm. My name Dung, for example, pronounced "You-houng" (depicting bravery and strength), is alas but animal excrement when pronounced in English. "Lamb Dung" my classmates used to tease me as they giggled.

Ngoc, my sister, had a hard time trying to convince her high school friends that her name meant jade and precious gem, not a cry from some confounded tree frog. Van, Truc, Trang—meaning Cloud, Bamboo, and Elegance — the three pretty girls who often walked together down their high school hallway suffered constant pestering from classmates who would yell: "Look out! Here come a Train, a Truck, and a Van."

Van, Truc, and Trang wandered into "Vogue" and "Mademoiselle" magazines one summer and emerged Yvonne, Theresa, and Tania. They even looked different, wearing more fashionable clothes and make-up. Ngoc was dubbed Nancy when our landlord and neighbor, after having tried in vain to pronounce her name, threw up his hairy arms and said, "Never mind! Let's call you Nancy, as in Nancy Wong, the actress."

Thus like street urchins in a strange land, we children of Vietnam gather our new identities from anything deemed worthy: milk cartons, fashion magazines, even flustered neighbors. For deep in our psyche there murmurs the assurance that we will be accepted by Americans with our new American alias. Our American names give us the illusion or the assurance of being Americans, part of this country.

And over the seasons, through the years, many of us come to embody the Andrew, Nancy—those identities to which we once failed to respond when called. It is Andrew now who claims credit for this essay. Nancy, the once shy girl, is involved in local politics. Our dreams, our ambitions—how readily we function in the new society opened to us by our new names.

But what of the old ones? What of the clouds and jades and brave of hearts? In our language, their meanings are safe-kept. But more, I should like to think that their magic is instilled in us; in us who must adapt and change, but who still remember and cherish the iridescent clouds and cool of jades.

DATE: Sunday, March 26, 1989 PAGE: 8C SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, SECTION: Perspective SOURCE: By ANDREW LAM. MEMO: Andrew Lam, a Vietnamese who came to the United States in the mid-1970s, studies creative writing at San Francisco State University. He wrote this article for Pacific News Service.

Human themes

THANKSGIVING. Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November in the United States and on the second Monday in October in Canada. There are also Thanksgiving holidays celebrated every year in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Laos, Liberia, Puerto Rico, Guam, Grenada, and the Virgin Islands.

As celebrated in the United States, Thanksgiving was originally a **harvest festival**, one of the oldest and most widespread of celebrations. The American holiday commemorates a harvest celebration held by the Pilgrims of Plymouth colony in 1621.

The Pilgrims had come ashore from the *Mayflower* on December 21, 1620. Soon after the Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts, they met an Indian of the Pawtuxet tribe named Squanto. Squanto befriended them, taught them how to survive in their new wilderness home, showed them how to plant crops, and acted as an interpreter with the Wampanoag tribe and its chief, Massasoit.

The winter had been heartbreaking. Only about half the original group had survived. Fortunately the harvest was good. There were 20 acres (8 hectares) of the strange Indian corn, for which the Indians had furnished seeds. There was also barley and plenty of meat. Governor William Bradford sent four men to hunt for fowl. They returned with enough waterfowl and wild turkeys to last a week. Fishermen brought in cod and bass. Indian hunters contributed five deer. Ninety Indians, with their chief, Massasoit, feasted with the colonists for three days.

The date of the feast is not known. Bradford wrote in his history "Of Plimoth Plantation" that on September 18 some men set out in a small boat for Massachusetts Bay to trade with the Indians. The harvest was gathered after they returned. The feast must have occurred before December 11. It was described in a letter written on that date by Edward Winslow.

There is also no record that the feast was called a "thanksgiving." Appointing certain days for giving special thanks was a custom of the Puritans, but the first record of such a day was two years later in 1623. Then the Pilgrims "set apart a day of thanksgiving" for rain that ended a terrible drought.

Thanksgiving days following harvests later came to be celebrated throughout the New England Colonies but on different and varying dates. Later the custom was kept alive by proclamations of state governors.

Sarah Josepha Hale believed that Thanksgiving should be a national patriotic holiday. For the date she chose the last Thursday in November because on the last Thursday of that month in 1789 (November 26) George Washington had proclaimed a National Thanksgiving Day in honor of the new United States.

•What happened to Squanto?

•What happened to the Pawtuxet and the Wampanoag tribes?

•The Hmong share with the Indian groups an oral history, and beliefs about the world that incorporate events in a way that makes sense to them. Imagine: What kinds of questions might the Pawtuxet and the Wampanoag tribes have asked after their early encounters with the colonists?

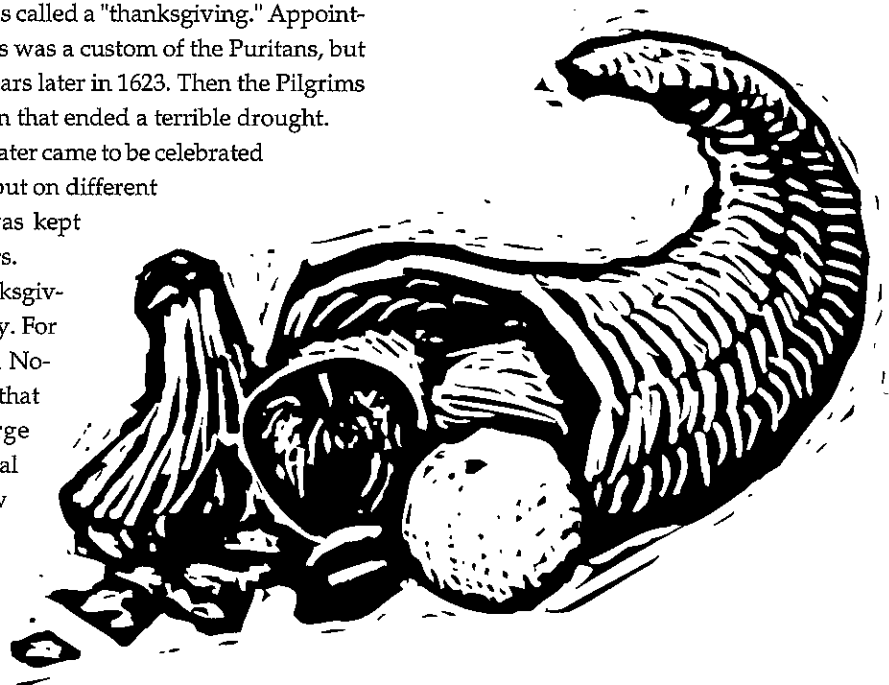
•Interview some older Hmong. How did the Hmong interact with the first Europeans who came into their mountain villages (first the French, then the Americans)?



Thanksgiving—literally, thanking those responsible for getting something valuable. Humans everywhere have beliefs about why good things happen, why bad things happen. Rituals develop to increase the good, decrease the bad. Among those rituals are thanksgiving.

Take a look at the ways that human groups survive in a hostile environment, from the least dependence on technology to the most: gathering, hunting, cultivation, livestock,

(continues)



Human themes

(from previous page)

bartering, purchasing. Gatherers and hunters give thanks for natural abundance; farmers and ranchers give thanks for favorable conditions; traders and purchasers give thanks for having earned enough to exchange for food. Human groups differ in the reasons they give for getting the good, and the excuses they have for bearing the bad. Human groups also differ in the details of their thanks. Whether it's expressing gratitude or performing actions that are believed to be causally related to getting the good, rituals are observable expressions of belief systems.

Thanksgiving rituals are often tied to the harvest season or the initiation of a new annual season. In many cultures, they are the "new year" observances. Thus, Hmong New Year, which occurs between November and December on the Western calendar, is more closely related to American Thanksgiving than it is to the January 1st New Year. Chinese, Vietnamese, Mien, and Korean New Year, which occurs between January and February, is also analogous to Thanksgiving. Cambodian, Lao, and Thai New Year, which occurs in mid-April, is tied to the coming of the rainy season.



Etiquette Around the World

Rules of etiquette have varied all over the world at different times in history. The customs dealing with hospitality furnish good examples of this.

To early man, hospitality meant sharing food and shelter with friends or strangers. This has remained one of the chief ways of expressing friendship. Among the Bedouin Arabs, for example, it is considered ill-mannered and insulting to ride up to a man's tent without stopping to eat with him. A ceremony of hospitality among the Bedouin is the coffee-brewing ritual. The host always makes a fresh pot, using elaborate utensils which are handed down from father to son. Another such ritual is the chanoyu, or tea ceremony, of Japan. **What are the expectations of hosts and guests in different groups represented in your class (or school or community)?**

Many other rituals have been used to make guests feel welcome. Early Greeks gave salt to a guest as a symbol of hospitality. Arabs poured melted butter on the hands of their guests to refresh them. In Arab lands today, a guest must be careful not to admire his host's possessions, because if he does the host will offer them to him. Among the North American Indians, smoking a tobacco pipe, the calumet, was the chief ritual of hospitality. Passing around the calumet became a feature of tribal gatherings for making peace or forging alliances. **What are rituals of greeting among groups represented in your class (or school or community)? How do the phrases of greeting translate literally? Are there commonalities?**

Table manners evolved along with the development of hospitality. The ancient Greeks did not use knives, forks, or spoons for eating. They used their fingers to eat solid foods, which were cut into small pieces before being served. They drank liquids directly from vessels or sopped them up with bread. The Romans did not use individual plates but took food with their fingers directly from the platters. The Egyptians also shared a common dish. **What are different ways of serving and eating food among groups represented in your class (or school or community)?**

The Chinese traditionally use chopsticks to eat solid foods, which are prepared in small pieces. In addition to their normal use during a meal, chopsticks may be used to send a signal to the host. Placing them across the top of a bowl is a sign that the guest wishes to leave the table. **What are other "chopstick messages"?**

Table knives and forks were uncommon in Europe as late as the 17th century. People carried their own knives, which they took out and used whenever large portions of food were served. Today the use of the knife and fork varies in different countries. In the United States, the knife is held in the right hand and the fork in the left. After the food is cut, the knife is put down and the fork is transferred to the right hand. In most European countries the fork remains in the left hand. **What are "unwritten rules" about the use of knives in different groups? Why is it a bad idea to give a knife as a gift in England? Is this true in any other groups? Find proverbs and idioms that use the image of knives or cutting.**

(Information downloaded via America Online from Compton's Encyclopedia. Since there are very few curricular materials that take a "cultural comparison" approach to thematic lessons, teachers need to have quick access to bits of information from which interconnections can be built. Online or CD references help fill this need.)

Human themes

Thanks

French	merci
Spanish	gracias
German	danke
Portuguese	obrigado (masculine) obrigada (feminine)
Italian	grazie ('z' = 'ts')
Swedish	tack
Danish	takk
Norwegian	takk
Dutch	dank U wel ('w' = 'v')
Greek	efharistó
Hebrew	todah rabah
Turkish	tesekkür
Swahili	asanti
Russian	spasíba
Polish	dziekuje ('e'='en')
Hungarian	köszönöm
Rumanian	multumesc ('t'='ts')
Arabic	shukran
Korean	komapsúmuida
Thai	khop khun
Indonesian	terima kasih
Malay	terima kasih
Hindi	danyavad shukria
Urdu	danyavad shukria
Japanese	arigato
Cantonese	doh shieh ('doh'=short flat tone; 'shieh'= high falling, 'sh'='j')
Vietnamese	cám ơn ông (to an elder male) cám ơn bà (to an elder female) cám ơn chị (to a slightly older female) cám ơn anh (to a slightly older male) cám ơn em (to younger female or male)
Hmong	ua tsaug ('ua'=mid tone; 'tsaug'=low breathy tone, 'ts'='j')
Lao	khop chai
Thai	khop khun kap (by a male) khop khun kaa (by a female)
Mien	laengz zingh ('z'='rising/falling tone; 'h'='high falling tone)
Ukrainian	dya koo you
Armenian	schnor ha ka lu schun "u"="oo")

A disclaimer: the above words of thanks are not guaranteed...some are from Berlitz, some from friends, some over the phone...plus, transliterating non-roman alphabets (like Armenian, Lao) results in weird approximations in English. Use it as a starting point, and find out how many ways there are to give thanks in your school or community. Send in what you find, and I'll update this list.

Berlitz, in *Native Tongues*, says that English is the only language in which the personal pronoun 'I' is capitalized, and that a few other languages (like Spanish), it is the word for 'you' that is capitalized. How interesting....

corn dance

The term corn dance is applied to certain rituals of many Indian tribes of North America. Corn, traditionally a sacred plant to many Indians, needs plentiful rain to grow, and the dances are intended to induce rain, to promote fertility, or to thank the gods for the harvest. Corn dance rituals are associated especially with tribes of the arid Southwest, where Indians such as the Hopi and Zuni originally farmed without irrigation and thus were entirely dependent upon rain for the germination and growth of their crops. Among tribes of the southeastern United States, such as the Chickasaw and the Creek, the green corn dance, in celebration of the early harvest, was the most important ritual.

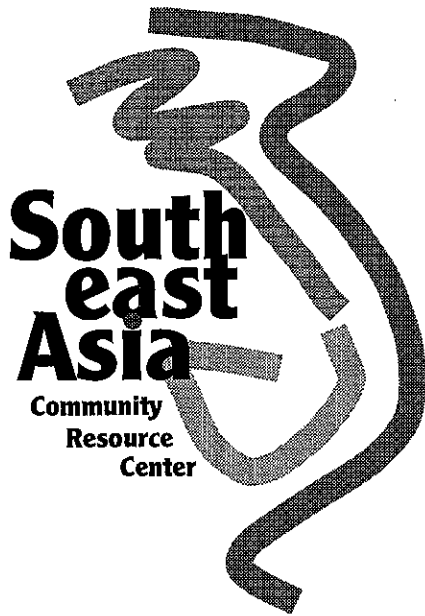


Eating...

- Which groups of people depend on **corn** as a dietary staple?
- What are different ways that corn can be prepared for eating?
- Which groups depend on **rice**?
- What are different ways that rice can be prepared for eating?
- Which groups depend on **wheat**?
- What are ways that wheat can be prepared for eating?
- Which **forms** of food are similar? (For example: flat cooked pieces used to wrap up other food—tortilla, crepe, rice paper, pita, bread...).

Feasting...

- What foods are special and used for feasting in different groups?
- What is the symbolism of foods used in feasting (begin by interviewing Chinese or Jewish, whose foods contain a lot of symbolism).
- What are taboo (forbidden) foods in different cultures?



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