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Refugee Update

Folsom Cordova Unified School District, 909 Mormon St., Folsom, CA 95630 (916) 635-6815, J. Lewis, Editor

3rd annual

Southeast Asian

Education
Faire

Special Conference

Saturday,
March 7, 1987

Presented by Refugee
Educators' Network, SDE
Bilingual Education Office, and
Folsom Cordova USD.

8:30 am-4:30 pm
Cordova High
\$25 per person

Khamchong Luangpraseut
Moury Ouk
Bruce Bliatout
Bruce Downing
Huynh Te

Call 635-6815 for info.

SILENT LANGUAGE...

"...It isn't just that people "talk" without the use of words, but that there is an entire universe of behavior that is unexplored, unexamined, and very much taken for granted. It functions outside conscious awareness and in juxtaposition to words. Those of us of European heritage live in a "word world" which we think is real, but just because we talk doesn't mean the rest of what we communicate with our behavior is not equally important.

For many years I have been involved with the
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Living
in Two Worlds

Communicating
Across Cultures

(from prior page)

selection and training of Americans working in foreign countries for both government and business. I remain convinced that much of our difficulty with people in other countries stems from the fact that so little is known about cross-cultural communication. Because of this, most of the good will and great efforts of our nation have been wasted in our foreign aid programs. When Americans are sent abroad to deal with foreigners, they should first be carefully selected for their suitability. Then for their own comfort and to insure their effectiveness, they should be taught to speak and read the language of the country, and thoroughly informed about the culture.

Formal training in language, history, government, and customs is only a first step. Of equal importance is an introduction to the non-verbal language of the country. Most Americans are only dimly aware of this "silent language" even though they use it every day. They are not conscious of the elaborate patterning of behavior which prescribes the handling of time, spatial relationships, attitudes towards work, play, and learning. In addition to our verbal language, we are constantly communicating

our real feelings in the language of behavior."

From The Silent Language, by Edward T. Hall, 1959, 1973. Also: Beyond Culture.

Editor's note:

In California, now and into the future, the number and kinds of cultures are becoming more numerous and more diverse. The issues of educating the youngsters of diverse cultures and living in intercultural harmony involve the basic problem of communicating....how to do it, how to teach it.

The problem is not only to be aware of some of the possible varieties of "silent language", but how do we, as educators in the American school system inform newcomers about our own communication system...the hidden rules by which we live and relate to others.

The Southeast Asian Education Conference strives to bring into awareness aspects of language and culture, of the many cultural groups that make up the catch-all "Southeast Asians". The upcoming conference will feature speakers and entertainers from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, each of whom will present (verbally and non-verbally) a piece of intricate puzzle. Order tickets now.

NOW AVAILABLE

from the University Film and Video Library at the University of MN (Kay Cooper, 3300 University Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, 1-800-847-8251):

**Between Two Worlds:
The Hmong Shaman in
America (\$10)**

**House of the Spirit:
Perspectives on
Cambodian Health
Care (42 min, \$12)**

**The Cutting Edge:
Portraits of SE Asian
Adolescents in
Transition (29 min,
\$15).**

THE HMONG WORLD

The first issue of this journal will be published soon. It will contain articles on shamanism, changes in musical tradition, White Hmong kinship terminology, and sung poetry. T. Christopher Thao, the first Hmong lawyer, wrote an article, "Hmong customs on marriage, divorce, and the rights of married women." The first issue is \$6.00, and can be ordered from Yale Southeast Asian Studies, Box 13A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520. Edited by Brenda Johns and David Strecker.

ONE HUNDRED PERCENT AMERICAN

The content of a culture--skills, customs, material objects, and nonmaterial ideas-- comes from a variety of sources. Some aspects of culture appear spontaneously and are developed from within the culture through the process of invention. Much more, however, is borrowed from other cultures through the ususally unconscious process of diffusion. Anthropologist Robert Linton wrote this passage some years ago.

There can be no question about the average American's Americanism or his desire to preserve this precious heritage at all costs. Nevertheless, some insidious foreign ideas have already wormed their way into his civilization without his realizing what was going on. Thus dawn finds the unsuspecting patriot garbed in pajamas, a garment of East Indian origin; and lying in a bed built on a pattern which originated in either Persia or Asia Minor. He is muffled to the ears in un-American materials; cotton, first domesticated in India; linen, domesticated in the Near East; wool from an animal native to Asia Minor;

or silk, whose uses were first discovered by the Chinese. All these substances have been transformed into cloth by a method invented in Southwestern Asia. If the weather is cold enough he may even be sleeping under an eider-down quilt invented in Scandinavia.

On awakening he glances at the clock, a medieval European invention, uses one potent Latin word in abbreviated form, arises in haste, and goes to the bathroom. Here, if he stops to think about it, he must feel himself in the presence of a great American institution; he will have heard stories of both the quality and frequency of foreign plumbing and will know that in no other country does the average man perform his ablutions in the midst of such splendor. But the insidious foreign influence pursues him even here. Glass was invented by the ancient Egyptians, the use of glazed tiles for floors and walls in the Near East, porcelain in China, and the art of enameling on metal by Mediterranean artisans of the Bronze Age. Even his bathtub and toilet are but slightly modified copies of Roman originals. The only purely American contribution to the ensemble is the steam radiator.

In this bathroom the American washes with

soap invented by the ancient Gauls. Next he cleans his teeth, a subversive European practice which did not invade America until the latter part of the eighteenth century. He then shaves, a masochistic rite first developed by the heathen priests of ancient Egypt and Sumer. The process is made less of a penance by the fact that his razor is of steel, and iron-carbon alloy discovered in either India or Turkistan. Lastly, he dries himself on a Turkish towel.

Returning to the bedroom, the unconscious victim of un-American practices removes his clothes from a chair, invented in the Near East, and proceeds to dress. He puts on close-fitting tailored garments whose form derives from the skin clothing of the ancient nomads of the Asiatic steppes and fastens them with buttons whose prototypes appeared in Europe at the close of the Stone Age. This costume is appropriate enough for outdoor exercise in a cold climate, but is quite unsuited to American summers, steam heated houses, and Pullmans. Nevertheless, foreign ideas and habits hold the unfortunate man in thrall even when common sense tells him that the authentically American costume of gee

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string and moccasins would be far more comfortable. He puts on his feet stiff coverings made from hide prepared by a process invented in ancient Egypt and cut to a pattern which can be traced to ancient Greece, and makes sure they are properly polished, also a Greek idea. Lastly, he ties about his neck a strip of bright-colored cloth which is a vestigial survivor of the shoulder shawls worn by seventeenth-century Croats. He gives himself a final appraisal in the mirror, and old Mediterranean invention, and goes downstairs to breakfast.

Here a whole new series of foreign things confront him. His food and drink are placed before him in pottery vessels, the popular name of which--china--is sufficient evidence of their origin. His fork is a medieval Italian invention and his spoon a copy of a Roman original. He will usually begin the meal with coffee, an Abyssinian plant first discovered by the Arabs. The American is quite likely to need it to dispel the morning-after effects of overindulgence in fermented drinks, invented in the Near East; or distilled ones, invented by the alchemists of medieval Europe. Whereas the Arabs took their coffee straight, he will probably sweeten it with sugar, discovered in India, and dilute it with cream, both the domestication of cattle and the technique of milking having originated in Asia Minor.

If our patriot is old-fashioned enough to adhere to the so-called American breakfast, his coffee will be accompanied by an orange, domesticated in the Mediterranean region, a cantaloupe domesticated in Persia, or grapes, domesticated in Asia Minor. He will follow this with a bowl of cereal made from grain domesticated in the Near East and prepared by methods also invented there. From this he will go on to waffles, a Scandinavian invention, with plenty of butter, originally a Near Eastern cosmetic. As a side dish he may have the

egg of a bird domesticated in Southeastern Asia or strips of the flesh of an animal domesticated in the same region, which have been salted and smoked by a process invented in Northern Europe.

Breakfast over, he places upon his head a molded piece of felt, invented by the nomads of Eastern Asia, and, if it looks like rain, puts on outer shoes of rubber, discovered by the ancient Mexicans, and takes an umbrella, invented in India. He then sprints for his train--the train, not the sprinting, being an English invention. At the station he pauses for a moment to buy a newspaper, paying for it with coins invented in ancient Lydia. Once on board he settles back to inhale the fumes of a cigarette invented in Mexico, or a cigar invented in Brazil. Meanwhile, he reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites by a process invented in Germany upon a material invented in China. As he scans the latest editorial pointing out the dire results of our institutions of accepting foreign ideas, he will not fail to thank a Hebrew God in an Indo-European language that he is a one hundred percent (decimal system invented by the Greeks) American (from Americus Vespucci, Italian geographer).

From the American Mercury, April 1937, pp. 427-429.

FOR TEACHERS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN LANGUAGES:

The Consortium of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL) publishes a bulletin twice a year, for a subscription price of \$5. It contains articles, book reviews, teaching materials and methods, A-V resources, computer assisted instruction, testing and evaluation, conferences and meetings, research projects and grant opportunities. CJ Compton, THE COTSEAL BULLETIN, 1859 Slaterville Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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1985 Conference proceedings (75 pages), 2948 Soi Somprasong 3, Petchburi Road, Bangkok 10400, Thailand.

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1986 "Looking for Phantoms: Flaws in the Khmer Rouge Screening Process." US Committee for Refugees Issues Brief. Contact Roger Winter, Director, US Committee for Refugees, 815 15th St NW, Ste 610, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 667-0782.

Asian Sudden Death Information

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1986 "Of Shamans and Physicians: Hmong and the US Health Care System." Amherst, MA: Hampshire College. Unpublished thesis. (113 pages). 61 Eldredge Parkway, RR3, Orleans, MA 02653, (617) 255-5750.

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1986 "Herbal Medicines Used by Hmong Refugees in Thailand." 140 page book with a chart identifying 174 plants recommended by Hmong herbalists and

(continues page 6)

indications for their use. 1727 E. 9th St, Tucson, AZ 85719.

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Hmong Recipe Cook Book

54 page cookbook, \$4.50, New Citizens' Hmong Garden Project, First Presbyterian Church, 535 20th Ave North, South St. Paul, MN 55075, (612) 451-3151.

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1985 "Resettlement of Laotian Refugees in Broome County, New York." In Migration News, April-June 1985. International Catholic Migration Commission, 37-39 rue de Vermont, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland.

White Hmong Dialogues

20 lessons, \$2.00, SARS. Checks to University of MN. CURA, University of MN, 330 Hubert Humphrey Ctr, 301 19th Ave South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, (612) 625-5535.

Citations from the SARS newsletter, FREE from CURA, Univ of MN (see address above).

HOW NOT TO BLOW A FLUTE INTO THE BUFFALO'S EAR

(excerpt from an article in
*Passage: A Journal of
Refugee Education*, by Thel-
ma M. Laguilles, Philippine
Refugee Processing
Center)

According to a Lao and Thai proverb, one who talks without making sense to another, is like one who blows beautiful music into the ear of a buffalo, which is not capable of appreciating it. How often does this characterize teacher-student communication in the classroom?

Moving a learner from the known to the unknown is a guiding principle in all teaching. In teaching English in a first-asylum camp and processing center, it is useful to use the students' proverbs to lead from the known to the unknown. Here is an example:

What skill is needed by people in order to move around on dry ground?

---walking

Could you use the same skill in the water?

---no!

What would happen?

---drown!

So what do you need to know so you don't drown?

---swim!

In your country you are good at walking. In your new country you will need new skills, so you don't

drown. What are these skills?

---Speak English!

What else?

---Speak telephone.

Important points to remember are:

1. The image used must be a familiar one, and not culturally sensitive.
2. Images must fit the message naturally and easily.
3. The teacher must have some knowledge of the learner's culture and the target culture.

These are some of the proverbs that we use in the Cultural Orientation classes.

Self-reliance and independence

Be content with flowers, fruit, even leaves---if it from your own garden that you pick them. (Confucius)

Self-sufficiency

There's no point in blaming heaven for our sufferings, for the root of goodness lies within ourselves. (Confucius)

When we escaped through the forest, each man had to run on his own feet. Nobody ran for another; only the crippled, the very old, and the very young were led by the others. (Khmer)

My hair grows on my head, not on anybody else's head. (Khmer)

Patience and persistence

If you sharpen the steel long enough, you will have needles. (Khmer, Chinese)

Signing contracts

The painter doesn't repair his strokes; a gentleman doesn't take back his word. (Chinese)

Parent-child relationship

The fruit never falls far from the tree. (Khmer)

Fish without salt will be spoiled. (Vietnamese)

The hardship of the father is as high as Thaison mountain, the love of the mother as endless as the water from the spring. (Vietnamese).

Teamwork in the family

One fence-stake does not make a fence. (Lao)

Education

If you stay near the ink, you will be dark; near the light, you will be bright. (Khmer)

In teaching there should be no distinction of classes. (Confucius).

Flexibility, in a new place

To be wise is to be like the hollow bamboo that is willing to be filled---it bends but never breaks. (Khmer)

Employment

It is better to fill your mouth with green bananas than with nothing. (Khmer)

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. (Chinese)

Assertiveness

A bashful lover will not get favors from his mistress. (Lao)

THE AMERICAN WAY: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN CULTURE (Prentice-Hall, 1984)

This is an ESL text, with a controlled vocabulary of 2500-3000 words, which incorporates answers about America and Americans. Each chapter begins with a short cross-cultural anecdote, and has plenty of exercises in reading and writing skills and conversation. The chapters are on American values (and how they are changing), Protestant heritage, frontier heritage, heritage of abundance, the business world, government and politics, ethnic and racial assimilation, education, sports and recreation, and family life.

On page 179 for example there is a very helpful paragraph on how to tell when a professor is signaling, both verbally and non-verbally, that an appointment with a student is over, so that the student will take the hint and leave. These subtle

manifestations of culture are most difficult to be aware of and to analyze and describe. At the same time, it is essential to do so, if the foreign student is ever to become acclimated.

(from Passage, L. Robert Kohls)

PASSAGE: A JOURNAL OF REFUGEE EDUCATION.

3 times per year, published by US Dept of State Bureau of Refugee Programs, distributed by the Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St NW, Washington DC 20007. Free.

Articles are by the staff trainers and teachers in the Refugee Processing camps, where English, job skills, and cultural orientation are taught to refugees for six months before going to a new country.

Refugee Update
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This newsletter is published 9-10 times per year by Folsom Cordova Unified School District. To subscribe, send 10 stamps per year to the above address.

We welcome submissions and ideas, especially of personal experiences, programs, and anecdotes.
