Handbook for Teaching Lao-Speaking Students

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First phase development (1980)

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Southeast Asia Community Resource Center
Folsom Cordova Unified School District
1989

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Publishing Information

This handbook was funded in part with funds from the Transition Program for Refugee Children, education funds authorized under the Refugee Act of 1980. The opinions expressed herein do not, however, necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. government, and no official endorsement should be inferred. The document was developed in consultation with the California State Department of Education Bilingual Education Office, as part of a series of handbooks for teaching language minority students. The handbook was prepared for publication with desktop publishing equipment provided under an educational grant from Apple Computer, Inc. to Folsom Cordova Unified School District. The manuscript was prepared on a Macintosh Plus, using Microsoft Word and Aldus Pagemaker, and run on a Laserwriter Plus. The handbook was printed by Spilman Printing Company, 1801-9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Copies of this handbook are available for $5.00 each, plus sales tax for California residents, and $1.50 per copy shipping & handling (multiple copies are shipped as *4th class special* rate). Out-of-state residents pay $6.50 per copy, shipping included. Make checks/purchase orders payable to Folsom Cordova Unified School District, Southeast Asia Community Resource Center, 125 East Bidwell Street, Folsom, CA 95630, telephone (916) 635-6815 or 985-4483.

Aslo available from this address is
Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students, 1988
($4.50 + CA tax and $1.00 shipping/handling).
Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students, 1988
($5.50 + CA tax and $1.25 shipping/handling).

Foreword

Folsom Cordova Unified School District, which serves three distinct communities at the outskirts of suburban Sacramento, has faced rapid unexpected changes in the ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic makeup of its student population over the past ten to fifteen years. Those of us serving this district's students, for the most part, were trained before teacher training programs offered courses in second language acquisition, cultural diversity, and adaptation to life in a new country.

The arrival of a few Vietnamese refugee students between 1975 and 1979 introduced the district's personnel to the challenges and rewards of teaching language minority students. Beginning in 1979, our community resettled about 10% of Sacramento County's newly arriving refugees, resulting in twenty to forty new students, kindergarten through twelfth grade, enrolling each month. These students, also from Vietnam, were of a different language group, ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically unlike the earlier students. During the following several years, students from yet other backgrounds enrolled in our district schools, challenging our teaching staff to learn enough about the changing population to plan and carry out effective programs.

Our district, like many others in the state, has come face to face with California's new student population with little preparation and few resources. The Asian and Minority Language Group Project of the California State Department of Education's Bilingual Education Office provides a valuable educational resource to classroom teachers, specialists, and administrators serving the language minority students within an ongoing program. We are pleased to work cooperatively with Van LE and other consultants at the Bilingual Education Office, as it is at the district and school level that the "ideal" educational programs are refined and reshaped by practical experience.

We, as individuals in the school community, have been enriched by the diverse talents, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and world views of peoples from so many backgrounds, and we are proud to recognize their importance in tomorrow's California with the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center, and the collaboration on the production of this handbook.

David H. Benson
Superintendent
Folsom Cordova Unified School District
October, 1989

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Acknowledgements

This handbook was developed as part of the Asian and Minority Language Group Project in the Bilingual Education Office, California State Department of Education. The Project Team identified as its first major activity the development of handbooks for a number or Asian and minority language groups. The project was designed to assist school personnel in understanding selected Asian and minority language groups.

Chapter I and II of this handbook address general background factors regarding the Lao-speaking language group: history, educational background, and sociocultural factors. Chapters III and IV contain specific information regarding the Lao language and appropriate program offerings that will promote the academic achievement of Lao-speaking students.

There are other related publications developed by the Bilingual Education Office, including *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*,[i] which provides extensive information regarding bilingual education theory and practice. It also outlines the basic principles underlying successful bilingual education programs and suggests a variety of implementation strategies. The analyses and illustrations in the *Theoretical Framework* are not specific to particular language groups. Rather, the *Theoretical Framework* provides a way of conceptualizing and organizing appropriate program services based on program goals, available resources, community background factors, and student characteristics.

The Asian and Minority Language Group Project has completed handbooks on Korean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Pilipino, Japanese, Portuguese,[ii] and Hmong and Khmer speaking students.[iii] We believe that by using these handbooks in conjunction with the *Theoretical Framework*,

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[i] Information regading this publication is available from the Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles, 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032. The Center also has handbooks on Vietnamese-speaking and Korean-speaking students.

[ii] Handbooks on Cantonese-speaking, Japanese-speaking, Pilipino-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking students are available from the Bureau of Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95801-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260).

[iii] The *Handbook for Teaching Hmong-Speaking Students* and the *Handbook for Teaching Khmer-Speaking Students* are available from the Southeast Asia Community Resource Center (Folsom Cordova Unified School District): 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670; (916) 635-6815.

school personnel should be able to develop program services that are appropriately suited to the needs of individual language minority students.

The Asian and Minority Language Group Project Team of the Bilingual Education Office began development of this handbook in early 1980. The initial contributors were Khamchong Luangpraseut, Onsy Inthavong, Bounmy Soukbandith, and Silay Bounkeo. The drafts were reviewed and improved by Dr. Bounlieng Phommasouvanh and Dr. Carol Compton.

Work resumed on the handbook in 1988 in close collaboration with staff of Folsom-Cordova Unified School District. Judy Lewis was added as a new contributor and editor, and second phase work continued with Khamchong Luangpraseut. They spent time in meeting, collecting recent data, doing extensive research work and rewriting sections of the handbook. The Bilingual Education Office staff reviewed drafts and made suggestions to the writers. David Dolson, Assistant Manager, and Daniel Holt, Consultant, edited copies of the manuscript. Van LE, as Team Leader, provided overall coordination of the development of the handbook.

Every effort has been made to produce a handbook that will be useful to educators who are responsible for the education of Lao-speaking students. Despite the extensive work of many individuals, this handbook should be regarded as a first edition. As time and resources permit, efforts will be made to refine it. It is difficult in one volume to depict the uniqueness and heterogeneity that characterizes the Lao language group. The reader should recognize that any language group is complex and diverse, with individual members and generations having a variety of needs and characteristics based on different experiences in America and in their native countries.

This handbook represents an initial attempt to describe generally the needs and characteristics of the Lao language group. Much more research and developmental work needs to be done by all who are responsible for ensuring the successful adaptation to America by the Lao language group.

October, 1989

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Note to Readers

In the preparation of this handbook the authors have attempted to provide information that would be helpful to teachers and administrators working with Lao students and their parents. Chapter 4 deals directly with instructional strategies for Lao and English language development. To bring out the relevance and applicability of information elsewhere in the text, boxes with the heading "*Implications for Educators*" have been inserted into the text wherever appropriate. Since these implications and teaching hints are based on the main text, that should be read first. But the boxes will be the place to look later when you are searching for practical suggestions.

Chapter 1

Background of the Laotians

"In the tumultuous Southeast Asian refugee story, Laotians[1] have often been the least noticed of the three nationality groups which have fled war and destruction in their home countries." (Cerquone, 1986).

History of Laos

Laos, a small land-locked kingdom bordering on China to the north, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the south, Thailand and Burma to the West, was founded under the name of *Lan Xang* or "Land of a Million Elephants" in 1353. In relation to Cambodia and Vietnam, it is a young country, only about one hundred years older than the United States. The rugged mountains were home to many different minority peoples, growing dry mountain rice and surviving on what they could produce. The ethnic Lao, only about half of the four million inhabitants, lived along the Mekong River and the small streams that feed into it. They also grew rice, but rather than slashing the jungle growth and burning the stubble, they built dikes and grew paddy rice. River transportation made it possible for the lowlanders to maintain political dominance. Transportation between the lowlands and highlands was never developed, and the sixty or more ethnic groups coexisted peacefully,

[1]In this handbook, the term "Laotian" refers to any person from the country of Laos. The ethnic Lao were the majority group, and since they farmed the lowland valleys they were also known as "lowland Lao". Half of the Laotians belonged to various other ethnic groups, farming the mountainsides; they were collectively known as the "midmountain" and "highland" Laotians. Of the sixty ethnic groups, the Tai Dam, Hmong, Iu-Mien, Khmu, and Lahu have come to the United States. Also living in the cities were Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Chinese. The primary focus of this handbook is the *Lao*.

having little contact with each other. The lowland Lao, descended from the same ethnolinguistic group as the Thai, have a reputation of being gentle, smiling, easygoing people, for whom *bo pben nyung* ("no matter") is a customary response to mishap.

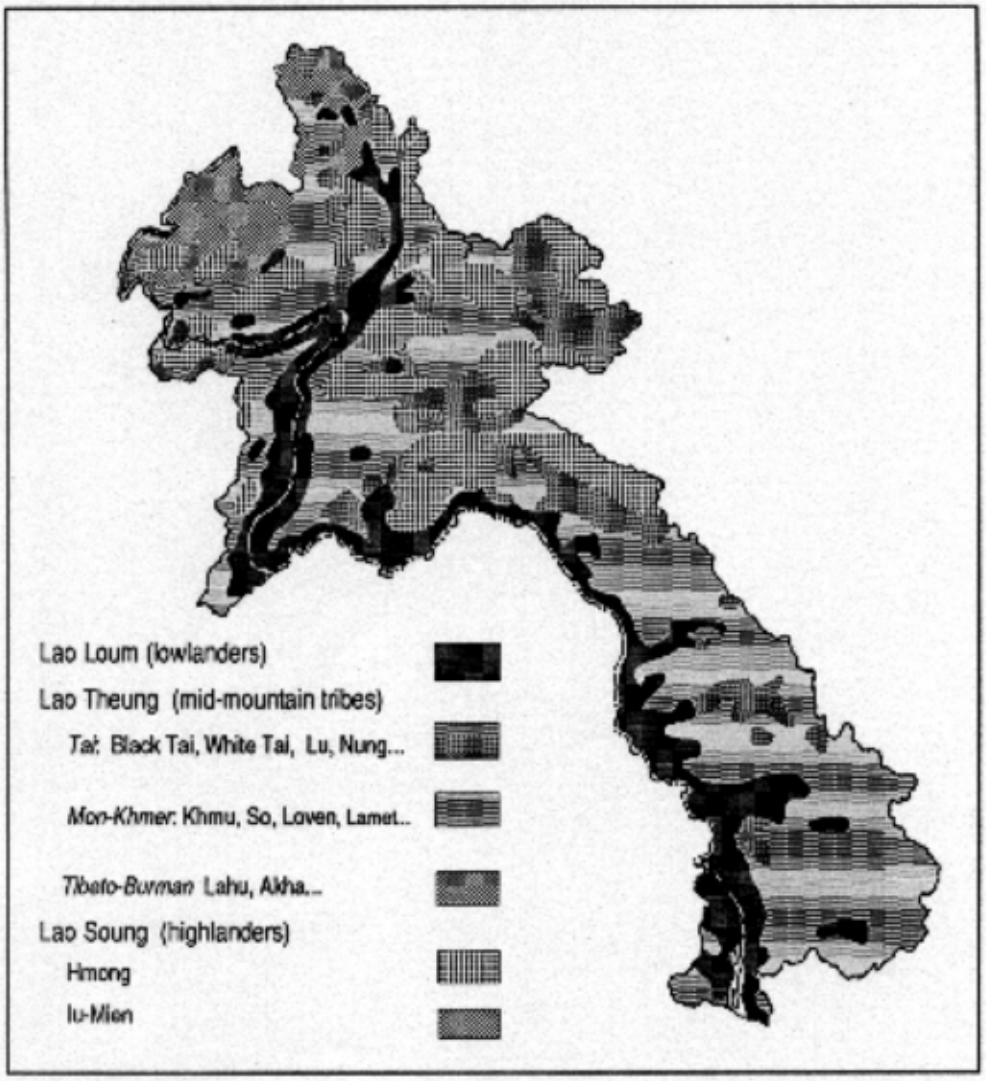
Lan Xang marked the beginning of Lao modern history and the kingdom enjoyed prosperity and influence for several centuries. Soulinga-Vongsa was king from 1637-1694, and this was a time called "golden age" by the Lao people. During this time the civilization flourished, with Vientiane (*Vieng Chan*) as its center. The heritage of the arts, like that of Buddhist Thailand and Cambodia, can be traced to the elaborate decoration of the *wats* and other religious shrines.

After King Soulinga-Vongsa died, the country split into three smaller kingdoms, each operating autonomously. The rivalry between the kingdoms forms the basis of regional affiliations and loyalties that exist even today.

The *Lan Xang* civilization declined at the turn of the 18th century and the kingdom came under attack by the invasion forces of the neighboring countries. Laos was caught between Vietnam and Thailand as the two countries fought to extend their territories. Laos was under Thai domination until it became a French colony in 1893, soon after Cambodia and Vietnam. In 1907, France signed a treaty with Thailand that set the borders, dividing the two countries at the Mekong River and placing in Thailand lands which had been settled by the Lao. As a result, even today, there are more Lao-speaking people living in the northeastern Thai provinces bordering the Mekong River than in Laos itself.

The French interest in Laos was minimal, as events in Vietnam (its primary Indochinese colony) and Cambodia took priority. The government officials of the first rank were French, with French-speaking Vietnamese serving as the the second rank officials. The Lao were not part of the governing of their own country. Laos did not offer vast rice-growing areas, as Cambodia did, nor were its resources easily extractable, given the limited transportation into the remote areas. From a French point of view, the most notable thing about Laos was its opium produc-

Figure 1
Laos: Land of a Million Elephants....and 69 Ethnic Groups



Remarkable for its ethnolinguistic diversity, Laos was the least developed of the French Indochinese colonies. Five ethnic groups have been resettled in the U.S. as political refugees: the Lao, Khmu, Lahu, Hmong, and Iu-Mien. This handbook focuses on the Lao, who were the majority group in Laos, but who are a little-known and enigmatic group in American communities.

tion, encouraged by the French as a way to finance the expenses of its colonial empire

In 1945, Japan occupied Laos along with the rest of Southeast Asia. With Hiroshima, Japan surrendered, leaving Laos to the Laotians for the first time in fifty-two years. The Prime Minister, Prince Phetsarath, formed a committee known as the Free Lao (*Lao Issara*) to counter any attempt by the French to return as a colonial power to Laos. However, they failed in their attempt, as the French soon arrived in Vientiane and Luang Prabang, announcing the resumption of the French protectorate.

King Sisavangvong, at the urging of the French, moved to limit Prince Phetsarath's power, but stripping the Prince of his titles and position strengthened the resolve of the Lao Issara movement. The Lao Issara attempted to set up an independent Laos. The King at first refused to recognized its legitimacy, then later relented as he realized the strength of anti-French sentiment. In 1946, then, Laos had a Lao Issara government with King Sisavangvong installed as monarch.

Viet Minh troops, under Ho Chi Minh, and Lao Issara troops resisted the presence of French troops, and they fought French-backed Lao guerrillas and French military units along the Mekong River. The French were stronger, and the Lao Issara forces broke up into guerrilla bands, some of which went into Thailand. Prince Phetsarath, still the head of the Lao Issara, joined his followers in Thailand and set up a government-in-exile. Once the French troops were in Laos, they attempted to reach compromise agreements with the anti-French groups. Laos was declared to be autonomous, and elections were held in early 1947. In the fall of that year, an official constitution was adopted.

In Thailand, the Lao Issara experienced internal leadership problems; three different factions split apart. Prince Phetsarath continued to hold out for a completely French-free independent Laos. His brother, Prince Souvanna Phouma, wanted independence for Laos, but was willing to work with the French. A half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, wanted the Lao Issara to join with Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh forces to defeat the French; this group later became known as the "Pathet Lao."

Prince Souvanna Phouma re-entered Laos in 1949, when the French agreed to most of the Lao Issara demands. By this time, the French were eager to encourage independence for Laos, so they could concentrate on

mounting difficulties in Vietnam. Prince Souphanouvong, after being removed from the Lao Issara party by Prince Phetsarath went back to Laos to join Ho Chi Minh's forces.

The French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu in the mountains near the Lao-Vietnam border, and France left Indochina as required by the Geneva Accords of 1954. The victory of the Viet Minh (later known as the *Viet Cong* in South Vietnam) caused a few thousand anti-Viet Minh, pro-French minorities to flee into Laos, where they lived until the victory of the communist Pathet Lao in 1975. These minorities, mostly Tai Dam and Nung, were among the first refugee groups to flee Laos to Thailand (Vanes-Beeck, 1982).

When the French administration pulled out of Laos, the newly independent Lao state immediately ran into economic, military and political problems. France, as a colonial power, invested very little in the development of the economy or infrastructure of Laos. In 1943, for instance, in all the major towns except Luang Prabang, 30% of the population was Lao and the remainder Vietnamese and Chinese (Halpern, 1964). As the Lao were generally not among the ranks of government officials, they were ill-prepared to govern Laos themselves. The situation was aggravated by internal conflicts and ideological struggles between different factions and regional groups; the three kingdoms of three hundred years before still affected the ability of the Lao leaders to unify the country.

By the late 1950's, Laos had become a focal point of the "cold war" tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Laos was seen as a prime example of the "domino theory" of communist expansion. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy were strongly committed to preventing this Laotian domino from falling. The United States thought of the "VC" (Viet Cong) and the "PL" (Pathet Lao) as a single communist insurgency movement with two forms, one speaking Lao in Laos and the other speaking Vietnamese in Vietnam. Both were controlled by Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi, backed by the Soviet Union.

Laos was also regarded as a buffer zone shielding Thailand from Soviet or Chinese communist takeover, which would lead, they thought, to expansion of the Soviet bloc to other Southeast Asian countries, then New Zealand and Australia, India, and eventually Africa. The U.S. also

felt that this was a test of its ability to help third world countries resist communist revolution; if the communists succeeded in Laos and Vietnam, other developing nations too would fall. In 1955 the United States assumed the French role as protector in Indochina.

For the next 20 years the United States supported the Lao government—switching from the rightists to the neutralists lead by Souvanna Phouma in 1960—as Laos struggled to carry out its social, economic, and military programs, and remain non-communist. While the socioeconomic conditions improved, however slowly, the military and political situation deteriorated rapidly over the years.

Between 1955 and 1958 efforts to unify Laos by bringing together the two half-brothers failed. In 1959, the Royal Lao and the Pathet Lao forces began fighting in northeastern Laos. The Royal Lao government complained that North Vietnam had troops in Laos, in violation of the Geneva Accords of 1954. The UN determined that North Vietnam was providing aid, but not troops. The Royal Lao government protested, saying that the troops were there, hidden away in the mountains between Laos and Vietnam.

The Pathet Lao made military gains, and the United States sent military advisers, along with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) workers and CIA personnel. In 1962, another Gevena conference met and declared that Laos was to remain neutral. The agreement called for all foreign troops to leave. The United States withdrew its advisers and military men, but North Vietnam did not. The USAID workers remained, and became liaisons with the United States military, based across the border in Thailand. A coalition government of neutralists, rightists, and communists was seated by the Geneva conference.

One year later in 1963, the coalition government fell apart. By the late 1960's, the Pathet Lao infiltrated more and more villages in the remote mountains, where the villagers chose between joining the Pathet Lao or fleeing to new sites to avoid their coercion. At the same time, North Vietnam increased the movement of troops and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail, supplying the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. The monarch's Royal Lao Army had neither the war equipment nor the men to fight a war in the remote mountains. The United States began to send in

weapons to arm the villagers who lived in the remote areas, and humanitarian aid to help the villagers who were displaced by the advancing war.

The Royal Lao Air Force flew T-28's, and as time passed, the U.S. provided more and more support and direction for their flights. The United States flew high altitude reconnaissance flights over Laos, which gradually became low altitude flights; eventually crews were given permission to fire upon or bomb hostile positions. Thus, the United States began saturation bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail. By 1969, there was also heavy U.S. bombing of communists in central Laos on the Plain of Jars, where many non-communist Laotian villagers lived. The bombing displaced at least 370,000[2] persons by 1973 (Lee, 1982), some of whom joined the anti-U.S. communists, but most of whom were sheltered in camps where food, living materials and medical services were coordinated by the remaining USAID and other development project workers.

The best known of the CIA-financed and advised "secret armies" was that in Central Laos' Military Region 2, headquartered at Long Tieng. The Hmong refugees in the United States were its troops, but the Iu-Mien, Khmu and other ethnic minorities, as well as the Lao, were also part of the clandestine army. Lartéguy (1978) gives the following breakdown of several battalions:

Batallion 201:	60% Hmong, 22% Lao, 13% Khmu, 5% Iu-Mien
Batallion 202:	20% Hmong, 20% Lao, 50% Khmu, 10% Iu-Mien
Batallion 203:	20% Hmong, 40% Lao, 30% Khmu, 10% Iu-Mien
Batallion 204:	70% Hmong, 5% Lao, 25% Khmu
Batallion 205:	70% Hmong, 20% Lao, 10% Khmu
Batallion 206:	60% Hmong, 10% Lao, 30% Khmu
Batallion 207:	50% Hmong, 40% Lao, 10% Khmu
Batallion 208:	50% Hmong, 30% Lao, 20% Khmu
Batallion 209:	30% Hmong, 60% Lao, 10% Khmu

[2] Chanda (1982) estimated that 700,000 were displaced by this time.

Even though the guerrilla army, headed in the central region by General Vang Pao fought against incredible odds, they slowly lost ground. The guerrilla army would capture an enemy position, but there weren't enough people to go in afterwards and hold it. The captured positions were soon overrun by the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese communist forces.

By 1973, the Pathet Lao controlled most of Laos, but not the Mekong Valley where most of the Lao population lived. The peace talks in Paris led to an agreement in Vietnam, and a cease-fire was signed by the Pathet Lao and the Royal Lao government in 1973. American air support and the equipment provided to the secret army was withdrawn. Two years later, South Vietnam and Cambodia fell to the communists in April, and Laotian leaders and soldiers began to leave for Thailand. Less than a month later, on May 15, 1975, the Royal Lao government fell to the communist Pathet Lao. On December 2, 1975, the six-hundred-old Laotian monarchy was abolished and replaced by the "Lao People's Democratic Republic."

Fleeing Laos as Political Refugees

There was very little emigration by the peoples of Laos before 1975. The sporadic internal movements of people in the recent past were caused by wars and agricultural practices. However, the communist takeover in 1975, which prompted thousands of people to flee the country seems to mark an historic turning point for the Lao people, as well as the Hmong, Iu-Mien, Tai Dam, and other minority peoples.

After World War II, the United Nations formulated a definition for "refugee", a special class of persons seeking to live in a country other than the one of birth. A refugee is

> "any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or

who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his habitual residence, is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it."

During the first years of communist rule, 1975 to 1982, 10% of the Laotian population—300,000 lowland Lao and highland minority peoples—fled from Laos into Thailand, to become refugees. From 1982 until 1988, another 50,000 have been registered by the UNHCR as refugees in Thailand. What was it in their lives that caused them to flee?

U.S.-supported clandestine army

The group to receive the greatest publicity in recent years has been the Hmong, the highland minority group that formed the backbone of the clandestine army in central Laos. The Hmong, along with Iu-Mien, Thai Dam, Khmu, and Lahu, were the frontline troops for the anti-communists, and were eligible to be refugees because of this direct connection with the United States. Soon after the takeover by the Pathet Lao in 1975, a government newspaper published an article calling for the extermination of the Hmong "to the last root" (Stuart-Fox, 1982), which has been widely quoted as proof of the coming retaliation against the Hmong. The government's effort to eradicate Hmong dissidents peaked during the period 1977-79, when the Lao and Vietnamese communists carried out suppression drives, and eventually damaged the resistance base at Phou Bia (Lee, 1982). Other factors that have caused the Hmong and other minority Laotians to flee were the changes instituted by the communist government, including labor conscription, forced resettlement, collectivized agriculture, rice taxes, and the resulting disruptions in crop production.

The Hmong and other highlanders have been granted refugee status fairly easily by the United Nations interviewers. However, between 1982 and 1985 many who had received approval declined to board the buses to leave the camps. In addition, there are now many relatives who followed the original refugees out of Laos, but who did not work directly with the United States, and their status is questioned.

Stepped up efforts increased the numbers of highlanders resettled during 1988-89, bringing to the United States families who have lived in the camps for ten years or more.

Implications for Educators:

Lao refugees arriving in the United States since 1985 may have been in refugee camps for up to fourteen years. The young children born in Thailand have grown up in an environment of crowding, poor sanitation, idleness, authoritarianism, and dependency. They and their parents will probably have different needs than the groups of Lao who spent less time in the camp environment.

U.S.-backed government and military

Another group of Laotians who fled to Thailand were those who ran the massive humanitarian aid programs designed to support the displaced villagers. Generally, the programs were administered by Lao who worked in Vientiane and other cities in Laos. These people, as well as the other Royal Lao government workers, members of the monarchy, and the military men of the Royal Lao Army and Air Force had reason to fear that they would be targeted for reprisal after the communist takeover in 1975.

The new Lao government instituted many changes (see Stuart-Fox, 1982), but there was one change that created an exodus of people who did not leave immediately in 1975. Like in Vietnam, the new government instituted a program of "re-education" of all government workers and military personnel attached to the Royal Lao government, and others who were suspected of having been corrupted by U.S. influence. The communist government itself announced that 10,000 to 15,000 people were sent to re-education camps; others have placed the figure much higher (Cerquone, 1986). Those chosen for re-education were sent to "seminars", from which many never returned alive. During the time of these seminars, few outsiders were aware of what was happening. It was only after those who had survived the re-education camps fled to Thailand as

refugees did the story become known. Re-education consisted of forced labor, imprisonment, starvation, self-criticism, and brainwashing.

Displaced villagers

Perhaps the largest group of Lao who fled to become refugees were those villagers who farmed in regions that were subjected to heavy bombing. Central Laos was the most heavily bombed area, per capita, in the history of warfare (Brown, 1982). Many of these bombs were cluster bombs, the type that explodes above the ground, raining thousands of small land mines into the fields. These "bombies" continue to be a problem today to the villagers who strike them with their hoes. These villagers, who made up the majority of the displaced persons receiving aid during the 1970's, make up a large number of the ethnic Lao refugees who have entered Thailand as refugees.

Others

After the 1975 takeover, the Pathet Lao found themselves unprepared to run a country. Those Lao who had the education and experience to re-establish peacetime activity had either escaped or had been sent to re-education camps. The Soviet Union sent advisers, and Vietnam sent more than 50,000 soldiers and civilian settlers. The government attempted to establish collective agriculture as had been done in the Soviet Union and Vietnam. The ineptitude of the new government, along with ill-timed natural disasters, created starvation conditions for several years. During this time, many Laotians who entered Thailand were classified as "economic migrants" by Thai officials. Economic migrants are not eligible to be refugees, and are denied access to resettlement in other countries. Because they are illegal aliens in Thailand, they are subject to deportation.

Thus, Laotians who have come to the United States as refugees are of several ethnicities, have different backgrounds in terms of education and vocation, have had different experiences during the war and its aftermath, and have come at different times over a 14 year period of

time. The ethnic Lao themselves are difficult to describe as a single category, just as it is difficult to describe any group of people who live and develop under a variety of conditions. Throughout history, there was never a strong national identity due to the number of minorities, the poor transportation from one region to another, and the lack of widespread education. In addition, there are very few resource books that make attempts to describe "the Lao", and the few books of Lao history are representative of the author's own group only.

Implications for Educators:

Lao people come from a variety of backgrounds...ethnic, socioeconomic... regional. Questions like *Why do Lao ...?* or *Are Laotians....?* are difficult for a Lao to answer. It is even more difficult to speak about the minority peoples with whom few Lao had direct contact. Most people know how things were done in their own household and locality, but cannot speak for all Lao. The low levels of literacy and the lack of access to the few written materials meant that people's understanding of how others behave and believe is rudimentary and often based on word of mouth and stereotype. Often Lao parents and students will first learn from resource materials which educators make available to them; unfortunately, few of them are written by Lao about themselves, but rather by Westerners who cannot speak as "insiders". It is in the United States, with an emphasis on cultural diversity, and the ability to communicate in a common language, that people can begin to learn about the others who used to be their unknown neighbors.

Refugee Camps in Thailand

The Thai government agreed to provide the land for refugee camps, under the condition that the United Nations and voluntary agencies from all over the world would provide food, training, and medical services, and that after the crisis ends there would be no residuals left expecting to settle permanently in Thailand. Thailand, with refugee-producing communist countries on three of its borders, cannot accept all those who wish to find asylum or to establish new homes.

Ironically, the Mekong River had long been a thoroughfare rather than a boundary between Laos and Thailand. On both sides of the river live "Isan" and (*isan* refers to those who speak Northeastern Thai, the

same Tai language as Lao). Family members who lived on opposite sides of the river suddenly found themselves nationals of countries with conflicting ideologies, backed by opposing superpowers.

The refugee camps and holding centers for the Laotian refugees have been established in the northern provinces of Thailand, along the border with Thailand. Sites, ethnic composition, populations, and eligibility for resettlement have changed several times since 1975.

In the early years, most of the ethnic Lao refugees were housed at Nong Khai camp, were the population reached 40,000 at its peak. When the international community began to slow the rate of accepting refugees for resettlement, Thailand closed the border (Stuart-Fox, 1980; van der Kroef, 1982), and decreed that future arrivals would be classified as economic migrants, not refugees. Those people arriving after July, 1980, were housed in "humane deterrence" camps, such as Na Pho in eastern Thailand and Chiang Kham in northwestern Thailand, until arrangements could be made to return the illegal aliens to Laos. Those housed in austerity camps were told they had two choices: voluntary repatriation to Laos, or staying in the camps forever. Those volunteering for repatriation were given a kit of supplies and year's supply of rice and sent back to Laos. Between 1980 and 1988 only about 2,500 Lao (and 750 highlanders) returned to Laos (*Refugee Reports*, December 1988) under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation program. During that time, UN officials estimate that as many as 17,000 returned to Laos unofficially. What happened to those who returned to Laos is unclear: some sold the supplies on the Lao black market and escaped again to Thailand (Morgan and Colsen, 1987); some returned to their villages; and some were never heard from again. In mid-1983, and again in early 1986, the Thai authorities relented, and allowed the international refugee team to interview the illegal aliens at Chiang Kham and Na Pho for resettlement.

At the end of the fiscal year in September 1988, there were 19,000 Lao officially in Thai camps: 16,917 at Na Pho, 216 at Ban Vinai, and 94 at Chiang Kham. The remainder were at the reprocessing centers of Bataan (in the Philippines) and Phanat Nikhom (near Bangkok), preparing to enter the United States or other third asylum countries. This concentration of Lao in a few camps is a departure from early years,

when Lao might have been at Nong Khai, Ubon, Houei Yot, Sob Tuang, Ban Nam Yao, or Ban Tong.

Some of the refugees who crossed the Mekong River have been able to blend into the rural village settings in northern and northeastern Thailand. Laotian girls sometimes marry into families who are Thai nationals. Particularly in Nan province, where the political boundary is visible only on maps, and where communist insurgency has been an intermittent problem, refugees who are members of the resistance move back and forth between Laos and Thailand. Many Laotians at Chiang Kham have claimed ties to Thai citizenship, and wait there for officials to investigate the claims.

As in Cambodia, international political decisions have made a humanitarian situation more difficult. Hardest hit are the families who are separated, some in refugee camps awaiting resettlement while the rest, who escaped later, are confined to the humane deterrence centers. Also, as in the Cambodian border area, Thailand tolerates an active resistance movement which keeps the Vietnamese-allied communist government in Laos from becoming a threat to Thai security.

Implications for Educators:

After escaping to Thailand and living in refugee camps, dependency on others became the norm. The United Nations provided basic rice and water rations, medical care, and schooling. This means that some younger Lao parents may have never provided for their own subsistence, and yet never worked for wages, either. This may affect how parents view the relationship between work, assistance, and survival. It also means that they are ill-prepared to advise their children for a future of working in America. Vocational planning, and even advising about ways to enter a wage economy, conducted by "insiders" whenever possible, can be an important aspect of public education.

Lao Resettlement in the U.S.

Table 1

Number of Indochinese
Who Arrived in the United States,
1975-88

Fiscal Year	*From Vietnam*	*From Cambodia*	*From Laos*
1975	125,000	4,600	800
1976	3,200	1,100	10,200
1977	1,900	300	400
1978	11,100	1,300	8,000
1979	44,500	6,000	30,200
1980	95,200	16,000	55,500
1981	86,100	27,100	19,300
1982	43,656	20,234	9,437
1983	23,459	13,114	2,835
1984	24,927	19,849	7,224
1985	25,209	19,131	5,181
1986	22,443	10,054	12,894
1987	23,012	1,539	15,564
1988	17,499	3,276	14,563
Total	547,205	143,597	192,098

Refugee Reports IX:12 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. State Department

Although the Office of Refugee Resettlement now keeps separate statistics for "highlanders" and "Lao", during the first few years of the refugee program they reported only the nationality, "Laotian". Thus, it is difficult to determine how many of the 192,000 Laotians who have come to the United States are Lao.

Records kept by the Office of Refugee Resettlement show that Laotians were initially resettled primarily in California, Minnesota, Texas, Wisconsin, Washington, and Illinois. During the period 1983-1988,

when some 58,000 Lao entered the U.S., the majority were resettled in California (36%), followed by Minnesota (10%) and Wisconsin (7.5%). Many states resettled smaller groups, 4% or less of the total (*Refugee Reports*, December 1988). These statistics do not accurately reflect the number of *Lao* in California because: 1) the numbers are not separated for Lao and highlanders (Hmong, Iu-Mien, Khmu, Lahu, etc.); 2) those resettled during 1975-1982 are not counted; and 3) the numbers refer to the states to which refugees were initially assigned, not their eventual state of residence.

The policy of the U.S. government was to spread refugees throughout the country, avoiding large impacts on any one state or urban area. Unfortunately, this policy did not fit very well with the nature of families who wanted to live in the same areas to help each other. Very soon after coming to a city, people contacted relatives in other areas by phone, and planned for an eventual reunion. People considered the dispersal of families just another leg of the journey that would at last end when everyone was together again.

In addition to this motivation, states are vastly different in weather, ethnic diversity, and social programs. California has been attractive to many newcomer groups, and is home to more Asians than any other state. Asian communities support grocery stores and restaurants with familiar foods, native language newspapers and broadcast media, stores, agencies and government offices with bilingual staff, and community self-help groups and churches that provide a center for community life. California has social assistance programs for unemployed two parent families, which many other states do not have. California's educational system is in the lead nationally in providing

Implications for Educators:

There are many community factors that affect a child's attendance and performance in school. Often these factors are not known to the school personnel, such as the sudden sale of rental units, the availability of low-income housing for large families in other areas, community tensions, and differing public assistance programs.

children with access to educational opportunity with bilingual staff and special programs. There is a wide variety of education and vocational training programs for non-English speaking and non-literate adults. As for the non-Lao minorities, it is even more difficult to estimate regional populations with any credibility. It is known, however, that the minority groups tend to cluster together to a greater extent than the Lao. Generally, most Hmong live in California's Central Valley and Minnesota; most Iu-Mien in Oakland, Sacramento, northern California and Seattle, Washington; the Lahu in the Visalia and Porterville areas of California; the Khmu in Stockton and Richmond, California; the Tai Dam in Iowa; and the other Laotian minorities are represented in very small numbers (Lu, Tai Deng, and Nung). Many minority peoples have adopted Lao names, and report themselves as "Lao", adding to the difficulty of estimating the various populations.

The one statewide census that can be used to estimate population groups and their counties of residence is the annual Language Census conducted by the California State Department of Education. An accurate count depends on school district personnel knowing each child's primary language. There has been confusion in counting Cantonese from Vietnam as "Vietnamese", Hmong, Iu-Mien, and other Laotian minorities as "Lao", etc. In addition, as students enter school with native-like English skills, an accurate language designation depends on the parent's responses on the Home Language Survey; FEP, or "fluent English proficient" students may be undercounted. Even with these disclaimers, however, the numbers of students in grades kindergarten to twelve give a rough estimate of the different language groups in California. The following chart shows the number of students reporting Lao as a primary language since 1981. Distribution by school district will be found in Appendix A.

Table 2

ENROLLMENT OF LAO STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS, 1981 TO 1989

CENSUS	*LEP*	*FEP*	*TOTAL*
Spring 1981	5,585	461	6,046
Spring 1982	7,128	739	7,867
Spring 1983	7,737	1,034	8,771
Spring 1984	8,748	1,465	10,213
Spring 1985	8,869	1,631	10,500
Spring 1986	8,959	2,330	11,289
Spring 1987	10,283	2,902	13,185
Spring 1988	11,452	3,494	14,946
Spring 1989	12,016	3,898	15,914

DATA BICAL Report No. 89-7J. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, Spring 1989.

Implications for Educators:

The children born in the United States are not refugees, and therefore do not qualify for special programs funded under U.S. refugee programs (for example, "TPRC"). Children born here may have received less frequent contact with public health nurses, and may not have received all their childhood immunizations. Entry into school is the first time children are checked for immunizations, and shots are often begun at this time. The need for childhood immunizations is relevant to parent education programs.

Children born here have social security numbers and birth certificates; those born overseas have either an immigration document, an alien registration card, or citizenship papers.

The birth date assigned by the officials in the camps is legal, but often inaccurate. School decisions are often based on chronological age; for example, many special education tests are based on age norms. To verify a birth date, a bilingual person should interview the parents to help establish the actual time of birth; sometimes the closest accurate date may be something like "after the rice harvest in in the year before we escaped to Thailand".

There are sometimes other factors which influence a parent's decision to continue with a mistaken birth date, especially if the date shows the child to be younger. Refugee assistance and general assistance programs discontinue providing support for children after age 19, and parents see a definite advantage of enabling a child to attend a few more years of school before having to get a job.

Worldwide Lao-speaking Population

The total population of Laos in 1984 was estimated at 4,033,000 by the United Nations; approximately fifty percent were ethnic Lao, and the others were other ethnolinguistic groups who speak Lao as a national language. However, the Lao language is spoken on a daily basis by approximately 18,500,000 people in other countries, primarily in Northeast Thailand (16,000,000), Northern Cambodia, and now, the United States (200,000).

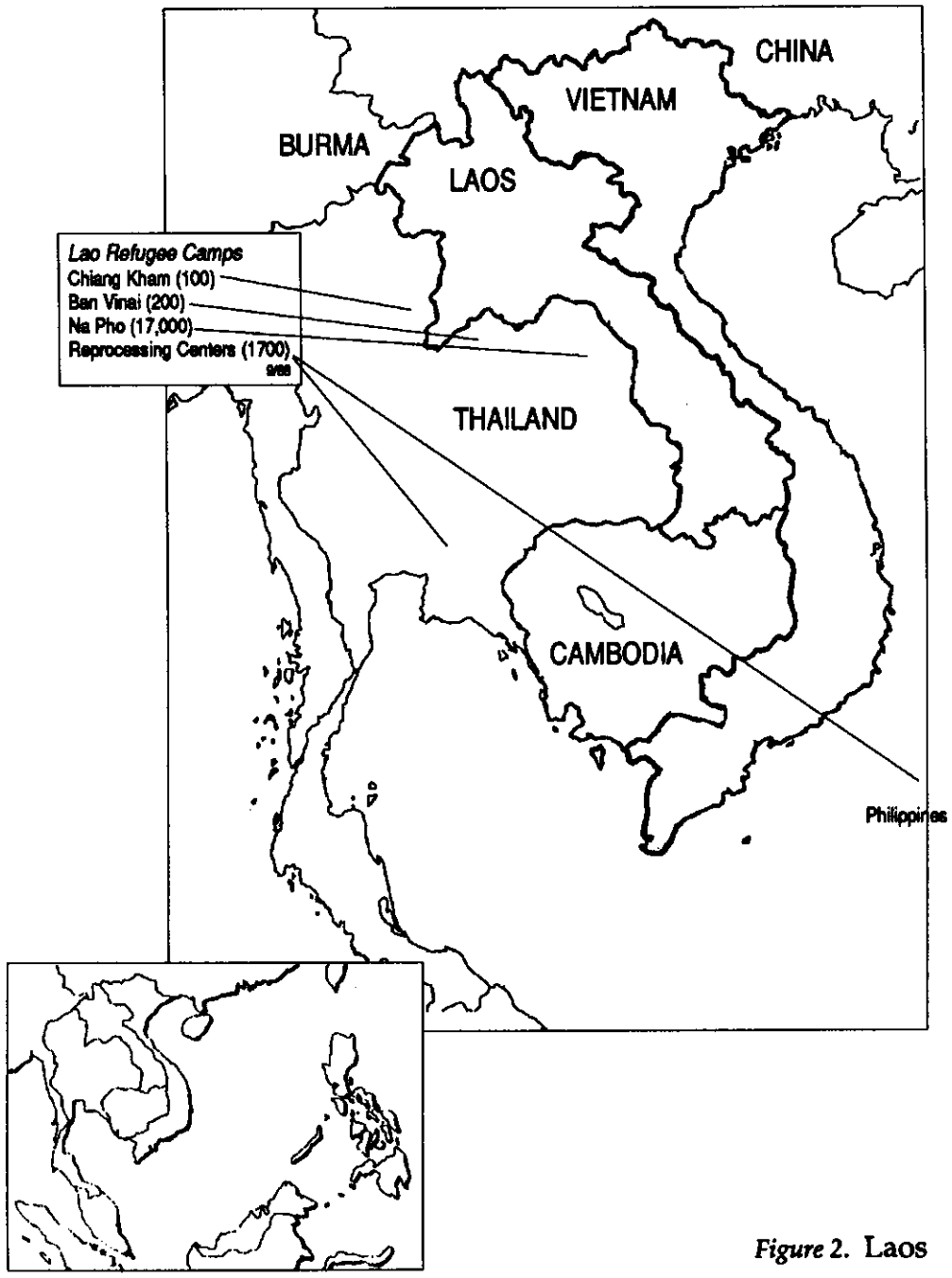


Figure 2. Laos

Chapter 2

Education in Laos, in Thai Refugee Camps, and in the United States

Factors in Laos

Refugees from Laos are characterized by their ethnic and linguistic diversity and by their common origins in a country marked by a lack of economic and social development. The Lao, only one of the several ethnic groups from Laos to resettle in the United States, are difficult to describe in general terms, especially because there has never been a strong national "identity" nor many English-language publications of Lao society. Any description of "the Lao" has to be tempered by the range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. The major commonality between various Lao is an adherence to Theravada Buddhism, the eating of sticky rice, and the playing of the *khene*, a musical instrument.

In the United States, the Lao are less well-known and less well-understood than other recent refugee groups, and there are fewer resources available for learning more about them.

Theravada Buddhism

Only five countries follow the form of Buddhism known as Theravada or "Little Vehicle" Buddhism: Laos, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. This form often incorporates the indigenous beliefs (such as ancestor worship and animism) into a total view of life. Other

Asian countries (Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and so on) follow Mahayana, or "Greater Vehicle" Buddhism, which adherents believe is a more rigorous, expensive and difficult course to follow. In Laos, the lowland ethnic Lao followed Theravada Buddhism combined with older spirit and ancestor worship, while the highlanders practiced animism and ancestor worship only. However, elements of Buddhism are central aspects of what Westerners think of as "Asian", so it is helpful to understand the basic beliefs of Buddhism.

Buddha was not a man's name, but a title meaning "Enlightened One", given to a man born in ancient India named Siddhartha Guatama. Buddha was a teacher, who advocated the "Middle Way", rather than the extremes of self-indulgence or self-denial. The heart of his teaching that is common to both forms of Buddhism lies in the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Noble Eightfold Path*, or the way in which ordinary people can escape the suffering (or living) to enter Nirvana.

Four Noble Truths

1. *Truth of Suffering.* All existence is suffering.
2. *Truth of the Cause of Suffering.* Suffering is caused by desire. A desire (whether for food, possessions, experience, or whatever) can never be satisfied. A person can feast today, but tomorrow is hungry again.
3. *Truth of Cessation of Suffering.* Suffering ceases when desire ceases.
4. *The Truth of the Path That Leads to Cessation of Suffering.* This is the *Noble Eightfold Path.*

Noble Eightfold Path

1. *Right view.* Understand and accept the *Four Noble Truths.*
2. *Right thought.* Keep free from lust, ill will, cruelty, untruthfulness.
3. *Right speech.* Abstain from lying, talebearing, harsh language, vain talk.
4. *Right conduct.* Abstain from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

5. *Right livelihood.* Avoid violence to any living thing; avoid luxury.
6. *Right effort.* Avoid and overcome evil; promote and maintain good.
7. *Right awareness.* Understand the temporariness of life, and the feelings of others; gain awareness of the mind.
8. *Right meditation.* Concentrate intensely on one object to achieve purity of thought, freedom from all desires, all sensations.

Buddha borrowed the Hindu concept of *karma*, the law of cause and effect of actions. Good deeds (i.e., following the *Noble Eightfold Path*) brings good results; bad actions bring bad results during this life and future lives. People continue to be reborn until they reach the level of awareness and conduct that leads to Nirvana, the end of rebirth and therefore of suffering.

The people who fully practice the difficult codes of behavior are the monks, who are organized into monastic orders; all together they are the *Sangha*. Monks are highly visible in the society, with shaved heads and orange robes. In some forms of Buddhism, entering the *Sangha* is a lifelong commitment, and in others, it is temporary, a rite of passage to manhood.

If all the people in Laos followed the exact codes of behavior, it would have been a very quiet society. But, the codes of behavior are different for monks and lay people. Monks are experts, who follow the 227 detailed codes faithfully, but ordinary people make special vows or commitments to observe the restrictions of the *Noble Eightfold Path*—for a short period of time. The lay people also do various kinds of good works, sometimes translated as "making merit" (*boon*), to have a better record of behavior during their lifetimes. (See Appendix E, for some of the annual Buddhist observances in Laos.)

The community of monks are often involved in the political events of Buddhist countries. At the very least, they are at the heart of every Lao community.

Implications for Educators:

Every refugee group has its own lines of influence within the community. In strongly Buddhist groups, it is often the monks who are trusted and listened to. For American agencies that wish to influence members of the Lao community, for example to accept new programs, it is worth contacting the monks and eliciting their cooperation in planning effective and relevant programs.

Within traditional villages, the influence of the family seldom extended past the immediate household, but the teachings and advice of the monks established the limits of proper behavior.

Implications for Educators:

Lao villagers are different from the strongly patrilineal clan groups of Hmong villagers, where every child has several "fathers" (the father and his generation mates), and misconduct brings shame to the entire clan. In Lao families, there is not wider "clan" to sanction the inappropriate behavior of individuals; there are as many family names are there are families.

According to Sen Srila, who researched the Lao in Illinois as part of a dissertation (1987), the traditional Lao family was idealized as one in which groups of women (daughters and daughter's children) provide a basis of continuity and security. Groups of women related by blood or marriage live near one another, and cooperate in cooking, cleaning, maintaining relations with the household spirits, and child-rearing. In Laos, a favored family arrangement was for a woman and her husband to live with a daughter, her husband, and their children. This arrangement has been altered by resettlement and pressures of acculturation.

Sen Srila characterizes the traditional ideal Lao family as "matrifocal"—one which was "conceptually female-centered" despite the obvious position of the man as the household head.

In interviews with Lao in Illinois, Sen Srila found that children think that the parent's duties towards their children include teaching the children good deeds and earning merit, giving them an education, and sometimes arranging a marriage. On the other hand, the major obligation of the children is still that of filial piety: providing for their parents in old age, and honoring them in the household ritual observances. The highest form of filial piety for sons was entering the monkhood, something that is very difficult to continue in this *country*.

In village groups disrupted by the war and resettlement, losing their traditional temples and monks to the pressures of acculturation in

non-Buddhist countries, there is most likely a vacuum in the guidance of children and adolescents. Parents traditionally depended on the monks to teach young boys the right ways to behave, and without monks, they don't have many familiar strategies for handling children who exceed behavior limits.

Traditionally, the mother and the other women who form a cooperative group with her handle the rearing of young children. As in families in other cultures where there are definite role distinctions based on gender and little formal education outside the family, child-rearing tends to follow gender lines. Once children are old enough to learn their roles, Lao mothers deal with the upbringing of daughters, and fathers share the task of guiding sons with the monks in the village temples.

Rural vs. Urban Lao

The following table itemizes differences that researcher Joel Halpern found between villagers and town dwellers before the war and its changes affected the population.

Table 3

Some Rural-Urban Differences Among the Lao

Joel Halpern (1964)

Villager	Prosperous Town Dweller
Works at agricultural labor.	Works in an office or store.
Has largely subsistence economy, amount of cash.	Is salaried or gets other cash with small income.
Is illiterate or rarely has more than three years of schooling.	Has had six years or more of schooling.
Speaks only Lao.	Fair to good speaking knowledge of French.
With rare exceptions, has traveled only within his own province.	At least moderate travel within Laos and possibly abroad.

Has no contact with Europeans, occasional contact with Chinese or Vietnamese.	Some contact with Europeans, only frequent contact with Chinese and Vietnamese.
House is thatch and bamboo on piles; sleeps on bamboo mat; uses low stools; kerosene lamp or candles.	House may be of concrete in European style; usually has electricity; home has chairs, tables and beds.
Usually has only one wife.	May have two or three wives.
All domestic work done by family.	May have one or more servants.
May own a bicycle.	Owns a bicycle; may own a jeep or other type of automobile.
Clothing is homespun; some manufactured items; often has no shoes; little jewelry.	Clothing is both European and Lao; women have gold and silver jewelry.
Has little knowledge or interest in government affairs.	Often has considerable interest in government affairs and politics; may read the newspaper.
Distrusts, resents, and sometimes fears the townspeople.	Often shows disdain for villagers, treats them with condescension.
Relies for recreation on traditional village celebrations; drinks rice wine.	Often attends movies, plays tennis, drinks beer, listens to radio.
Treats monks with great respect; often joins the priesthood, usually temporary basis.	Religion and participation in pagoda activities plays a smaller role in his on a life.
Relies primarily on traditional techniques from monks or village curers.	Uses both Western and traditional curing medical techniques.

Table 29 from *Economy and Society of Laos: A Brief Survey*, Monograph Series No. 5, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University, 1964.

Educational Background of Lao Refugees

Village education

Traditionally, education in Laos was in the hands of Buddhist monks, and only available to boys. The *wat*, a Buddhist temple or pagoda, provided the only education available in most Laotian villages. This monastic education was oriented to the practical needs of the villages, and teaching boys the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Noble Eightfold Path.* The challenges and learning during this time were important parts of becoming a man in Lao society.

Boys at an early age were handed over to the Buddhist monk to be educated and trained at the monk's discretion, even though very few planned to pursue a lifelong commitment to the ascetic life of a monk. During this time, young boys were taught the basic tenets of Buddhism, and the codes of acceptable behavior. In addition, they learned self-discipline and basic reading, writing and math, depending on the aptitude of the individual monks. The parents relinquished control; the monk had complete authority over the youth's life during this apprenticeship. The pagodas and temples throughout the countryside were also the centers of community life, the site of several annual celebrations, and the monk's teachings provided a common thread to "being Lao", regardless of region or socioeconomic status.

Rural education centers were begun in the 1950's. Villagers then had access to basic secular education for their children, at least for the first three years of the six-year primary cycle. However, simply having access to free public education was not always the only factor in whether or not children attended school.

Village families subsisted on the products of their own labor, rather than working and buying necessary goods and services with their wages. Losing a pair of hands and a strong back to the school decreased a family's ability to provide for itself. Families had to consider carefully whether or not their children should go to school. Within villages, the poorest families or those not blessed with several children could least afford to lose their children's labor contribution. Sometimes only one or two of the

children were chosen as the ones to go to school, and the other family members supported them while they studied. Once the first three years at the village school were completed, families had to consider again whether or not their children should continue. The second three years of elementary school were not available in most small villages; they were usually in market towns, larger villages, and of course urban areas. In addition to losing the children's labor contribution, the family now had to consider how to find the money required to pay for the children's room and board as well. In summary, having been to school was in itself a mark of socioeconomic standing in Lao society.

It should be noted that during the 1950's and 1960's, in the remote areas controlled by the communist Pathet Lao, a literacy campaign was undertaken (Chagnon and Rumpf, 1982). This rural education program was not plagued with the question of changing from French to Lao, but was actually a creation of an entirely new system. Classes were held in bombed out buildings and in caves, and the primary emphasis was learning to read and write, and of course, political doctrine. These schools were located in Phong Saly, Sam Neua, portions of Xieng Khouang, Attopeu, and Saravane provinces, the areas in which the Pathet Lao were a dominant force.

When the new government took power in 1975, less than 20 percent of the population had completed six years of school, and less than 2 percent had completed twelve years. Sen (1987) listed the prior educational experiences of 300 Lao living in Illinois[3] in 1985-86, and found that 11-15% of the men had some schooling, and this kind of schooling shifted from Buddhist to "modern" over time.

City education

During the first 50 years of French control, education was neglected. The secular elementary school system was begun about 1940. The Lao people were strongly against French secular education. It was

[3] The Lao interviewed by Sen Srila were primarily rural farmers rather than urban workers.

Table 4

Prior Education of Lao Men and Women

(resettled in Illinois)

Men			
age	*number*	*"modern"*	*Buddhist*
65-55	30	0%	15%
54-45	30	4%	7%
44-35	30	7%	8%
34-25	30	8%	7%
24-15	30	12%	3%

The total percentage of men attending school did not increase with the coming of modern education, but for women, there was an increase from 1% to 10%.

Women			
age	*number*	*"modern"*	*Buddhist*
65-55	30	0%	1%
54-45	30	1%	1%
44-35	30	3%	1%
34-25	30	6%	2%
24-16	30	8%	2%

Source: *The Lao in the United States: An Anthropological Inquiry of Persistence and Accomodation*, Ph.D. dissertation by Srila Sen, 1987.

the French system transplanted, and was foreign to the Lao, irrelevant to their needs, and void of traditional Lao cultural and moral values. Students learned French history, French geography, and French literature; students could name all the provinces in France, but not those in Laos. In short, students were being made foreigners in their own country.

In the early years of national education, the French imported trained Vietnamese teachers, who spoke French, to teach the classes. The Lao became more receptive the French system when it was modified to reflect local needs and aspirations in the mid 1940's. Even after independence from France in 1953, the Lao retained the French emphasis

in education. During the late 1960's, American educator-trainers set up several programs in which the instruction was in Lao, but for the majority of schools, the problem of moving from French to Lao was never resolved.

The Laotian education system available in urban areas, prior to the Communist takeover, was structured on a 6-4-3 model. This means that there were six years of schooling in primary education and seven years in secondary education. Education in Laos was centralized, with a government-set curriculum, and was highly selective. The elementary school cycle of grades one to three was compulsory, in principle. School attendance was never enforced, however, as the government lacked the human and physical resources to implement the law. The rural education centers offered the same elementary curriculum as the urban schools, although the teachers were usually less well-educated and less well-trained.

From the middle of the 1960's onward earnest attempts were made to extend education beyond the urban centers to rural and isolated areas, including the highlands. However, human and financial resources were limited. In addition, during the last two decades Laos was torn apart by the civil war. In some of the larger refugee relief settlements, basic schools were set up, and village children (who were not then needed for growing rice) had a first opportunity to attend school. Overall, though, the majority of Laotian school-aged children never had an opportunity to receive much formal education.

In the 1970's, only about thirty percent of school-age Laotians attended public and private schools. Approximately seventy percent of first graders dropped out at some point before grade six, and in 1973 only 15,000 students received the Primary School Certificate (Sonvilay, 1974). Of those who continued, twenty percent attended secondary schools and eight percent entered vocational training. Interestingly, the study done by Joel Halpern (1964) on the economy and society of Laos does not mention education in the table of contents. Figures compiled for 1959 showed 60,690 males and 23,722 females in "modern" elementary schools, including rural education centers, and 7,171 males, 2,430 females in pagoda schools. Figures for secondary were: 738 males and 224 females attending lycée in Vientiane; 765 males and 172 females attending collèges in Khammouane, Savannakhet, Champassak, Luang Prabang, and Xieng

Khouang provinces; 207 males and 34 females attending law, medicine, arts, and trade schools in Vientiane (compiled by Halpern in LeBar, 1963).

Although opportunities for education were very limited in Laos, there was a massive increase in the number of schools between 1946 and 1959; according to LeBar (1963), there were only 175 elementary schools in Laos in 1946, but by 1959 the number had grown to 1,500 secular elementary schools and 750 pagoda schools. Even though most of the Lao children did not finish six years of school, the opportunities for education among the minority ethnic groups were even fewer.

Typical school experience

In general, school in Laos was held five days a week for 30 to 36 hours. The school day began at 7:30 a.m. and usually ended at 5:00 p.m., with a two-hour lunch break. Students went to school in the morning and returned home for lunch. In the afternoon, classes usually started at 2:00 p.m. Except for boarding schools at the secondary and higher levels, most Lao schools did not have lunch programs. Students walked to school, as there was no school bus system. The average distance to the school was from two to four miles.

Every student was required to take a final examination at the end of each school year. The most important finals were at the end of the sixth, tenth, and thirteenth grades; these were actually exit examinations. Those who failed the exam had to repeat the same grade level for the next whole year and take to examination again. Standardized tests did not exist. Teachers had to prepare their own tests for for each class. However, exit final exams for the sixth, tenth, and thirteenth grades were prepared by the Ministry of Education for the whole country. To gain access to secondary school, students had to pass stiff entrance exams. The tests were usually essay-type. True-false tests and multiple choice tests were not common in Laos.

A numeric grading system was widely used. The scale was from 0-10 for primary schools and from 0-20 for secondary schools. Teachers rarely gave a student a perfect score of 10 or 20 points even though the work was outstanding. A sixth grader in Laos usually had to study four hours of

math, six hours of Lao, two to three hours of French, two hours of sciences, and history and geography for the remaining five hours. Sixth graders were able to read Lao and some French and had a mastery of multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction.

Education at the secondary level was, by and large, academically oriented, and used French as the language of instruction. The French *collège/lycée* system (equivalent to junior and senior high), which prepared Lao young people for higher education, was the most prestigious and most sought-after secondary school system in Laos. The system created an educated elite, and vocational education was degraded as it implied manual work. Therefore, education was generally viewed as an avenue to office and professional work. Manual work was regarded as suitable for the uneducated.

Consequently, vocational education, though established in 1925, was never popular. It was generally the last resort for many Lao youth. However, the government, in attempting to implement the Education Reform Act of 1962 which essentially called for an education system responsive to social and economic development for the country, introduced in 1967 the *Fa Ngum* model for national secondary education. This model was patterned after the American comprehensive high school and was oriented toward vocational training.

Implications for Educators:

When hiring bilingual aides, keep in mind this background. If the aides had up to three years of school in Laos, then they probably can read and write Lao. Aides who are required to translate for the sciences, government, history, or higher level math would need to have had 4-6 years, or more, of school. Even with that background, translating without adequate dictionaries will be difficult. Young adults probably had neither Lao schooling nor sufficient American education to allow them to translate for junior high or senior high classes. A better alternative is to find an older adult, who had more than three years of Lao schooling, but whose English may not be as clearly spoken as younger Lao. The primary purpose of bilingual aides is to reteach concepts in the primary language.

In summary, the school system established by the French was patterned after those in Vietnam and Cambodia. French was chosen as

the language of development because of the availability of texts and trained teachers in that language, and the use of French as an international language of diplomacy and commerce. The Fa Ngum model brought Lao into the secondary schools, but few texts were developed in Lao before the effort stalled during the war years.

Language Development

Oral skills

Well-developed oral skills were highly praised in Lao adults. However, in traditional Lao culture, children were taught not to be outspoken. They are not supposed to ask many questions nor to make any suggestions to older people. For these reasons, oral language skills were usually not well-developed by Lao school children of any age.

Most Lao children were shy and soft-spoken in school. This was, in fact, due to the large number of students in a single classroom in which individual children rarely had an opportunity to speak up. Oral skills such as public speaking and debate were not a part of the curriculum, until after the 1972 reforms. As a result of this and the social restraints on speaking out, Lao students often appear to be reserved and timid in American classrooms.

Implications for Educators:

Asking questions and admitting confusion may be considered disrespectful to the teacher. Lao children may simply remain quiet or answer "yes" when asked "Do you understand?" rather than imply that the teacher has done a poor job of teaching.

The oral language environment of a village child was often rich. Traditional oral poetry forms were still used in Lao villages for courting, farewells and for other important occasions at which children were generally present. It was not until they reached adulthood, though, that

young people, primarily males, had a chance to try out such speaking skills.

In adult life, then, the Lao highly valued well-developed oral skills. For important occasions there was usually a master of ceremonies who could speak well and who used carefully chosen vocabulary. Such people often had spent some time in Buddhist temples where they learned rhetoric; learned to read, write and recite poetry; and had considerable practice in developing their speaking abilities.

Implications for Educators:

With television and homework, there is less time for children to listen to adults tell stories, legends, and history. What this means is less exposure to complex and abstract Lao language. The children can function socially in Lao, but are limited in expressing complex ideas. When English language development is also limited, the children have no vehicle for expressing their thoughts. Often, encouragement by the teacher can increase both the amount of language use by the parents, and the degree of participation by the children. Rather than tell the students, *"Speak English at home,"* encourage parents to develop their children's native language skills.

A study cited in *Refugee Reports* (October, 1985) on the success of the "boat children" found that being read to as children, no matter in what language, was a strong predictor of later high academic achievement. Teachers can supplement the reading input by inviting parent volunteers, peer tutors, or bilingual aides to class to read to the children, in their own languages.

Literacy in Laos

LeBar (1963) reported that the literacy rate in Laos had never been systematically studied, and was without doubt very low. Likewise, Halpern (1958) did not hazard a guess as to the literacy rate, but rather listed the number of students enrolled in schools in 1956 (most of whom were ethnic Lao rather than minorities). A catalogue of the world's languages used by missionary linguists who develop orthographies and write Christian materials estimate that the literacy rate in Laos is 20% (Grimes, 1978). By comparison, the same source estimated Thailand's literacy rate at 70%, Vietnam's at 68%, and Cambodia's at 59%.

Literacy was defined operationally in that a message encoded by an author would have meaning in the mind of a reader. When a person was able to read fourth grade level materials, which in practical terms meant that he could read and understand government notices and newspapers, he was regarded as functionally literate.

Implications for Educators:

One of the major handicaps that older Lao students face is the lack of adequate materials to support their study, especially in the sciences. Vietnamese and Chinese students can find many dictionaries, which are drawn from a well-formulated body of formal knowledge, or they can find educated individuals in the community to explain difficult concepts. Laos was beginning to prepare high school curricula in Lao when the country fell. Those who had a secondary education in Laos will likely know the concepts in science and math by their French terms, and these students may be able to use French dictionaries.

For students who have no background resources upon which to draw, teachers can help the learning process by rewriting the essential concepts in straightforward English, for the bilingual aide to use when explaining and relating the new concepts to existing concepts. The state framework for science lists the key concepts taught from kindergarten to grade 12, and can be used to fill in the gaps for students entering American education mid-stream. If you have Lao paraprofessionals who have had science training in Laos beyond the 5th or 6th year of school, then they could use the framework to give a "crash course" to newly arrived junior high and senior high students, teaching basic vocabulary and concepts usually taught from kindergarten to grade 6 or grade 9. Social studies is less of a problem area, because it is generally a study of people and events (easier to translate).

Value placed on literacy skills

The majority of the Lao in the countryside did not view literacy skills too favorably during the French colonial period, since it was skill in the French language which was emphasized then. Many felt that the ability to read and write would separate the children from their families, since literate people tended to find work in the cities. This attitude changed rapidly as the villagers began to appreciate the benefits secular education had to offer.

As in any developing country, there were few options open to those who were self-subsistence farmers. It was difficult to have enough extra to sell, and other than selling cash crops, there was really no way to enter the market economy. No matter how poor, almost everyone had some source of cash income (Halpern, 1964). The sources of cash included selling prepared foods, surplus rice, livestock, fruits, vegetables, crafted items (jewelry, pottery, forged tools, woven fabrics, ceremonial drums, baskets, pirogues), lime, rice alcohol, charcoal, gunpowder and rifles. Selling was simply a matter of setting out items and waiting for buyers; there were no bureaucratic licenses or inspections. Some people sold items in market towns, others traveled village to village. "Stores" consisted of streetside arrays of candy, soft drinks, cigarettes, soap flakes, salt, dried fish, rice whiskey, beer, matches, thread, candles, and later, imported items. Another way to obtain cash was to work as a laborer, domestic servant, or *sam loh* (pedicab) driver, or to offer services, such as tailor, barber, herb doctor, or midwife. Eventually, villagers saw that some people could "sell their reading and writing skills", by working in offices in the city. Thus, an important way to improve one's socioeconomic position was learning to read and write.

Literacy was valued in other domains as well. The long tradition of courting through sung poetry has evolved into the writing of love letters, which often contain poetry. Traditionally, Lao have taken great pride in the ability to read aloud particular Buddhist scriptures at various functions such as marriages or births. The medical practitioner, the village headman and most respected male community members were quite familiar with Buddhist texts and codes of ethics, and most village leaders were expected to be able to read them. Above all, people believed that literacy skills would bring them improved social status and, eventually, a prominent position in the community.

Learning to read and write Lao

Children began to learn to read and write the Lao language in the first grade at the age of six or older. Boys who attended the Buddhist pagoda schools usually began to learn to read and write the Lao language at the age of fourteen or older. Since French was essential for further education, children began to learn the French language in the fourth grade.

Traditionally a student learned how to read and write the Lao language first by learning the Lao alphabet and then by copying and writing compositions and poems in school. Students also used their writing skills to correspond with family and friends or to write love letters to sweethearts. For many years, few books were printed in the Lao language, and even then the press runs were usually very small. Consequently, students had only a few materials to use to sharpen their reading skills. However, in urban areas they sometimes had access to materials such as cartoons, fairy tales, romances, government news and regulations, and newspapers to read for enjoyment and information. Also, during the early seventies a few new popular magazines were published in Lao.

Reading was never considered a child's undertaking in Laos. There was no public library system for the general public, though Lao texts could be found in the village temples. In urban areas, there may have been a few book shops where books could be rented by the day or week. Otherwise, reading was largely confined to those adults who were well-educated or had enough money to afford books, magazines and newspapers. What a child read was more likely to be directly related to school work. In fact, textbooks were often a student's only reading material.

English in Laos

Because Laos was a French, rather than British or American, colony, it was French which was learned. Although the Lao language was the national language, French was still widely used in official documents of the government, as a medium of instruction in most institutions of secondary and higher education, and in business. Students were offered English in the second year of high school. In general, secondary school students received about two hours of English instruction a week, which was inadequate for good language development. Most students were not motivated to learn English, as there was not any very strong incentive for doing so. In addition, there was a great shortage of teachers of English, and virtually no curricular materials in English and Lao.

For those who did study English, students usually learned to read and write English through a traditional approach. Reading and writing were often taught through rote methods. Once the students mastered the alphabet, simple sentences were introduced. Basic skills in grammar and writing were emphasized, and for those who already knew French, learning English was not very difficult. Most students of English understood much of what they read, and they could write some English. However, they could speak very little English since there was not much emphasis on speaking skills in class, and little opportunity to practice in the community.

For a long time, there were no clearly defined goals for English programs in the Lao curriculum. However, English received greater attention in Laos during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Many young Laotians viewed English as a means to continue their education in colleges and universities in many English-speaking countries which offered numerous scholarships for Lao students every year. Unlike knowledge of French, knowledge of English was not considered the mark of an educated or cultured person in Laos. For some time, few people took English very seriously, and a student's failure in an English class would not seriously jeopardize his overall school record nor his advancement to a higher grade.

In an effort to strengthen English programs in Laos, an English teacher training school was created in 1959 under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The new English teacher education program was designed to introduce quality English instruction to Lao students by using pedagogically sound teaching strategies and methods. This objective had been partially achieved by the time Laos fell in 1975.

Use of English in Laos

English use increased in a reasonably short period of time because of the American involvement in Laos, beginning in the mid-1950's. In addition to the American personnel in the cities, there were more and more missionaries and foreign aid workers in the rural areas. Halpern (1964) estimated that there were 500 American families in Laos, and almost all were relief and American aid workers. These Americans often learned Lao, however. There was a steady increase in military and CIA personnel until the Geneva Accords in 1962, but fewer of these Americans learned to speak Lao. In general, the English language was not used much beyond the embassies of the English-speaking countries, the offices of the U.S. government agencies, and businesses that catered to Americans.

English began to gain acceptance in the late 1960's and the early 1970's. Several factors contributed to this change. First was the change in the policy of American aid programs which resulted in the replacement of their foreign staff with Lao staff in local offices; these positions offered lucrative salaries for Lao in comparison with the Lao government salary scale. Many English-speaking countries offered scholarships to Lao young people so that they could pursue their education abroad. In addition, international banking and business grew in Laos during this period. Finally, the English language was institutionalized when the specialized regional educational centers under the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization adopted English as the medium of instruction and communication.

As a result, English was more widely used. More people became interested in learning English, and school programs tried to adjust to this change.

Factors During the Refugee Period

Education in Thai refugee camps

For those who escaped to Thailand, little educational opportunity was available in the refugee camps during the late seventies. The Thai government has allowed the teaching of native literacy, Thai, and English by international agencies at different times during the past fourteen years. Thus, students may have had some exposure to literacy in the camps, but the programs have been characterized by inconsistency, untrained volunteer teachers, and literacy instruction in a variety of languages.

Implications for Educators:

Young adults who spent time at Nongkhai or Ban Vinai may have learned Thai literacy rather than Lao literacy. Lao and Thai are very close, but are different languages. Reading Lao or Thai will be easier than writing them. Often a person who reads Lao can use a Thai dictionary as well.

Phanat Nikhom Transit Center

After being accepted for resettlement to the United States, Lao families are moved to Phanat Nikhom, a transitional camp near Bangkok. There, most stay a minimum of six additional months prior to actual entry into the United States. During this time, attendance in a six-month English class and American Cultural Orientation is required. Run by an organization called the Consortium, Phanat Nikhom provides English, cultural orientation and work orientation training. The goal is to help adult refugees acquire language skills, and to prepare them to adjust to American life.

English classes are offered at six different levels. Level 1 is for those who speak no English at all, while the highest level, level 6, is for those able to communicate fairly well in English. Those refugees who only complete level 1 prior to entry into the United States are only able to speak a few common English phrases; while those who have completed level 6 are fairly fluent in English. The majority of refugees have completed levels 2 or 3 before entering the United States, and this means that they are able to communicate at least a little with their American sponsors, case managers, and social workers. Since 1983, the English level that each refugee has achieved is printed on the back of the immigration and naturalization document that he or she brings to the United States

A special program, called the PASS program (Preparation for American Secondary Schools), has been established for young refugees who will enter junior or senior high schools in the United States. The content is ESL, math and American studies.

The American Culture Orientation course is intensive and covers many aspects of life in the United States. Use of and maintenance of American plumbing, large and small appliances, and electrical facilities is covered. Also covered are how to shop for, store and prepare American foods; American holidays; the school system; business and work ethics; American etiquette; and many other aspects of the American culture.

There was a journal produced by the camp staff and students twice per year, that contains articles and pictures about the programs offered in the reprocessing centers. It is entitled *Passages*, published by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Publication of this magazine was halted in 1988, and replaced with a newsletter entitled *In America: Perspectives on Refugee Resettlement.* The newsletter limits each issue to one or two topics of concern to educators and social service workers in the United States who have contact with refugees recently arrived from Phanat Nikhom or a sister center in the Philippines, located at Bataan. There are various other informational items put out by the same office from time to time, in an effort to coordinate the camp programs more closely with the school experiences students will encounter once they arrive.

Factors in California

Lines of influence in a Lao community

Each ethnic community has its own particular lines of influence outside the family units, and it is helpful for school personnel to be aware of this informal structure when dealing with parents and when attempting to implement changes. The Lao communities in the United States tend to be fragmented (Bliatout, Rath Ben, Do, Keopraseth, Bliatout, and Lee, 1985). There is no research which explains why this is so, but intuitively, several factors come to mind. The Lao, as a majority group in their own country, didn't have strong external threats that made internal ethnic unity important for survival. Laos was actually a confederation of different regions, geographically, socially, economically distant from one another; the regional differences presented barriers to cooperation when different groups are suddenly thrown together. The socioeconomic and educational divisions are other lines along which fragmentation occurred. The basic unifying force for the Lao is a common adherence to Theravada Buddhism. Thus, it is not the American community group leaders who carry influence with the Lao living in an area, but the Buddhist monks. There are also former leaders who are respected; in this group are the former teachers, doctors, and lawyers in Laos, along with some of the old political and military leaders. Those whose backgrounds enabled them to go abroad for education before 1975 are also respected. However, since there is less general group identification among the different Lao, it is difficult to pinpoint Lao leaders who represent a wide range of individuals.

Parents' attitude towards education

Parents in Laos can be divided into two general categories: city dwellers and farmers. Parents from the cities as well as those from rural areas want their children to be as highly educated as possible. They regard education as a means achieve status and upward social mobility. Therefore, they highly support education. However, city dwellers usually have had better access to schools and so understand the educational process better.

Parents' attitudes about involvement in education

Lao parents responded to teachers and school personnel in the modern secular education system in much the same way that they had to the monks. That is, they placed every confidence in those appointed to teach, and the ultimate responsibility rested on the teachers. The teachers, like the monks before them, had exclusive control over a student's well-being.

In the United States, Laotian parents continue to want a good education for their children. Similarly, they continue to think that the education of their children is the sole responsibility of those who are trained to educate.

Lao parents usually agree with the teachers; they usually will not voice any opinions, especially in the form of criticism at public meetings. They tend to be polite, adaptable, and receptive to the advice of the school. One of the reasons for this might be that the Lao adults often have problems with English, and they do not understand what the teachers say. But they are also unable to understand their new role in U.S. schools as parents. As a result, very few Lao parents attend parent-teacher meetings or sign up for conferences. Teachers and other school officials need to make special efforts to educate Lao parents about their role in the public education of their children and to strongly encourage their active cooperation with the schools. Some of them are shy and uncomfortable in the role of participant in deciding on the education of their children. Moreover, Lao parents generally think they should not criticize the American system of education, which they feel must be good

or there wouldn't have been so much technical progress, high standards of living and modern ways of life. It is understandable why parents are puzzled when teachers request them to give input and consent to program alternatives for their children.

Implications for Educators:

Teachers can help parents understand what their children are bringing home by using a consistent symbol, word or color of ink to indicate how well work has been done. Without a system, non-literate parents rely on other cues. For example, parents might be told that if there's a lot of writing by the teacher on the paper, then it's bad; if there's a short word, then it's good. If parents know when to expect a work folder from school, then they can ask to see it.

There's a great volume of written communication between the school and home, including advertisements and information about optional activities. If the information is important, teachers might mark a red X or other symbol on it; parents can then take that paper to be translated, rather than taking everything. If it's important information, teachers would be wise to have the bilingual aide call home and explain to the parents.

An important part of the parent education program is explaining grades, homework policy, and expectations of the school. "Support your child" is too vague; it might mean paying for food and rent while the student stays in school, rather than going to work. As part of a parent education program, school personnel should be able to explain clearly what they assume to be true for children in their classes. For example:

- Children should get 8 hours of sleep, parents should see that they go to sleep early enough.
- Children should either have food before school, or bring a snack to eat during the morning.
- Children should be expected to do homework at a certain time each day.
- Children should stay home when they're sick (explain what symptoms are considered sickness).
- Parents should expect their children to learn, and do well.
- Parents should take an active interest in their children's schooling; explain clearly what *active interest* means.
- Parents should discipline their children, but not abuse them.

Parents will come to school for meetings and conferences, when they know that they will be able to understand what is said.

Parent participation preschools are a good place to begin the process of involving Lao parents in their child's education, and to demonstrate the value of primary language development along with early exposure to English.

It's important for school personnel to remember that not all Lao parents are educated, nor are they all former peasants; using one approach will result in misunderstanding at best, and insult at worst. Here again it's the bilingual staff person who knows best how to approach parents.

Lao parents of course hope that their children will go as far as possible in the American educational system. They encourage their children to "get a good education." However, encouragement tends to be limited to advice from the leaders and some financial assistance from the parents while the children finish school.

Because many of the Lao parents have had only a little education, if any, and speak little English, they are not able to check the school work and monitor the academic progress of their children. If they have never worked for wages themselves, they have great difficulty in advising their children about vocational goals in an industrial or information society. Lao parents who have never been to school themselves are likely to rely on their children and let them do what they want. They are ready to believe what the young people tell them about their homework, their grades and their activities in class.

Availability of Trained Lao Educators

Most male Lao refugees in the United States were farmers or military men in Laos. Most female Lao refugees were farmers or housewives. The average educational level of these Lao is different for males and females. The estimated average education for women ranges from zero to four years; and for men, from two to six years. Only a handful of Lao in the United States have had a higher education. Most Laotian intellectuals went to France or were sent by the new regime to the re-education seminars.

In 1988, about 15,000 Lao students attended California schools, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, with an unknown number studying in institutions of higher education. However, only a very small number of Lao-speaking teachers are currently involved in the American system of education.

There are Lao in California who have had experience teaching. However, they were trained in Lao schools, and the records of their education and experience did not survive the their escape, and in most cases the training to teach in village schools was much less that what is

required for California teaching credentials. When these former teachers arrived, they had to make a decision about how to earn a living. To become a teacher here requires five years of college. Job prospects, unfortunately, often depend on factors beyond a person's control, such as speaking accent-free English. Because of the recency of a multilingual society, Americans' attitudes towards variations in spoken English are still fairly narrow; many personnel directors look for almost accent-free oral skills in teacher candidates, something which is very difficult to accomplish when learning a second language as an adult, and which is often associated with weak native language skills. In addition, the job is only ten months a year, and the pay is almost the same as one can get from semi-skilled or skilled work. Thus, most former teachers are now working as machinists, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and so on.

Implications for Educators:

In the absence of certificated Lao teachers, districts can fill the gap in other ways. The key to a good program is hiring the right person to act as the "bridge" between parents and teachers, between Lao and English, between the old world and the new one. Hiring the right person means creating positions with new titles, unique qualifications, flexible job descriptions, and pay adequate to provide for long-term employment. Since the Lao are Buddhist, a good place to begin the search is at the temple; respected monks can be involved in the search for the right person. Involving the community leadership helps the district find a person who has credibility with the community. Parents will be more willing to participate and consider his opinions during conflicts or misunderstandings.

Problems Encountered by Lao Youth: Three Studies

Recently, three studies of the adjustment of Southeast Asian youth were commissioned by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (Philadelphia, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and San Diego) and the studies found differences between the different groups from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia report (Peters, 1988) found that the largest obstacle to all the Southeast Asians was the difficulty of learning. Major school problems included placing students in grades by age rather than background and skills; poorly designed programs for teaching English; lack of bilingual support staff; general lack of knowledge about the needs of Southeast Asian refugee youth; and a high incidence of prejudice and violence directed towards Southeast Asians. The Lao boys in Philadelphia generally kept to themselves, while the girls were more likely to be friendly with Vietnamese and other groups. The other groups characterized the Lao boys as adopting a street style with characteristic dress, hairstyle, and speech patterns. Even though they looked tough, they were not very often involved in serious gang behavior. The Lao families in Philadelphia tended to be from rural areas, and because of their lack of experience in school, they had difficulty in guiding their children.

Minneapolis

In Minneapolis, the Lao students were the most dispersed, and therefore the least accessible, and the least well-understood by the resident community. (In California, too, the Lao tend to be widely dispersed into many residential communities. The enrollment of Lao-speaking students in districts throughout the state, shown in Appendix A, shows that a great number of districts enroll only a few Lao students.) The Lao community was more loosely unified than in other Southeast Asian groups. In Minnesota, most of the Lao are from lowland cities in Laos, and most had received at least several years of schooling. They tended to have been attached to the Royal Lao Army, and received refugee status because of that association with the United States.

The youths have a realistic view of their current abilities, and while they admire professionals, the focus on post-secondary technical training. The youth aspired to home ownership in the suburbs, and planned to begin work within two years of high school. The Lao men were the most distinctive in dress and hairstyles of all the Southeast Asian groups; they adopted currently fashionable "punk" styles that make a strong statement of being different from their parents. In spite of a

counter-culture appearance, however, the youth were polite and cooperative with the interviewers. In general, the Lao tended to have a more stable pattern of employment, and were less aware of other Lao who were outstanding examples of success. (Baizerman et. al., 1988).

San Diego

The San Diego study looked at school performance, background factors, and problem behavior among Vietnamese, Chinese-Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, and Hmong high school students in San Diego high schools. In general all the Southeast Asian youth were marginal in both their worlds, the one they were born into and the one they have been "formed" by.

The educational level, current income and employment of the parents were important factors in how well the students did at school, but they were not the main determinants. It was the mother's emotional characteristics and socioeconomic status that were highly correlated with students' performance—stable mothers had higher performing children. Generally, girls performed better than boys; the longer they were in the United States, the better they did; those who were younger did better; children of intact families did better; those with families who retained their ethnic pride and cultural identity had children who performed better.

In terms of grade point average, the Lao fell below the other groups—Vietnamese, Sino-Vietnamese, Hmong, and Khmer. The Lao and Khmer cultures were seen as providing lower levels of discipline and orientation towards education, and less likely to have extended families to help resolve difficulties. The Khmer and Lao students did not aspire to the higher status jobs. Lao youth, along with Khmer and Hmong, had a fairly short view of the future.

Overall the suspension rates from school were lower than the general population, but among the Southeast Asians it was the Lao and Vietnamese who were most often suspended, usually for fighting in response to racial baiting. The Southeast Asians had lower levels of involvement with law enforcement, but again, it was the Vietnamese and Lao who most often encountered the juvenile justice system. No matter which ethnic group, those who did run into trouble with the law were

most likely to be male, from one-parent families, and were involved with collective violations of the law (gangs or groups). The Lao families were characterized as having lost control of their children. (Rumbaut and Ima, 1987).

Recommendations of the San Diego study included the need for further research on the Lao, a particularly misunderstood and at-risk group. In addition, there is a need to provide information to Lao, Khmer and Hmong youth about financial aid for post-secondary study. Post-secondary schools need to seek out ways to provide specialized "bridging" services for Lao, Khmer and Hmong youth. Schools need to focus on the academic success of Lao youths, and institute programs designed to reduce interracial friction and teach Lao and Vietnamese youth strategies for dealing with racial baiting. Buddhist temples should be encouraged to provide programs and guidance to the youth of the community, as they already serve as community centers for the Lao and Khmer refugees.

The San Diego study, in particular, has been greeted with dismay by Lao community leaders, and there may well be problems in generalizing from one San Diego high school population to all Southeast Asians in America.[4] However, several of the observations of Lao communities and Lao youth occur in all three studies.

To summarize, the Lao tend to be loosely associated with other Lao, dispersed over wider areas, and less well-known by non-Lao. Lao boys tend to wear a distinctive style of dress and hairstyle that make others uncomfortable and unsure of them. They tend to experience problems with successful completion of high school, and lack confidence in their abilities to pursue higher education. They tend to seek jobs that require no more than two years of technical training. They tend to be less able to handle their new position as "minority", and confront rather than avoid tormentors.

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[4] A Master's thesis conducted in Hawaii (Kapiniaris Tan, 1987) investigated the success of 22 Lao high school students. The study determined that 12 students were successful, 10 were unsuccessful, and concluded that a major correlate of academic success in Hawaii was the socioeconomic status of the parents in Laos. The 22 students were from 18 families; of these parents there were 13 fathers with 4-16 years of school, and 6 mothers with 4-12 years of school. Of the 36 parents, 13 had been farmers, laborers or housewives; 7 had been professionals or military officers, 8 had been self-employed or senior clerks, and 7 had been military non-officers or police.

Implications for Educators:

Lao were the majority group in Laos, and many of the youth have had no experience as a minority group member. In the United States, when they encounter discriminatory treatment or harassment by non-Lao, they don't know how to avoid conflict. There are few proverbs or stories that teach how to get along as a minority within a majority culture, and parents have only their own experiences (as majority group members in Laos) upon which to draw.

Language in U.S. Communities

Use of Lao in the community

Like other refugees in the United States who have been uprooted from their homelands, Lao refugees look toward their fellow countrymen for social comfort and and moral support in the new society. Throughout the country they organize themselves by setting up associations so that they can talk over their problems and seek solutions for their common good. There is at least one organization in every town in California that has large concentrations of Lao people. Buddhist temples, such as those in San Diego, Modesto, La Puente, Santa Ana and Los Angeles, also serve as social and religious centers for the refugees in those cities and their vicinities. The Lao language, with certain English and French phrases occasionally inserted during discussions—usually phrases which refer to Western ideas which cannot be translated into Lao, is used as a means of communication at these gatherings. On the other hand, educated Lao use French to communicate with other French-speaking Indochinese.

In addition, the Lao people get together quite frequently. Home visits are commonplace among Lao neighbors and friends, old and young. In general they share goods and services among themselves. By so doing, their cultural values are maintained and their language kept intact.

Lao is still spoken as a first language in the majority of Lao homes at the present time. A primary reason for this is that most elders and adults are not yet, and may never be, fluent in the English language. Thus,

preschool children, adults, and elders use Lao almost exclusively as their language for communication. As the children grow up and enter the American school system, it becomes increasingly common to hear them communicate with each other in English. For children who have grown up in the United States, after a few years in school, it seems

Implications for educators:

Schools can play an important role in helping the Lao community maintain the language and culture. Teachers can acknowledge the importance of knowing how to read and write Lao, and can encourage efforts in a variety of ways, other than full bilingual classroom programs.

- After third or fourth grade, have the students write the reading vocabulary words in Lao as well as English. Have the bilingual aide go over the reading vocabulary and key concepts in Lao. If the Lao children are shy about using Lao in front of other classmates, provide a time and place for review or reteaching in Lao; it's important not to use art or physical education time for this, as the students don't want to miss class activities.
- Set up a homework program in which older siblings use the Lao equivalents of basic word lists, like the Dolch Basic 220 word list, to tutor younger siblings on a regular basis.
- Involve the non-Lao students in learning simple Lao words.
- Help set up Lao literacy classes through the local recreation program for summer vacation and after school; offer Lao literacy during summer school programs; assist the Lao community set up classes at school sites.
- Keep in mind that until there are good Lao dictionaries, secondary students may not see much value in learning Lao. Demonstrate ways to use Lao to help learn English material: taking notes, writing equivalent words, noting pronunciation, etc. Help the librarian locate Lao language books for the community and school libraries.
- Above all, the teacher is a model to the students, Lao and non-Lao. Many communities have programs that introduce "survival Lao" to non-Lao. In addition to learning a few words, the teacher is better able to understand and anticipate problem areas in class, and learns a great deal of the culture via study of the language.

that many have become more comfortable communicating in English. As time passes, it seems that more and more children use Lao only when communicating with elders, and if given a preference, will use English instead.

There is one Lao newspaper which is circulated nationwide, the *Lao Samphanh*. There is also a monthly magazine, SANGKHOMLAO,

produced in Oregon. These periodicals cover current events and news about their homeland in the Lao language. Moreover, Lao people in San Diego and in San Francisco and the Bay areas can enjoy Lao radio programs once a week, which broadcast news and play Lao music.

Materials for Lao language development

Literacy materials are very limited, but there are some. The textbook series approved for use in Laos is available in some communities. A reprint of these texts by Pragmatics International is available for purchase in the United States (see Appendix B). The texts include a primer and readers for grades one to three. Christian missionary groups have developed religious teaching materials in Lao, including the *Bible*. The Foreign Service Institute also produced materials for English-speakers stationed in Laos: *Reading Lao: A Programmed Introduction (1974)*. The American Council for Learned Societies produced two publications designed to teach serviceable Lao to English-speakers, *Spoken Lao, volumes 1 and* 2(1956). There is a *Lao-English Dictionary* published by the Catholic University Press (Kerr, 1972), and a Lao-French dictionary, *Dictionnaire Laotien-Français* (Reinhorn, 1970). Of the two simpler, more easily accessible volumes—Soukbandith's *Modern English-Lao, Lao-English Dictionary* (1983), and Russell's *English-Lao, Lao-English Dictionary* (1977)—Soukbandith's is more usable for Lao students. Khamchong Luangpraseut has produced introductory literacy materials for Lao-speaking children, titled *Dara Reads Lao,* volumes one to four. Once literacy has been established there are not very many materials available in Lao, but periodicals such as *Lao Samphanh* and *SANGKHOMLAO* can provide topical reading on a monthly basis. Developing higher Lao reading skills will be difficult until advanced texts are produced in Lao. With the recent availability of Lao desktop publishing software, Lao books may become more readily accessible, for the first time in history.

Use of English in the community

Most of the refugees who arrived between 1975 and 1977 had American sponsors. Individual families or churches were the common sponsors during that time period. Thus, refugee families arriving then immediately came into contact with English. Often, there were difficulties in communication between sponsors and refugees at the initial contact, but usually within a few months the head-of-household was able to speak at least some broken English. For those Lao who have moved away from their sponsors, or whose sponsors have not kept in touch after the first few weeks or months, of course, these contacts have now been lost.

After 1977, many Lao refugees were sponsored by other Lao families who had already resettled in the United States. Regardless, refugees are processed by one of the national voluntary agencies, and each refugee family is usually assigned to a case worker and/or case manager who follows them for the first few months of resettlement. Interviews with the case manager, mandatory health screening, and other interviews with job counselors and welfare workers are common contacts refugee families have with American personnel. And, of course each family with school-aged children encounters the school secretary soon after arrival in the United States.

Within the Lao community, exposure to English is largely through television, radio and newspapers. Children often pick up a great deal of idiomatic speech by watching cartoons and popular shows. The Lao tend to stay close to their families and friends who speak the same language and share the same culture and the same problems. They have very few interpersonal relationships with the American people, although of all the Southeast Asian refugee groups, it is among the Lao that people are widely dispersed throughout the community. Most Lao are Buddhist and do not go to American churches in which they would be exposed to an English-speaking environment. Younger children tend to have the greatest contact with English if they spend time with their American peers on the playground or in the neighborhood. Those who have older siblings who learn English in schools also pick up the language from hearing these siblings speak and play. Children who attend preschool

may begin kindergarten with a surprisingly strong understanding of spoken English. Adolescents seem to experience some difficulty in entering Americans' social groups (this is probably related to general characteristics of adolescents as well), and are less likely to spend their free time with American peers. Lao who have found employment of course learn a great deal of English through talking with their co-workers and employers. On the job, Lao learn oral skills, idiomatic meanings, and how to joke and socialize.

The English proficiency of Lao parents varies widely. As their children grow up and speak more and more English at home, it is common to find many parents also picking up and using more English. Most are able to speak at least some basic English with their children, although most are more comfortable speaking Lao. It is becoming increasingly common to hear conversations between parents and children where the parents speak Lao and the children answer in English, yet both understand each other. In general, it is safe to say that while relatively few Lao parents are fluent in English, the majority know at least some survival English, and can usually communicate simple thoughts and ideas. It's important to remember that second language learners usually understand English better than they speak it. Many also know, through hearing their children, numerous idiomatic phrases.

Lao elders have a much lower rate of English proficiency. This may be because in this age group, few received more than a few years of education, either at temples in villages or city schools. Also, fewer in this group are encouraged by social service agencies to actively participate in ESL classes and job search activities. Persons in this age group generally find it more difficult to learn a new language. Moreover, in traditional culture it is common to find that when persons became grandparents they have earned the right to semi-retirement. They turn over many responsibilities to their children. Their families treat them with respect and do not ask them to perform any physically or mentally stressful tasks. They are relied upon for their wisdom rather than their energy.

In this group of older Lao are also those who escaped early and resettled in the United States during the few years after 1975. They were the ones in society with the greatest skills in French and/or English.

According to Susan Forbes (1985), in 1975, 30% of the arriving Southeast Asians spoke English well, but by the period between 1979 and 1982, only about 7% spoke English well. School personnel may be surprised when they discover that they have highly educated and widely respected professionals—university professors, doctors, former government officials—living in their neighborhoods.

English language proficiency is also related to differences in how long a family has been living in the United States, which varies from more than thirteen years to less than a month. Of course, the longer the adults have lived in the West, the more exposure to English they have had, and the more English they have acquired. Even so, about 20% of the adult population have made no gains at all, and may never learn English (Forbes, 1985).

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1982-84) analyzed the influence of background characteristics on the refugee adult's acquisition of English. More important than time in the U.S. were four other factors: age, education and occupation in Laos, and the ability to read Lao. Those most likely to arrive with use of English are younger men who worked as professionals, military personnel, clerks, or who were students. By examining the backgrounds of Lao parents and whether or not their are literate in Lao, it is possible to guess at the extent of English use in the home.

In a study of refugee labor force participation (Bach, 1984, in *Refugee Reports*, June 1986), the Lao had the highest rate of early entry into employment, compared to other Southeast Asian refuge groups. However, the study found that the Lao tended to have the lowest weekly wages, suggesting that while they went to work soon after their arrival in the United States, they were working at low-paying, entry-level jobs. The study showed that the Lao opted for work rather than education, and this has an impact on the levels of English proficiency (including literacy) that adults have been able to attain.

Lao students in U.S. schools today have educational experiences very different from their parents, some better and some worse. While California schools will seldom need to plan appropriate educational programs for the parents of their students, it is important to understand the extent and range of the parents' exposure to formal education and

literacy. The educational and socioeconomic background of the parents has a strong impact on their successful adjustment to life in the United States, which in turn has an impact on the success of the children in school.

Chapter 3

Linguistic Characteristics of the Lao Language

Relationship of Lao to Other Languages

Laos derived its name from the Lao, the major ethnolinguistic group in Laos. The Lao have played a dominant role politically, culturally, and economically throughout the history of Laos. There was a considerable amount of classical literature written in Lao. Consequently, the Lao are proud of their ethnic and linguistic heritage.

The Lao language is a member of the Tai family of languages which traditionally have been classified as belonging to the Sino-Tibetan group. For Westerners, Lao and Thai (once called "Siamese") are probably the best-known of the Tai languages. Readers should note that the word *Thai* refers to the designated official national language of Thailand. The word *Tai*, when used in this handbook refers to the entire family of Tai languages to which both Thai and Lao belong. Some of the other Tai languages spoken in Laos include Black Tai (Tai Dam), White Tai (Tai Khao), Red Tai (Tai Daeng), Lu, Nung, and Phuan. Speakers of various Tai languages are also found in China, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Burma.

Why is it that there are more *Lao* speakers in northern Thailand than in all of Laos? To linguists, Lao is actually *Laotian Tai*, sometimes called *Isan* or *Northeastern Thai*. Central, or Standard, Thai is the form of Tai spoken in Bangkok and taught in the schools. The people who speak Laotian Tai and Northeastern Thai, or Isan, are the same people.

Some time after these Tai speakers populated the area, map-makers drew in a boundary (roughly at the Mekong River), dividing the populated area into two nations. After that, the language spoken inside Laos was called "Lao"; that spoken across the river in Thailand was called "Northeastern Thai" or "Isan". Although the two are written with their respective national alphabets, Lao and Thai, the difference between the spoken languages is similar to that between British and American English. Matisoff (1986) recalls an old saying that differentiates between a language and a dialect, saying: "A language is a dialect with its own army and navy." No matter what the implications for nationalism and ethnic pride, the Lao who have escaped from Laos to Thailand have found it easy to communicate.

Distribution of Languages in Laos

The Laotian society is a multilingual and multicultural society in the extreme. There are 69 different languages spoken in Laos today (Grimes, 1978). Among the major and predominant ethnic minorities are the upland Mon-Khmer groups, the upland Tibeto-Burmans, the various Tai groups, and the Hmong and Iu-Mien, or Yao. Although some of the adults of all minority ethnic groups (especially the males) learn to speak Lao, most of them maintain and use their own languages.

Laos may be divided into three latitudinal geographical areas. Along the Mekong and in other river valleys and on the plains live the Lao, called "Lao Loom" or "lowland Lao". In the rugged and mountainous areas are the various Mon-Khmers (So, Bru, Loven, Lamet, Khmu), the non-Lao Tai (Black Tai, White Tai, Lu, Phuan and Nung) and the Tibeto-Burmans (Akha, Lolo, Lahu) collectively referred to as "Lao Theung" or the "Lao up in the hills". On the high peaks in isolated areas live the Hmong and Iu-Mien who are called "Lao Soung" or "highland Lao". The Lao who settled along the valleys and on the plains are found in all parts of the country. The Hmong and the Iu-Mien are concentrated in the northern highlands. The various Mon-Khmer

Figure 2
Distribution of Ethnolinguistic Groups in Laos

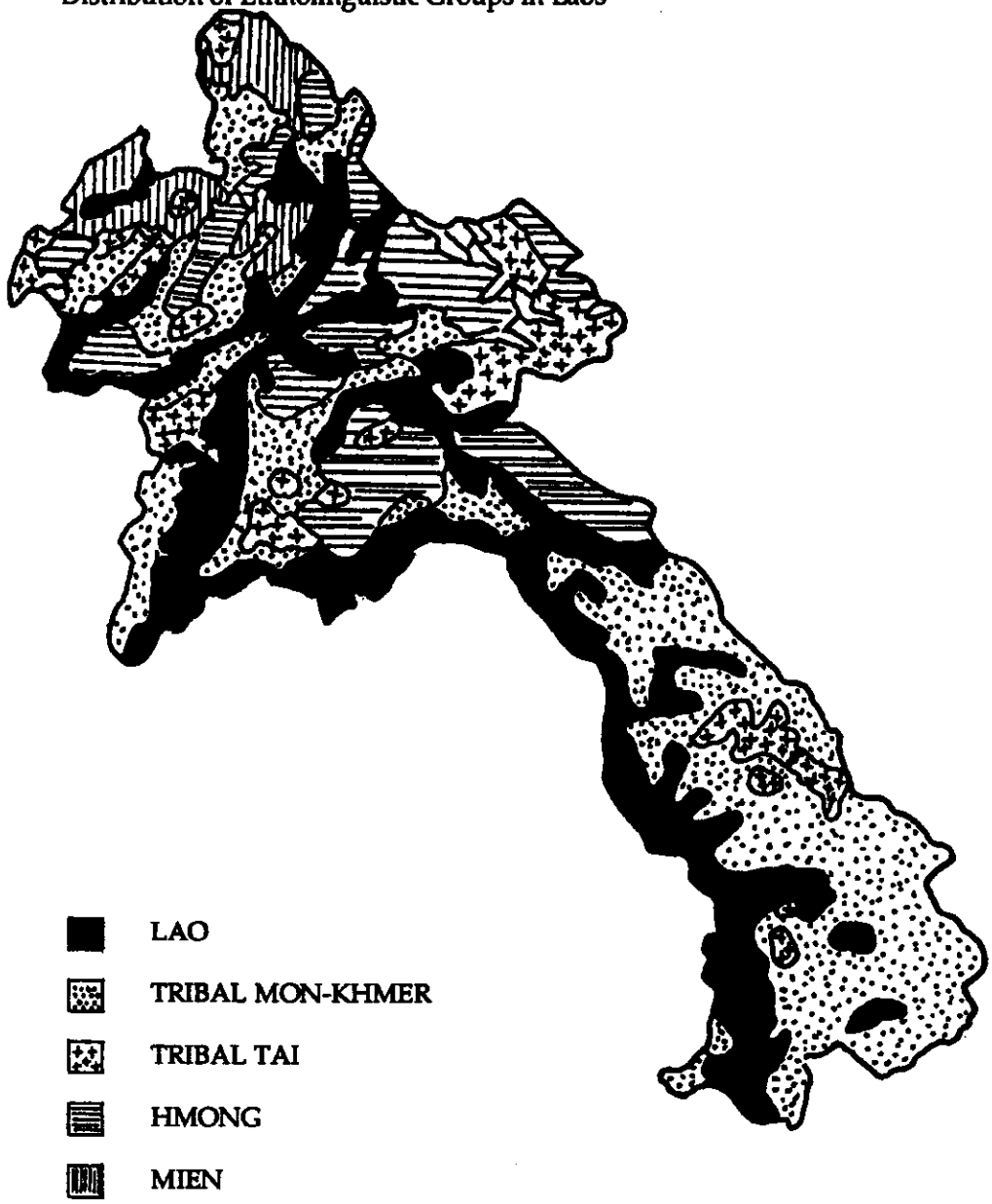
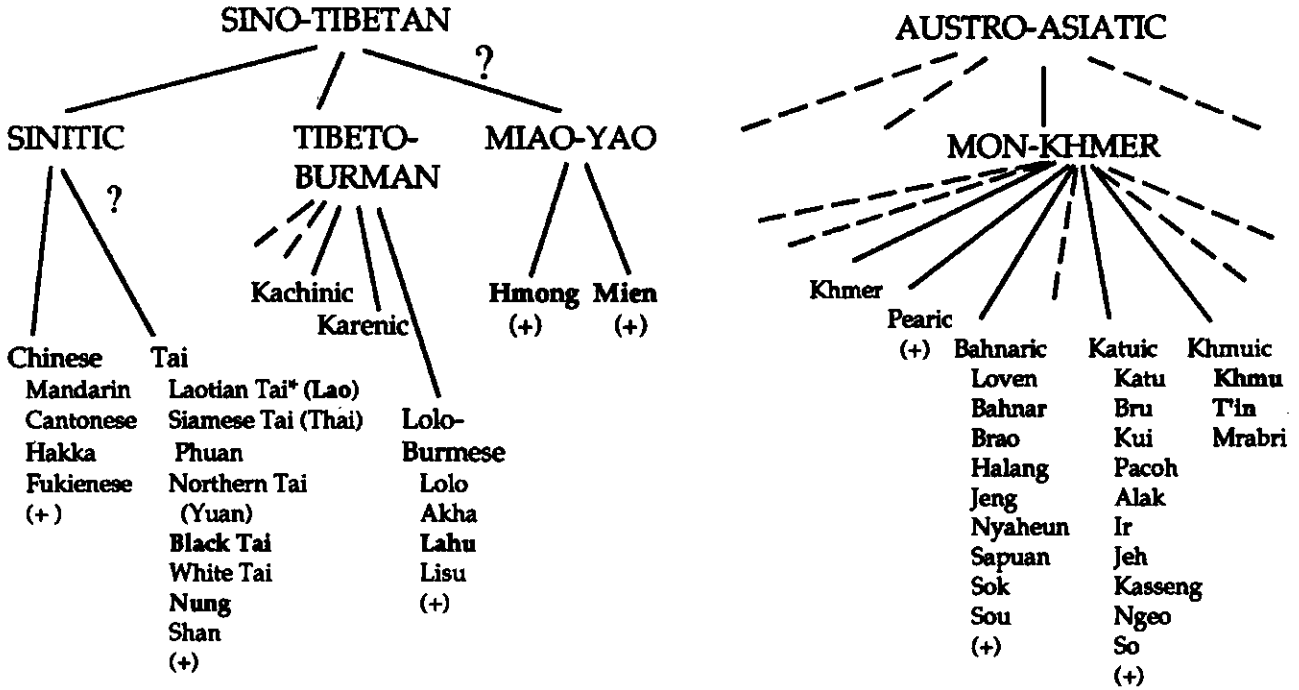


Figure 3

Language Families in Laos

Boldface=groups in the U.S. as refugees from Laos.



The Lao, the Thai living in Bangkok, and the Yuan all speak "Tai"—whether the differences are dialects or different languages depends on who is defining. The Tai spoken in Laos is known as "Lao", but across the Mekong River in Thailand, it is known as "Isan" or "Northeastern Thai"; in Bangkok, the Tai spoken is "Central" or "Standard Thai".

and Tibeto-Burman groups are scattered throughout the country. (See the ethnolinguistic map, Figure 4). Other ethnic groups found in Laos, primarily in the urban centers, are the Vietnamese, Chinese, various Europeans (including, since 1975, Russians), Indians and Pakistanis.

Mutual intelligibility

Of the languages mentioned above, only the various Tai languages are closely related to the Lao language. However, this does not mean that the Tai languages are mutually intelligible. All other languages in Laos are very different from Lao; some are more closely related to Khmer than Lao.

The existence of a written form of a language increases its range and permanence when a group is faced with assimilation by more dominant groups. Other than the ethnic Lao only a few groups have developed writing systems. The various Tai groups have adopted Indic-based scripts which provide a method for representing vowels and consonants; these Tai alphabets are alphabetic. Missionary linguists have worked with minority languages, and have developed Christian materials for a few. Still fewer have dictionaries completed or in progress. The Akha have a dictionary (Lewis, 1968) and a New Testament (1968); the Lahu have a New Testament (1968) and a dictionary nearing completion (Matisoff, 1989); the Jeh have a New Testament (1978); and the Lu have a New Testament (1933). The Iu-Mien (Yao) use Chinese characters to write their sacred books are written. There are more than five Mien orthographies which use the roman alphabet, but the worldwide Iu-Mien population has yet to settle on one as the standard. Missionary linguists published a Mien New Testament in 1975, and a Yao-English dictionary was completed in 1968 (Lombard and Purnell). The Hmong language was given a written form in 1953 by missionary linguists, and a New Testament was printed in 1978. Later, a system using Lao letters to represent Hmong was also devised. However, it is the first system, the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) which is most widely used by Hmong in the United States. The Hmong have more dictionaries than other minority groups, but few are usable for academic work in American schools: Bertrais,

to French; Heimbach, 1969—White Hmong to English; Lyman, 1974—Green Hmong to English; Xiong, n.d.—Green Hmong to English, English to Green Hmong. The latter was developed in the United States, and includes words appropriate for school.

Relative status of languages

Although the population of Laos is composed of many ethnic groups, social conflict between them was not a problem in Lao society. There are many reasons for this. First of all, Laos had a small population which was dispersed in many small villages and towns. Laotian villages were somewhat isolated from one another, primarily because of the lack of good transportation and communication systems. In addition, villages tended to be made up of members of one ethnic group. Secondly, Laos was a kingdom in which political power had been in the hands of one ethnic group, the Lao, for centuries. Whole villages of minority groups were recent arrivals, having immigrated to Laos within this century. Some minority groups were represented in the government, but their numbers in the top levels were few. Thirdly, the minority groups did not have a chance to develop themselves and to become well-integrated into the political and social fabric of the country. Formal education was not easily accessible to most of them, and the former government made little effort to integrate minority concerns into the nation's plans for social and economic development.

Implications for Educators:

In the United States, the age-old status relationships between the majority Lao and the minority Hmong and Iu-Mien have been reversed. When Americans need interpreters or translators, they often rely on minority Laotians (Hmong or Iu-Mien), who can converse in Lao as well as their own native tongue. Thus, in courts, schools, and hospitals, Lao must depend on the words, and often advice, of people who were never their social equals in Laos. Usually this situation works, but sensitivity is required. School districts with Lao, Hmong, and Iu-Mien students should keep this in mind when planning for bilingual aide staffing needs.

The five major Laotian ethnic groups which have made their way to the United States are the Lao, the Hmong, the Black Tai (Tai Dam), the Khmu, and the Iu-Mien (Yao). A few Lahu and Nung (originally from Vietnam) have also resettled in the United States. The first two groups mentioned represent the largest number; therefore, their mother tongues will inevitably have important implications for instruction in the United States. Hmong has become an important language (particularly in California's Central Valley). The need for Lao and Hmong speakers is, in fact, critical in many school districts.

Common Features of Southeast Asian Languages

Linguists look at the features of languages to determine which ones are descendants of a common ancestor language, thereby hypothesizing which ethnic groups are most closely related. However, affiliations are difficult to establish, and the linguistic history of the groups is continually debated in the journals. Matisoff (1986) reviews the current theories about the relationship of languages in Thailand, many of which are the same as those in Laos. It is difficult to say with certainty whether the Tai languages and the Miao-Yao languages are "sister" languages within the Sino-Tibetan family, which includes the various Chinese dialects. Nevertheless, there are certain features that many of the languages share, particularly when contrasted to English.

Monosyllables and tone

The Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Iu-Mien, Lao, Thai (and other Tai groups), Karen, Lahu, Akha, Lisu (and other Lolo groups) all have words that are essentially one syllable long; this means one vowel and usually one or more consonant sounds. There are very few final consonant sounds. Thus, tone becomes important. This is because there is a very high probability that, for example, the two sounds /p/ and /a/ blended as *pa*, could have any one of many possible meanings. One way to differentiate one kind of *pa* from another is to always say a particular *pa* with the same voice contour (rising, falling, long, short, abrupt end)

and pitch (high, mid, low). That way, the listener has additional clues as to which *pa* the speaker means, and has to sift through fewer possibilities to arrive at the correct meaning.

On the other hand, English words commonly have two or more syllables and use a variety of initial and final consonant sounds. There are more unique combinations of sounds, and it is less likely that words have been assigned many meanings. Therefore, tone is not important to the meanings of words. English speakers hearing *buy, bye, by, and bi-* without other clues will have difficulty knowing which one is meant. However, when we hear *bye* (low mid-level tone, short)-*bye* (high falling tone), we are fairly certain it means *see you later*. In this case, we have assigned certain tones to the two elements of *bye-bye* which are used consistently when meaning *good-bye*. In tonal languages all words are said with a particular voice contour and pitch; to ignore the tone is equivalent to deleting the "t" or "d" from the "pat" or "pad"

Use of serial verbs

Many of the languages in Laos and the region also treat verbs in a similar fashion. Linguists are not sure if this feature was adopted from others, or whether it represents some deeper relation between languages.

Implications for Educators:

It helps for teachers to be aware of major differences between Lao and English, particularly when teaching writing. Often the errors in written English result from using the native language syntax and inserting English vocabulary. What results is a distinctly Lao-flavored English. Written language uses a strict set of rules about what is proper, often different from acceptable oral English. Lao students will need to learn the rules specifically, and teachers can target teaching to the areas in which errors are likely to occur—the areas in which Lao is most unlike English.

Dictation helps Lao students learn the "patterns" of English. Also, keep in mind that language acquistion results from input that is understood. Input can be in the form of reading. In other words, the more students *read* understandable text, the better they will *write*.

However, the Tibeto-Burman and Tai languages, along with Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong and Mien, all show some degree of "verb concatenation" (Matisoff, 1986) or verb serialization. English uses this device only rarely, usually in informal speech, as in "*Come sit* down" or "Let's *go buy* a sandwich."

Verbs and adjectives

A verb in the languages of this region is generally defined as a word that can be "negated by a simple negative particle" (Matisoff, 1986). Adjectives, then, are a particular kind of verb. It is as if the adjective *cold* includes the notion of *to be*: *to be cold*. In this way, since *to be cold* can be negated by using a simple *not*, it is a verb. Another way to look at this matter is that these languages dispense with *to be* in terms of describing subjects: *girl is pretty; speaker is cold*, etc. In fact, a Lao spaaker will see no difference between the structure *the girl is pretty* and *the pretty girl*; both translate literally as *girl-pretty*. This leads to problems when using English, which requires use of forms of *to be* in a variety of situations, and differentiates between an *adjective-noun* construction and a statement of equivalency: *noun—is—adjective/noun.*

Classifiers

English seldom uses classifiers, but the Asian languages discussed here are often characterized by their use of classifiers. Early efforts to capture "Chinese" English capitalized on this, as in "I buy one *piece* ticket" or "three *piece* shirt". A classifier specifies an otherwise general noun, thereby imposing an explicit categorization upon things in the world. Bulky round objects take one classifier; flat leaf-like objects take another; long objects take another; humans take another; living non-humans take another; and so on.

Paired words

Chinese, the Asian language with which Americans are most familiar, uses or paired words, or four-syllable elaborate expressions, as does Lao, Thai, Hmong, Mien, Lahu, Khmu, T'in, and the other languages of the region. These paired words are used as adjectives, verbs, nouns, and can be shortened to a brief form. For English speakers learning Asian languages, these expressions may in fact be easier to remember with the correct tone patterns, because the four syllables are said as one unit, resembling a 4-syllable English word.

Implications for Educators:

The use of classifiers defines how things are put together into groups, and there are differences in how a Lao categorizes things and how an English speaker categorize things. When psychologists have a bilingual paraprofessional translate the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to estimate native language intelligence, there are some major problems. A test page shows four pictures, and the tester says a word, like *farmer*; the child points to the correct picture. If only one of the pictures is a human, then the classifier that goes with the word gives away the answer, because the the classifier means literally *person*.

Another implication is that classification according to English attributes is an important activity for English language development, and involves culture to a great extent. There are often unwritten "rules" about what things go together, rules that native speakers learn through experience. For example, *which object does not belong with the others: lemon, lime, grapefruit, and grape?* Specifically learning opposites parirs is another categorizing activity: for example, *what is the opposite of hot? warm? today? evening? energetic?*

The pattern of these figurative expressions usually calls for two of the syllables to be repeated, and the opposing two syllables to be semantically related to each other. Sometimes one of the related pairs is archaic language, an utterance from the deep past or from past contact with others, which no one can translate. If English used paired words, they might look like these:

"garbage in garbage out"
"day in day out"
"up stairs down stairs"
"raining cats raining dogs"

Following are Lao four-syllable elaborate expressions, translated literally, and with an English equivalent

ໜ້າຊື່ໃຈຄົດ	face-straight-heart-crooked	hypocritical
ໜ້າມືດຕາດຳ	face-dark-eye-black	threatening, angry
ເອົາຈິງເອົາຈັງ	take-true-get-serious	industrious
ເມືອງນອກບ້ານນາ	region-outside-village-padi	countryside
ເຊື້ອເຈົ້ານາຍຄົນ	linage-royal-chief-people	aristocracy

Related to these expressions is the generally figurative nature of the languages. Where English tends to specify, with several choices of words for any given thought, Lao and the other languages tend to *suggest;* it is left to the listener to infer the exact meaning from the context. This also has an impact on students speaking and writing English, in that teachers look for definition of terms and precise use of vocabulary; Lao spears of English may appear to be speaking in generalities, of "beating around the bush".

Final particles

Another feature of Lao and the other languages which is baffling for English speakers learning the language (indicating an area of great difference) is the use of final particles to indicate the purpose or the emotional tone of an utterance. English uses punctuation in written language to accomplish this end: *Come here. Come here!* In oral language, English speakers approximate the use of particles when they attach a softening word at the end of an otherwise harsh command: *Come here, will you? Be quiet, okay?*

Since English does not use *tone* to carry the meaning, tone can be used to convey the emotional content of the utterance. For example, saying *now* with a high falling tone (*now!*) will result in the listener understanding that this is a command which requires immediate response; *now* with a rising tone (*now?*) results in the listener realizing

that the speaker is not sure, and that a *yes* or *no* response is expected. Lao and the other languages convey all these sorts of messages by attaching a syllable at the end of the utterance.

Characteristics of the Lao Language

The Lao sound system

Lao has 20 consonants and 18 vowels. There are sounds that exist in the Lao phonological system but not in the English system and vice versa. Note that we are talking about sounds, not about the letters of the alphabet or the written symbols of these two languages.

Consonants

The Lao consonants are /b, d, p, t, č, k, ʔ, p^h, t^h, k^h, h, m, n, ɲ, ŋ, s, f, l, w, y/ (see Table 6). Note that Lao has two sets of voiceless stops (/p, t, k/ /p^h, t^h, k^h/). The first set is unaspirated; the second set is aspirated. Actually, these two kinds of stops also exist in English, but the unaspirated ones occur in a cluster context in English, as in *spill, still,* and *skill.* In Lao, unaspirated stops occur both in initial position and in final position. In English, it is the aspirated stops which occur in initial and final positions. Since Lao does not have aspirated stops in final position, Lao students will tend to produce unaspirated stops at the end of English words; the final *t, k,* and *p* will sound as if they are "swallowed". Similarly, since Lao does not have /b/ or /d/ in final position and it has no /g/ at all, Lao students will also tend to produce their unaspirated stops at the end of English words ending in *b, d,* or *g.* Lao students may thus have trouble producing the final sounds in the words *cap* and *cab, bag* and *back, bad* and *bat.*

In addition, Lao does not have consonant clusters. What seems to be a cluster in some Lao words is not really a cluster. In these Lao words, a schwa, /ə/, as in b*u*t or pil*o*t, separates what seems to be a cluster, as in ตลาด *tə-laat* 'market', and สมัย *sə-mai* 'era'.[5]

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[5] Almost every writer has a different method for transliterating Lao into the roman alphabet. The transliteration used here is a modified International

Vowels

Lao vowels are more complex. There are short vowels and their long counterparts, short diphthongs and their long counterparts, and other diphthongs. American teachers use *short* and *long* to differentiate between vowels like those in *back* and *bake; pet* and *Pete; pick* and *pike; on* and *own; cut* and *cute.* However, in Lao, *long* refers to a vowel which is of longer duration than its short counterpart; the sound is otherwise the same.

Short vowels

Sound	*Lao*	*English example*
i	◌ິ	as in beet
e	ເ◌ະ	as in make
ɛ	ແ◌ະ	as in bet
ɨ	◌ึ	as in boxes
ə	◌ັ	as in but
a	◌ະ	as in *a*h hah!
u	◌ุ	as in boot
o	◌ោ	as in *o*h oh!
ɔ	◌ອ◌ະ	as in *ou*ght

Long vowels

i	◌ີ	as in beet, but longer
e	◌	as in make, but longer

Phonetic Alphabet; the tone marks are left off, and long vowels are represented by doubled vowels *aa, ee, ii, oo, uu, iia, aai,* etc.

ɛ	◌ะ	as in bet, but longer
i	◌ิ	as in boxes, but longer
ə	◌ึ	as in but, but longer
a	◌า	as in ah hah!, but longer
u	◌ุ	as in boot, but longer
o	โ◌	as in oh oh!, but longer
ɔ	◌ो	as in ought, but longer

Diphthongs [6]

Sound	*Lao*	*English example*
iə	เ◌ียะ	as in Maria
iə	เ◌ีย	as above, but longer
iə	เ◌ือ	no English equivalent
iə	เ◌ือ	as above, but longer
uə	◌ัวะ	as in fluent
uə	◌ัว	as above, but longer
au	เ◌า	as in house
ai	ไ◌ or ใ◌	as in Mai-tai
am	◌ำ	between *am* and *um*

[6] Martini (in de Berval, 1956) says that there are only three genuine Lao diphthongs: *ia* /iə/, *cua* /ɨə/, and *ua* /uə/. The others (ai, au, iu, eo, oi, etc.) are simply vowels followed by /w/ or /y/, which he calls consonants rather than semi-vowels.

Other diphthongs and triphthongs are formed by following some of the above vowels by the semi-vowels represented in English by *y* ◌ຽ and *w* ◌ວ.

ɔi	◌ɤ◌ຽ	as in b*oy*, but with the ɔ as in *ought*.
uəi	◌ɤ◌ɔ◌ຽ	no English equivalent
iəi	◌̊ɤ◌ຽ	no English equivalent
iu	◌ɤ◌ຽ◌ɔ	as in *few*, m*u*te
ɛo	◌ɯ◌ɤ◌ɔ	similar to *"lay-o'*

Table 5. LAO VOWELS

Simple vowels

Short				*Long*		
FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK		FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
i	ɨ	u	HIGH	i	ɨ	u
e	ə	o	MID	e	ə	o
ɛ	a	ɔ	LOW	ɛ	a	ɔ

Diphthongs

Short			*Long*		
iə	ɨə	uə	iɔ	ɨə	uə
ai	au				ɔy

Table 6

Lao consonants

Sounds are represented by IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbol and Lao character.

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
STOP Vls. Unasp	p ป		t ต	ċ จ	k ก	ʔ อ
STOP Vls. Asp	pʰ ผ ฝ		tʰ ท ฑ		kʰ ข ค	
STOP Voiced	b บ		d ด			
FRICATIVE Vls		f ฟ ฝ	s ส ซ			h ร ห
FRICATIVE Vcd		v ว, หว				y ย
NASAL	m ม หม		n น หน	ɲ ย หย	ŋ ง หง	
SEMI-VOWEL		w ว		y ย		
LATERAL			l ล หล			

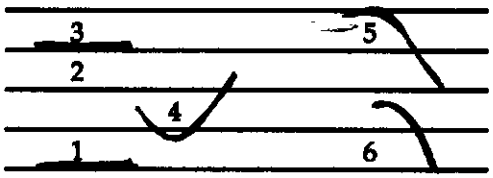
In Lao /w/=/v/.

Some consonants have two forms: the first character represents a high tone, and the second a low tone. The tone of the word is determined by a combination of factors: the tone of the consonant, the type of vowel, whether or not there is a consonant following the vowel, and whether or not one of four tone diacritical marks is used.

Tones

The tonal system in the Lao language varies by region. Speakers from some northern areas of Laos have as many as eight tones while those from the south may have as few as five tones. The Vientiane dialect has six tones, three on a level contour (high, mid, and low), one rising tone, and two falling tones (high falling, low falling).

Tones: pitch and contour



The syllable /pa/ can mean different things depending on the tone which which it is spoken.

Tone number	*tone mark*	*Lao*		*meaning*
1 (11)		ปา	/pa/	fish
3 (44)	◌่	ป่า	/pa/	forest
5 (53)[7]	◌๊	ป๊า	/pa/	aunt

The four tone marks, which are placed above the vowel, override the usual tone set by the particular combination of consonant and vowel. Two are commonly used, and two are very rare.

Tone mark	*effect*	*Lao*	*meaning*
◌่	mid	บ่า	shoulder
◌๊	high falling	ก๊าม	muscle

[7]The two numbers describe the tone. The first number is the beginning pitch, and the second number is the ending pitch (on a scale of 5).

x̃ (໊)	raises the tone	ຕົ໊ວ	ticket
໋		ປ໋າ	--

The tones of words are difficult for a non-Lao speaker to decipher. This is because the particular tone is determined by the category of the consonant, plus which vowel is used, whether or not there are final consonants, and which tone mark, if any, is used. Lao speakers learn these tone attributes as they learn the alphabet and begin to blend sounds into words.

Pronunciation difficulties

When learning to discriminate between similar sounds, it is essential to first hear the difference before attempting to produce the difference. When learning a first language young children are given numerous opportunities to hear the sounds they are meant to reproduce; in fact the entire first year of life is devoted to this activity. Later, when children try out the sounds they have heard, they are often given more practice in comparing a given sound with another similar sound. Adults and older children are seldom given this extensive exposure to hearing and discriminating the sounds of the language they are learning.

Nilsen (1973) summarizes sequences of activities for teaching the pronunciation of /l/ and /r/ to second language learners:

> *Recognition*: Number your paper from 1 to 3. I am going to say groups of three words. Two of the words in each group will be the same. Write down the number of the word which is different. For example, I will say *lash-lash-rash*. You should write down "3" because the third word is different.
>
> 1. locker-rocker-rocker (1)
> 2. wrist-list-list (1)
> 3. miles-mires-miles (2)

Implications for Educators:

Because tone is such an important part of knowing the meanings of words in Lao, and because English-speaking teachers are not aware that students are attending to the pitch and contour of a word, which they interpret as lexical tones, confusions occur. For example, when a speech therapist gives a list of word pairs, and the student is to say "same" or "different" for each pair, a student may pick up the different "tone" of two identical words, and get the item wrong. (Say a word pair like *sat - sat*; notice how your voice indicates *"this is the last word of the pair"* by the falling pitch it gives to the second word; compare it to the pitch of the first word, which means *"another one's coming"*).

On the other hand, Lao students have to learn that in English a word is spelled the same, even if it carries different meaningful tones. For example, in the English *bye-bye*, there is no difference in spelling, even though the two syllables are actually different in terms of their tones. Students' awareness of pitch patterns will help them learn the pronunciation of long words, in that they will automatically learn each syllable with its characteristic tone.

The particular intonation of a phrase as it's first learned carries over despite different situations. In English, we judge the sincerity or emotionality of how something's said. For example, "how are you?"—we can tell if the person really wants to know, or is just giving a standard response along with "hello". However, often the Lao speaker says "how are you?" in exactly the same way, whether he's really interested in knowing or not. Along this same line, sarcasm and irony in English is conveyed with intonation, along with gestures or facial expressions in context. If Lao speakers are not tuned into these other aspects of conveying meaning, they may miss the sarcastic intent of a comment, and respond literally. Consider the frequent use of "Oh, great," in various situations (just received a check in the mail, just spilled coffee on my clothes), or the teen-ager's sardonic comment to someone who brags about an accomplishment: "You're my hero".

Sentence intonation in English is often confusing as well. "Why can't you go?" has the same intonation as a statement, but the listener has to pick up the *why* and the *can't* to understand that it's a question. *Can't* is easy to confuse with *can*, especially for listeners not accustomed to hearing final consonant clusters. Make sure to restate your question, if you don't receive an answer as you expect; it could be that the listener missed the fact that you asked a question.

Recognition. Number your paper from 1 to 4. Listen to the word. Listen to the last sound in the word. If it is /l/, write "l"; if it is /r/, write "r".

1. toll
2. tore
3. tile
4. tile

Production. Listen carefully and then repeat the following pairs of words. The first word begins with /l/ and the second begins with /r/.

lace-race

lane-rain
law-raw

Repeat this type of drill for /l/ and /r/ in the medial and final positions, for example: *belated-berated; feel-fear.*

Production. Listen carefully to these sentences. Repeat after me.

There is a *light* on the *right.*
The *leaf* is on the *reef.*

These are also good exercises for written production, through dictation.

Production. Number your paper from 1 to 4. Repeat each sentence after me. If the last word begins with /l/, make a check mark on your paper.

1. This isn't a good *lime.*
2. This isn't a good *rhyme.*
3. It is a high *load.*
4. It is a high *road.*

Nilsen gives lists of minimal pairs, given in words and sentences, and specifies which language groups can be expected to experience difficulties with each sound pair. For Thai speakers (*Lao* is not listed, but since Thai and Lao are both Tai languages, problem sounds will be similar):

beat-bit	They *ship sheep.*	She wore a *knit/neat* suit.
bit-bet	He *hid* his *head.*	Hand me the *pin/pen.*
bait-bet	Did you *get* a new *gate?*	Can you *taste/test* it?
bet-but	A *duck* is on the *deck.*	The *rest/rust* was orange.
bit-but	That *stick* is *stuck.*	That is a common *pin/pun.*
cat-cot	It's too *hot* for a *hat.*	My *sack/sock* is torn.
cut-cot	I hope that's *not* a *nut.*	That's my *lock/luck.*
buck-book	It is good *luck* to *look.*	Jan had two *bucks/books.*
but-boat	Has your *coat* been *cut?*	He was given a *nut/note.*
but-bought	It was *dug* by a *dog.*	That's no *fawn/fun.*

cot-coat	I *hope* you can *hop*.	Tha *cot/coat* is too small.
cap-cab	The *cop* has a *cob*.	Look at that *mop/mob*.
cop-cough	The *chief* wants it *cheap*.	Turn your *cup/cuff* over.
Wac-whack	*Which* is a *witch*?	I heard a *wail/whale*.
west-vest	*Walt* put it in the *vault*.	That's a good *vine/wine*.
fat-vat	Does the *van* have a *fan*?	They are beginning to *leaf/leave*.
veal-zeal	He wore a *vest* with *zest*.	When will he *arrive/arise*?
thank-tank	She *brought* some *broth*.	That's a good *theme/team*.
thy-thigh	*Breathe* one *breath*.	I don't like *either/ether*.
than-Dan	I don't *dare* go *there*.	When will *they/day* come?
then-Zen	*Breathe* that *breeze*.	Is it *clothing/closing*?
tone-toll	Have you *seen* a *seal*?	Bring me the *spoon/spool*.
at-add	I can't *wait* to *wade*.	They burned the *cart/card*.
lack-rack	Is that the *right light*?	It is a high *load/road*.
chin-shin	These *sheep* are *cheap*.	My *chin/shin* hurts.
Jack-shack	See the *sheep* in the *jeep*.	That's my *gin/shin*.
edge-etch	*rich* man on the *ridge*	Did you see a *batch/badge*?
jam-yam	Is the *jet* here *yet*?	Give it to *Midge/me*.
bag-back	The *dog* is on the *dock*.	Put it in the *bag/back*.

The difficulty of English final consonants

A Lao speaker may know all the English sounds, but will still have problems with pronunciation. In the English words with more than two syllables, there are stressed and unstressed syllables, and the vowels sound different in unstressed syllables. For example, a Lao student may pronounce *pilot* with the "o" as in *lot*, resulting in a mispronounced word. In addition, English often has several consonants together, unusual to Lao ears, and those present special problems. Since Lao has very few final consonants, and never final consonant clusters, this aspect of English is very difficult. At first, Lao speakers will not even hear these sounds, because they do not expect consonants to appear after the vowels. In English it is especially important to be able to add /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/; these sounds are used to indicate past tense and plurals. Often miscommunication occurs because of misheard or mispronounced final

consonants—for example, *I can* vs. *I can't*. Words with final clusters like the following will have to be practiced carefully, first to discriminate the sounds, then to produce them:

first	stopped	carves	helm	hunt	church
stabbed	month	calls	lunch	strength	jogged
width	months	called	warm	laughs	judged
wasp	fifths	jumped	warmth	laughed	asks
sharp	carved	buzzed	girls	makes	asked

Stress and intonation

Lao differs drastically from English in that Lao is syllabic-timed while English is stress-timed. In other words, the speech rhythm for Lao is based on the syllables while in English certain words are said clearly, with stress, and others are slurred over quickly. For example, the English word *tomorrow*, which has a stress or accent on the second syllable may be mispronounced by a Lao speaker by erroneously placing the stress on the first or last syllable (*tomorrow, tomorrow*).

Intonation patterns in English are completely foreign to the Lao speaker. An English sentence contains a stress or several stresses which must be properly placed in the sentence. The rising intonation pattern for yes-no questions and the falling intonation pattern for statements and "wh" questions need to be taught. Furthermore, an English speaker can shift the stress from one word to another in the same sentence to change the shade of meaning or to provide crucial subtlety in English. This linguistic behavior is likely to present a serious communication problem for the Lao learner of English.

The Lao Writing System

The writing system of the Lao language is based on an alphabetical system which is derived from ancient Indo-Aryan scripts. It reads from left to right. The writing system does not provide space between individual words in a sentence. Therefore, words run into each other and make a long line to form a complete sentence. One may feel that it would be very difficult to identify individual words in a sentence when they are not isolated in the same way English words appear in sentences. But it is not as difficult as it seems because there is a mechanism built into the system that helps identify individual words.

A Lao word must be spelled with at least one consonant and a vowel, thus eliminating the chance of mistaking a vowel by itself as a word. For instance, the semi-vowel represented by ຮ is used as a dummy consonant to form a word when a vowel sound is initial. Each vowel is designated a specific position in relation to a consonant (before, after, above, or below), thus minimizing errors in recognizing words.

Lao does not have lower and upper case letters. Punctuation, which is based on the western system, is seldom used, except for the period. Space is often used in place of a comma. The lack of written conventions marking the beginnings and ends of words and sentences makes written Lao very different from English. Lao-literate students may have to learn the specific rules for spacing, use of capital letters, and sentence/paragraph signals in English writing.

Script

The 20 consonant sounds are written with 27 consonant symbols. However, a Lao student learns 33 consonant symbol-sound pairs. The consonants are grouped into three categories based on the associated tone; thus, a Lao student learns a particular tone *and* consonant sound with each symbol.

The six *akson suung* (rising tone) consonants are:

ຂ ສ ຖ ຜ ຝ ຫ

The eight *akson kaang* (low tone) consonants are:

ກ ຈ ດ ຕ ບ ປ ຢ ອ

Finally, the thirteen *akson tam* (high tone) consonants are:

ຄ ງ ຊ ຍ ທ ນ ພ ຟ ມ ຣ ລ ວ ຮ

The consonants /f, h, k, l, m, n, ŋ, p, s, t/ and the semi-vowel /w/ have both *tam* (high) and *suung* (rising) forms; the semi-vowel /y/ has both *tam* (high) and *kaang* (low) forms. The consonant symbol ອ has no sound, but it acts as a low tone consonant in the word; ອ is used when a syllable begins with a vowel sound.

The symbols for the vowel sounds can be divided into "short" and "long" forms. Lao students learn the short variant first, followed by the long form. In addition, a Lao student learns a form of the vowel that is used in open syllables (those with no consonants following the vowel) and a different form for closed syllables. In writing the alphabet, it is the open-syllable form that is written.

The Lao writing system is basically phonemic. Formerly, the system was not as phonemic as it is today because many loan words particularly those of the Pali or Sanskrit origin retained their original orthographical features, which were foreign to the Lao language. However, a royal decree in 1949 established a policy for the Lao writing system. It required that a word be spelled the way it was pronounced. The royal decree brought about a radical reform in the writing system and helped to prevent a Lao child from learning Pali and Sanskrit cognates in learning how to read and write Lao. Under the old system, for example, the word for *country* that used to be spelled ປຣະເທສ *pra-t'ees* is now spelled ປະເທດ *pa-t'eet* to reflect the Lao sound system.

Note that the spelling has /r/ which is not a true Lao sound and /s/ which never occurs in the final position. While the royal decree has not completely eliminated spelling irregularities, it has kept the problem to a minimum. There are two exceptions to the phonemic rule in the Lao system. First, whereas the sound /t/ actually occurs in the final position,

not /d/, the writing system always uses the letter *d* in *t*'s place. Therefore, even though *d* appears in the final position, it is pronounced as /t/, as in ผัด *p'at* 'sweep'. Second, the short diphthong /ai/ has two letters in Lao, ໄ and ໃ. These two symbols represent the same sound for all Lao speakers except for those who speak Luangprabang dialect. Therefore, most Lao speakers have to memorize the words which are spelled with these two symbols.

Figure 4. Sample Lao Text and Translation

ພາສາລາວເຮົາມີລັກສນະພິເສດເປັນຂອງຕົນເອງ ແຕ່ເນື່ອງຈາກສິ່ງຫລ້ອມ
ລ້ອມທາງປວັດສາດແລະການເມືອງ ເຊິ່ງເຮັດໃຫ້ພາສາເຮົາຕ້ອງມີການ
ປ່ຽນແປງຕັ້ງທີ່ເຮົາໄດ້ເຫັນຄຳຕ່າງປະເທດປະປົນຢູ່.
(Taken from Souvanhni, n.d.)

Our Lao language has special characteristics of its own. The environment of history and politics caused the Lao language to change so that now we see a lot of foreign words mixed with the Lao words.

Syntax

Word order

The basic word order in a Lao sentence is subject-verb-object. In the noun phrase, the basic patterns are noun-adjective (*car red*), and noun-number-classifier (*pencil two item*).

ລາວຍິງນົກດຳ

laau-nying-nok-dam
he/she—shoot—bird—black
He shoots a black bird.

Subjects are often omitted in Lao sentences when the speaker and the listener are engaged in a face-to-face conversation or when the relationship is explicit.

Questions and answers

The word order is the same for both a statement and a question. A question marker is added to the statement to form a question. Yes/no and rhetorical questions are formed by adding a question particle, *bɔɔ*, after the statement. Questions that ask "Is that right?" use the final tag *meen bɔɔ*; "can it be done?" or "is it okay?" questions use the tag *dai bɔɔ*..

ເຈົ້າປາກພາສາລາວບໍ?

čao paak p'aa saa laau bɔɔ
(you—speak—language—lao—no?)
Do you speak Lao?

Answers to these questions take the form of repeating the verb, saying *meen leo* ("true"), or *dai* ("can do", "okay"). Answers to persons of higher social rank take the form of *čau* or *dooy*

There are Lao counterparts for English *wh-* question words, which are inserted in a statement to form a question. Common question words include:

ຫຍັງ	nyang (what)
ໃສ	sai (where)
ໃຜ	p'ai (who)
ເມື່ອໃດ	miɔ dai (when)
ອັນໃດ	an dai (which)
ຢ່າງໃດ	yaang dai (how, in what way)
ເທົ່າໃດ	t'au dai (how much)
ຈັກ	čak (how many)

Below are questions and answers. Notice how the question word takes the position in the sentence that the answer would take in an analagous statement.

เจ้ามีลูกจักถ่ิบ?	มีลูกสองถ่ิบ
čau mii luuk čak k'on you—have—child—how many—person?	mii luik sɔɔng k'on have—child—two—person
How many children do you have?	(I) have two children.
เจ้าไปไส?	ข้อยไปตลาด
čau pai sai you—go—where?	k'ɔɔy pai dəlaat I—go—market
Where are you going?	I'm going shopping.
ผู้นั้นแม่นใผ?	แม่นแม่ข้อย
p'uu naan mεεn p'ai person—that—be—who?	mεεn mε k'ɔɔy is—mother—I
Who is that?	She's my mother.
อันนี้แม่นหยัง?	แม่น สໍ
an ni mεεn nyang classifier—this—is—what?	mεεn sɔɔ is—pencil
What is this?	(It) is a pencil.

Negations

Negatives are constructed by inserting a negative particle, like *bɔɔ*, before the verb.

ลาวบ่ยู่บ้าน

laau bɔɔ yuu baan
he/she—no—located at—home
He is not home.

ບໍ່ມີ

bɔɔ mii
no—have
no (There is none.)

ບໍ່ເປັນຫຍັງ

bɔɔ pen nyang
no—be—what
It's nothing. Don't worry. You're welcome.

Final particles

Lao has a wealth of final particles, and they appear to serve three major functions: to make a question, to make a command, and to provide special emphasis. The particular particle used relates something of the speaker's emotions or attitudes, and quite often it says something about the relationship between speaker and listener. As such, the use of particles is bound up with social rules, which most native speakers are unable to explain to outsiders. The following are examples:

ບໍ	bɔɔ	no? like the French *n'est-ce pas?*
ໄປບໍ	pai bɔɔ?	*(you) go, no?*
ແມ່ນບໍ	meen bɔɔ?	*true, no? (is that right?)*
ເດ໊	dɔ	encouragement, warning, sincerity
ໄປເດ໊	pai dɔ	*(I) go, you hear*
ໂຊກດີເດ໊	sook dii dɔ	*good luck, truly*
ນາ	na	pleading, beseeching, explaining

ໄປນາ	pai na	*come, oh please*
ຫວ໋	wa	surprise, puzzlement; alone, it conveys *oh? is that so?*
ບ໋ໍ່ໄປຫວ໋	boɔ pai wa?	*oh, aren't you going?*

Particles are a significant part of the language, but are seldom found in written text. Foreign speakers of Lao must master their use to be understood, much as Lao learners of English must learn to understand and manipulate intonation for emotional content, sarcasm, and irony.

Pronouns

Pronouns in Lao are different from English in three ways: there are no changes for gender in the third person singular; pronouns specify the social distance between the speaker and listener; and there are no changes in a pronoun's form according to grammatical function.

When referring to persons of the same social rank, the word *laau* is used, regardless of the gender of the person. Therefore, Lao speakers may mix up the English pronouns *he* and *she*. When referring to a non-human (in English, *it*), the object's classifier is used, or a general classifier like *an* is used. In addition, Lao speakers may have difficulty using different forms of the English pronouns as subjects, objects, and possessives (*she/her/hers; he/him/his*).

The feature of Lao pronouns most different from English is the way in which a speaker must choose a pronoun appropriate to the social rank of the listener. For example:

Pronoun	*to equals*	*to monks*	*to elders*	*in writing*
I	k'ɔɔy ຂ້ອຍ	k'aa p'a baat ຂ້າພະບາດ	k'aa nɔɔy ຂ້ານ້ອຍ	k'aa p'a čau ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າ
you	čau	aa čaan	t'aan	t'aan

	เจ้า	อาจาม	ท่าน	ท่าน
he/she	lasu	p'a	pon	lasu
	ลาว	พะ	เผ่น	ลาว

In addition, a person's title can be used as a pronoun. Transferring this syntax to English results in telegram-sounding speech: *"I give it to teacher."*

Adjectives, articles, and classifiers

Lao does not have articles. The use of definite and indefinite articles, therefore, presents a problem to a Lao learner of English. Sometimes the English *one* is used as a poor substitute for indefinite articles *a* and *an*.

Adjectives are similar in function to the English *to be* plus an adjective. Constructions with *to be* will need special attention. Adjectives follow the nouns they modify. This difference between Lao and English is usually covered adequately in basic ESL programs, although the preferred order of several adjectives, one after another, is sometimes confusing.

English presents a vast array of possible adjective choices, each with a subtle shade of meaning; use of a thesaurus with simple example, synonyms, and antonyms is a valuable teaching resource. Teachers can also focus on groups of related adjectives, clarifying the subtle differences and, when possible, matching up opposing pairs. Comparative and superlative adjectives ending in *-er* and *-est* are new to Lao speakers, and therefore will need extra attention.

Lao is rich in classifiers, a class of words which is not common in English. (English examples include "a *flock* of geese", "a *herd* of cows", "a *piece* of paper", "a *stick* of gum", "a *pack* of gum".) Each Lao noun has its associated classifier, and a general noun, like *wood* ไม้, can mean different things:

Lao	*literal translation*	*meaning*
ກົກໄມ້	central trunk-wood	tree (standing or fallen)
ດອກໄມ້	flower-wood	flower
ໝາກໄມ້	fruit-wood	fruit
ໃບໄມ້	leaf-wood	leaf
ຕົ້ນໄມ້	whole tree-wood	tree (standing)
ລຳໄມ້	tubular section-wood	log
ຝາໄມ້	flat object-wood	wall
ຫີບໄມ້	cube-wood	box

The word that precedes *wood* in the above examples is the classifier. Classifiers can be used with a variety of different nouns, as long as they share the attributes which define a particular category. The defining attributes are often the common characteristics of objects (shape, consistency, composition) or a relationship between elements, as in the English *'herd* of _____', *'stack* of_____', and so on. The classifier alone often functions as a pronoun, referring to a previously mentioned object. The classifier precedes the noun, as in

ໂຕຄວາຍ

(classifier—water buffalo)
a water buffalo

However, when the number is specified, the order is *noun-number-classifier*, as in

ຄວາຍສາມໂຕ

(water buffalo—three—classifier)
three water buffaloes

Verbs

Lao verbs are very simple when compared to English verbs. Lao verbs are not conjugated and there is no subject-verb agreement.

ຂ້ອຍມາ	k'ɔɔy maa	I come
ເຈົ້າມາ	čau maa	you come
ລາວມາ	laau maa	he/she come
ພວກຂ້ອຍມາ	p'uak k'ɔɔy maa	we come
ພວກເຈົ້າມາ	p'uak čau maa	you come
ພວກລາວມາ	p'uak lau maa	they come

Time is expressed in Lao only when the context does not make it clear just when the action takes place. When it is necessary to indicate time, the simple future and past can be marked with particles which are inserted before or after the verbs.

ແລ້ວ	lɛo	already completed
ໄດ້	dai	past tense marker

ຂ້ອຍບ່ໄດ້ມາ

k'ɔɔy bɔɔ dai maa
I—not—past tense—come
I didn't come.

ລາວໄປແລ້ວ

laau pai lɛo
he/she—go—already
He already went.

ຊິ	sii	will (future)
ຈະ	ča	will (future)

ຂ້ອຍຊິໄປ

k'ɔɔy sii pai
I—future—go
I will go.

Time markers such as *today, next week, next year* are used with the simple present tense verbs. Lao students will need to focus on both the tense and subject-verb agreement when learning English.

Because of the liberal use of serial verbs in Lao, stringing verbs together is likely to result in errors in written and oral English. Students will need to learn the limited range possibilities for using one verb after another in English. Examples of verb serialization in Lao are:

ຂ້ອຍໄປເຫັນມາແລ້ວ

k'ɔɔy-pai-hiin-maa-leo
I—go—see—come—already
I went to see it and came back

ລາວຢາກມາລົມກັບຂ້ອຍ

laau-yaak-maa-lom-kap-k'ɔɔy
he/she—want—come—converse—with—I
He wants to come to chat with me.

English uses verbs in a variety of ways, and the appropriate use of verbs hinges on more than simply knowing the tenses and subject-verb agreement rules. For example, there are some verbs which allow an infinitive to follow, but others which do not; there are some verbs which allow the present participle of another verb to follow, and others which do not; and, there are a variety of idioms that are used as verbs, as well as slang verbs which change year to year. The teacher needs to focus on these verb situations, as a Lao speaker will not be able to determine if a particular usage "sounds right". To get an idea of the variety of verb

situations in English that a Lao speaker must learn to manipulate, consider the following:

Two-word verbs (can be separated by other words)[8]

blow out	*hang up*	*pick out*
put away	*look over*	*take back*
do over	*look up*	*take off*
hand in	*pass up*	*use up*

Two -word verbs (cannot be separated)

call on	*look into*	*run out of*
get through	*look like*	*ake after*
go away	*look up to*	*take off*
look for	*run into*	*wait on*

Verbs that can be followed by an infinitive (for example, "to come")

With no object

agree (to come)	*hope* (to come)
appear (to come)	*know how* (to come)
arrange (to come)	*learn* (to come)
care (to come)	*mean* (to come)
decide (to come)	*refuse* (to come)

With object (for example "him")

advise (him to come)	*instruct* (him to come)
allow (him to come)	*invite* (him to come)
cause (him to come)	*permit* (him to come)
challenge (him to come)	*persuade* (him to come)
command (him to come)	*remind* (him to come)

With or without object

ask (to come)	*ask* (him to come)
beg (to come)	*beg* (him to come)
expect (to come)	*expect* (him to come)
want (to come)	*want* (him to come)
would like (to come)	*would like* (him to come)

[8] Examples taken from *The ESL Miscellany*, by Clark, Moran, and Burrows, 1981.

Verbs followed by the object and the simple form of a verb ("go" rather than "to go" or "going")

feel (it go)	*see* (it go)
hear (it go)	*smell* (it go)
observe (it go)	*watch* (it go)

Verbs followed by gerunds (for example, "telling")

admit (telling)	*keep* (telling)
avoid (telling)	*miss* (telling)
can't help (telling)	*practice* (telling)
consider (telling)	*regret* (telling)
deny (telling)	*resent* (telling)

Verbs followed by either infinitive or gerunds

attempt (to come)	*attempt* (telling)
begin (to come)	*begin* (telling)
continue (to come)	*continue* (telling)
hate (to come)	*hate* (telling)
like (to come)	*like* (telling)

Idioms with "go"

go biking	go on a picnic
go for a bike ride	go riding
go bowling	go for a ride

The *ing* ending of gerunds is easier to pronounce because it has an additional syllable and ends with *ng*, a familiar final consonant for Lao speakers. Because of this, the gerund form is often used when the speaker is unsure of the correct verb form, or when the correct form has final consonant blends and is difficult to pronounce. Another popular choice is the infinitive form, since the *to* marks the following word as a verb, and increases the probability that the listener will understand. Least preferred are the verbs which contain final consonants, plus a /d/ or /t/, indicating past tense (as*ked*, clip*ped*, enhan*ced*).

Vocabulary

Word formation

Lao words are built from monosyllables. Often a word's meaning can be deciphered by taking apart the syllables and looking at the meaning of each syllable. For example, the literal translation of *understand* is to *enter the heart:*

ເຂົ້າໃຈ	k'au čai	enter—heart	understand

There are many words built from the concept of *water*:

ນ້ຳຊາ	nam sa	water—tea	tea
ນ້ຳພຸ	nam p'uu	water—mountain	fountain
ນ້ຳຕາ	nam taa	water—eye	tears
ນ້ຳໃຈ	nam čai	water—heart	perseverance
ນ້ຳນົມ	nam noom	water—breast	milk
ນ້ຳປາ	nam paa	water—fish	fish sauce
ນ້ຳຫວານ	nam vaan	water—sweet	dessert

Certain words help build nouns from verbs, as in:

ການ

kaan (the action of ___)

ການໄປມາ	ການສອນ	ການທຳມາຫາກິນ
kaan pai maa	kaan soon	kaan tham maa haa kin
action—go—come	action—teach	action-do-come-look for-eat
traffic	teaching	livelihood, occupation

ຄວາມ

k'waam
noun marker

ຄວາມຮູ້	ຄວາມເປັນມາ
k'waam huu	k'waam pen maa
noun—know	noun—be—come
knowledge	history
ຊ່າງ	ຊ່າງໄຟຟ້າ
saang	saang fai faa
artisan	artisan—electricity
	electrician
ຜູ້	ຜູ້ແທນ
p'uu	p'uu t'een
person	person—take the place of
	representative

Many other words are derived from Pali and Sanskrit; Khmer and Thai also have many words from ancient texts of India, showing their common roots. These words are polysyllablic, and cannot be broken down into familiar components. Because these words are derived from the sacred Buddhist texts written in Pali, both Khmer and Thai contain the same words, shaped by the features of their sound systems. The Lao language also includes loan words from Khmer and Chinese. Because of the long period of French colonial administration in Laos and some twenty years of an active American presence there, modern Lao also includes some French and English loan words, usually for technical terms.

Loan words from French

ຝຣັ່ງ	Français	French
ອັກກອກເດອ້ງ	accordéon	accordion
ຢາອັສເປຣິນ	asprine	aspirin

ໝວກບີເຣ	béret	beret
ຊິເນມາ	cinéma	movie
ສາຍອັ້ງແຕນ	antenne	antenna
ກາເຟ	café	coffee
ໂຊໂກລາ	chocolat	chocolate
ເຫລົ້າເບ້ຍ	bière	beer
ເຫລົ້າແວ້ງ	vin	vine
ເຫລົ້າໂກຍັກ	cognac	brandy
ນ້ຳມັນເນີ	beurre	butter
ຜັກກາຣ໊ອດ	carotte	carrot
ຜັກສາລັດ	salade	lettuce
ຜັກຊູ	chou	cabbage
ໝາກປອມ	pomme	apple
ຣົດໂອໂຕ	automobile	automobile
ຣົດຕັກຊີ	taxi	cab
ປືນກາຣາບິນ	carabine	rifle
ໂຮ້ງແຊກ	cercle	club
ແກຣມ	crème	cream
ພຣະເຢຊູຄຣິດ	Jésus-Christ	Jesus Christ
ກິໂລ	kilogramme	kilogram
ແມດ	mètre	meter

ລົດເມໂຕຣ	metro	subway train
ໂມງ	montre	watch, clock
ລົດໂມໂຕ	motocycle	motorcycle
ໂອແຕນ	hotel	hotel
ຕັ່ງຊາລົງ	salon	living room
ຢາກີນີນ	quinine	quinine
ປາຣີ	Paris	Paris
ໂຮງຮຽນລີເຊ	lycée	senior high school
ເຕເລໂຟນ	téléphone	telephone
ລົດກາມີຍົງ	camion	truck
ຢາວິຕາມິນ	vitamine	vitamin
ທະຫານປາຣາ	parachutiste	paratrooper

Loan words from English

ອະເມຣິກັນ	American
ອັງກິດ	English
ແມວລ	mail
ສະແຕມ	stamp
ທີວີ	T.V.
ເຕັກໂນໂລຈີ	technology
ເຄມີ	chemistry

ເງິນດອນລາ	dollar
ຍົນເຮລິຄັບເຕີ	helicopter
ສຽງຮາຍຟາຍ	hi fi
ເຢັຽຣະມັນ	German
ກີຕາ	guitar
ຜ້ານາຽລອນ	nylon
ປີອາໂນ	piano
ສາຣະເວ	survey
ເສື້ອເຊີ້ດ	shirt
ແຊຕ	set (game)
ສະປິງ	spring (furniture)
ເຈັຽ	gear
ແກ໊ງ	gang
ຣົດບັດ	bus
ບັ໊ງກາໂລ	bungalow
ເຫລົ້າວິສກີ	whiskey
ເຂົ້າຫນົມເຄກ	cake
ກະໂລ່ງ	gallon
ແຟສັ່ນໂຊ	fashion show
ແຟ່ນ	fan (admirer)
ຄຣິດສຕຽນ	Christian

ຄອມປິວເຕີ	computer

Loan words from Vietnamese

ຫວຽດ	Việt	Vietnamese
ຫວຽດນາມ	Việt	Vietnam
ຫວຽດກົ໋ງ	Việt Cộng	Vietnamese Communist
ຫວຽດມິ໋ນ	Việt Minh	Viet Minh
ອົ໋ງ	ông	title: Mr.
ເຝີ	phở	noodle soup
ມ໋	mì	Chinese style noodle
ຊຸ໊ນຍ໋	giò lụa	pork roll
ຈ່ານ໋	chả giò	Vietnamese egg roll
ແນມເ໊ນືອງ	nem nướng	BBQ sausage

Inflections are basically unknown to Lao speakers. There are a few prefixes, all derived from Pali loan words. Lao words are not changed to reflect plurality, tense, or grammatical function. The way in which English words are transformed according to their function will be a problem area for Lao students. In fact, when teaching vocabulary to Lao students, it is important to teach the various forms of words and have students practice with matching the correct form with its function. Examples are:

verb	*noun*	*adjective, adverb*
complicate	complication	complicated, complicating
legislate	legislation	legislated
	legislature	legislative
	legislator	
vacate	vacancy	vacant, vacated

	vacation	vacationing
	beauty	beautiful, beautifully
write	writing	written

Implications for Educators:

Teachers assume that a reader will know that the vocabulary word *rode* is the past tense of *ride*; second language learners have to learn that they are the same, except for time; on the other hand, English will use *rice* whether it's *in the field, hulled* or *unhulled*, or *cooked, glutinous* or *plain*. Lao has different words for rice in different contexts.

When teaching the vocabulary in a reading group, look through the story for items that second language learners may need to learn; look for past tense verbs, contractions, idioms, verbs like *get up, get down, get over*, and culturally different concepts. Prepare to teach each of these with its corresponding other forms. For example, teach *will not* along with *won't*; teach *peanut, peanut butter, jelly*, and *sandwich* along with *peanut butter and jelly sandwich*; teach informal spoken forms like *no way* along with the more formal *impossible*; teach *legislature* along with *Legislature*, pointing out what the capital L signifies; teach *legislate, legislation*, and *legislator* as well, showing how each form is used (noun, verb, adjective, etc). For high school students, one of the most difficult areas of writing is knowing which form of a word to use. Common errors include *I interested in it. I am boring. Did you reservation us a room?* and so on.

A related difficulty is the use of many near-synonyms in English, that correspond to only one word in Lao. Teach the shades of meaning, using opposite pairs when possible.

Lao uses proverbs, sayings, and adages frequently, especially to teach behavior, values, or beliefs. Teachers can make use of this by using proverbs from many cultures to explain classroom events, and the exercise of trying to find a proverb from one's own background that expresses the same message helps language development as well as cross-cultural understanding. As an example, *no man is an island* is similar to a Lao proverb that *one stake cannot make a fence.* In English, *we kill two birds with one stone*, and in Chinese, people *get two eagles with one arrow.* Whenever possible teach concepts by using parables or example stories.

New words are adopted to talk about concepts that are not part of the cultural past. A Lao villager would have difficulty using his native vocabulary to discuss the fuel injectors on a modern car; he could either manufacture a new compound word from existing words, or he could use the English terminology, shaping the sounds and structure to fit Lao. This becomes a problem in American society, when translators are asked to produce a document in Lao. Many of the words are coined to fit the

new technical concepts, and different translators will coin new words differently. By listening to a conversation in Lao and noting the English vocabulary that is interjected, it is possible to guess at areas in which the two cultures have little common ground.

Numerals

The numeral system used by the Lao is based on the decimal system. The numerals from one to ten, and selected numbers from eleven to one hundred are written as follows:

1	๑	ning	one
2	๒	sɔɔng	two
3	๓	saam	three
4	๔	sii	four
5	๕	haa	five
6	๖	hok	six
7	๗	čet	seven
8	๘	peet	eight
9	๙	kau	nine
10	๑๐	sip	ten
11	๑๑	sip et	eleven
12	๑๒	sip sɔɔng	twelve
20	๒๐	saau	twenty
21	๒๑	saau et	twenty one
40	๔๐	sii sip	forty
41	๔๑	sii sip et	forty one

100	๑๐๐	hɔɔy	hundred
200	๒๐๐	sɔɔng hɔɔy	two hundred

Most books printed in Lao indicate the page numbers with the Lao numerals. However, in modern times the Arabic numerals have ben taught and widely used in business, government, and education.

Implications for Educators:

When translating or interpreting for Lao parents about school-related concepts, it's necessary to explain the "American" views on which the concepts are based. Often there is no equivalent concept in Lao, so that translation/interpretation alone does not mean that communication and understanding take place. For example, the American concepts of "potential", "intelligence", "learning handicapped", "gifted", "under-achiever" and so on all depend on a general concept of something unseen within a person that can be measured, and then increased or decreased. They will need to understand that there are ways to change or enhance the performance of children with blindness, deafness, physical disability, retardation, or learning handicaps. Before involving parents in home strategies to teach a deaf child to function in a hearing world, the parents need to understand that Americans truly believe that it's possible to change that child; Lao probably believe that it's their turn to have a deaf child born to them, and that that child will be taken care of throughout his/her life.

The best way for the translator/interpreter to learn these basic American concepts is to work day to day in an environment where he/she can see "with his own eyes" different situations and their outcomes.

Cultural Patterns and the Lao Language

The spoken word is an integral part of a culture; some words cannot be translated exactly into another language because the cultures differ in basic concepts related to social relationships, environmental and economic conditions, and the place of humans in the universe.

Once a person learns the Lao language, it is still possible to communicate poorly, unless these cultural aspects of the language are understood. Likewise, Lao who learn English must also learn the cultural components of communication in America.

Forms of Address

The Lao, like other Asian groups, call each other by kinship terms. Lao tend to use generation terms rather than terms for specific relationships. For example, a young man will address persons of his father's generation by one term, those of his grandfather's generation by another term, and those of his own generation by terms loosely translated as *younger brother* or *older brother* .

	Paternal		*Maternal*
Grandparents' generation			
ພໍ່ປູ່	p'ɔɔ puu (g.father)	ພໍ່ເຖົ້າ	p'ɔɔ t'au (g.father)
ແມ່ຍ່າ	me nyaa (g.mother)	ແມ່ເຖົ້າ	me t'aau (g.mother
Parents' generation			
ພໍ່	p'ɔɔ (father)	ແມ່	me (mother)
ລຸງ	lung (old uncle)	ຕາ	ong (old uncle)
ອາວ	aau (young uncle)	ນ່າຍາວ	naa baau (young uncle)
ປ້າ	paa (old aunt)	ປ້າ	paa (old aunt)

ອ້າ	aa (young aunt)	ນ້າສາວ	naa saau (young aunt)

Children's generation

ອ້າຍ	aai (old brother)	ລູກ	luuk (child)
ນ້ອງຊາຍ	nɔɔng saai (young bro.)	ຫລານ	laan (grandchild)
ເອ້ຍ	ɔei (old sister)	ເຫລັ້ນ	leen (great g.child)
ນ້ອງສາວ	nɔɔng saau (young sister)	ຫລອດ	lɔɔn (g. g. g.child)

Several titles of respect can be affixed to the person's name, or can be used alone, as a pronoun:

ທ່ານ	t'aan	Mr., sir
ນາງ	naang	Miss, Mrs.
ທ້າວ	t'aau	Mr.

In summary, the term by which one person addresses another carries with it information about how to conduct the social relationship. This applies equally to kinship terms, titles, and socially ranked pronouns. In the United States, with an emphasis on individuals, the emphasis is on the uniqueness of each person, but in Lao society, the emphasis is on the social group to which a person belongs.

Lao Names

It was not until July, 1943, that surnames were required of Lao citizens. Before that, people were known by their familiar names, given at birth. Names were chosen from among a rather limited range of descriptive or representative words, such as *red, black, strong, small, gold, stone*, etc. If there were several with the same name, then a man's son's name was added as a specifier, as in *Mr. Gold, father of Stone.* In some

cases, it was the wife's name (or the husband's name) which was tacked on as a specifier.

After the decree of 1943, a wealth of surnames came into being, often of three to five syllables. After that time, surnames were given to a man's children to carry, at least on the official records. The surnames, then, were created, just as given names were, and the syllables carry meaning. Examples of Lao surnames, broken into components, are:

Souk-som-boun	ສຸຂສົມບຸນ	health, prosperity
Vieng-kham	ວຽງຄຳ	golden city
Souk-ban-dith	ສຸຂບັນດິດ	mature pundit
Vong-kham-keaw	ວົງຄຳແກ້ວ	gold lineage
Vong-sa-wat	ວົງສາວັຕ	prosperous lineage
Vong-pra-chan	ວົງພຣະຈັນທ໌	moon lineage
Va-tha-na-tham	ວັທນະທັມ	culture
Luang-pra-seut	ຫລວງປຣະເສີດ	very precious

There was a custom of assigning titles as names, which helped specify a person's social rank, or the social rank of his ancestors. For princes and noblemen, the names *Chao, Sathu,* and *Agna* were used; *Thao* signified mandarins and the sons of mandarins; *Xieng* was a prefix for lesser-degree monks; *Thit* for full monks; *Maha* for those who had received a diploma for the study of Pali; and *Chane, Chane Xa, Chane Khu, Chane Khu Lak Kham,* all of which referred to the monkhood. *Nai* and *Bak* were given to men of low rank.

Women's title names included *Chao, Agna,* and *Nang* for princesses and the wives and daughters of mandarins. *Mom* indicated a girl of lower rank married to mandarins or to foreigners of equal social rank, and *Sao* or Y was used for girls of low rank.

In later years, the title *Agna* was applied to all state employees. Princes who were appointed head of a state deparment were given the prefix *Chao Krom*. The King could give special titles to the children of mandarins and to other persons of special merit: *Chao Phagna Luang, Chao Phagna, Phagna, Phya, Sen,* or *Mun* (de Berval, 1959).

The given name, which, like the surname, appears very long and unpronounceable to English speakers, can be broken apart into component parts. These components are often common prefixes followed by one of several common suffixes. For example:

Prefix	*Suffix*	*Name*	*In Lao*
Kham	sy	Khamsy	ຄຳສີ
Kham	say	Khamsay	ຄຳໃສ
Kham	phanh	Khamphanh	ຄຳພັນ

Often close friends drop the prefix, and call a person by the last part of the given name, alone. Word parts that are often seen in Lao given names include

thong ທອງ	boun ບຸນ	kham ຄຳ
sy ສີ	pheng ເພັງ	bang ບາງ
say ໃສ	phone ພອນ	bone ບອນ
sone ສອນ	phanh ພັນ	my ໄມ
souk ສຸກ	phoun ພູນ	ma ມາ
dang ດັງ	phouang ພວງ	manh ຫມັ້ນ
vong ວົງ		

Non-verbal Communication

Lilly Cheng (1987), in her book about the assessment of special education needs among Asian children, lists several typical characteristics of Asian children, and how American teachers sometimes form erroneous conclusions, based on their differing cultural backgrounds. For example, teachers may report that a child is submissive or passive when actually he or she is simply quiet and does not talk back. A teacher may view a child's tendency to speak only when asked a question as a sign of disinterest. Children who don't make a choice, or who do not look at the teacher, especially when being corrected, as defiant. Those who wait for the teacher's explicit directions, do not volunteer information or ask questions may be seen as indecisive, lacking in initiative, or overly dependent on others. Children who observe others rather than participating, or who is alone, as shy, inhibited, or having difficulty in establishing friendships. If a child observes and imitates, or pursues conformity rather than non-conformity, may be seen as lacking in creativity. A child who does not confront peers directly, or who asks a mediator to approach the teacher on his or her behalf may be considered afraid, devious, or unwilling to seek help. These examples, and many others, point out the value of being able to switch from one's own cultural frame of reference to another's before reaching conclusions or passing value judgements on a person's behavior.

The Logical Language of the Lao

The Lao language is replete with "classifiers", types of words which group specific ideas into more general terms. For instance, a teacher will say, "I have students ten people", or "I have pencils two things". There are separate classifications for people, animals, books, packages, and guns, which is easily understood...But the logic itself is sometimes too tortuous to follow. And yet, in spite of the "classifiers", the logic shines through.

To give birth in the Lao language is "awk luke", literally, "out comes child". How could this event be more fittingly described? Instead of saying "trucks consume a great deal of gasoline", there is a logic as well as charm in saying literally, "big vehicles drink greasy liquid much much". If you wish to use the verb meaning "go", you don't bother with "go, goes, went, would go, has gone, had gone, would have gone, will go, should go", etc. You use the one word "pie"—"go", for everything and everybody in the present tense, place "die" in front of it to express past tense or "see" in front of it to express future tense. The same holds for all other verbs.

The logic at the basis of the language reveals much about the people and their customs. The literal translation into English not only reveals that logic, a candid appraisal which sees and describes life as it is, but often results in images of great beauty...images such as "young man who sleeps alone", for "bachelor", or "father of the rice fields" for the prosaic word "farmer", or the "frog that eats the moon" for "lunar eclipse".

A written invitation is a "please card". And if it's formal, you're requested to "dress up big". A sailboat is a "boat (like a) leaf in the wind". The Lao equivalent of "excuse me" is "punish me", a more contrite and thus more sincere expression. A servant is a "use person". Lard is "greasy liquid of the pig". Gasoline is "greasy liquid for the car". A good standard of living is "live well, eat well". Physical exercise is "effort of the body", willpower is "effort of the heart". Honey is "water of the bee". Milk is "water of the breast". Tears are "water of the eyes". A fountain is "mountain of water". A well is "constructed water".

The term "King Cotton" was used until fairly recently to describe the importance of an agricultural product and its effect upon the life of man in the American South. But cotton was a very weak monarch indeed compared to "King Rice". The importance of this monarch is not revealed except through the language itself.

If you wish to ask a person what he would like to eat, you ask, "What would you like to eat with your rice?" Breakfast is to "eat rice in the morning"; lunch is to "eat rice at noon"; dinner is "eat rice in the evening". The dining room is the "room in which to eat rice". And to go on a picnic is "to go eat rice in the forest".

Stomach medicine is "medicine to make hurt stomach feel better"; aspirin is "medicine to make hurt head feel better". A battery is "mother of electricity".

In conclusion, typical remarks at a service station might be, literally translated: "Punish me, this car drinks greasy liquid much much. Please fill it up, and also check the water in my mother of electricity. We are on our way to eat rice in the forest. When we come back to town, I must dress up big, for I have received a please card to go eat rice in the evening with my friends. This will be the first time I have seen them since the child went out of his wife."

From: *Legends of the Lao*, by Xay Kaignavongsa and Hugh Fincher.

Chapter 4

Recommended Instructional and Curricular Strategies for Teaching Lao Students

Each language is a working system of communication within its unique social and cultural boundaries. Aspects of human life in a particular society are reflected in its particular language. There is no easy human language as there is no simple human society. The interaction between language and society is complicated when a language has to be considered in relation to another totally new and different society. Such is the case for Lao refugees who have fled for safety to the United States.

Lao refugees are undergoing rapid changes in their lifestyles, social and economic development, and educational status. Coming from very different backgrounds—village farmer, Buddhist monk, former soldier or pilot, U.S. programs officials, government officials, members of royalty, doctors, teachers, merchants—Lao now in America find themselves regarded by others as coming from one kind of life. Their successful adjustment to life in the United States depends on many factors —how old they are, whether they can read and write Lao, whether or not they had ever worked for wages, what kind of experiences they had during the "secret war of Laos" and as refugees, whether or not they were resettled into communities with effective English language training programs and favorable employment prospects, the resources and regulations in effect during the year of their entry, and so on. In addition to facing and overcoming obstacles to success in America, many still worry about family members still in the camps and in Laos.

Despite all these pressures, the majority of their effort has been towards obtaining the English speaking and literacy skills necessary to survive in this society. Amongst the children and teen-aged Lao students,

Lao literacy is not being developed. Efforts to encourage Lao language development, both communicative and literacy skills, should be taken by both the Lao communities and the American school systems to ensure that not only do limited English speaking students receive equality of educational opportunity, but that they do not suffer from the effects of subtractive bilingualism (interruption in the acquisition and development of the first language and insufficient acquisition of the second language).

For Lao adult and teen-aged students, those who are literate in Lao will be able to more easily transfer these reading and writing skills to English. Even though Lao is written with a script very different from English, it is not difficult for Lao-literate students to learn a new symbol-sound code (Thonis, 1981). Those young children who are literate in their own language have proven that they have the requisite visual, auditory, and sensorimotor skills, as well as oral language conceptual

Table 7

PERCENT OF *LEP* LAO STUDENTS
IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS, 1981 TO 1989

CENSUS	*LEP*	*TOTAL*	*Percent LEP*
Spring 1981	5,585	6,046	92%
Spring 1982	7,128	7,867	91%
Spring 1983	7,737	8,771	88%
Spring 1984	8,748	10,213	86%
Spring 1985	8,869	10,500	84%
Spring 1986	8,959	11,289	79%
Spring 1987	10,283	13,185	78%
Spring 1988	11,452	14,946	77%
Spring 1989	12,016	15,914	76%

TPRC-BEO, October 1988, Van LE. Data summary from DATA/BICAL Report, California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, 1981-89. Updated with 1989 figures.

development necessary to learn any language. This means the student has at least minimum skills and abilities, and thus should be able to progress educationally even when taught in a second language.

Another positive effect of native language literacy is that it encourages a sense of pride in the student for having the ability to read and write in his or her own language. It also implies that the student has a positive sense of his or her own identity, is well adjusted to his ethnic group, and reflects acceptance and knowledge of his culture. Native language literacy ensures an educated group of fully bilingual-bicultural persons who can be leaders in the fields of education, politics, economics, medicine, and so on. They will doubtless be leaders of their ethnic groups as well as needed liaisons between their communities and the greater society.

Prior to 1975, Lao literacy development was in its beginning stage. Part of the reason for this is the nature of education in the French originated school system in Laos; work on secondary materials in Lao received more attention after 1975. As in Vietnam and Cambodia, students learned French in order to use French science, history, math, and other textbooks. During the past decade, with growing numbers of Lao refugees resettling in the United States, opportunities for research in this field have opened up. However, there is still very little general awareness of how to teach students to read Lao, nor materials with which to instruct students. In comparison to Vietnamese, Khmer, and Hmong, Lao falls far behind in both the number of people working on materials and methods and in the number of materials available.

Acquiring Two Languages

Students should be exposed to both Lao and English so that they can become proficient in both languages. School personnel and practices should create an emotional climate that allows students to maintain and develop their primary language skills.

By the age of five or six, all children, except those who are severely retarded, deaf or aphasic, acquire basic interpersonal communicative

skills in Lao, spoken in the home and community. However, unless taught in a planned program, students will not proceed to cognitive or academic language proficiency in Lao (cognitive or academic language skills are those associated with literacy and school achievement). The home, the school, and the community are all appropriate settings for such development of primary language skills.

Parents and older siblings can be encouraged and taught to work with preschool and school aged-children in a variety of activities. Teachers in American classrooms often tell language minority parents to speak English more at home. Unfortunately, such a practice is often not possible or even desirable. Speaking torturous or broken English may severely limit the quantity and quality of verbal interaction between parents and children. Rather, teachers can encourage parents to verbalize with children in their strongest language in ways that build underlying cognitive skills. For example, many parents, especially those who have never been to school, are not familiar with the ritual that goes on in many homes: sitting with a child and looking at a book; pointing to pictures and asking questions; reading a few lines, and letting the child fill in the rest; letting the child retell a familiar story. These kinds of activities can take place in any language. Too often, the most frequent kind of verbalization consists of commands or instructions: *close the door, watch your sister, time to eat.* Children are exposed to more advanced vocabulary, structure, and logic when listening to their elders discuss something, or when observing traditional rituals in the home, temple, or community. Literate parents not only have more reading materials available in the home, but they teach their children in important pre-reading skills (Wells, 1988), and may even teach Lao literacy to their children. While parents do not necessarily have to speak more English at home, they can *expect* their children to learn both Lao and English well.

The school is often not directly involved in Lao community activities, but school personnel can advise and influence community leaders in the awareness of what is important to successful school achievement, the advantages of proficiency in the home language as well as the majority language, the skills and attitudes that teachers take for granted. Schools can assist communities with the organization and implementation of literacy or cultural classes, production of a community newsletter in Lao,

bringing community members into the school setting to share information with non-Lao, and cooperation with community groups who promote skills in Lao language and culture.

As more and more children are American born, and as the second, bilingual or bridge, generation has children, students may have been exposed to English from the beginning at home. Schools can make students and parents aware of the benefits of bilingual proficiency, and encourage children to learn the home language of their parents through auxiliary classes. While this kind of parent education is essential for parents who have never been to school, it is also important for educated parents, who have had experiences similar to the ones their children now face: learning concepts in a second language. They may expect their children to follow their own example, and never consider that there are important reasons for encouraging children to become fully proficient in two languages. The key role that school personnel plays is to avoid making English proficiency the only means of gaining prestige; finding ways to enhance the prestige of Lao in the majority community will encourage children to learn and use Lao.

Promoting bilingualism and biliteracy

Research on students of many language backgrounds strongly supports an affirmative effort by the school to cultivate each student's potential bilinguality. This approach will have rewards not only for Lao skill levels but also for English skills levels and academic achievement .

Willig (1985) has conducted a "meta-analysis" of several bilingual programs in the country, and compared the students in many ways—backgrounds, literacy in the home, prior schooling, socioeconomic status, and so on. She found that well-matched students in comparison bilingual programs performed at least as well as the control students on criterion testing, no matter which language was used for testing. Her study suggests that evaluations of results of the effectiveness of bilingual programs is highly dependent on the way in which the groups of students are compared. At the very least, students in good bilingual programs (in which students are taught in their own language before English reading is

introduced) performed no worse than "ordinary" students, and had the bonus of knowing their own native languages well.

Implications for Educators:

Mory Ouk, a Cambodian educator, has made these suggestions for American teachers; they apply equally well to Lao students.

Spell new English words both vocally and visually to help students understand the pronunciation, tie the word to the concept, and fix the word in memory.

Dictate sentences and paragraphs aloud for students to write. This helps students check their knowledge of English vocabulary, to find weaknesses in the form of their written English, and improves their skills in listening and comprehending.

Group students with native English speakers. This is very important for acquiring English as a natural process. The kinds of structure that children use, the type of feedback, and the motivation that peers provide cannot be replaced by other strategies. Teachers can help shy Lao students by initiating a buddy system, arranging seating groups in the classroom, and providing opportunities for team work and cooperative learning.

Being understood is the greatest single aid to learning English. Even though the student speaks broken English, when the teacher understands what the student means to say, the anxiety barriers are lowered.

Films and videos are very difficult for limited-English speakers. Often the sound is poor, the people speak rapidly, the vocabulary and concepts may be unfamiliar, and there are few extra-verbal cues to aid understanding. The teacher should outline what is to be seen, so the students have a frame of reference. Taking notes is almost impossible

Likewise, taking notes during a class lecture is very difficult. In addition to comprehending what the teacher says, a student has to be able to summarize it, then write down the key parts as notes. Even those who were in secondary schools in Laos, taking notes in French, will find it difficult. Students without prior schooling have not even learned the concept of "taking notes". The teacher can help this process by providing students with a simple written outline of the lesson, or by writing the key parts on the board.

The best teachers for newcomer children are those who are patient, and show with non-verbal cues that they are compassionate. Once the children know that the teacher understands their difficulties, they will gain confidence in trying to communicate, and in persevering to tackle difficult tasks.

At the same time, the teacher should expect children to conform to the behavior limits in the classroom. The teacher should make an effort to ensure the student understands the rules and consequences, then apply the consequences whenever the limits are exceeded.

Using programs in seven California districts, Krashen and Biber (1988) found that students in bilingual programs equal or better the

performance of matched students on standardized tests that use academic language. Their findings supported earlier estimates that it takes five to seven years to develop the language skills necessary for academic learning and abstract reasoning, but only about two years to become conversationally adept.

Students who spend time becoming bilingual and biliterate, then, are investing in their futures. The problem is that any given teacher cannot see the whole process, which takes up to seven years. After the entire process, the students are not any less skillful in English, but they have the added power of skill in a language other than English. This ability will enable them to respond to opportunities in the increasingly multinational business community that are not open to monolinguals. Proficient bilingual and biliterate students have other advantages over less proficient language minority students and even over monolingual students (Cummins, 1981; *Evaluation of California's Education Services*, 1981). In particular, adults who learned to manipulate the rules of two languages as children outperform monolinguals in cognitive flexibility, divergent thinking, and analyzing complex situations for underlying structures.

California school personnel who wish to provide Lao language development to Lao-speaking students faces several obstacles related to the relative scarcity of a written materials and the interim lack of trained teachers. Even in Laos there were scarcely any school materials in Lao; most texts were borrowed from French schools. Although Vietnamese and Khmer materials are appearing in greater numbers every year in the United States, this is not the case for Lao materials; there aren't many to reprint. Until there are sufficient materials for teaching Lao literacy in the school (see Chapter 2 for Lao literacy materials), the schools must depend on the skills of persons who can teach Lao literacy without published materials. Until there are sufficient credentialled Lao teachers, the school can look to the home, pagoda (*vat*), church, and community for literate adults (many of whom have had experience teaching in Laos) who can team with credentialled teachers to provide Lao literacy to students.

Schools can also promote the community efforts to teach Lao literacy by making available school sites for after-school classes. Parent

education programs in schools can share the parenting techniques that literate parents use with their young children to promote the attitudes and the prerequisite skills necessary for literacy. School personnel can help parents understand the effects of parental expectations, and encourage them to expect children to be bilingual and biliterate. Above all, the public school educators can create an atmosphere in which being bilingual and biliterate is admired and respected, and one in which both languages are regularly used.

Implications for Educators:

Today's high school students know the name of every outstanding athlete in the school, and school programs work to encourage and develop artistic and musical skills in talented students. Knowledge of another language is but another special skill that some students bring with them to school, but peers are seldom aware of which students are bilingual and biliterate. When the day arrives that it is *fashionable* to know other languages, then such students will continue to develop their skills to a degree inconceivable today. Imagine scouts searching out the best Lao bilingual students, and competing to offer lucrative full scholarships for prestigious universities—based on linguistic skills rather than pass completions!

Readiness for Reading and Writing Lao

Five skills are necessary before reading and writing in Lao can begin. The first two prerequisites for learning to read and write Lao are the same visual skills and sensorimotor coordination that English-speaking children need to begin reading. These are non-language-specific skills, but they are learned through the use of language, such as naming basic shapes, comparing same and different, and counting in order.

The next two required skills are a command of spoken Lao and a knowledge of concepts by which the student can begin to understand and analyze meanings in the written language. Oral language development in Lao can build both these skills at the same time. The fifth requisite for beginning to read and write is motivation.

Visual skills

Visual skills include recognizing basic shapes, sizes, and colors; telling whether patterns are the same or different; naming the items that are missing in a picture; and choosing the picture that is different from the others. Obviously there is a strong cultural component to the nature of the tasks children are asked to perform; they have to be personally familiar with the components of an object or a scene before knowing what is missing. Some children are rehearsed in these skills by parents before entering school; however, such experience should not be assumed, especially when teachers may have the children of both educated and uneducated parents in the same classroom. These skills are necessary before learning to reading in either Lao or English.

The Lao alphabet consists of characters whose significant differences include position, straight and curliqued lines, tiny vertical or horizontal marks, and left-right orientation of identical forms. Just as beginning English readers confuse 'b', 'p', and 'q', or 'i' and 'j', beginning Lao readers have to differentiate ฝ ฟ ฬ and ฬ; ก ก ก and ก.

To read Lao, a student must be able to identify and differentiate symbols which represent phonemes, including tones, as well as positions to which vowels belong; vowels appear in front of, behind, above, or below initial consonants. Indeed, the ability to differentiate and recognize these vowels and vowel combinations and their respective positions is crucial to reading Lao because both words and sentences in the Lao writing system are strung together; that is, there is no space between the words or the sentences in written Lao.

Sensorimotor skills

The motor control skills and eye-hand coordination skills necessary to begin writing are called sensorimotor skills. A sequence of activities usually leads from the gross-motor level to the fine-motor level and from the three-dimensional space around the body to the two-dimensional area of the page. First, isolated motions are mastered, such as jumping, throwing, catching, and clapping. Second, sustained sequences of actions

related to a whole task are required; for example, acting out all the body motions that accompany a song or cutting and pasting pieces of paper to make a picture. Finally, the hands and fingers practice the fine skills of handling crayons, paper, and pencil. Prewriting pencil-and-paper practice may include drawing lines through a maze, drawing basic shapes such as circles and triangles, and making Xs or Os on work sheets in response to visual discrimination tasks. Materials that focus on prereading skills for non-native speakers are difficult to find, and native English teachers find it difficult to isolate the specific skills that need to be taught. Material developed for language delayed students often have the sequences well defined and do not assume any prior knowledge of either the concepts or the skills.

Auditory and oral language skills

Students need personal mastery of most of the sounds, syntax, and common vocabulary of spoken Lao before they can begin to read and write. A Lao student must be able to discriminate and produce accurately the distinctive tones of the language; as with the consonant or vowel sounds, parents require more correct pronunciation as the child matures, often joking about the confusions in meaning that results from mispronounced sounds and tones. Traditional learning strategies emphasize the skills required for success in a society that does not rely on the written page for use of their native language, such as auditory memory skills. Students raised in Lao speaking environments will learn these skills through daily exposure to adults who rehearse prerequisite skills in the same way that literate parents rehearse prerequisite visual discrimination and memory skills.

There are different styles of spoken Lao, from ritual texts that contain words and phrases that are not generally understood, to interaction between siblings as they play. There appear to be regional differences in the vocabulary and usage in rituals, and as the rituals are less often performed, the children receive less exposure to these oral language development experiences. At the same time, as Lao from different dialect groups and from different regions come to live with and interact with each other, they begin to understand and accept previously unfamiliar words

and pronunciations, and the differences may be expected gradually to level out.

Implications for Educators:

Teachers and school specialists should not overlook the possibility of untreated ear infection, or residual ear damage from previous untreated ear infections.

Conceptual skills

Conceptual skills include the abilities to organize thoughts in chronological or thematic order, to anticipate consequences, to explain similarities and differences, to classify things, to give simple definitions, and to identify difficult words or phenomena. Development of these skills involves building awareness of surroundings, feelings, people's roles and relations, and many life experiences. As students practice these analytical skills through play, word games, and informal discussions, they prepare themselves for the conceptual demands of reading and writing.

Motivation for reading and writing

Motivation to read and write in Lao at school can be promoted through an environment that is rich in opportunities, reading materials, and encouragement from all teachers and students. The teachers and the principal of the school must communicate clearly the goals of the school

Implications for Educators:

Folk tales and stories from different cultures have different formats and thus differences in the way that "what comes next" is anticipated. The student raised with European style stories is left with a sense of "what happened...?" Preschool, kindergarten, and entry programs should include the basic folk tales, nursery rhymes, and legends in the curriculum.

program to the students' parents. In addition, school personnel should coordinate their efforts with those of the staffs of other Lao literacy classes, so that the programs support each other.

Because so many of the initial reading materials have been developed by Christian missionary groups, it may be that Lao who attend church regularly see more reason to read Lao, and in fact, get more practice in reading. For those Lao who are not Christian (the great majority), the pagodas and the public schools may be the only places in which they have the opportunity to become literate in Lao.

Transfer of literacy skills

There are skills that transfer from literacy in a first language to other subsequent languages. This transfer of skills makes the learning of the second language more efficient. It is only the specific spelling patterns and rules of word order that are language-specific.

The prereading skills do not have to be relearned; they are non–language-specific. Students will understand that a written language is a code, and there are particular rules for decoding (reading) and encoding (writing). They will understand that the written language differs from the spoken language, but that there are conventions to help the reader make the written passage sound as much like oral speech as possible when read aloud (periods, commas, quotation marks, boldface, and so on). Literate students will have strategies for confronting a written page, and for understanding the punctuation and layout of text. They may be familiar with the physical cues that help them analyze the nature of a document (this is a letter, this is a poem, this is dialogue, and so on), even before they can fully comprehend the meaning of the words and sentences.

Literate students will know how to read for meaning in a paragraph, how to organize and classify details, how to form images of what is read. Problem solving strategies for figuring out unknown words can be applied to the second language, such as using context clues, looking just before or just after a new word to find its meaning restated, consulting a dictionary, or describing a problem that needs solving.

Lao differs from English in both structure and content, and its writing system and characters are totally different from the Roman alphabet. However, there skills that do transfer directly from Lao literacy to English literacy. First of all, by learning a system which is as phonemic as Lao is, the child learns the relationship of symbols to sounds in a meaningful way. That is, the symbols represent, consistently, sounds which the child knows well. Second, the Lao writing system is alphabetic, as is English. Also, the sensorimotor skills transfer, in that both systems proceed from left to right and top to bottom on a page. Lao sentences, like those of English, consist of subject, verb, and object; each word has a particular language function, and the function is basically the same in both languages. The construction of sentences and paragraphs is similar, although in Lao there are no spaces between words. Higher thinking skills involved in analyzing the meaning of written material—such as comparison and contrast, understanding metaphors, antonyms, homonyms, intentions of the author, differentiating fact from opinion—all these can be learned in Lao, then transferred to English. Ada (1980) divides reading skills into the four categories of readiness, decoding, comprehension, and critical reading, and shows that "no one learns to read twice."

Literacy Programs in the Lao Community

Learning to read Lao

In Lao orthography the letters have a very consistent correspondence to the sound system, and so, the phonic method is the most effective way for teaching most students. Reading by the phonic method requires knowledge of the letter-sound correspondence and blending skills.

Learning to read with fluency in school in Laos or Thailand depended on practicing or memorizing set texts of material, to be read in front of the class. This may have been a carry-over from learning in Lao schools, or may have been necessary because of the lack of books and paper. Memorization and recitation were supplemented by dictation, and eventually, sight recognition of words occurred. The immediate recognition of words, rather than decoding them in a low voice and listening to the words, is essential for speed, comprehension, and the editing skills required by writing.

In teaching Lao reading in the schools in Laos the teacher employed several methods, including phonic methods similar to those used in teaching English reading, and sight reading, in which whole units are recognized without breaking apart the component sounds. During the initial stage of reading instruction, the Lao teacher used the phonic method. The teacher usually began with the presentation of the symbols of the alphabet in pairs, which always consisted of high frequency consonants and vowels. The child was taught to listen, pronounce, and identify the letters through repetition drills in order to establish the sound-symbol relationship. Then the letters were combined to form a syllable or word. At this point students were actually reading words. The process was strictly controlled—starting from the familiar and moving to the unfamiliar, and from the simple to the complex. Household words or syllables which tend to have high frequency in usage were introduced first. The reading of nonsense syllables, which can help prepare the child for reading unfamiliar words in the future, was not introduced until much later. The letters and syllables introduced during the first lessons were

carefully repeated for some time in follow up lessons to ensure retention. As the program proceeded, these high frequency syllables would be found often in most reading materials used in the schools.

As soon as the child's skills in building syllables or words were well developed, common words within the child's understanding were gradually introduced. Later in the program, at the more advanced stages, the sentence method which emphasized comprehension skills, was introduced. Simple forms of both prose and verse were used in the texts to help the child achieve the desire level of fluency and speed in reading.

Good writing and Lao literature to which the child can relate in a meaningful way can be used to stimulate the child's motivation and interest in reading. Many volumes of traditional Lao literature can be found in research libraries in the United States, and passages of prose and poetry could be excerpted form them. Competent Lao staff is necessary to implement the program.

Lao reading texts for basic reading and for grades 1 through 6, which were used by the Ministry of Education in Laos, have been reprinted and can be obtained in this country as resources for classroom teaching. Only one primer and graded series has been produced in this country (Luangpraseut, 1984, 1989). This series uses a modified roman alphabet as a bridge for those who learn English reading first, and the texts are devoted to learning about other peoples, and encouraging higher order thinking skills.

Catholic University of America Press (Washington DC).
Lao-English Dictionary (Kerr, 1972)
Foreign Service Institute (Washington DC).
Reading Lao: A Programmed Introduction (1974)
Pragmatics International (Ministry of Education, Laos)
Primer
Grade 1 reader
Grade 2 reader
Grade 3 reader
The American Council for Learned Societies
Spoken Lao , Volume 1 (1956)
Spoken Lao, Volume 2 (1956)

Modern English-Lao, Lao-English Dictionary, Soukbandith(1983)
English-Lao, Lao-English Dictionary (Russell, 1977).
Luangpraseut, Khamchong. (Multifunctional Support Service Center, San Diego State University).
Dara Reads Lao I
Dara Reads Lao II
Dara Reads Lao III
Dara Reads Lao IV

Learning to write Lao

Usually American teachers present the manuscript form first, because it is believed that this method is more suitable for young hands and fingers. Manuscript writing requires fewer hand or eye movements. The Lao primer was probably used with a variety of learners, from young children to adults, and since books were few, as much as possible was contained on each page.

The physical skills necessary for anyone to begin writing are: 1) establishing the dominant hand; 2) learning to manipulate the pencil or pen; 3) establishing left-to-right direction; and 4) learning to position the body, hand, and paper. Initial exercises usually include practice in making basic strokes and shapes (large and small circles, vertical lines, diagonal lines, and regular spaces). Instruction in writing is begun by having students learn to write letters of the alphabet, by copying from models.

For cursive writing, learners need to have sufficient small muscle control and coordination to enable them to make the retracing, joining, and flourishes that are part of cursive writing. The essential differences between the two forms of writing are the joining of letters and the lifting of the pencil at the ends of words rather than the ends of strokes.

Basic writing was taught concurrently with reading in the Lao education system. As soon as the reading objectives for each lesson were achieved, writing was introduced immediately. In this prewriting stage, the child spent most of his learning time on tracing and copying the letters previously learned in the reading lesson.

The child studied penmanship form the first grade through the sixth grade. Spelling was also an integral part of the writing skills taught in Laos. However, the task was not terribly complicated because the Lao writing system is basically phonemic and is an alphabetical system. Dictation was a widely adopted technique in teaching spelling in Laos. Composition was taught to help the child organize his ideas and express himself clearly and coherently in a written form.

Traditionally, composition activities for students followed the "copy the form" method of learning, in which students copy or encode dictated texts verbatim at first, then vary the texts according to personal style. In the lower grades, the compositions were usually in free narrative form. Poetry styles and other forms of prose writing were taught in the higher grades. Higher skills, such as taking notes during lectures would have been learned in secondary school, and would have been in French.

Learning to write Lao seems to be somewhat more difficult than learning to read, especially for Lao adults and elders. This may be due to the complete lack of scholarly and literary activities in the traditional village life for some of the Lao people. Even holding a pencil or pen is a new skill for many Lao elders. Some older people find learning to write their name, a necessary skill for life in the United States, as much as they are willing to master. However, with continued practice of motor skills, use of pens, pencils, and paper, Lao children and adults can learn to write Lao texts.

Among the younger groups of Lao, there are those who may like to use their literacy skills to write creatively. Like all aspiring authors, they need a forum through which they can publish their works. Interested school or community people could assist the Lao to find funds, volunteers, and personnel to produce journals, books, articles, or provide access to the computers and software necessary for desktop publishing in the Lao language. This endeavor would provide two benefits, one being a way to encourage persons to write in Lao, and the other being the provision to the Lao and the greater community of much-needed Lao written resources. An additional benefit is the involvement of community elders in meaningful school-home pursuits, the preservation of what they know.

Acquisition and Literacy Programs in the Schools

Learning to speak a second language involves acquiring the language in much the same way as all children acquire their native tongues: first comes listening, then understanding what is heard, and finally producing thoughts so others can hear. We acquire language *by understanding what we hear* (Krashen, 1982, 1985a). To speak better English, a person has to hear more and understand more. Fine-tuning the spoken language comes through having someone rephrase and repeat what has just been said, as parents do for children, and learning through more formal methods the "right" way to speak. For second language learners, the school often replaces the parent in the rephrasing role, as well as teaching the formal rules of the language. However, the formal rule learning is not a substitute for being understood and gently corrected.

Language learners who have already acquired a second language (for instance, French-speaking Lao or Lao-speaking Hmong) have been exposed to the strategies that are important for success—listening and analyzing sounds and structures, using "telegraphic" speech (*"you go where?"*) in an effort to communicate as soon as possible, imitating the patterns and intonation of speech units, searching out empathic listeners, repeating over and over when misunderstood, and taking risks.

Krashen and Biber (1988) identify three elements in effective programs for limited-English students:

1) high quality instruction of subject matter in the native language, without translation;
2) development of literacy in the native language;
3) comprehensible input in English.

Language Programs in the Schools

In California, most language minority students enter one of four types of classroom situations: 1) *grammar-based English as a Second Language* (taught as high school foreign languages are taught, with emphasis on

translation, phonology, and rules); 2) *submersion* (taught as if every one is a native speaker of English); 3) *communicative-based ESL* (with emphasis on language use and language functions, the "natural approach"); or 4) *sheltered-English* (in which the subject matter is taught in English, with modified materials and special techniques that enhance comprehension). The research suggests that communicative-based ESL and sheltered English instruction best promote the acquisition of English, and the other two methods are less effective (Krashen, 1981; Terrell, 1981).

Depending on the age of the student entering the American schools, and the school environment, appropriate program design will differ. The basic guideline to remember is that language acquisition takes place when the input is made comprehensible in some way (whether by using pictures, hand signals, "motherese", modified materials, bilingual aides, or peer tutors). Young children who enter school at kindergarten find an environment that provides plenty of comprehensible input; kindergarten teachers use short phrases, demonstrations, repetition, and instructions to perform physical activities. On the other hand, high school teachers use English that has fewer apparent clues as to meaning, and students cannot watch and mimic peers as kindergartners do.

Grammar-based ESL classes are usually offer one of two approaches: grammar-translation (inductive), or audiolingual or cognitive code (deductive) methods. Either of these approaches leads to the development of a language monitor (Krashen, 1981). The monitor assists learners of English in producing carefully constructed and grammatically accurate utterances. Before the monitor can be effectively used, the task at hand must be focused on language forms in some way (for example, a grammar test); the students must have already learned the grammar rule; they must recognize the appropriateness of the situation for the rule; and they need sufficient time to retrieve the rule, adapt it to the situation, and use it correctly in producing an utterance. Seldom does the normal speech situation allow for these conditions. The monitor can actually inhibit the output of language.

In submersion environments language minority students are placed with native English speaking peers and a native English teacher who teaches as though there are only native English speakers in the room.

Submersion environments are less effective than grammar-based ESL classes, because during submersion lessons, the students do not comprehend much of what is said. Krashen (1981) states that the critical elements of "comprehensible input" are 1) what the student can already comprehend, and 2) the additional input that is made comprehensible by a variety of techniques. In submersion classes, there is too much input that is too far removed from the level of comprehension of the student. Cummins (1981) and Krashen (1981) have conducted research that shows that in submersion environments, neither the ability to communicate socially nor the cognitive/academic skills are developed.

Language skills in English, both the interpersonal communicative skills and the underlying cognitive/academic language proficiency, are most successfully acquired when students are placed in either communicative-based ESL (the natural approach), or sheltered English classes. After the student develops intermediate language skills, grammar-based ESL or submersion may be appropriate.

The elements in effective programs that help students acquire English simply provide multiple paths to better and earlier understanding of messages. All of the standard methods for helping students learn English are appropriate and effective at some point in their seven year journey to becoming proficient in both the conversational and more abstract uses of the language. The teacher's role is to know which approach is appropriate at any given time for a particular student. Over-reliance on any one approach limits the students' options for understanding more, and thus acquiring more.

An important part of "understanding more" is the background knowledge a student brings to the task. Studies show that more that students know about the content of a message, the more likely they are to understand (Bransford, 1979; Smith, 1982). This is a critical factor when teaching newcomer students who enter American schools without adequate schooling *before* they arrive. In addition to building background knowledge (using the primary language is usually the most effective and efficient method), teachers are faced with the very difficult task of providing remedial background knowledge—all that other students have been learning slowly since kindergarten—as well as current subject matter. Students have to catch up as well as keep up.

Four Instructional Approaches

Literacy—reading and writing a language—is acquired in much the same way as understanding and speaking. People *learn to read by understanding what they read.* In learning to read, a person masters the code, and puts it to use, first in reading, and then in writing. The fastest route to literacy is in the language in which thinking takes place. In learning to read a second language, students have to accomplish the same tasks, but without knowing what the decoded words mean. However, reading is another form of language input, and if comprehensible, should result in increased language acquisition. Research shows that one of the most important factors in learning to read, whatever the linguistic situation, is free reading (Smith, 1982; Krashen, 1984, 1985b; Nagy, Herman and Anderson, 1985). As students understand more and more, they build vocabulary, as well as learn and internalize more complex grammatical constructions. Thus, reading improves both reading and writing skills in all learners, and for second language learners results in further acquisition of language. The key is whether or not students understand what they decode. The challenge for the teachers is to enable second language learners from a variety of language backgrounds to understand what they read.

The appropriate time to introduce reading instruction depends on the goals of the program. If the goal is biliteracy, then reading instruction would begin in Lao, in kindergarten and continue through at least sixth grade. Formal instruction in English reading would begin at about second or third grade, after the basic processes are strongly developed in the primary language, including higher reading skills such as inference and study skills. In transitional bilingual programs, reading instruction is begun in the primary language and is continued until about 4th grade, when a transition is made to reading only in English. In English-only programs, students attain the readiness skills necessary for reading instruction, and begin to read in English. Essential readiness skills would be interpersonal communicative skills and underlying cognitive skills

demonstrated by native English speakers when they begin reading instruction.

There are four basic choices in organizing a reading program in bilingual contexts:

- Begin literacy in Lao, introduce English later, at second or third grade; continue both through sixth grade.
- Simultaneous instruction in both Lao and English.
- Begin literacy in English then teach Lao literacy (immersion programs).
- Literacy instruction in English only.

Lao followed by English

When there are sufficient human and material resources available and the parents support the concept, the first-language reading approach appears to be effective in developing full bilingualism and biliteracy, with fully developed cognitive and academic skills (Cummins, 1981; Krashen and Biber, 1988; Willig, 1985). An effective program introduces reading in the primary language in the first grade and continues it until third grade. Formal English reading instruction begins in third grade, and instruction in both languages is continued to sixth grade (Rosier and Holm, 1980; Cummins, 1981). The effects of reading instruction are cumulative, adding up year after year, and the best results are achieved after a seven year program (Cummins, 1981; Krashen and Biber, 1988).

Lao and English simultaneously

In these programs, students learn to read in Lao and English at the same time. Some studies suggest that there is confusion (like "false cognates") when learning two alphabetic systems at the same time, that is not a problem when learning characters (like Chinese) and letters (like English) at the same time.

The key to an effective program would be the coordination between the lessons and teaching staff of the two reading programs. It would not be necessary to teach twice the underlying skills that are developed by reading instruction (for example, a student learns to alphabetize or

identify the topic of paragraphs only once). If one teacher teaches both languages, it has been shown to be more effective if the instruction periods are clearly separated in terms of time, materials, and environment. Simultaneous literacy instruction does not mean mixing the two languages in the same activity. Rather, it should involve complementing and enhancing the student's literacy development through the use of two languages in separate, efficient, challenging sets of activities.

English followed by Lao (immersion programs)

Immersion programs in French for native English speaking students have been in operation in Canada for more than a decade, and there have been several experimental programs in the U.S. In these programs, all instruction is given in the students' second language (for example, English), including literacy instruction (in the language of immersion, English). At second or third grade, language arts instruction in the primary language (French) is begun. Research has shown that most students in French immersion programs achieve high levels of literacy in both languages (Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1981; Genesee, 1980; *Studies on Immersion Education*, 1984). Even though students were provided with most of their instruction in French, once English language arts were added to the curriculum, the students quickly caught up to their monolingually schooled peers. In fact, the students in the immersion program did as well in English reading as did the students in English-only programs (Genesee, 1980). The students did as well as monolingually schooled peers in grade level tests of academic language, but had gaps in speaking and writing (Pellerin and Hammerly, 1986). In addition, however, the students were proficient in French.

One should note that the immersion programs are especially designed so that native English-speaking students acquire a second language while at the same time experiencing normal academic and English development. These students, in general, attain a level of proficient bilingualism. Implementing such programs in the U.S. should be based on a commitment by educators to promote the LEP students' academic learning as well as comparable proficiency in both English and their native language.

English only

For a variety of reasons—philosophical position, desires of the students and parents, or lack of educational resources—some school districts will continue to provide Lao students with English-only, submersion type reading instruction. Fortunately, most programs offer at least oral ESL instruction; nevertheless, few recognized ESL (initial) literacy curricula are available; and few staff members are trained in this approach. Unfortunately, most of the activities in the ESL program tend to be remedial versions of the same activities used with native English speakers.

Under the best circumstances within the English-only option, formal English reading instruction should be delayed until language minority students have acquired some basic interpersonal communicative skills in English. Once an oral language base in English is established, students will be better able to cope with the more cognitively demanding concepts associated with literacy. Educators should be aware that since Lao literacy is not addressed, a subtractive form of bilingualism will probably be the result for most students.

Clearly, English-only reading instruction is not a recommended option. However, if such an option is used, there are several suggestions for making it the best possible program:

1. Provide students with ample amounts of comprehensible input in English, so that basic communicative skills will be acquired.
2. Build background knowledge in content areas through sheltered English strategies and native language teachers or aides.
3. Group second language students apart from native speakers for part of the oral language and literacy development, where communicative ESL and sheltered English strategies can be employed.
4. Sequence instruction appropriately so that students will not be introduced to the new concepts until they have acquired enough English and background knowledge sufficient for understanding.

5. Analyze English reading materials in order to anticipate where the students may have difficulty with vocabulary, syntax, and cultural content.
6. Provide interested parents with materials and instructions to carry out language tasks at home in Lao. Teachers should encourage parents to focus on activities that better prepare students for the academic requirements of school.
7. Encourage students to build native language literacy skills.
8. Teach students strategies for coping with unfamiliar materials, and study skills for researching unknown concepts, use library resources, and so forth.

In practice, few programs will have biliteracy in Lao and English as their goals; the resources, methodology, and trained teachers are too few to implement such programs, and the parents, who grew up in multilingual societies, place an emphasis on early learning of the language of commerce and development. Biliteracy will produce positive outcomes, and schools can foster Lao literacy by encouraging and assisting the Lao community in efforts to conduct classes in literacy, produce materials to read, and training teachers who are bilingual and biliterate. However, appropriate school instruction must consider the negative effects of limited bilingualism, in which students become semi-proficient in English, and yet are limited in their own language.

In summary, effective reading programs in bilingual contexts require that school personnel correctly match the instructional approach with student needs, community desires, and human and material resources. Regardless of the approach selected, the quality of implementation is the key to producing positive outcomes. In practical terms, for Lao students, acquiring English skills in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing should be combined with, at least, effective re-instruction of key concepts and vocabulary in Lao. This will enhance the development of underlying cognitive/academic skills, as well as promoting the ability to reason and speak in Lao. Practical activities, that are fairly easy to implement with the help of bilingual aides, include:

1. To acquire a language (English or Lao), children must be exposed to it, the input must be comprehensible, and there must be a positive attitude towards acquiring it.
2. To succeed in school, underlying cognitive language skills are necessary, in at least one language.
3. There are ways in which parents can increase their children's chances for academic success, and schools can teach parents these skills.
4. There are ways for schools to incorporate the use of Lao in programs which emphasize English, even though there are currently inadequate/insufficient Lao materials and personnel.
5. Schools can work cooperatively with Lao community groups to plan and implement Lao literacy and culture classes outside of the regular school day.
6. School programs must be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the incoming Lao populations.

Language development, oral and written, in English and/or the native language, forms only one of many components of an appropriate and effective educational program for Lao students. Other components include strong academic content, psychosocial support, staff development, school climate, home-school relations, parent education programs, and vocational/college counseling.

ELEMENTARY:

- Reviewing basal reading vocabulary with a Lao aide.
- Reviewing weekly spelling words with a Lao aide.
- Reviewing vocabulary and key concepts in science and social science with a Lao aide.

SECONDARY:

- Sheltered English courses in the core requirements that use simplified, vocabulary based English materials and re-instruction or review with a Lao aide/teacher.
- Foreign language credit for Lao classes.

As the training and re-certification of bilingual teachers becomes a reality, more options for effective programs will be possible.

Historically, parents and educators have considered the acquisition of interpersonal communication skills the only goal for language minority students. For the students, the best possible program would be one in which the core curriculum is delivered in the language they know best, while learning to use English with native-like proficiency.

> *A strong and consistent research base indicates that properly staffed bilingual education—a combination of native language instruction for academic subjects with intensive English language development—is the most efficient approach for teaching limited English speaking children because it addresses both a child's academic development and language needs.* (California Tomorrow, *1987).*

Full bilingualism, including the ability to read and write both languages, is the ideal goal for students who speak a language other than English at home. For schools, incorporating full instructional services in as many as 150 languages, is beyond the realm of possibility. Somewhere in between lies a program that is well-designed, skillfully implemented, and specific to the language group it serves.

Schools that have Lao children can provide appropriate programs for children by keeping in mind these guidelines:

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420.008. "Laotian Themes (Culture and Educational System of Laos)", 34 pages. (English).
420.016. "Laotian/English Legends". 64 pages.
420.018. "A Brief Outline of the U.S. Constitution of the U.S." 12 pages. (Lao/English).
420.019. "The Bill of Rights." 12 pages. (Lao/English).
420.022. "Two Heroes of the American Revolution—George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette." (Lao/English). 6 pages.
420.023. "Some Men Who Explored America." 44 pages. (Lao/English).
420.027. "U.S. Constitution", 35 pages. (Lao/English).
420.095.. "Lao Culture (Teaching Unit on Culture of Laos)", 67 pages. (English-Lao).
420.096. "Teaching Basic Economic Concepts", 87 pages. (English/Lao).
420.097. "A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens, Grade 7", 30 pages. (English/Lao).
420.098. "Bilingual Bicultural Social Studies, Grades K-2". (Lao).
420.101. "Bilingual Bicultural Science, Grades K-2". (Lao).
420.102. "Bilingual Bicultural Health, Grades K-2", 111 pages. (Lao).
420.104. "English & Lao Language Study," 33 pages. (English/Lao).
420.114. "Teaching English to the Lao, Center for Applied Linguistics General Information Series #19", 56 pages. (English).
420.118. "A Parallel Curriculum for LEP Children, Short Stories & Drama, Grade 9", 91 pages. (Lao/English).
420.119. "Julius Caesar, Grade 10", 13 pages. (Lao/English).
420.120. A Parallel Language Arts/Grammar Curriculum for LEP Children, grades 7-8. 216 pages. (Lao).
420.121. "Bilingual Bicultural Social Studies, Grades 3-4", 200 pages. (Lao).
420.122. "Bilingual Bicultural Science, Grades 3-4", 142 pages. (Lao).
420.123. "Bilingual Bicultural Health, Grades 3-4", 241 pages. (Lao).
420.125. "Bilingual Bicultural Math, Grades 3-4", 272 pages. (Lao).
420.131. "Bilingual Bicultural Social Studies, Grades 5-6", 324 pages. (Lao).
420.132. "Bilingual Bicultural Math, Grades 5-6", 239 pages. (Lao).
420.135. "Bilingual Bicultural Science, Grades 5-6", 208 pages. (Lao).
420.138. "United States History—Handbook for Laotian-speaking [sic] Students", 171 pages. (English/Lao).
420.139. "Senior High Health Supplement", 149 pages. (English/Lao).

Appendix A

Districts Ranked by Enrollment

of Limited-English Proficient Students Who Speak Lao

California law requires that school districts each year conduct a language census. The purpose of the census is to identify students who are considered to be limited-English proficient (LEP). Once identified, state law requires that LEP students be offered bilingual learning opportunities.

In the spring 1989, 15,914 students were reported to speak Lao at home. Of these students, 12,016 or 76% percent, were found to be of limited English proficiency and were classified as LEP. In addition to the 69 districts listed below that enroll 20 or more LEP Lao speaking students, another 135 districts reported between 1 and 19 LEP students who speak Lao.

DISTRICTS RANKED BY ENROLLMENT
OF LEP STUDENTS
WHO SPEAK LAO,
SPRING, 1989

Name of School District	*Rank by # of LEP (Lao students)*	*LEP (Lao) enrollmt Spring 1987*	*LEP (Lao) students as a percentage of state LEP (Lao) stds*
Fresno Unified SD	1	2,389	19.9%
San Diego Unified SD	2	1,709	14.2
Stockton City Unified SD	3	1,034	8.6
Modesto City Elem SD	4	435	3.6
North Sacramento Elem SD	5	321	2.7
Richmond Union High SD	6	320	2.7
Long Beach Unified SD	7	317	2.6
Sacramento City Unified SD	8	313	2.6
Oakland Unified SD	9	300	2.5

Visalia Unified SD	10	288	2.4
Merced City Elem SD	11	244	2.0
Porterville Elem SD	12	210	1.7
San Francisco Unified SD	13	193	1.6
Grant Joint Union High SD	14	169	1.4
Banning Unified SD	15	162	1.3
Modesto City High SD	16	148	1.2
Washington Unified SD	17	130	1.1
Santa Ana Unified SD	18	127	1.1
Los Angeles Unified SD	19	123	1.0
Riverside Unified SD	20	117	1.0
Pomona Unified SD	21	106	0.9
Lodi Unified SD	22	100	0.8
Moreno Valley Unified SD	23	97	0.8
Garden Grove Unified SD	24	87	0.7
Redding Elem SD	25	81	0.7
Chico Unified SD	26	77	0.6
Pittsburg Unified SD	27	76	0.6
Empire Union Elem SD	28	75	0.6
San Juan Unified SD	29	69	0.6
Alum Rock Union SD	30	67	0.6
Santa Rosa Elem SD	31	52	0.5
Eureka City Unified SD	32	67	0.6
Merced Union High SD	33	63	0.5
Fairfield Suisun USD	34	63	0.5
Santa Rosa High SD	35	58	0.5
Lincoln Unified SD	36	57	0.5
Elk Grove Unified SD	37	55	0.5
East Side Union High SD	38	53	0.4
Porterville Union High SD	39	53	0.4
Anaheim Union High SD	40	43	0.4
Anaheim Elem SD	41	42	0.3
Bakersfield City Elem SD	42	41	0.3
Huntington Beach City El. SD	43	37	0.3
Huntington Beach Union H SD	44	37	0.3
Clovis Unified SD	45	36	0.3
Lynwood USD	46	36	0.3
Berkeley Unified SD	47	34	0.3
Weed Union Elem SD	48	33	0.3
Del Paso Heights Elem SD	49	32	0.3
National Elem SD	50	32	0.3
Stanislaus Union Elem SD	51	32	0.3

Eureka City High SD	52	31	0.3
Placentia Unified SD	53	31	0.3
Del Norte Co. USD	54	30	0.2
Escondido Union Elem SD	55	30	0.2
San Bernadino City USD	56	29	0.2
Westminster Elem SD	57	28	0.2
Buckeye Elem SD	58	28	0.2
Shasta Union High SD	59	26	0.2
Bellvue Union Elem SD	60	26	0.2
Sylvan Union Elem SD	61	26	0.2
Ontario Montclair Elem SD	62	24	0.2
Goleta Union Elem SD	63	24	0.2
Franklin McKinley Elem SD	64	24	0.2
Evergreen Elem SD	65	22	0.2
Willows SD	66	20	0.2
Fullerton Elem SD	67	20	0.2
Alvord USD	68	20	0.2
Woodlake Union Elem	69	20	0.2

Source: *DATA BICAL Report No. 89-7J.* Sacramento: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, Spring, 1989.

Appendix B

Educational Resources

Where to Find Resources & Information

Asia Books, 5 Sukhumvit Road Soi 61, Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Asia Library Services, PO Box 867, Auburn, New York 13021-0867. Microfilm copies of Lao periodicals.

Asian Research Service, GPO box 2232, Hong Kong.

The Cellar Bookshop, 18090 Wyoming, Detroit, MI 48221

Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037, 202-429-9292

Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia (CORMOSEA), Association for Asian Studies, 1 Lane Hall, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

Dalley Book Service, 90 Kimball Lane, Christianburg, VA 24073. Laos is their specialty.

DMR Books, Teacher's College #104, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306. Reprints of primers and texts from Laos.

Center for Refugee Ethnology. Division of Graduate & Continuing Studies, Hamline University, 1536 Hewitt Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104. (612) 641-2900.

Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 104 Lane Hall, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 260 Stephens Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International & Area Studies, Box 13A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520

Indochinese Refugees Information Center (IRIC), Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Payathai Road, Bangkok 10500. Phone 251-5199 or 251-1985.

MN Bilingual Publications & ESL/Bilingual Consulting Services. Distributor of the *"CEEDE"* (Center for Educational Experimentation, Development and Evaluation). PO Box 891, El Toro, CA 92630. (714) 951-7329..

National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. RIEM (Refugee & Immigrant Education Materials), 8738 Colesville Rd, Suite 900, Silver Spring, MD 20910. (800) 647-0123.

San Diego City Schools, 4100 Normal Street, San Diego, CA 92103. (*Making a New Life in America,* a social studies program for Indochinese students, K-12, in English, Lao, and other languages).

Southeast Asia: A Scholar's Library (John Randall Books), 47 Moreton Street, London SW1V 2NY, England.

Southeast Asia Community Resource Center. Folsom Cordova Unified School District, 2460 Cordova Lane, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670. (916) 635-6815.

Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 120 Uris Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853

Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project (SARS), Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), 330 Hubert H. Humphrey Ctr, University of Minnesota, 301 19th Avenue S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455

University Film and Video, University of Minnesota, 1313 Fifth Street, S.E., Suite 108, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 1-800-847-8251

Periodicals

Lao Samphanh, monthly newspaper. 1413 Meriday Lane, Santa Ana, CA

92706. (714) 541-4533.

SANGKHOMLAO, monthly magazine. 20395 S.W. Rock Court, Aloha, OR 97006.

Computer Software

Lao. Ecological Linguistics, PO Box 15156, Washington, D.C. 20003. (Macintosh).

Appendix C

Laotian Community Organizations

California Laotian Organizations

From list compiled by the California State Department of Social Services, July 1, 1989

Union of Lao Organizations in America,
Lao Lane Xang Asson of CA, POBox 29799, Oakland, CA 94604, (415) 451-6729.

Lao Iu Mien Cultural Asson, Kouichoy Saechao, 1115 Wood St., Oakland, CA. 94607, (415) 522-7159.

Laotian-American Community of Chico, Inc., 2260 Ceanothus Ave #D, Chico CA 95926.

Lao Family Community, Inc (Chaosarn Srisongfa), 3200 Barrett Ave, Richmond CA 94804, (415) 237-0344.

Lao Mien American Assn., Chaosarn S. Chao, President, 3104 Birmingham Dr., Richmond, CA 94806.

Lao Khmu American Community of the Bay Area, Inc., 66 Marguerite Dr., Richmond, CA 94806, (415) 222-0539.

Lao Family Community Assn of Fresno, Inc., Bouasy (Bruce) Kittinphanh, 1343 E. Barstow St., Fresno, CA 93710, (209) 227-3106.

Lao Ethnic Association, Inc., Paul T. Moua, 3233 Mayfair Boulevard, Fresno, CA 93702, (209) 233-6528.

Lao Family Community, Inc., Anthony TK Vang, 3121 E. Olive Ave., Fresno, CA 93702, (209) 264-4080

Lao/Hmong Family Relief, Nhia Ge Vang, 1234 N. Cedar, Fresno, CA 93703, (209) 252-7821

Lao Student Federation, Bounseum Radspone, 1647 Holland Ave., Clovis, CA 93612.

Lao Freedom Asson, Inc., 4527 East Belmont, Fresno, CA 93702.

Laotian Chamber of Commerce, 2010 N. Fine St., Suite 104, Fresno, CA 93726, (209) 252-7551.

Hmong American Women's Assn., Maly Vang, 2748 N. Weber #113, Fresno, CA 93705, (209) 228-8190.

CA Lao Assn, Pat Medkara, 1908 Beverly Blvd. #200, Los Angeles, CA 90057.

Vipassanaram, 1239 E. 20th St., Long Beach, CA 90806.

Hmong Assn of Long Beach, Ter Fong Yang, 1401 Chestnut Ave, Rm 323, Long Beach, CA 90813. (213) 591-9884.

Lao Christian Service Center, 13455 Hadley, Whittier, CA 90601.

Economic and Employment Development Center for Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese Communities, 1908 Beverly Blvd. #200, Los Angeles, CA 90057, (213) 413-4868.

Lao Assn of Los Angeles, Seng Nguene Malaythong, 1400 W 9th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015, (213) 385-7211.

Lao Buddhist Assn of CA, Thira Souratha, 1096 Queen Anne Place,Los Angeles, CA 90019, (213) 936-2977.

United Laotian Assn, Kongphet Sayabouapheng, 235 W. 12th St., Suite D, Merced, CA, 95340. (209) 384-7333

Lao Family Community, Inc., Houa Vang Xiong, 855 West 15th St., Merced, CA 95340.

Lao Family Community, Inc., 531 N. Fairview, Santa Ana, CA 92703, (714) 541-8236.

Lao Family Community, Inc., Lee Hai, 22700 Allesandro Blvd, Suite F, Moreno Valley, CA 92388, (714) 638-1181.

Mounxon Lao, Inc., 2521 Marigold Place, Ontario, CA 91761.

Saophout Buddhist Assn., Chantha Liemthongsamout, 2026 O'Neill Way, Sacramento, CA 95822. (916) 424-8167

Lao Family Community, Inc., Yia Yang, 5840 Franklin Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95824, (916) 424-0864.

Lao Lan Xang Assn of Sacramento, Boun Nhang, 3050 Bell St., Sacramento, CA 95821, (916) 972-0360

Lao Women Assn., Kham Phet Salycocie, 2551 Ulric St., San Diego, CA 92111, (619) 583-9811/576-9479.

Lao Family Community, Inc., Chue Yang, 6885 Osler St., San Diego, CA 92111.

Lao Mutual Assn, Inc., Thamavonig Darouny, 4244 1/2 Chamoune St., San Diego, CA 92105, (619) 280-2813/235-4282.

Lanexang Student Assn, 6970 Linda Vista Road, Suite 214, San Diego, CA 92111.

Lao American Assn, Bounhong Khommarath, 743 O'Meara St., San Diego, CA 9211.

Lao Buddhist Temple, 724 44th St., San Diego, CA 92102. (619) 263-9191.

Lao America Assn, Boun Loyane, 7110 Hemet Ave., Stockton, CA 95207, (209) 476-9224.

Lao Khmu Assn, Inc., Boonheuang Khoonsrivong, 425 N. California St. #7, Stockton, CA 95202, (209) 463-3410.

Lao Lane Xang Assn, Kham Baccam, 7217 Percival Way, Stockton, CA, (209) 957-1398.

Lao Relationship Assn, 710 Flint Ave., Stockton, CA 95206.

Lao Community Assn, Inc., Khamsing Manithep, 1969 Edgeview Dr., San Jose, CA 95122.

Lao Lane Xang Assn of Santa Clara and San Mateo, George Virasek, POBox 2243, San Jose, CA 95109. (415) 367-9871

Assn of Laotians of Santa Clara, Bounhock Mhoutitham, 1922 The Alameda #100, San Jose, CA 95126. (408) 554-8111.

Lao Lanexang Assn, Khampong Rathanaviday, 2471 Pawnee Street, Santa Rosa, CA 95401.

Lao Lanexang Assn of Modesto, 208 Carmillita Way, Modesto, CA 95354.

Lao Friendship Assn, Phommaly Keomanivong, 1524 Raquel Ln., Modesto, CA 95355, (209) 523-4314.

Lao Lane Xang Assn, Bounthiene Vongsavanh, 209 Carmillita Way, Modesto, CA 95354, (209) 529-6865.

Lao Lang-Xang of CA, 12101 Lambuth Road, Oakdale, CA 95361, (209) 523-6462.

Lao Mai Assn, Khamvang Inthiraj, 217 N. Riverside Dr., Modesto, CA 95353, (209) 576-7583.

Wat Lao Buddharangsy, Soukhan Soukkaseum, 3819 E. Service Rd., Modesto, CA 95307

Central Hmong American, Inc., Her Chang, POBox 552, Porterville, CA 93258, (209) 781-0694.

Lao Family Community of Tulare, Kou Vang, 3140 Stapp Drive, Visalia, CA 93291, (209) 738-3371.

Appendix D

Lao Character Equivalents

There is no one accepted method for writing Lao words in the roman alphabet. Below are several ways that have been devised to represent the sounds of Lao. *IPA* stands for the *International Phonetic Alphabet, Kerr* refers to the information given in the *Lao-English Dictionary* (Kerr, 1972); *Reinhorn* lists information from the *Dictionnaire Laotien-Français* (Reinhorn, 1970); and *Luangpraseut* is the encoding devised for the text series *Dara Reads Lao* (Luangpraseut, 1984). Not shown here are the methods used by Marcus in his Lao-English books or the accepted Library of Congress transliteration.

Lao	*IPA*	*KERR*	*REINHORN*	*LUANGPRASEUT*
ກ	k	k	k	kɔɔ
ຂ	k' or k^h	kh	kh	ǩhɔɔ
ຄ	k' or k^h	kh	k̂h	khɔɔ
ງ	ŋ	ng	ng	ŋɔɔ
ຈ	č	c	c	cɔɔ
ສ	s	s	s	šɔɔ
ຊ	s	s	ŝ	sɔɔ
ຍ	ɲ	ny	ñ	ñɔɔ
ດ	d	d	d	dɔɔ
ຕ	t	t	t	tɔɔ

ຖ	t' or t^h	th	th	ˋthɔɔ
ທ	t' or t^h	th	t̂h	thɔɔ
ນ	n	n	n	nɔɔ
ບ	b	b	b	bɔɔ
ປ	p	p	p	pɔɔ
ຜ	p'	ph	ph	p̌hɔɔ
ຝ	f	f	f	ˋfɔɔ
ພ	p' or p^h	ph	p̂h	phɔɔ
ຟ	f	f	f̂	fɔɔ
ມ	m	m	m	mɔɔ
ຢ	y	y	y	jɔɔ
ຣ	r	r	r	rɔɔ
ລ	l	l	l	lɔɔ
ວ	w	v	v	vɔɔ
ຫ	h	h	h	ȟɔɔ
ອ	-	-	ອ	ʘɔɔ
ຮ	h	h	ĥ	hɔɔ

Double cosonants

ຫງ	ŋ	ng	hng	ŋ̌ɔɔ

ຫຍ	ɲ	ny	hñ	ñɔɔ
ຫນ	n	n	hn	ňɔɔ
ຫມ	m	m	hm	mňɔɔ
ຫລ	l	l	hl	ɭɔɔ
ຫວ	w	v	hv	ňvɔɔ

Vowels

◌ະ	a	a	a	a
◌າ	ā	aː	aa	aa
◌ິ	i	i	i	i
◌ີ	ī	iː	ii	ii
◌ຶ	ɨ	ɨ	ù	y
◌ື	ɨ̄	ɨː	ùù	yy
◌ຸ	u	u	u	u
◌ູ	ū	uː	uu	uu
ເ◌ະ	e	e	e	e
ເ◌	ē	eː	ee	ee
ແ◌ະ	ɛ	ɛ	E	ɛ
ແ◌	ɛ̄	ɛː	EE	ɛɛ
ໂ◌ະ	o	o	o	o

ໂX	ŏ	oː	oo	oo
ເXາະ	ɔ	ɔ	O	ɔ
Xໍ	ɔ̄	ɔː	OO	ɔɔ
ເXິ	ə	ə	ŏ	ə
ເXີ	ə̄	əː	ŏŏ	əə
ເXຶອ	iə	ia	ùa	ya
ເXືອ	īə	iaː	ùùa	yya
Xົວະ	uə	ua	wa	ua
Xົວ	ūə	uaː	wwa	uua
ເXັຽະ	iə	ia	ia	ia
ເXັຽ	īə*	iaː	ie	iia

Special vowels

ໄX	ai	ay	ai	aj
ໃX	ai	ay	ae	aj
ເXົາ	au	ao	ao	aw
Xໍາ	am	am, aːm	àm	am

* the "long" mark over the vowels indicates longer duration.

Appendix E

Holidays and Special Events Celebrated in the Lao Community

Traditional Lao holidays and festivals do not fall on the same date each year. They are determined by the Lao calendar which is different from the Gregorian. It is based on the lunar-solar system. The sun's apparent movement aroung the earth determines the years, while the month coincides with each new lunar cycle.

The time element between each new moon is about 29-1/4 days. To avoid confusion, the ancients decided that ll even-numbered months (the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth) should consist of thirty days and that all remaining months (the odd-numbered ones) should be of twenty-nine days' length. Twelve lunar months such as these only add up to a year of 354 days. Consequently, a series of complicated astronomical calculations were employed to create a supplementary month (twin eighth month) that ensures the year's correspondence with the seasons.

Thus the system of the calendar, a solar one as a whole and a lunar one in its details, required long computations to determine whether the year is to be one of twelve ordinary months or one of the thirteen months which becomes a leap year.

The first month of the year corresponds to December in the Gregorian calendar. However, the Lao New Year begins in the fifth month because astrologers chose to place it under the most favorable auspices. It was thought that a year that begins in the fifth month, April, offers the best prospects for happiness and prosperity.

Both religious and profane holidays are calculated by mathematical formula based on the Lao calendar. Modern holidays are observed on fixed dates. The following are the approximate times for Lao holidays and festivals:

February
Wat Phou Champasack Festival
Mountain Temple Festival

These temple ruins are from the twelfth century. The people from the six southern provinces enjoy five days and nights of cultural, social, and sports activities, along with an exhibition of the year's products. An elephant show and elephant races are the most exciting events. On the last day of the festival, offerings are given to hundreds of monks, and that night, a full moon, people light candles and walk around the temple ruins.

Februay (3rd month, full moon)
Maka Boosa
Buddhist All Saints' Day

On this day most Lao Buddhists remember the greatness of Buddha and his teachings. They prepare delicious food, gather flowers and candles, incense, and money to present to the monks in the monasteries. At night they have a candlelit procession around the temple.

Mid-April (5th month)
Pi Mai
Lao New Year

The New Year may last anywhere from seven days to three weeks. The most important days are Sangkan Pai Day, which is the last day of the old year; Sangkan Nao, which divides the old year from the new year; and Sangkan Kun, when a new year begins. Celebrations include relaxing, eating good food, drinking, visiting friends and relatives, and honoring elders.

May (6th month, full moon)
Visakhabouxa
Day of Birth, Enlightenment, and Death of Buddha

On this day, the Buddhists give alms and offerings to the monks in the monasteries. During the day they listen to the monks, and at night, they have a candlelit procession around the temple.

May (6th month, new moon)

Bamboo Rocket Festival
Labor Day (May 1)

This festival is held for three days on the banks of the Mekong River in Vientiane, and throughout the country. A 150 foot tower is built to launch rockets across the river. Many special events are organized, including Lao boxing, bingo, music, and drama. The high point is the contests involving the best designed bamboo rockets, to see whose rocket can go highest. This festival actually begins the rice planting season, because of the ancient belief that the higher that the rockets go, piercing the clouds, the more rain will come to make the rice grow.

July (8th month, full moon)
Kao Vatsa
Beginning of Buddhist Lent

During this three month period, the monks spend most of their time in the monasteries, studying Buddha's teachings, meditating, and preaching. The monks are not allowed to spend the night outside the monastery, and the people, especially the old, meditate and listen to sermons.

August-September (9th month, half moon)
Hokao Padapdinh
The Ancestor Festival

Lao Buddhists believe that after death the soul will either go to hell or heaven according to the degree of sin, and will reincarnate into certain creatures or unfortunate human beings. Therefore, on this day a husband, wife or relative of a deceased person will give alms and offerings such as food, clothes, shoes, silverware, money, and miscellaneous items to the monks expecting them to pray and invite those human souls to come and eat delicious food, to receive new clothes and other items that their relatives have presented to the monks.

September (10th month, full moon)
Ho Khao Salark
The Ancestor Festival

Ho Khao Salark symbolizes the Buddha's most successful day in converting many disciples. Lao Buddhists prepare food, offerings,

and then give them to the monks in the monasteries to commemorate Buddha's sharing his meal with a large gathering and relieving the suffering people from evils. During the day people go to listen to the monks preach and at night they participate in the candle-light procession around the temple.

October (11th month, full moon)
Aukvatsa
End of Buddhist Lent

After having spent time meditating, studying Buddha's teaching and preaching for three months, the monks are now free to travel and spend nights in other monasteries. On this day, Lao Buddhists prepare food and offerings and present them to the monks. At the same time, they worship and have a ceremony of presenting new robes to the monks. During the day, they listen to the preachings; at night they float miniature ships made of banana leaves, and participate in the candle-light procession around the temple.

October (11th month, new moon)
Pirogue Racing Day

October-November (12th month, full moon)
That Luang Festival

That Luang is a huge stupa which is located in Vientiane. It was built by King Xayasettatirat in the 16th century for installing one of Buddha's teeth brought from India. This stupa is 400 feet tall and its base i 1600 square yards. The celebration is held annually and people from all over the country acknowledge that That Luang is the sacred national shrine. Foreign diplomats are invited to participate and exhibit their national products. The government also encourages various departments and merchants to exhibit and sell their products in a huge fair. On the first day, the important officials and royalty admire the exhibits; on the last day alms are given to the monks and competitions and games are held in the courtyard of the shrine. The festival ends with a candle-light procession and fireworks under the full moon.

November (12th month, before the full moon)
Wat Ong Teu Festival
Oath Day

The king, prime minister, and high ranking officials gather in front of the huge statue of Buddha at the Ong Teu Temple in Vientiane. They drink sacred water and take an oath of loyalty to the country, the religion, the throne, the constitution, and the people.

November-December (1st month, full moon)
Wat Inpeng Festival

This festival is similar to the That Luang Festival, but this shrine is located in Savannaket province in central Laos.

Other national events include political observances, such as Constitution Day and Independence Day, and commemoration of heroes. Minority groups living in Laos observed other days that were not generally celebrated by the lowland Lao, such as the Hmong New Year (November-December) and Mien New Year (coinciding with Chinese New Year in January or February).

Events within the family that are important include weddings and funerals. Animist (well-being) and ancestor worship rituals were also frequent among the groups who followed these beliefs, and occurred at various times.

Baci Ceremony

The *su-kwan* ceremony, or *baci,* in more formal language, is the core of every popular celebration. *Su* means to 'invite' and *kwan* the 'Soul'. This is how a *su-kwan* ceremony is held in its simple form. After a tower made from the banana leaves and decorated with hundreds of flowers has been prepared, it will be put on a mat just in the middle of the living room. Usually, the tower stands on a silver tray and is supported by a traditional bamboo table which is round and low. There is a candle on the top of the tower. Hundreds of white yarns symbolizing the traditional sacred thread are placed around the tower, between the flowers, and through the small bamboo sticks. The host and guests will be sitting on the floor forming a circle around the table. Between the table and the

sitting people, there is food, mostly a chicken cooked with its head and feet, a few boiled eggs, candies and cakes, and a bottle of rice wine with a small glass.

When the time comes to start the ceremony, the host will ask the most senior member of the community to lead the celebration. After accepting the mission, the senior person will join his two hands and press them against his chest. His gesture is immediately followed by all the rest of the people surrounding the tower. He then will begin to chant a few magical formulas which may last from a few minutes to one whole hour depending on the occasion. The man is actually inviting the mobile souls to return to their residences. According to the popular belief, there are thirty-two of such mobile souls presiding over the human body. Each soul has its own residence, thus, there are thirty-two residential organs. The King soul is believed to "live" in our head (this is the main reason why some Southeast Asians do not wish their head to be touched or even pointed at by another person). Anyway, after each spelled formula, a yarn will be taken off the bamboo stick and placed around the wrist of a chosen person. The yarn will end with a tied knot to symbolize an effective return of the absent soul. According to tradition, the person who receives such a yarn or yarns should keep them on for at least three consecutive days.

Su-kwan is so popular in Laos that there is a special *su-kwan* for almost every imaginable occasion. But mostly, a *su-kwan* or a *baci* is held for the following reasons: the birth of a child, the child's entry to the Buddhist priesthood, the wedding, the death of a person, a recovery from a serious sickness, the departure for a long trip, a return home from a long journey abroad, a welcoming gesture for honorable guests, a reunion with good friends, etcetera.

Su-kwan is also the most social event in Lao cultural life. In a country where people do not shake hands to say "Hello" and where boys and girls do not embrace each other in public, the *su-kwan* ceremony presents an excellent occasion to express feelings of concern, friendship, and respect. The person receiving the yarn is supposed to extend one hand towards the blessing wisher, while the other hand must be kept with straight fingers at the level of one's face. There are two positions for the extended hand. First it remains empty and must have the palm turning towards the ground. This is the time when the wisher commands the "bad elements" inside the body to get out, and then the palm is turned back to face the sky. This is the moment when friends and relatives will put food, fruits, and an egg in the hand while wishing the person all the best. Finally, it is the wishtaker's turn to become the wisher and the same patterns will be repeated over and over again.

Appendix F

Glossary

additive bilingualism— A process by which individuals develop proficiency in a second language subsequent to or simultaneously with the development of proficiency in the primary language.

affective filter— The screening effects of personality, motivation, and other feelings on the reception or expression of a second language. The filter is high when when the learner is tense, uncomfortable, or defensive, but low when the learner is comfortable and receptive. A high filter diminishes the amount of comprehensible input.

American Cultural Orientation course (CO)— A course offered in Phanat Nikhom refugee camp in Thailand (and elsewhere) for refugees accepted for resettlement in the United States, designed to develop basic survival skills. Classes are taught by indigenous staff, supervised by American teachers.

basic interpersonal communicative skills— Second language skills that are equivalent to the ordinary conversational fluency of native speakers. These skills are normally acquired in the home or community, and are necessary but not sufficient grounds for academic success.

bilingual education program— An organized curriculum the includes (Hmong) language development, English language learning, and school subject learning through both Hmong and English. Adds the goal of bilingualism/biliteracy to the other school goals.

bilingualism— Fluency in two languages; literally, *two tongues*. To emphasize fluency in reading and writing a language as well as understanding and speaking the language, the additional term *biliteracy* is often used.

classifier— see *noun classifiers*.—

cognitive/academic language proficiency— Language skills associated with literacy and academic achievement. Includes greater vocabulary, more complicated syntax, and a higher level of abstraction than does "basic interpersonal communicative skills".

collège—Generally equivalent to junior high school; the phase of French-based education in Laos that comes after the first six grades and before *lycée*. In Laos, finishing *collége* was qualification for many jobs, including government worker and primary teacher.

communicative-based English as a Second Language— One approach to teaching English as a second language; student progress is measured by ability to communicate messages in English; the focus is on language function and not on formal grammar; the "natural approach" is one such approach.

comprehensible input— Language that enters the learner's brain (listening or reading) which is largely comprehensible; the teacher provides an environment, materials, and strategies that increase the comprehensibility of the language. Examples include using realia, photographs, gestures, etc. Krashen holds that language acquisition takes place when there's comprehensible input.

elaborate expressions— A construction common to the languages of Southeast Asia, which function as nouns, adjectives, etc. Generally, they contain four words, in two pairs, that are related to one another by sound and/or meaning. If English had such expressions, they might be: *garbage in garbage out, raining cats raining dogs.* Also called *paired words, 4-syllable expressions.*

grammar-based English as a Second Language— One approach to teaching English as a Second Language which is based on teaching the grammar of the language; student progress is measured by how well they form grammatically correct language output (speaking or writing). Examples of this approach are the grammar-translation method, the audiolingual method, and the cognitive code.

Fa Ngum— Secondary education that was redesigned, and which was to include subjects taught in Lao rather than French; modeled after the American high school system; barely began before the fall of the country.

final particles— A linguistic feature of many Asian languages which help convey the emotional tone and function of the utterance that comes before. English sometimes uses final particles in informal situations: "You're sleepy, eh?"

highland tribes— Any of several distinct ethnic groups living principally in the higher elevations in Laos, and including the Khmu, Lahu, Hmong, Iu-Mien, Tai Dam, and several other tribal groups.

highland Lao— A member or members of any of several highland tribes of Laos, including the Khmu, Lahu, Hmong, Iu Mien and others.

Home Language Survey— A form that all parents fill out when enrolling children in California schools, which informs the school of the languages spoken in the home.

immersion program— An organized curriculum in which the students study in a second language, including literacy in the second language and subject area study via the second language; native language development is also part of the program; in addition to the regular school goals, an additional goal is that of proficient bilingualism. English speakers living in French Canada often participate in immersion French programs.

input— in language, this refers to hearing and reading.

Isan— refers to the language also called "Northeastern Thai" in Thailand. It is the same language as Lao, and its speakers, who have settled on both sides of the Mekong River, are now citizens of different nations.

Iu Mien— An alternate name for the Mien. A highland people of Laos; their language, closely related to the Hmong language.

khene— Reed and wind instrument of the Lao; symbol of the Lao.

Khmu— An indigenous people of Laos, living at middle elevations; other transliterations include Kammu, Khamu, Kha Mu.

Lan Xang— Transliteration of the Lao words meaning "million elephants"; name of Laos at its founding in 1353.

Lao— The majority population of Laos; their language, closely related to Thai, the national language of Thailand.

Lao Loum— Laotians who live in the lowlands of Laos, chiefly along rivers and streams, growing "wet rice" or padi; usually ethnic Lao.

Lao Soung— Laotians who live in the highlands; chiefly the Hmong and Iu-Mien minority groups.

Lao Theung— Laotians who live between the Lao Soung on the mountain peaks and the Lao Loum who occupy the lowlands; comprises many minority groups, including speakers of Tai languages other than Lao, speakers of Mon-Khmer languages, and speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages. Many references refer to these groups collectively as *Kha*, which is pejorative.

Laos— A land-locked nation of mainland Southeast Asia, bordered by China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma; the homeland of the Lao, Khmu, Lahu, Tai Dam, Hmong and Iu-Mien, now in the United States as political refugees.

Laotian— Pertaining to the nation of Laos, e.g., the Laotian government, a Laotian citizen.

liquid— A class of consonant sounds, including [l] and [r].

limited bilingualism— A form of subtractive bilingualism; the learner is not an educated native speaker of either the native or the second language; basic interpersonal communicative skills in the two languages, but the cognitive/academic skills in neither.

lowland Lao— Lao, the ethnic identification and language of the majority group of Laos.

lycée— Generally equivalent to high school; the final stage of the French-based educational system in Laos before university. Finishing *lycée* qualified people for most government jobs at high levels.

Meo— Name for the Hmong people used by others in Southeast Asia, considered derogatory by the Hmong.

Miao— Chinese name for the Hmong people, considered derogatory by the Hmong in America.

Mien— A highland people of Laos also called *Iu Mien*; their language, closely related to the Hmong language.

monitor— The "watchdog" of spoken or written language; the process by which a person processes, stores, and retrieves conscious rules of languages.

monosyllabic— In a monosyllabic language, words always or nearly always consist of only one syllable, e.g., Hmong, *qeej, pa, ndao.*

morpheme— The smallest part of a word that has a meaning. The word *potato* has one morpheme; the word *misspelled* has three morphemes: *mis- + spell + -ed.*

morphology— Principles of word-formation.

mutual assistance association (MAA)— This is the term most commonly used to describe membership and service organizations in the United States operated by and providing services for refugees.

nasal— A stop consonant that is pre-nasalized (q.v.) or characterized by airflow through the nose; [m] and [n] are nasal consonants.

noun classifiers— A set of words, in some languages, that are used with nouns and that typically express a semantic class to which the noun belongs, e.g., human, round, long, flat.

numeral classifiers— Same as *noun classifiers*

output— in language, this refers to speaking and writing.

partial bilingualism— Level of proficiency in two languages in which the learner has native-like proficiency (able to comprehend, speak, read and write) in one language but not the other.

Pathet Lao— The communist Lao aligned with the Vietnamese Viet Minh, and later the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong; the enemy, during the Indochina War in Laos. *Pathet Lao* literally translates as *country of Laos.*

Phanat Nikhom— Refugee transit center outside Bangkok, Thailand; refugees approved for resettlement in the U.S. spend up to six months in the transit center, studying English and American culture.

proficient bilingualism— Level of bilingualism in which the learner has native-like proficiency (ability to comprehend, speak, read, and write) in two languages.

Sangha— All of the monastic orders of Theravada Buddhism.

secret war of Laos— The military conflict between forces of the Royal Lao government, supported by the United States government through the CIA, and Communist Pathet Lao and Vietnamese forces backed by North Vietnam, lasting approximately from 1962 to 1973.

sensorimotor— commonly called "eye-hand" coordination.

serial verb construction— The use of two or more verbs, with no conjunction between them, in a single clause. English example: "Let's *go eat.*"

sheltered English classes— One approach to teaching subject matter through a second language (English), in which the language input is made more comprehensible; this approach uses techniques like grouping students with similar English proficiencies, altering the complex reading material to fit the students' level, and teaching the aspects that pertain to second language learners, but not native speakers.

Soulinga-Vongsa— King of Lan Xang from 1637-1694, a time known as a golden age in Laos.

sticky rice— glutinous rice, the type favored by the Lao; eaten with the fingers, dipped into a variety of spicy foods; symbolic of Laotians when compared to other Asians and Indochinese.

stupa— Memorial shrine containing a bone or other sacred object.

submersion classes— Second language learners in regular subject matter classes; the language is "native to native", with few alterations in materials or methods to make the language input more comprehensible.

submersion program— An organized curriculum that is designed for native English speakers (the "regular school program"), but that is often used with second language learners.

subtractive bilingualism— A form of bilingualism in which the acquisition of one language (usually the native language) is interrupted or suppressed; the learner has poor proficiency of the native language, or a complete loss of the native language.

tone, lexical— Distinctive voice pitch associated with a word or morpheme, by which one word may be distinguished from another.

Tai— Language family which includes Lao, Thai, Phuan, Tai Dam, and other languages; member of the Sinitic branch (with Chinese) of the Sino-Tibetan group.

Theravada Buddhism— One form of Buddhism, also called "Little Vehicle Buddhism"; the major religion of five countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Laos, and Sri Lanka.

transitional bilingual education program— An organized curriculum in which the native language (Lao) is used in a systematic way for some period of time after the learner enters school.

vat— Buddhist pagoda, often containing the only school; in Thailand, the word is spelled *wat*.

voiced— pronounced with vocal cord vibration ("voicing"), like English *v, d, m, l,* etc. All vowels are voiced.

voiceless— pronounced without vocal cord vibration, like English *f, t,* etc. People who pronounce Y (or *wye*) and *why* the same have voiced *w* (*wh*) in both; people who pronounce them differently have a voiceless *w* (*wh*) in *why*. Also called "unvoiced".

Yao— Name used by outsiders to refer to the Mien (q.v.).