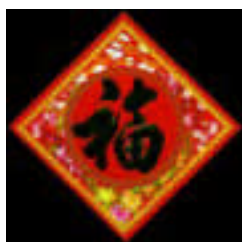


Context:

Newcomers in California's classrooms
Volume 21, No. 144, December 2000/January, 2001

Year of the Snake, 4699



Last year was the Year of the (Golden) Dragon, which occurs once every 60 years. Chinese families wanted to have children in the year that comes to an end

January 23, 2001. Districts with large Chinese populations will probably want to project an enrollment bulge for kindergarten in four more years. However, Chinese friends say that no one really wants a baby with the “head of a dragon, tail of a snake,” one begun in the year of the dragon, born in the year of the snake.

(This, metaphorically, also applies to undertakings begun with great noisy fanfare that come to a disappointing finish.)

Snake people, born in 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, and 2001, are wise and intense, attractive, vain, and high-tempered. The most compatible people are those born in the year of the ox (1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997) or rooster (1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993). People best avoided are those born in the year of the pig (1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995).

This is the year of the metal snake (there are five cycles for each animal sign: metal, water, wood, fire, and earth). Those born in the metal snake years (1941, 2001) are determined, ambitious, independent, and successful. They are unlikely to take big risks, but will take advantage of financial opportu-

nities. They don't express their feelings, but rather demonstrate their emotions directly through their actions; this makes them seem cool and distant. They are artistic, especially in art and music.

There are also four seasons for each animal; this year's snake is the “Snake Sleeping in Winter.” Success this year will depend on preparation. This snake year is associated with hardships and difficulties that must be overcome. Success in this snake year requires firm focus on goals, but a quick eye to see the immediate obstacles that get in the way. Friends and family will be an important asset. There is also a danger of excessive behavior this year, so successful snakes must use their natural abilities to maintain bal-



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SNAKE (noun)

Middle English, from Old English *snaca*; akin to Old Norse *snakr*, Old High German *snahhan* to crawl (before 12th century).

- any of numerous limbless scaled reptiles (suborder Serpentes syn. Ophidia) with a long tapering body and with salivary glands often modified to produce venom which is injected through grooved or tubular fangs
- a worthless or treacherous fellow.
- something (as a plumber's snake) resembling a snake.

SNAKE-LIKE (adjective)

SNAKE (verb), 1653. *snaked*; *snaking*

- to wind (as one's way) in the manner of a snake
- to move (as logs) by dragging
- to crawl, move, or extend silently, secretly, or sinuously

SERPENT (noun)

SERPENTINE (adjective)

The following contain "snake" (useful for classifying activities with English learners)

bull snake
 chicken snake, rat snake
 coral snake
 garter snake
 glass snake
 gopher snake
 indigo snake
 bull snake
 green snake
 hog-nose snake, puff adder
 king snake
 milk snake
 pine snake
 plumber's snake
 sea snake
 snake charmer
 snake dance
 snake doctor
 snake fence
 snake in the grass
 snake oil
 snake pit
 water snake
 Snake River
 Snake Range

ance.

Activities during the Spring Festival (beginning with the lunar new year on January 24, 2001 and ending two weeks later with the Lantern Festival) focus on ensuring good fortune for the upcoming year. Red and gold predominate; black and white are avoided. Good thoughts and kind acts set the tone, and sour moods and angry words must be avoided especially on the first day of the new year. Foods have symbolic meanings. Children (unmarried adults, too) receive red envelopes of money from relatives. Families spend time to honor ancestors, to respect elders, and to ensure an auspicious first visitor across the threshold. Fireworks keep evil spirits away, the houses are cleaned, and old debts are paid.

Proverbial snakes

One of the features of the "year of" issue of *Context* is a crosscultural look at the animal of the year. Proverbs contain good information about how a culture attributes human characteristics to the animal, and comparison of proverbial lessons from different cultural groups helps identify common beliefs and themes. Below are a few snake proverbs.

One quick idea for a lesson is to enlarge the proverbs on the copy machine, cut them apart, and pass them out to students. The object for each student to find as many others as s/he can that teach the same idea or lesson. (This would also be a good ice-breaker at a staff inservice.)

Because understanding proverbs develop skills of abstraction (figurative vs. literal meaning), this activity relates well to the California standards and SAT objectives that call for students to comprehend implicit meaning in text.

This activity can also be extended into the home, with students collecting other examples from family and community. Asking students to present the proverb in the native language allows for a rare moment of respect from peers for multilingual skills, and delivers a strong message of inclusion. It's also

best to ask for a literal word-by-word translation, if possible, then work as a group to arrive at a rendition that sounds natural in English but stays close to the original meaning.

Finally, a year-long or school-wide activity could be locating other proverbs that carry the same meaning, creating connections, on a big wall in the cafeteria or front office. A few equivalent proverbs have been inserted to get you started.

“A snake does not bite a man without cause. (Ashanti)
 [Where there's smoke, there's fire.]

“A snake is not killed by its own poison (Lebanese)

“The snake does not bite itself (Turkish)

“A snake rears snakes (Iranian)
 [An acorn falls close to the tree.]
 [You can't make a silk purse from a sow's ear.] [Plant cucumbers, get cucumbers.]

“A snake may enter a bamboo tube, but it will still wriggle. (Chinese)

“Big snakes do not live in the same hole (Ovambo)
 [Too many cooks spoil the broth.]

“Don't play with a snake offspring as though it could never bite (Annang)

“Don't trouble a quiet snake (Greek)

“Press not the tail of a sleeping snake (Turkish)

“He who has been bitten by a snake fears a decayed rope (Japanese)

“He who has been bitten by a snake is afraid of an end of a rope. (Arabic)

“He who has been bitten by a snake fears a piece of string (Iranian)

“He who has been bitten by a snake is afraid of an eel. (Danish)

“He who has been bitten by a snake is afraid of lizards. (Serbo-Croatian)

“He who is bitten by a snake fears a lizard (Buganda)

“Who has been bitten by a snake dreads even earthworms (Russian)

“If a snake bites your neighbor you too are in trouble. (Swahili)

“One does not follow a snake into its hole. (Zulu)

“One little arrow does not kill a snake. (Malawi)

“A snake that you can see does not bite. (Mozambique)

“The snake grows with every repetition of the story. (Filipino)

“The snake that wishes to live does not travel on the highway. (Haitian)

“Warm up a frozen snake and she will bite you first. (Armenian)

“When the snake is old the frog will tease him. (Iranian)

“Khiav nab ntsib qav, khiav dab ntsib tog cav; Khiav tog cav zom pas av. (Hmong)

Run-snake-meet-frog; run-ghost-meet-log; run-log-stuck in mud

(You can't outrun your troubles.)

Mythical snakes

Snakes tend to symbolize the dual powers of nature, or the dreaded parts of life. Their abilities to kill with a single bite (power), to shed their skins (rebirth, creation), and the lack of blinking eyelids (entrancement) can be seen in myths from various cultures.

Greek and Roman myths are full of snakes of power. Mercury breaks up two battling snakes with his staff. The two snakes then wrap themselves around the staff. This became a symbol for peace, and is the emblem of the medical profession. Eurydice was killed by snakebite on her wedding day. Laocoon and his two sons were killed by Minerva's serpents. Hercules killed two of Hera's serpents while an infant. Python was a serpent that dwelt in the caves of Mount Parnassus and was slain by Apollo, who

then either founded the sacred oracle at Delphi or took it over from Python's guardianship. Apollo killed Python with his arrows, which he had only before been used against small animals. Cadmus battled a horrific serpent and eventually killed it by impaling it in the mouth on his spear. Medusa, in Greek myth, was part snake; her hair was a nest of writhing snakes, and if a man looked at her, he would turn to stone.

In the Bible, the snake tempts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It symbolizes Satan. Catholic Saint Patrick is said to have driven all the snakes (evil) out of Ireland.

Certain Christian groups handle snakes to show that they are true believers. This is based on a passage from the Bible, "...They shall take up serpents, and if they drink something deadly, it shall not hurt them."

The aborigines of Australia worship a rainbow serpent named Kurrichalpongo. They believe that it created the world and its eggs hatched the mountains and the trees.

Quetzalcoatl, in Mexican myths, is the feather-clad serpent, half bird, half snake, of Aztec ancestry. It represents the the universe, heaven and earth together, thus the forces of nature, both good and bad.

South American Indian. The Yanomamo flood receded when a woman dove into it and became a snake-like monster. The first Ceubo emerged as anaconda and became human upon shedding their skins. The Desana emerged from the underworld in a canoe— which was the body of an anaconda.

India. Cobras are regarded as reincarnations of important people called Nagas; many stories and myths feature cobras.

(With excerpts from www.thesnake.org)

蛇落竹筒節節難
Snake descend bamboo joint difficult.
Going down a bamboo tube means difficulty getting past the joints.
(Used for decline in status.)

一朝被蛇咬
十年怕草繩
One day snake bite, ten year afraid grass rope.
Once bitten by a snake, fear the rope.

打草驚蛇
Beat grass startle snake.
Cause undesired agitation.

撥草尋蛇
Search grass find snake.
Find the answer; determine.

劃蛇添足
Draw snake add legs.
Add legs to the snake after you have finished drawing it. Superfluous.

人心不足蛇吞象
Person heart not satisfied snake swallow elephant.
"Bit off more than you can chew."
Greedy.

蛇蠍心腸
Snake scorpion heart intestine.
Dreaded, awful things.

蛇蠍美人
Snake scorpion beauty person (lady).
Dangerous things.

蛇頭鼠眼
Snake's head, rat's eyes.
Crafty, wily.

蛇鼠一窩
Snake rat one hole.
Bad guys associate with one another.

蛇無頭不行
Snake no head no go.
Leaderless.

佛口蛇心
Buddha mouth snake heart.
Stab someone in the back.
Two-faced.

人蛇
Person snake. Illegal immigrant.

亞蛇
Ah- snake. Police (Hong Kong)
("Ah" is used in front of names, "Ah-Say.")

放蛇
Release snake. Undercover police.
(Hong Kong)

One of California's standards for English/Language Arts calls for students to identify correctly capitalized proper nouns.

These old fables help show how the rules for capitalization change over time. For example, these Aesop's Fables capitalize the story characters, even when they are not used as names. The way that students can recognize that these nouns should be lower case is that there are articles (a, an, the) before the nouns. (Not all languages use articles, so their use will need to be taught and/or rehearsed.)

If the noun could be substituted for the animal's name, and it's a capitalized proper noun.

To follow today's rules, these fables would have to be corrected.

For second language learners, recognizing proper nouns is difficult (a white house; the White House), especially when the words refer to a piece of cultural (implicit) knowledge. In these cases, the article/name rule won't work; exposure and corrective feedback is the solution. Point out the proper nouns in passages or daily sentence editing practice, and list similar phrasing that would not be capitalized, so EL students can compare. Eventually the specific examples will generalize into a "rule" which will help them predict which nouns are proper and which are common.

(The SAT exam calls for receptive knowledge, the recognizing of errors, rather than productive knowledge, the ability to produce correct writing.)

Activity . Copy fable on an overhead. Group correct the punctuation, word usage, sentence structure, and capitalization to reflect today's rules. (Help students realize there is nothing magic about rules for written English; they developed, have been refined, and will change again in the future.)

Activity . Read the fable to the class. Ask someone to retell the story in his/her own words. Have groups of students create, write, and edit fables using different animals which teach the same lesson.

Fabled Snakes

A Snake and A Crab

There was a familiarity contracted betwixt a snake and a crab. The crab was a plain dealing creature that advised his companion to give over shuffling and doubling, and to practice good faith. The snake went on in his old way: so that the crab, finding that he would not mend his manners, set upon him in his sleep, and strangled him. Then looking upon him as he lay dead at his length: This had never befallen you, says he, if you had but lived as straight as you died.

Moral: There's nothing more agreeable in conversation, than a frank open way of dealing, and a simplicity of manners.

The Countryman and The Snake

A Countryman's son accidentally trod upon a Snake's tail. The Snake turned and bit him and the son died. The father, in a rage, got his axe, and pursuing the Snake, cut off part of its tail. The Snake, in revenge, began killing the Farmer's cattle. The Farmer thought it best to make it up with the Snake, and brought food and honey to the mouth of its lair, and said to it: "Let's forget and forgive; perhaps you were right to punish my son, and take vengeance on my cattle, but surely I was right in trying to revenge him; now that we are both satisfied why should not we be friends again?" "No, no," said the Snake; "take away your gifts; you can never forget the death of your son, nor I the loss of my tail."

Moral: Injuries may be forgiven, but not forgotten.

The Viper and The File

A Serpent in the course of its wanderings came into an armourer's shop. As he glided over the floor he felt his skin pricked by a file lying there. In a rage he turned round upon it and tried to dart his fangs into it; but he could do no harm to heavy iron and had soon to give over his wrath.

Moral: It is useless attacking the insensible.

Storied Snakes

The Snake With Big Feet

Native American (www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/loreindx.html contains other Native American stories.)

Long ago, in that far-off happy time when the world was new, and there were no white people at all, only Indians and animals, there was a snake who was different from other snakes. He had feet—big feet. And the other snakes, because he was different, hated him, and made life wretched for him. Finally, they drove him away from the country where the snakes lived, saying, "A good long way from here lives other ugly creatures with feet like yours. Go and live with them!" And the poor, unhappy snake had to go away.

For days and days, he travelled. The weather grew cold and food became scarce. At last, exhausted, his feet cut and frostbitten, he lay down on the bank of a river to die.

The deer, E-se-ko-to-ye, looked out of a willow thicket, and saw the snake lying on the river bank. Pitying him, the deer took the snake into his own lodge and gave him food and medicine for his bleeding feet.

The deer told the snake that there were indeed creatures with feet like his who would befriend him, but that some among these would be enemies whom it would be necessary to kill before he could reach safety.

He showed the snake how to make a shelter for protection from the cold and taught him how to make moccasins of deer-skin to protect his feet. And at dawn the snake continued his journey.

The sun was far down the western sky, and it was bitter cold when the snake made camp the next night. As he gathered boughs for a shelter, Kais-kap the porcupine appeared. Shivering, the porcupine asked him, "Will you give me shelter in your lodge for the night?"

The snake said, "It's very little that I have, but you are welcome to share it."

"I am grateful," said Kais-kap, "and perhaps I can do something for you. Those are beautiful moccasins, brother, but they do

not match your skin. Take some of my quills, and make a pattern on them, for good luck.” So they worked a pattern on the moccasins with the porcupine quills, and the snake went on his way again.

As the deer had told him, he met enemies. Three times he was challenged by hostile Indians, and three times he killed his adversary.

At last he met an Indian who greeted him in a friendly manner. The snake had no gifts for this kindly chief, so he gave him the moccasins. And that, so the old ones say, was how our people first learned to make moccasins of deerskin, and to ornament them with porcupine quills in patterns, like those on the back of a snake. And from that day on the snake lived in the lodge of the chief with the warriors by the council fire and, for a long time, was happy.

But the chief had a daughter who was beautiful and kind, and the snake came to love her very much indeed. He wished that he were human, so that he might marry the maiden, and have his own lodge. He knew there was no hope of this unless the High Gods, the Above Spirits took pity on him, and would perform a miracle on his behalf.

So he fasted and prayed for many, many days. But all his fasting and praying had no result, and at last the snake came very ill.

Now, in the tribe, there was a very highly skilled medicine man. Mo’ki-ya was an old man, so old that he had seen and known, and understood, everything that came affected his people’s lives, and many things that concerned the Spirits. Many times, his lodge was seen to sway with the Ghost Wind, and the voices of those long gone on to the Sand Hills spoke to him.

Mo’ki-ya came to where the snake lay in the chief’s lodge, and sending all the others away, asked the snake what his trouble was.

“It is beyond even your magic,” said the snake, but he told Mo’ki-ya about his love for the maiden, and his desire to become a man so that he could marry her.

Mo’ki-ya sat quietly thinking for a while.

Then he said, “I shall go on a journey, brother. Perhaps my magic can help, perhaps not. We shall see when I return.” And he gathered his medicine bundles and disappeared.

It was a long and fearsome journey that Mo’ki-ya made. He went to the shores of a great lake. He climbed a high mountain, and he took the matter to Nato’sé, the Sun himself.

And Nato’sé listened, for this man stood high in the regard of the spirits, and his medicine was good. He did not ask, and never had asked, for anything for himself, and to transform the snake into a brave of the tribe was not a difficult task for the High Gods. The third day after the arrival of Mo’ki-ya at the Sun’s abode, Nato’sé said to him, “Return to your own lodge Mo’ki-ya, and build a fire of small sticks. Put many handfuls of sweetgrass on the fire, and when the smoke rises thickly, lay the body of the snake in the middle of it.”

And Mo’ki-ya came back to his own land.

The fire was built in the center of the medicine lodge, as the Sun had directed, and when the sweetgrass smoldered among the embers, sending the smoke rolling in great billows through the tepee, Mo’ki-ya gently lifted the snake, now very nearly dead, and placed him in the fire so that he was hidden by the smoke.

The medicine-drum whispered softly in the dusk of the lodge: the chant of the old men

Links

http://edu.ocac.gov.tw/ocacqasp/familycorner/mix/olmix_frames.asp (Lots of connections to Chinese language and culture.)

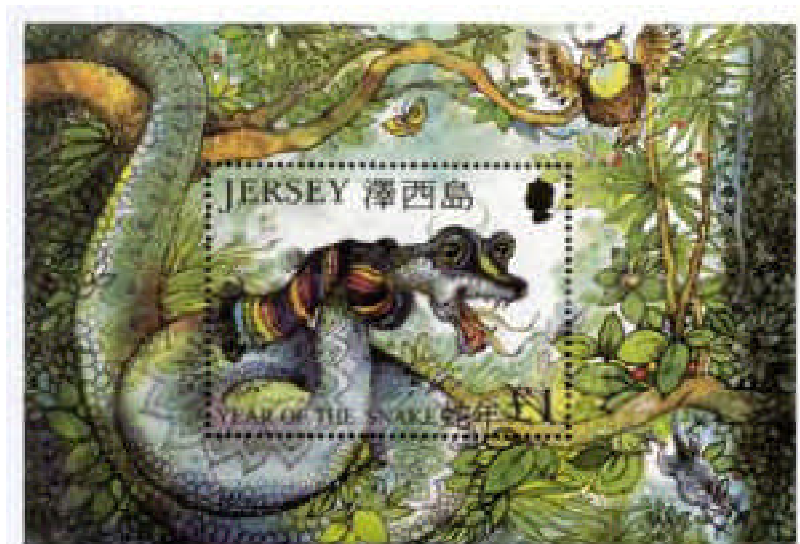
<http://zhongwen.com/> (Zhongwen.com has dictionaries, language learning, and stories.)

www.mandarintools.com/ (Chinese name generator!)

[www.pitt.edu/~dash/snake.html](http://pitt.edu/~dash/snake.html) (Snake and Serpent Husbands in Folktales)

http://edu.ocac.gov.tw/CultureEnglish/Story/Ewhole04_05.htm (The Snake God)

This site is the **Global Chinese Language and Culture Center Online**. It contains many links, and provides access to the well-done materials for overseas Chinese education programs. Mac users should install the Chinese Language Kit to view the pages well. There is button for Spanish and for English.



grew a little louder, and then the smoke obscuring the fire parted like a curtain, and a young man stepped out.

Great were the rejoicings in the camp that night. The snake, now a handsome young brave, was welcomed into the tribe with the ceremonies befitting the reception of one shown to be high in the favour of the spirits. The chief gladly gave him his daughter, happy to have a son law of such distinction.

Many brave sons and beautiful daughters blessed the lodge of the snake and at last, so the old ones say, his family became a new tribe—the Pe-sik-na-ta-pe, or Snake Indians.

Old Black Snake

lu-Mien. Storyteller: Muang Yoon Saechao. Collector and Translator: Judy Thungc. In *Loz-Hnoi, Loz-Hnoi Uov: In the Old, Old Days*, ed. Tim Beard, Betsey Warrick, Kao Cho Saefong. *Traditional Stories of the lu-Mienh (Loas)*. lu-Mienh Stories Project. Vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: Laotian Handcraft Project, 1993), pp. 60-64.

A king has three daughters. He would make a rice field covering twelve mountains and twelve valleys. He and his daughters clear the area of small growth, but he offers one of his daughters in marriage to one who can clear the area of trees. A large black snake performs the task.

The two older daughters refuse the snake but the third daughter named Faam gets water for the snake to wash up, then

makes his bed, and agrees to pack her bag and go with him. Irritated at her circumstance she steps on his tail; he in turn bites her, but as she weeps and can walk no more.

He puts saliva on the bite to make her feel better. They come to a river and the snake tells her not to point if the water changes color and to close her eyes as a young man appears; she should keep her eyes closed until she hears the sound of seven waves.

She obeys and the Old Black Snake takes her to his house in the city. As she lives with the family of snakes they all turn into humans. They ask her what kind of chair she would like. She says an old cutting board would do, and they give her a gold chair instead. They ask her what kind of chopsticks she would have. She says old wood, and they give her gold. When asked what bowl she would eat from she says the pig's bowl will do, but they give her a gold rice bowl.

After a time she has a child and returns to her parents for a visit. Her older sister Naix is jealous and wants to return with her to her husband. She drowns Faam and goes to Old Black Snake as her sister's substitute.

She asks for a gold chair and gets a cutting board; for gold chopsticks and gets wood; for a golden bowl and they give her an old pig's bowl. The baby cries and won't sleep.

A stable boy hears a bird singing and is so pleased with the music that he comes home late. Old Black Snake inquires of his tardiness and goes to hear the bird himself. He recognizes the spirit of his wife and brings the bird home on his wrist. Naix kills the bird and serves it for supper. The meal is delicious for everyone except Naix, for whom the meal tastes like woodchips.

She throws it out the window and from it a bamboo bush grows. The bamboo helps them clean themselves after going to the bathroom. Naix tries it but it pokes her in a vulnerable place. She cuts the bamboo down and makes a bed of it, but it makes her itch as if ants were biting her. She cuts the bamboo bed frame open and finds Faam inside, as



beautiful as ever.

She asks how Faam has managed to stay young and beautiful after having been fried and boiled by Naix many times. Faam suggests that Naix try bathing in the boiling water. Naix climbs into the scalding tub and is killed.

The Snake & The Turtle

Vietnamese folktale.

(www.boatpeople.com/vn_folktales/ran_rua.html)

Once upon a time at a green river lived a snake and a turtle who bitterly hated each other. Each wanted to rule the whole river as his own territory. They had fought with each other many times for control of the river without any resolution.

The snake was very greedy and proud of his fast and cunning moves, always snicking behind the turtle and waiting for a chance to kill it by biting its neck. The turtle, even though very slow, had a very thick and strong protective armor. Thus, every time Snake made his move, Turtle withdrew his head inside the safe, protective armor. As a result, Snake could not kill or even harm the turtle.

The snake was very angry every time he went home defeated. He could not understand why Turtle's skin was so thick and strong that he couldn't bite nor break it. Because he was so anxious for control over the river, Snake ran out of patience. So, one day he decided to find out why he could not bite Turtle's neck, and what Turtle did to make his skin so thick and strong.

Snake thought to himself that he would pretend nothing had happened and ask Turtle directly. However, Turtle knew Snake's intentions, and said, "It's useless. You will never be able to bite my neck nor my skin because we, Turtles, have an old family secret method of making our skin strong as steel."

He then walked away without explaining any further. Snake was bitterly angry as he watched Turtle walk away. He vowed to himself that he would find out about this "old family secret" of Turtle, and promised to de-

stroy Turtle for sure.

So every night, he secretly snicked close to Turtle's house to see what "secret method" Turtle had been practicing that made him invincible. Since Turtle knew Snake's intentions, he continued to play his trick by pretending that he didn't know Snake was watching him. Every night, Turtle purposely stood in front of his house slashing his head off using the wooden knife. In reality, Turtle did not cut his head off. He just withdrew his head inside his shell and waited for Snake to leave, then came out again.

After watching Turtle's act, Snake was very excited that he finally knew a way of making himself invincible just like Turtle. So one day, he met Turtle and said, "I finally know about your old family secret that makes you invincible. However, I'm still not quite sure what you were doing. Could you explain it to me?"

"I'll be happy to explain it to you," Turtle said. "It's really quite simple. It is actually an old practice of chopping your head off to make your skin invincible."

Because of his selfish nature, Snake also wanted to be invincible like Turtle. He pretended to be disappointed and said to Turtle, "You are so lucky to have both arms and legs. I don't have the luxury of having arms to chop off my head." Turtle, pretending to be helpful and unselfish, said, "If you don't mind, I am willing to help."

Snake was so delighted when Turtle offered his help. He thought to himself that he had tricked Turtle to reveal his secrets. He was excited that the moment has come for him to get rid of Turtle, but did not know the real danger was awaiting for him. The next day, Snake called all of his relatives to come to the bank of the river so they all could learn to be invincible. Turtle also called all of his relatives out to the river. Each was carrying a wooden knife and one by one cut off the head of each and every snake.

[This translation into English contains the verb "snick." Is this a real verb? If not, what other verb might the translator been thinking of?]

From Peter, in Laos

Peter Whittlesey, until recently an elementary ESL teacher, media guru, and librarian in the north valley town of Oroville, has been a long-time member of the Refugee Educators' Network. He's involved himself in the lives of new immigrants and their children, and this voyage of discovery has taken him to Laos for a year or so.

This article is taken from recent emails to the Network members.

The photos that accompany this article are those Peter has taken in Laos, and emailed to us. He'll be posting them on the website at www.seacrc.org and later at his website through Butte County Office of Education, <http://whitney.bcoe.butte.k12.ca.us/poplar/Laos/>

In a sense I've been settling back into just staying here in Vientiane. In December I went up to Luang Prabang twice, the first time to see how I could arrange to get up the village of Ban Phu Leuy where I had visited Mai's grandmother and the second time to stay for a period of about two days.

When I went up there the first time I couldn't locate the man who had taken me before and finally made arrangements with a Lue young man who said we could hike up to the village from his parents village, Ban Pak Chek, on the Nam Ou.

So, the first time I was in Luang Prabang I went out and spent the night in Sing Tong's (the Lue young man) parent's house and the next morning at 5:00 a.m. began the hike up to the village. I would say it was about a 10 mile hike with an elevation gain of at least 2000 feet. And for about two miles we had to constantly cross this one stream and as the area was very "brushy"

I also had my first encounter with leeches. They're little things, but as you can imagine, they're thirsting for nice warm blood

and if you don't pick them off right away they attach themselves and it's a little more difficult to get them off. I was wearing some Teva sandals, which made fording the streams easy and were great for hiking, but also made it easy for the leeches to latch on, and we constantly had to stop and inspect our feet and ankles. It ended up that when I got to Ban Phu Leuy and we were sitting in Mai's grandmother's house, that Sing Tong spotted one of the leeches, about ten times bigger inching along the dirt floor and it was only then I looked down at my ankles which were quite bloody from the leeches who had satiated themselves on my blood and dropped off leaving quite a bloody trail. It looked worse than it really was, but I learned that I needed to be more vigilant in pulling them off on the way back!

As we had to hike back the ten miles we could only stay for a short time but I found out that Hmong New Year was going to begin on December 25 so I told them I would be back then and would spend a couple of nights as they always lamented that they wanted to kill a cow or do something more than provide a

Ban Phu Leuy

with the town of Ban Heuy Ot in the distant background.



Ban Phu Leuy School

This is the only school in Ban Phu Leuy. Primary students attend this school and then have to walk down the mountain to Ban Heuy Ot to attend the upper elementary level school there.



quick meal of a freshly killed chicken when I came. So as it turned out, I came back a week later, but had Sing Tong make arrangements to have a truck-taxi take us up to the village of Ban Huey Ot where we then would only have to walk about one mile to the village as I would be carrying more camera equipment and whatever I needed to stay for a couple of days and it would have been much more difficult to hike up the mountain.

So for my Christmas day, I spent it driving up the tortuous dirt road to Ban Huey Ot and then walking up the trail to Ban Phu Leuy. Mai's relatives were happy to see me again and Mai's uncle set to work to clean up a wooden platform as our bed and place to set all our belongings. While we were waiting for lunch we walked outside and close by the house they were making some kind of a soy-bean curd by taking a mixture of what I think were soybeans and pouring them little by little into a hole in the center of a large stone mortar which was being turned round by two girls pushing and pulling on a large wooden handle, that through different connections was turning this wheel which ground the beans into a soupy mixture. It was the next day we had some in a kind of chicken soup and it tasted just like tofu and was quite good.

As it was the beginning of Hmong New Year everyone was cleaning their altars and having individual ceremonies for each of their homes. Mai's oldest uncle is a kind of shaman and we went with him to several homes where he performed the ceremony for that particular house. As it turned out over the two days I was there I must have eaten close to fifteen meals! There was always somebody that came to the house were I was, and as we were usually eating they would wait patiently until we had finished and then insisted that I had to come to their house.

On the second day I actually had to be quite adamant that I really wanted to take some photos and that sitting in smoke filled rooms sitting on little stools about six inches high for extended periods was taking a toll on my "well-being!" The Hmong are extremely hospitable, but I was able to convince them to let me spend some time exploring the village



and did get some good photos. I shot some video too and I hope that sometime you can see the sequence where Mai's grandmother, about 75 or so, hikes down the steep hillside to the stream where the water supply is, about a quarter mile away, ladles in water to two five gallon containers and puts them in the wooden basket on her back and then hikes back up to their house. Quite amazing and she does this three or four times a day...

There are a couple of other older women, one is her sister I think, who spend a lot of time together and they are so cute. Mai's grandmother is hard of hearing and can't see too well, but when they sit together and talk you can tell how much they care for each other and the other two women have to speak loud so Mai's grandma can hear. I bought Mai's grandma and her sister both a warm sweater that buttons up and the next day they were both wearing the sweaters and I think really liked them.

On the second day one of the homes I ate at was the naibon's and at the house was the naibon of Ban Huey Ot and the head of security for the area. During the conversation they let me know they wanted me to come back and talk more with them about their school and ways of helping them with the education of children in their village. As it turned out, Ban Huey Ot wants me to do the same. As you can imagine the needs of both villages are extreme, and I told them I would come back, but

Baci Ceremony

This baci was held at the naibon's house in the village of Ban Phu Leuy in celebration of Peter's visit. The baci is a ceremony of welcome, farewell, marriage, celebrating the recently born, honoring achievements and giving thanks. Performed by a respected male elder of the community, the Baci restores balance and harmony to the individual and community and conveys goodwill and hospitality.

(November 2000, Laos)

it is so difficult and fairly expensive for me to get to the villages that I don't know what I could do for them that would really make a difference.

At a school like in Ban Tha Din Daeng Tai [the one that is nearer the city, and that Peter linked up to the Refugee Educators' Network on his earlier trip to Laos], I can get there in an hour from my house by motorcycle and be back home the same day, so then I'm able to take a more active involvement. I just don't know what I will be able to do to help, but I'm thinking about it.

One of the things I need to do is find someone who is Hmong and could be my interpreter and not charge too much. My guide/interpreter that last two times was Lue, and so everyone had to speak Lao. I think if my interpreter was Hmong that by everyone speaking Hmong they could give me more details about the village, school and students.

The two days I was there I didn't bathe as nobody ever told us where they bathed and so I was feeling a little grungy. I did shave the first morning, but didn't shave the second morning and didn't think it would be a big deal as we

were going to be leaving. But when we hiked down from Ban Phu Leuy into Ban Heuy Ot the head of security had arranged for everyone to line up on both sides of the street and there were eight beautiful Hmong girls all line up with flowers in banana leaves, who then came up and presented me with the flowers, one by one. Wow, I felt like quite the VIP, but kept thinking to myself that I didn't look the part! The ceremony in his house was also quite elaborate, and I was quite impressed

with his leadership skills. He was a class act and it will be interesting to see if I can make it back there to visit both villages with a good Hmong interpreter and discuss in depth the current state of education in both villages and their "dreams" for the future.

I also still need to visit Ban Tha Din Daeng Tai. I went out there in the beginning of November but neither the naibon or teacher was there as it was on the weekend. I'm hoping to get a motorcycle this week (of the 110cc variety) and that way I'll have a lot more freedom to get around and it would be fairly easy then to get out to Ban Tha Din Daeng Tai. I did meet with the director of the Consortium, the NGO [non-governmental organization] that was going to be the guarantor of the Japanese small scale assistance grant for building the school and there's no way they can sign on to the grant now because they received a much larger grant for a detoxification project from Japan and Japan only wants NGOs to receive one grant a year. There was the chance that a smaller NGO called World Education, which was going to be integrated into Consortium, could have put down their name and taken over the formal responsibility of being the guarantor, but they ended up just pulling World Education out of Laos. My only hope now is that the former director of World Education, with several other individuals, has formed their own NGO called Village Focus. By coincidence, we both went to SEASSI [Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute] the same summer, but I don't remember him as he studied Lao and I was studying Hmong. He's really nice and I talked at length with him one morning at a local bakery and there's a chance I might do some photographic work for them and what I'm hoping is that somehow I can get him to help me reapply for the grant, but I'm sure that won't be in the immediate future so unfortunately Ban Tha Din Daeng Tai will have to continue to be patient.

One of the projects that I'm working on now is making prints of photos that I've taken over the last two years and getting them framed for a display at a new annex of the Scandanavian Bakery, the most popular hang-out for foreigners. What I'm hoping is that

Boy in Tree

This is a shot of a boy watching the activities of Hmong New Year in Ban Phu Leuy from a coveted vantage point.



people working for different NGOs and organizations will see the photos and read the one page information sheet I've put together about myself and consider contracting with me for possible photographic assignments. I haven't actively gone out and tried to make contacts as my main focus has been on learning Lao, but once the display is up I going to begin focusing more on my photography.

But speaking of learning Lao, I definitely know what it's like to be a second language learner and it's not easy! I tried having a "professional" Lao teacher come to my home and teach me, but I found him too regimented to the same lessons he's been using forever. Plus, he was charging me \$6 an hour. What I've fallen back on is having my friend Thavivanh teach me, and he's actually quite good and I end up paying him the same \$6 for 3-4 hours. His family is Catholic and he's made friends with an older nun from Italy who has been sponsoring him to study English at a private school and he's learned a lot. Plus, she's now arranging for him to get one of two scholarships to study English in Singapore in August. He's definitely not your typical tuk tuk driver and I'm extremely lucky to have him as my friend.

I also study on my own quite a bit and over the last month have spent a lot of time at a friend's house where every one speaks Laos so I'm forced to speak Lao. I wish I could say I'm learning it fast, but I feel like it's a slow go and I realize I have to get used to making hundreds of mistakes a day in either pronunciation or grammatical construction. I'm still not at the point where my foundation is big enough where people tell me a word and I easily remember it. A lot of words just "bounce off me" but if I think back to where I was two months ago, I know I've made pretty good progress, and it's when I take the time to study and memorize words and sentence structures that my progress really accelerates. Plus I'm giving equal attention to learning to read and write Lao, which I think will help me over the long run.

Let's see, what else is there? I am hoping to give a presentation at the Hmong National Conference [in Sacramento March

30–April 1] on what I've learned about the Hmong and their relationship to Laos and issues of accommodation and assimilation as they relate to cross cultural understanding. I'm planning on coming back for about two weeks and maybe I'll see some of you at the conference! I'm preparing some Staff Development Workshops that I will be making available for schools during the month of August and September. I want to have a menu of choices available for schools to select from such as:

- *A Day in the Life of a Novice Monk* (exploring Buddhism in Laos)
- *Brief History of Laos/Lao PDR*
- *Lao Loum, Lao Teung, and Lao Soung* (the three broad official ethnic groupings which incorporate over 47 ethnic groups)
- *Relationships, the currency of business and social life in Lao PDR* (Understanding Lao Culture)
- *A "National Geographic" look at Laos*
- *Current state of education in Laos*
- *Issues of Assimilation and Accommodation* (as they relate to cross-cultural understanding)
- *Exploring language as the window to the soul of a culture* (primarily from a Lao perspective).

[A few days later...] One more thing as it relates to acculturation, yesterday I bought a used motorcycle. I've never driven a motorcycle in my life, but finally realized it was time, and my friend Thavivanh helped me buy one and then gave me lessons, and I've sort of amazed myself at how fast I caught on. The whole idea of driving a motorcycle, especially here in Laos where the rules of the road are far from rigid has scared me, but the freedom it provides I feel is well worth the risk. Plus there's something about being in control and not being passively driven around, that I didn't realize was there, but now with my 110 cc Suzuki I'm "born to be wild!"

My best, Peter

My mail address in Laos is
P. O. Box 7573, Vientiane,
Lao PDR. My email is
peterlaos@hotmail.com.



Center on Immigration Studies

The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI) has announced the establishment of the Academy of Migration Studies at the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California–San Diego. The Academy will train students to collect and analyze data from recent and prospective migrants to the United States. Academy scholars will also investigate the multidisciplinary literature on international labor migration and refugee flows and the impacts of these population movements on sending and receiving countries. The program will be directed by professors Wayne Cornelius and Takeyuki Tsuda.

For further information about the Center visit the Web site at www.ccis-ucsd.org.

The most recent issue of the UC LMRI Newsletter contains information on several publications regarding studies on Proposition 227 and reports on English Language Learners from the New York City Board of Education.

For more information go to <http://lmri.ucsb.edu>

Program Directories Available

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) has published several new resources.

Available online is the Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Programs (www.cal.org/twi/directory)

Also available is a Directory of Secondary Newcomer Programs in the United States (Revised 2000). The Directory contains profiles on 115 middle and high school newcomer programs across 196 sites in 29 states and the District of Columbia.

Another recent publication is a research brief entitled “Improving Classroom Instruction and Student Learning for Resilient and Non-resilient English Language Learners.”

For more information call (202) 362-0700 or visit www.cal.org/crede/pubs/

Software in Many Languages

The Earobics Classroom software, designed to develop phonemic awareness among En-

glish learners now includes directions in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Haitian Creole, Arabic, and Polish. www.earobics.com

Stories of Immigrants & Immigration

Rubén Rumbaut, researcher of immigration education issues, has teamed with Alejandro Portes to produce *Legacies, The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. This volume contains a comprehensive collection of reports, research, and analyses of the immigrant experience in the United States. Later in the year a companion volume entitled *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America* will also be published by the University of California Press. Check out

www.ucpress.edu/books/pages9357.html

TESOL Conference

The annual conference of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is scheduled for February 27 to March 2, 2001 in St. Louis, Missouri. Conference information including registration instructions and forms is available at www.tesol.org

Catalogues of Material Resources

The following agencies and companies produce catalogues of student, instructional, and teacher development materials:

- BookLab Publisher. K-12 and adult ESL and bilingual textbooks and workbooks. www.booklabpub.com
- Childcraft Education Corporation. Variety of manipulatives, books, and furniture for infants to grade 4. www.childcraft.com
- Franklin Company. Multilingual electronic dictionaries, calculators and other electronic learning devices. www.franklin.com
- Globo Libros. Bilingual (English/Spanish) story books and other materials. Email: Gbololibros@aol.com.

Grammar Online

English learners, especially those who are literate in their mother tongues and who have a background studying learning language through the grammar-translation method, will learn find explicit study of English grammar essential for comprehending and composing English. This is even more true now that the California standards, SAT-9, and soon-to-be-unveiled High School Exit Exams are a necessary part of a student's schooling.

Go to this site: <http://webster.comnet.edu/grammar/index.htm>

In addition to links to every possible grammar explanation and example, there are materials to help teachers learn sentence diagramming themselves, and downloadable power point shows to teach students how to diagram sentences (http://webster.comnet.edu/grammar/diagrams2/one_pager1.htm).

For non-literate, unschooled students, afterschool or Saturday classes that teach the syntax of their mother tongue, using the same "graphic organizers" for sentences, would provide them with the means to compare the syntax of their language and of English.

Child-rearing proverbs (p. 19)

- “A child is a precious stone, also a heavy burden. (Swahili)
- “To give a son a thousand taels of gold is not equal to teaching him one craft. (Chinese)
- “With seven nurses the child loses an eye (Russian)
- “Better the child cry than the mother sigh (Danish)
- “Better the child should cry than the father. (Yiddish).
- “Spare the rod and spoil the child (English, American)
- “If you love your child do not spare the cane. (Chinese)

“A bitten child dreads a dog (American)

“The child of a snake is also a snake (Bemba)

“An acorn falls close to the oak tree

“If the father is spotted, the children are sure to be speckled(Malay). Like father, like son. (American) What you are as a child you will be as a man. (Philippine)

“The weeping child will gain strength. (Tamil)

“Two buckets of tears will not heal a bruise. (Chinese)

“A child needs love the most when he deserves it least (American)

“There are four things every child needs: an abundance of love; plenty of good nourishing food; lots of soap and water; and after that some good healthy neglect. (American)

“What the child sees is what the child does. (Irish)

“When you show the moon to a child, it sees only your finger. (Bemba)

“If you love the children of others, you will love your own even better(Wolof)

“Small children give you headache; big children, heartache. (Russian)

“The child may be rocked too hard (French)

“A rich child often sits in a poor mother's lap. (Danish)

“Shape a branch while it is young and pliable. (Chinese)

“Mold the clay while it's still soft (Hmong).

“An ounce of mother is worth a ton of priest.

“One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters (Chinese)

“The tongue is a sharp sword which slays though it draws no blood. (Chinese)

Refer to these as you read the article by Steve Magagnini on page 16, and the following on page 19.





Applications for 2001-2002

EIEP applications from Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) for the 2001-2002 school year must be submitted (postmarked) on or before March 1, 2001.

Non-public schools must submit a "Request to Participate" form to the appropriate LEA (with a copy to the California Department of Education) by February 15, 2001.

Forms and instructions for public LEAs and non-public schools can be obtained at the EIEP Web site in the Library at: www.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/bien/eiep/EIEPLibrary.html

Final Reports for 1999-2000

The final reports for the 1999-2000 school year were due on December 1, 2000 from all LEAs which participated in the EIEP during that school year. These reports are being processed and whenever revisions are required, the LEAs will be contacted. Expenditure reports will be processed on a priority basis with the goal of resolving all of the fiscal reports by March 31, 2001.

The Language Policy and Leadership Office will enlist the assistance of several evaluators experienced in programs for English Learner and immigrant students to assist in the analyses of the Annual Program Performance Reports. LEAs will receive a customized written review indicating strengths and weaknesses of their report. In cases where the data appear to be inaccurate for any reason, the data of the particular LEA will not be entered into the statewide database. LEAs may revise and resubmit the report or they have the option to consider the comments in the review when preparing future Annual Performance Reports.

The reviews of Annual Performance Report are expected to be generated during the period of December 2000 to March 2001.

Contacting the State EIEP Office

For further information on the issues contained in the EIEP News or any other matter related to the EIEP program, you may contact David Dolson or Jorge Gaj, Educational Program Consultants at:

Language Policy & Leadership Office

California Department of Education

721 Capitol Mall, 4th Floor

Sacramento, CA 95814

Tel. 916.657.2566

FAX 916.657.2928

ddolson@cde.ca.gov or

jgaj@cde.ca.gov

Forms and instructions, the Administrative Handbook, and other documents related to the EIEP are available on the Web at: www.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/bien/eiep/EIEPLibrary.html

If you are unable to access the library, documents may be requested by e-mail or phone from Helen Bustillos at hbustillo@cde.ca.gov, 916.657.5471.

Refugee Children

Supplemental Assistance Program

Nine grants have been awarded in California through this special funding redirected from the federal program for refugee resettlement. The programs include:

Glendale USD: Project RACE

Armenian, Russian, Ukrainian, Persian, Iraqi, Vietnamese

Welcome center; classes for parents (orientation, district and government services, expectations for parents in schooling process, parenting skills—child abuse, discipline, anger management, readjustment process); monitoring of child's progress for three years; parent/child support services; parent center; community outreach.

Joanna Junge, 223 North Jackson, Glendale CA 91206-4380.

This article was developed by David P. Dolson, Coordinator of the Emergency Immigrant Education Program, California Department of Education, Language Policy & Leadership Office:

(916) 657-2566

ddolson@cde.ca.gov

www.cde.ca.gov/cilbranch/

bien/eiep

Los Angeles USD.

Armenian, Persian, Vietnamese, African

Supplemental instruction; counseling; Saturday school for language and academics at the African Community Resource Center for families; outreach through Armenian cable TV; Persian parent seminars; TV-based tutoring in Armenian, Vietnamese, and Russian.

Lila Silvern, 11301 Bellagio Road,
Los Angeles CA 90049, (310) 471-1303.

Eastside Union High SD

Vietnamese

Intensified instructional program; supplemental materials; after school tutoring for credit deficient students; summer bilingual tutoring; textbook outlines in Vietnamese for US History and Algebra, student support and counseling.

Nguyet Dinh, 830 North Capitol Avenue,
San Jose CA 95133.

Campbell Union SD: Project SAILORS

Vietnamese, Bosnian, Russian, Persian, Ethiopian

Intensive English instruction; ELD materials; support community service organization; staff development and teacher training (including a video and training handouts). Elementary and middle schools.

155 Third Street, Campbell Ca 95008.

Norwalk-La Mirada.

ELD assessment tool for placement; computer-based instructional support.

12820 Pioneer Boulevard,
Norwalk CA 90650-2894.

Washington USD. Scholars Project.

Russian, Ukrainian

2 high schools: tutoring, AVID, summer school, family activities, field trips.

Lucille Barba, Julie Hoskins, 930 West Acres Rd,
West Sacramento CA 95691.

San Juan USD.

Russian, Ukrainian, and several other languages.

Supplemental services at 6 sites: ESL lead teacher, bilingual instructional assistants, tutoring, take-home computers with ESL software; referral to services.

Isabel Johnson, 3738 Walnut Avenue,
PO Box 477, Carmichael CA 95609-0477.

Sacramento City USD.

Hmong, Mien, Vietnamese, Russian

Supplemental assistance to elementary students (homework assistance) and high school students (individual interventions for targeted students); weekly radio outreach (Hmong, Mien, Russian), including guest speakers and call-in comment and questions; family and student support.

Suanna Gilman-Ponce, 520 Capitol Mall,
Sacramento CA 95814.

Folsom Cordova USD: Community Heritage Language Schools

Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian

Community-based literacy development classes on Saturdays in Ukrainian, Armenian, and Russian; materials development and alignment with demands of grade level curriculum; sequence articulation and assessments; teacher guides for 32 Saturdays for 8 levels of Ukrainian, 3 levels of Armenian, and 3 levels of Russian; training ladder for Saturday School teachers to become California-credentialed teachers; translators and materials developers for each site that hosts Saturday School; individualized ESL instruction via computer-based ELLIS program.

Judy Lewis, Nadia Kalinyuk, 2460 Cordova Lane,
Rancho Cordova CA 95670.





Stephen Magagnini, Sacramento Bee journalist specializing in stories that demand knowledge of cultural backgrounds and acculturation challenges and triumphs, wrote this article for *Context*. Contact him at smagagnini@sacbee.com.

He wrote a weeklong series, *Orphans of History*, in the fall, and recently wrote a followup article (December 31, 200) on a trip to Laos with local Hmong T. T. Vang.

These articles, plus graphics, photos, and other links can be found at www.sacbee.com/news/projects/hmong/



Discipline or Abuse? Observations from the Field

How do you discipline your kids? And, as a teacher, what responsibility do you have for someone else's kids?

Many countries consider corporal punishment an acceptable form of punishment, employed by both parents and teachers.

In seven years as *The Sacramento Bee's* ethnic affairs reporter, I've heard numerous immigrants and refugees complain that they can't control their Americanized kids without laying a hand on them.

Nou, a Hmong mother of 12 living in Sacramento, has tried everything on her kids. In a culture that rarely expresses affection, she'd swallow her pride and tell her teenage sons she loved them—as they walked out the door.

In Laos, discipline was clear-cut, she said. "First, we would lecture the kids. If that didn't work, we'd discipline them with a stick on the butt."

That might have worked in Laos, but in America, parents who hit their children - or are accused of hitting them—are often jailed for child abuse, while their children are taken away and placed in foster homes.

That's what happened to Nou's cousin Mary, who got into a battle of wills with her daughter Sandy, a high school sophomore.

"Sandy got the best grades—she was number one in the whole class," said her older sister, Nancy. "But she kept coming home late every single day for seven months."

Instead of helping with the family chores—which include feeding and caring for her seven brothers and sisters—Sandy would hang out at Burbank with her favorite teacher, who would give her a lift home after dark.

Finally, after asking Sandy three times to come home right after school, only to be ignored, Mary snapped. When Sandy finally came home, her mother hit her with a switch.

The next afternoon, when Mary arrived at Burbank to get Sandy, she was arrested.

Over the next two days, CPS officials placed four of Mary's children in two foster homes, said her husband, Phillip.

"It took almost seven months to get my kids back," he said. He and his wife were forced to spend \$3,000 on a lawyer, and were ordered to take 10 weeks of parenting classes. "My wife failed the class because she didn't know English, so we had to attend a class in Hmong," Phillip said.

Sandy still lives in foster care, and refuses to speak to her parents. Her mother said she'd rather live with other people than cook, wash dishes and live with her large family in a crowded three-bedroom apartment.

Mary said the parenting class taught her to discipline her kids with words, not spankings, "But when you have 8 kids, you have to spank if necessary."

If she hadn't disciplined Sandy, she would have been criticized by the Hmong community for letting her daughter run around with a teacher.

Nancy, Sandy's older sister, said their father's lectures are worse than any physical punishment. "He'll sit us down and just say the same things over and over. I'd rather have a beating for 5 minutes than have to sit there for 3-4 hours listening to my dad."

Nancy and her parents blame the school for breaking up their family.

"I don't understand why teachers are taking sides without listening to the parents," Mary said, in tears.

The teacher has since left the school, and a Hmong guidance counselor has been hired. But the case illustrates several sad truths: first, the Hmong, who come from a pre-literate, pre-industrial culture in the misty mountains of Laos, were never adequately prepared for life in a 21st century society that is often directly at odds with their time-honored beliefs; second, there's often no correlation between how well a refugee's child does in school and how well that child adjusts to life at home. Sometimes, Hmong children who excel in school have even less respect for parents who often can't read or

speak English, hold a job, or deal with landlords, doctors, school officials or social workers without their help.

When the Hmong first settled in Sacramento in the late 1970s and 1980s, they often got into trouble with authorities for hitting their children.

But while most Hmong parents now know the laws against corporal punishment, they're almost never given the benefit of the doubt, said Laura Leonelli, a long-time advocate.

"The parents are automatically guilty," said Leonelli, who has seen dozens of such cases in her role as program manager for Lao Family Community Inc. "Teenagers know this particularly well. What really fries me is the attitude that the kids are better off in a receiving home or in foster care - anywhere but with the parents."

Leonelli points to the case of Fong, 36, and his wife Sandra, 27, both educated, hard-working Hmong who speak English.

While Sandra works from 7:30 a.m. to 3 in the afternoon, Fong takes care of their six small children. Then, when Lee comes home, Fong works as a swing shift manager for a baking company.

One afternoon, while the kids were playing in the backyard, Xue, then seven, fell and hit his head on the concrete.

The next day, when his first grade teacher asked him how he'd gotten a bruise over his eye, Xue said his mommy hit him.

By 1 p.m., sheriff's deputies and a CPS worker had taken away Fong's children, including a four month-old baby. Once the kids were in the patrol cars, Fong said a deputy told him, "Your son said you abuse your wife and your kids - we have to take them away."

Fong said not only was he forbidden to see his children, "We didn't even know where the kids were at."

After a nightmarish week, Sandra said she was forced to sign a confession and agree to take a parenting before CPS would release the children -even though she swears she's innocent.

"This is the most difficult experience of my life," said Fong. "It's very hurtful...I'm a working man, I'm a good citizen, I want to raise the kids the best I can. Nobody could be a better parent than me."

The good news is that fewer and fewer Hmong kids are being taken from the families. Out of the more than 10,000 Hmong children in the Sacramento area, there are barely two dozen Hmong kids in foster care, according to the county department of human assistance.

Schools have little choice but to report alleged child abuse - or be held responsible, said Rob Gerig, director of Student and Family Support Services for the Sacramento Unified School District.

"It's not the teacher's or the principal's place to sort out the cultural differences," Gerig said. "If a child has marks on them, or complains of something like that, if they don't report that (to Child Protective Services), they're liable."

But Gerig said school districts do have a responsibility to educate immigrant or refugee parents on American laws and what is - and isn't - legal when it comes to disciplining their children.

Laura Coulthard, division manager for Sacramento County Child Protective Services, said that the two cases cited in this article "could have occurred to anybody," and that Hmong parents are held to the same standards as everybody else. She said that parents don't have to sign "confessions," but a case plan that lists a parent's responsibilities and the services or requirements designed to reduce the risk in the home so that children can either be returned or stay at home.

She said her agency interviews relatives, doctors, school officials and anyone else who might know the family before determin-



This Khék Noy, Thailand, Hmong family—widowed mother, son, daughters-in-law and grandchildren—show the range of generations within a child-rearing family. Why look to the ways of Hmong in the "old countries"? Because the grandparents are responsible for much of the child care, and these Hmong grew up in families like the one pictured below. The stability of child-rearing strategies comes from this cross-generational pattern, but with stability comes slower adaptation to the ways of a new country. American agencies would do well to include grandparents in their awareness and behavioral change programs.

-Photo by Judy Lewis, 1986, Thailand





ing whether to return the children to the home. The agency does contract with Hmong social workers, but Coulthard said it's very hard to find Southeast Asian social workers. She currently has three openings for jobs that pay about \$30,000 to start, and only a bachelor's degree is now required.

Many Hmong kids don't blame their parents for resorting to corporal punishment - although they insist that it's strictly punishment, not a deterrent. At age 12, Aluya Vang said she started her own gang, the Sacramento Lady Players, modeled after various Hmong boy gangs. The Lady Players, she said, stole cars, tossed bricks through windows and beat up any girls that "crossed" them.

Vang said she looked up to Sou "Hitman" Thao, one of the leaders of the notorious Hmong gang MOD (Masters of Destruction). "We all thought he was cool," she said.

Vang started sleeping away from home, and soon was gone for weeks at a time. She said that when she came home, her mother would bribe her to stay by taking her on shopping spree. But after she got her new clothes, she'd disappear again. Finally, her mother started tying her to the bed, "but I'd get my sister to untie me."



What can you identify in these photos of Hmong in Thailand that if seen in American Hmong communities would trigger mainstream Americans' concern about neglect or abuse? (Photos by Vang or Lewis, 1986, 1992, Thailand).

After three years of the gang life, Vang got pregnant and had a little boy, and decided to go straight—parent-hood seems to be the only sure way out of a gang. She enrolled in a special public school for teen moms and did well in school. She's now 17, married and living in Stockton, and hopes to attend college someday. If she does, she'll be the first of her 14 siblings to make it that far.

There are Hmong parents who raise their kids successfully without every laying a

hand on them. I was especially impressed with Xong Lao Vang, a 73-year-old Hmong shaman and flute player who has raised five sons and a daughter in the gang-riddled confines of South Sacramento - without ever striking them.

Perhaps it's because his children know that he's a highly-respected elder. Or perhaps, as his son Bee says, "you've got to give respect to get respect."

Vang never showed favoritism and never used force. "When you did something wrong, he let things cool down," said his son Chue, now 40. "Then he'd take you to a room alone. Quietly, softly, nicely, he'd say, 'A good person wouldn't do what you did today....a smart person learns from his mistakes.'"



Abuse, neglect, or cultural norm?

It is difficult to discard one's own beliefs about what constitutes good care and rearing of children when faced with different ways of doing this universal human activity. School, health, and law enforcement personnel are often placed in this predicament—is it neglect? is it abuse? is it a cultural norm?

The purpose of California state penal code 11164 is to “protect children from abuse and neglect.” However, “in any investigation of suspected child or neglect, all persons participating in the investigation of the case shall consider the needs of the child victim and shall do whatever is necessary to prevent psychological harm to the child victim.”

Because the psychology of a child is basically an internal representation of the “community psychology,” or culture, it appears that those of us involved with children from diverse backgrounds must take care to consider the cultural context of child rearing. This can be done within the intent of the penal code, and does not become the much simpler and sometimes heard, “well, they're here now and they need to learn the law.” Yes, the law. Not the law as it is interpreted by those whose brains contain information about experiences with only one kind of culture.... their own.

A training guide for culturally sensitive investigations (see sidebar, “*”) begins: “Investigators need to be sure that their personal beliefs about child care do not become the standard to which they legally seek to hold others. ...evidence of neglect should be a matter of context; whether such caretaking is valued by the group or imposed on an unwilling child.”

Most training programs have come to include more evident practices that have in the past been misinterpreted as child abuse or neglect—coining, cupping, and so on.

The key is for the investigators—and mandated reporters—to recognize when they are dealing with an unfamiliar culture, and to ferret out the context of the behavior that they believe might be child abuse or neglect. On

the other hand, we also have to be attuned to the possibility of racism—that we are dealing with stereotypical beliefs about groups (including our own!) that prevent our looking at the specifics of individual cases within the context of their cultures.

Look at the following situations... which might be considered child maltreatment by members of a different cultural group?

- Making razor cuts in the face and rubbing ashes in the cuts.
- Tattoos.
- Piercing holes in the earlobes of baby girls.
- Circumcision of infant boys.
- Letting a child cry from hunger until a certain amount of time has passed by.
- Letting a child sleep alone in a box (crib) in a dark room.
- Letting a 4-year old carry around a baby in a baby-carrier.
- Letting a child do whatever he/she wants until about age 5 or 6.
- Letting a child fall asleep on someone's lap whenever he/she gets tired.
- Putting a child in a room, closing the door, and letting him/her cry until sleep.
- Not providing a child with his/her own space within the home.
- Immunizations.
- Orthodontia.
- Bruising the skin to cure illness; acupressure; acupuncture.
- Allowing natural consequences to cause a child discomfort, when a watchful adult should have seen and prevented the pain.

Are you guilty of child maltreatment? In Euro-American culture, there is a belief that a certain amount of discomfort is part of growing up, and that to intercede too much is to “spoil” a child. The challenge is to identify adults who go too far, by anyone's cultural norms.

LINKS

- **Child Abuse Prevention Handbook and Intervention Guide** (rev. 2000): Crime and Violence Prevention Center, California Attorney General's Office, PO Box 944255, Sacramento CA 94244-2550, www.caag.state.ca.us/cvpc. Complimentary copy.
- **Mandated child abuse reporting: Legal, ethical, and professional dimensions.** www.apa.org/books/mandate.html
- *Cultural issues in child welfare.* www.calib.com/nccanch/pubs/bibs/culture2.htm
- *Child-rearing practices in Latin America* (Meyers, 1991 CELAM, UNICEF conference). <http://ecdgroupp.com/cn/cn15la.html>
- *Sociocultural Influences on Learning and Teaching* (Puerto Rican culture). www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/classics/culture/sociocultural.htm
- *Child Rearing Practices and Beliefs in Sub-Saharan Africa* (good ideas on dealing with parents from rural unschooled backgrounds) www.ecdgroupp.com/archive/crwrepo.html
- *Infusing Culture into Parenting Issues: Supplement for Psychology Instructors* (Ritts). www.stlcc.cc.mo.us/mcdocs/users/vrittsculture.htm
- *Some Aspects of Vietnamese Culture in Child Rearing Practices* (Buu Quoc Phung, 1993).
- *Discipline.* www.liveandlearn.com/punish.html
- MN Dept of Human Services: **Children of Color Outreach** . Translation Project. Information for parents in Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Somali. www.dhs.state.mn.us/childint/Programs/ChildofColor/trans.htm
- MN DHS, **Hmong Health Initiative** . “Encyclopedia” of concepts used in health and prevention, a comparative lexicon, to make communication more effective. Patricia.T.Ray@state.mn.us, (651) 297-2468.
- **Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect** (National Academy Press, 1993), online text. <http://books.nap.edu/books/0309048893/html/>
- **New Beginnings: A Guide to Designing Parenting Programs for Refugee and Immigrant Parents** (Scheinfeld), International Catholic Child Bureau. <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/refugees/>
- *Cross-cultural Investigations**. National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information. nccanch@calib.com, www.calib.com/nccanch/pubs/usermanuals/law/types.htm
- CPS Watch: *Child Abuse or Discipline?* www.cpswatch.org/reports/discipline.htm

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Hmong Literacy Development Materials, 1999 (call or email for price list). <http://mills.fcusd.k12.ca.us/ctrsite/hmlitdev/HLDorder.pdf>

- #9616 *Tawm Lostsuas Mus (Out of Laos: A Story of War and Exodus, Told in Photographs)*. Roger Warner. English/Hmong. \$18.56 per copy, \$89.10 per 6-pack, \$445.48 per carton of 40.
- #9613 *Introduction to Vietnamese Culture* (Te, 1996. \$5.00. Carton price \$4.00).
- #9512 *Handbook for Teaching Armenian Speaking Students*, Avakian, Ghazarian, 1995, 90 pages. \$7.00. No carton discount.
- #9410 *Amerasians from Vietnam: A California Study*, Chung & Le, 1994. \$7.00. No carton discount. OUT OF PRINT. Available online.
- #9409 *Proceedings on the Conference on Champa*, 1994. \$7.00. Available online.
- #9207 *Minority Cultures of Laos: Kammu, Lua', Lahu, Hmong, and Mien*. Lewis; Kam Raw, Vang, Elliott, Matisoff, Yang, Crystal, Saepharn. 1992. 402 pages \$15.00 (carton discount \$12.00, 16 per carton)
- #S8801 *Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students* Bliatout, Downing, Lewis, Yang, 1988. \$4.50 (carton discount for lots of 58: \$3.50) Available online.
- #S8802 *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* Ouk, Huffman, Lewis, 1988. \$5.50 (carton discount for lots of 40: \$4.50). Available online.
- #S8903 *Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students* Luangpraseut, Lewis 1989. \$5.50. Available online.
- #S8904 *Introduction to the Indochinese and their Cultures* Chhim, Luangpraseut, Te, 1989, 1994. \$9.00. Carton discount: \$7.00.
- #S8805 *English-Hmong Bilingual Dictionary of School Terminology* Cov Lus Mis Kuj Txhais ua Lus Hmoob. Huynh D Te, translated by Lue Vang, 1988. \$2.00 (no carton price)

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